

Part 10 – August 15, 2010

Understanding Our Part in Developing Conviction(s)

Intro

What does it take to develop convictions?

“Wesley Duewel, a former missionary to India under OMS International [a missions organization], discovered that the world and busyness can so fill the mind with godless thoughts, that he needed a prayer retreat in which he read at least fifty chapters of the Bible before he was again really in tune with **God**. [quoting him] `I have at times read as many as fifty chapters from God's Word before I was completely alone with God. But on some of those occasions I received such unexpected guidance that my life has been greatly benefited.”
John Piper, A Godward Life, Book Two, p. 128-29

- Preaching to the choir--perhaps--but do you regularly have Holy Spirit inspired motivation that creates genuine *delight* in interacting with God's Word?
- In your pursuit of holiness, who are you primarily out to please--check your heart.
- Look at your commitment list--look at the cross--derive your motivation there.
- DO NOT derive your motivation primarily from any culture, even Christian culture--declare yourself immune from "morality by consensus" or "sanctification by consensus".

Judges 21:25

What Influences Us?

Romans 12:2

Conforming vs. Being Transformed

Psalm 1:1-3

"Do you know any Christian who is not still being influenced by the world? If so, I guarantee you it is not you--or me."

Seesaw Illustration

Romans 7:12

Psalm 119:59

What is your default thought life?

"This discipline of bringing our thoughts into conformity with God's revelation of Himself is the discipline that produces convictions."

"You cannot become a great Christian-you may be a babe in grace, but you never can be perfect in Christ Jesus while you yield yourself to the worldly maxims and modes of business of this world. It is unhealthy for an heir of heaven to be a great friend with the heirs of hell. It looks bad when a courtier is too intimate with his king's enemies. Even small inconsistencies are dangerous....0 professing Christian, too little separated from sinners, you don't know what you lose by your conformity to the world. It cuts the tendons of your strength, and makes you creep where you ought to run. Then, for your own comfort's sake, and for the sake of your growth in grace, if you are a Christian, be a Christian, and be a marked and distinct one."
Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening*, October 14e

ROMANS 12:2 IS A COMMAND! A PASSIVE COMMAND?

"Most of us do not give ourselves the soaking in God that can penetrate to the deep preferences that really govern our choices without our even knowing it. There is a kind of tuning in to the mind of God in His Word that comes with lingering in His Word-saturated presence. This is the fullness that could make all the difference in whether your heart resonates with the new music God is playing in your life."
John Piper, *A Godward Life*, Book Two, p. 128

2 Timothy 3:16-17

2 Peter 1:21

2 Peter 3:15-16

"God speaks to us through His Word. Do you hear Him?--Regularly?"

Psalm 119:18, 34

Bridges' Principles:

- 1. Humility;**
- 2. Dependence; and, [I added]**
- 3. Diligence.**

Proverbs 1:29-2:5

"In order to understand the Word of God, and delight in the God of the Word, and to be changed from the inside out, we must pray, 'Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in you Law' (Psalm 119:18, NIV). But when we pray for eyes to see, we must not shift our minds into neutral. Don't assume that the indispensability of prayer means the dispensability of focused thought on the Word of God....What then?

1. *Pray and Read*

Read the Word! What a privilege! And what an obligation! And what a potential for seeing God! Consider Ephesians 3:3-4. 'By revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. By referring to this, *when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ*' (Emphasis added). When you *read!* God willed that the greatest mysteries of life be revealed through reading.

2. *Pray and Study*

Second Timothy 2:15: 'Be diligent (or 'study') to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.' God gave us a **book** about himself, not so that we might read in any old careless way we wish. Paul says, 'Be diligent to...accurately handle the word of truth.' That means work at the Word if you want the most from it. Benjamin Warfield, a great studier of the Bible, wrote in 1911, 'Sometimes we hear it said that ten minutes on your knees will give you a truer, deeper, more operative knowledge of God than ten hours over your books. 'WHAT!' is the appropriate response, 'than ten hours over your books, on your knees?'

3. *Pray and Ransack*

Our approach to the Bible should be like a miser in the gold rush or a fiancée who has lost her engagement ring somewhere in the house. She ransacks the house. That is the way we seek for God in the Bible. [Quotes Proverbs 2:3-5]

Seek as for silver, search as for hidden treasures. This is ransacking the Bible for all that it is worth. If there are hidden treasures, act like it. God ordains that he will give to those who seek with all their heart. (Jeremiah 29:13)

4. *Pray and Think*

In 2 Timothy 2:7 (author's translation), Paul tells Timothy how to read his letter: 'Think over what / say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.' Yes, the Lord 'gives' understanding. But not without thinking. Don't replace thinking with praying. Think *and* pray. Read and study and ransack and think. But all is in vain without prayer....

...Prayer is indispensable if we would see the glory of God in the Word of God. But we have also seen that *reading* and *studying* and *ransacking* and *thinking* the Word is

also necessary. God has ordained that the *eye-opening work of His Spirit* always be combined with the *mind-informing work of His Word*. His aim is that we see the glory of God and that we reflect the glory of God. And so He opens our eyes when we are looking at the glory of God in the Word. ..."

John Piper, *A Godward Life, Book Two*, pp. 182-84

Storing Up God's Word

"The purpose of storing up the Word is to be prepared when the time comes, as it will, that we need God's guidance on a moment's notice."

Proverbs 2:1

Proverbs 7:1

Proverbs 3:13-15

Colossians 1:9-10

"When God's Word is hidden away, stored like a treasure, the Holy Spirit can use it, in the circumstances of our daily life, to transform us. We are transformed by the renewing of our minds--what is not there cannot transform us."

Matthew 4:1-11

Colossians 3:16

Application of the Word

James 1:22

THE Formula, the winning recipe:

KNOWLEDGE

+ MEDITATION

+ APPLICATION

= BIBLE BASED CONVICTIONS

2 Timothy 2:7

An imaginary conversation between Paul and Timothy about Paul's letter, 2 Timothy 2:7:

"Timothy: Wait a minute, Paul. You tell me to think, but isn't the organ of our thinking fallen and unreliable?"

Paul: Yes, your mind is fallen and fallible. Yes it is prone to self-justifying errors. But Christ is in the business of renewing the mind (Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:23). Do you think there is some unfallen part of you that you could substitute for your mind? We are fallen and depraved in every part. You cannot retreat from thinking into some other safe, untainted faculty of knowing. Take note, Timothy; even in raising the objection against thinking, you are thinking! You cannot escape the necessity of thinking. God's call is to do it well.

Timothy: But, Paul, won't I become arrogant and boastful if by using my mind I discover things on my own?"

Paul: Timothy, you never have and never will discover anything, `on your own.' You would know this if you had thought more deeply about what I said. What I said was: `Think over what I say, for the Lord will grant you understanding in everything.'" The Lord, Timothy, the Lord! `From him and through him are all things. To him be the glory!' (Romans 11:36, RSV). He is the ground and goal of all thought. So think, Timothy. Gird up your mind and think!"

Piper, *A Godward Life, Book One*, pp. 122-23

his recipe is to be mixed liberally, and continually with God's Word!

Room for Grace?

"When you stumble, and when I stumble and fail in the practice of these disciplines that produce convictions in my life, does God love you or me any less? A resounding no! His love is based on someone else's merit-Praise God!!"

Godly disciplines are God-given for our good--treat them that way and be blessed!

2 Timothy 2:7

Question For Application:

"a. Below are two contrary convictions. Which one do you tend to live by more than the other? Give an example of how you have displayed that conviction in your behavior.

- ◇ Avoid pain if at all possible.
- ◇ If doing what Christ would do involves pain, then I have through the Holy Spirit the strength to endure that pain.

"b. What do you think it would take for the second of these two convictions to become the one you live by habitually?"

In Conclusion—Back to Grace:

Perhaps there is something further to be gleaned about the nature of transformation from the story of Jacob. Favored by his mother, he schemed and connived his way into receiving his brother's birthright and his father's blessing. He treated his wife Leah with great contempt and ended up taking a great deal of his family's dysfunction into his own family; he, too, favored the children of his wife Rachel. But Jacob had a profound encounter with God one night in the lonely ford of Jabbok.⁽¹⁾ It was this wrestling match with the living God that proved truly transformational. Jacob received a new name, "Israel," as well as a dislocated hip. He named this place of transformation "Peniel," which means, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved" (Genesis 32:30). His life had been preserved, but he would forever bear the mark of that transformational encounter in a new name and identity—and in his permanent limp.

Perhaps, our own journeys of transformation reflect a similar experience. For those who follow the God of reconciliation, the hope of the living gospel, God indeed changes our names and gives us new identities in the hope of becoming all that God intends for us. But God undertakes this work in a way that leaves our humanity intact. The hope of transformation doesn't undo our human limp. Instead, transformation is a gift of grace—a recognition of how far one must still journey to become more than we are, while we entrust our limp to the faithfulness of God to walk alongside all the way.

Margaret Manning, *Wrestling with Transformation*