

MEN OF CONVICTION

Men who are part of the kingdom of God look radically different from what the world values in men or teaches men to become. The world often tells men to conform to the culture around them or to the ways of the majority. Yet, Jesus calls us to conviction. Jesus does not just want stubborn or strongly opinionated people. Rather, Jesus wants humble men who will accept what God says as truth and to submit their opinions to God's word. Then, having accepted what the King says, they must stand firmly in those truths, regardless of the pressure to bend and conform. Therefore, kingdom men are men of conviction!

EPHESIANS 4:11-16

God has equipped Jesus's body (kingdom) to reach maturity in Christ. He has provided spiritually mature men (including evangelists, shepherds, and teachers) who can help others reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of Christ and grow into spiritual maturity. Part of their role is to help those in Jesus's kingdom develop and stand firm in their convictions about faith in Jesus and the practice of that faith, so they are not tossed by every wave and blown around by every wind of teaching. Certainly, there are many different ideas expressed in this world that men in Christ's kingdom are exposed to, and there are many different pressures to conform (Romans 12:2). Yet, Jesus wants men in His kingdom who humbly learn what He teaches and follow only those things (James 1:19-21), regardless of how deceptive or appealing other ideas may be. To accomplish this, kingdom men must diligently study the Scriptures for themselves to know what is true (Acts 17:10-12; 2 Peter 3:14-18). Then, learning from mature teachers is also critical to their spiritual development.

2 TIMOTHY 3:10-17

The apostle Paul had a close relationship with Timothy (2 Timothy 1:2). Now, Paul knew his life was about to end (2 Timothy 4:6-8). In some of his final words to Timothy, Paul urged Timothy to remember what he had learned and where his convictions came from. He had learned the God-breathed Scriptures and firmly believed them. They made him wise for salvation

through faith in Christ Jesus and equipped him for every good work. Now, he needed to stand firm in those convictions, even when he experienced persecution and encountered evil people and imposters who would try to deceive him. Timothy needed to know what he believed, why he believed it, and stand firm in those convictions, no matter what challenges he faced!

DANIEL 1:1-8

Daniel and his three friends were among the Jews taken into Babylonian captivity. However, they were among a select few who were chosen and trained for service in the palace of the Babylonian king. As such, they would be given food and drink as part of their training and assimilation into Babylonian culture. Yet, when Babylon tried to change them, they refused to compromise their convictions! Even though they were young men in a strange place, being pressured to adapt to a different culture, under the influence of a powerful king, they were strong in their convictions! Specifically, in the matter of eating and drinking, they would not compromise to conform to the situation. Rather, they knew what God had required concerning such things (e.g., Leviticus 11) and saw what Babylon offered as something that would defile them. As they stood in their convictions, they were granted the opportunity to eat only vegetables and drink only water. In doing so, they looked better and healthier than all those who ate the king's provisions and were blessed by God for their faithfulness (Daniel 1:9-21).

GENESIS 39:1-12

Joseph had been so hated by his brothers that they sold him into slavery when he was about 17 (Genesis 37:2). That resulted in Joseph arriving in Egypt and in Potiphar's house. Because of the way God blessed him, Joseph prospered and was put in charge of Potiphar's house. There, he was tempted to commit adultery with Potiphar's wife. Yet, despite being a young man, in a strange land, away from his family and acquaintances, physically attractive, and dealing with rejection and mistreatment, he stood firm in his convictions to do what was pleasing to God! His convictions were not based on how he felt or his earthly circumstances. Instead, they were based on what was right and pleasing to God. He knew that God saw everything he did and refused to sin against Him or violate the trust Potiphar had placed in him. Then, as you read the rest of the story (Genesis 39-50), Joseph continued to do

what was right, despite being falsely accused and mistreated further.

ACTS 20:22-24; 21:10-14

The apostle Paul was convinced that he needed to go to Jerusalem and testify concerning the gospel of God's grace despite the indications of suffering awaiting him there. Although he did not know exactly what would transpire, he knew that it would not be pleasant physically. Yet, this did not change his determination or actions. His conviction to do what was pleasing to God did not depend on things being easy or convenient (Galatians 2:20; Philippians 1:20-24). Nor did it depend on how other people would respond. He was convicted to stand boldly for the truth of the gospel so those who were lost would hear it, no matter how it would impact him (Romans 1:16). He knew God would not let him down (2 Timothy 1:12; Romans 8:18)!

2 THESSALONIANS 2:13-15

Paul had warned the Thessalonians about a great apostasy that would happen (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12). There would be a lot of false teaching and deception. However, notice that these Christians were to stand firm! They were not just to be stubborn in whatever they believed and had come to practice. Rather, they were to stand firm and hold on to the traditions given through God's apostles and prophets. These were God's teachings and God's ways. They were not to waver in them in any way! No matter how many others fell away, what pressure they experienced, or how they might be persecuted, they needed to stand firm! So also your conviction must result in you standing firm in believing and practicing only what God says!

CONCLUSION

Men in God's kingdom are men of conviction. Rather than being driven by all the different teachings and ways of society, they learn and become convinced of what God says. Then they stand for what is right, regardless of what doing the right thing requires of them. They do not seek ways to compromise. They do not bend the truth. They stand firmly and hold to whatever God says and whatever truth requires. Even when their convictions may cost them dearly or cause them pain. This conviction is rooted firmly in the confidence that God exists and that His words are always true and right, no matter what situations they face in life!

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

What has God put in place to help His kingdom grow into spiritual conviction and maturity?

What are some threats against your faith in Christ?

Where should your convictions come from?

What can you learn about conviction from Timothy?

What can you learn about conviction from Daniel and his friends?

What can you learn about conviction from Joseph?

What can you learn about conviction from Paul?

How should you respond whenever things threaten your convictions in God's truth?