

Convictions Pt. 4

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[0 : 0 0] All right, if you got your Bible, I want you to start this morning in Nehemiah. You're going to want to find Nehemiah chapter 1. And we'll just button up where we were last week to just kind of, by way of review, catch one more passage, one more example.

And we are in a study on convictions. We are in the third category, as we're calling it, of convictions, that being spiritual convictions, where the Lord God intervenes in some way, whether to stop us from doing things that are wrong or to prod or move us towards something that we should be doing that's right.

And the Lord does this in different ways. Sometimes it's straight from the book, and that's a scriptural conviction that we can develop from the Word of God, but it's not always from the pages of the Scripture.

And so spiritual convictions, and we're going to take some time on this to fully try to understand and explain this. The first thing we learned last week was that these convictions that come from the Lord are personal.

They're individual. They're for you. They're not necessarily for your family, not necessarily for a congregation, but for you. It's God dealing with you. We saw that from the Apostle Paul and some things he was trying to do.

[1 : 2 5] We saw that as an example in the area of giving to like a free will offering. It's a personal conviction or God dealing with your heart about whether you should or shouldn't, can or can't.

I showed you from 1 Samuel last week where we ended that King Saul was just anointed to be king, and Samuel, everybody shouted, God save the king, and Samuel sent every man to his own tent, but God touched a few people's heart and said, no, you don't go home.

You stay with the king. And they didn't have the right to tell everybody else, where are you going? They just had to obey what God had laid on their heart. And that's where we're at here with Nehemiah, making this case that these convictions, these are personal things from God to the individual.

Nehemiah chapter 1, and let's just begin in verse 2, where the Bible says that Hananiah, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah, and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.

So he's curious about his hometown. What's going on? What's it like? And they said unto me, the remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.

[2 : 3 8] And it came to pass, when I heard these words, it's not what he expected. When I heard these words, that I sat down and wept and mourned certain days and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.

So Nehemiah's definitely burdened about this, right? He cares. This hurts. So now in chapter 2, and I'm just skimming through this, but come to chapter 2, he ends up getting over there to the land.

And I want to just pull a phrase out of chapter 2 in verse number 12. Verse 11 says, So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days, and I arose in the night privately, I and some few men with me.

Neither told I any man, notice, what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem. So this is a case where God has influenced and put something in the heart of a man to do something for God and for his people, but he's moving on this man to do it.

Not on the whole congregation, not on all the priests, not on all the Levites. It was on Nehemiah. God touched his heart. It was a personal thing. That's the point. I'm showing you. There's examples of this throughout the book.

[3 : 53] And when it happens to you in your life, when God deals with you, recognize it as God's dealing with me. And God's showing me something. God wants to change me. He wants to conform me to the image of his son.

It doesn't mean that I have to tell everybody else what to do. It just means you obey the Lord. So I hope that's understandable to you and easy to receive, that spiritual convictions are personal.

All right, we're back here in the Old Testament. Now go back to 2 Chronicles. 2 Chronicles and chapter 28. And I have five things that I want to say slowly and carefully about spiritual convictions.

The first one I hope you received. They're personal. They're individual. And I hope that's something that you can just realize and accept and acknowledge.

Because I warned you, the temptation is to pass it on or to push it on others or to presume this is for everybody when it might just be for you. And there will be more examples and more understanding of this as we develop it.

[5 : 08] The second thing I want to say about spiritual convictions is that they can be influenced. They can be influenced by, say, a preacher, by somebody who's handling the Word of God, by preaching the Word of God, or somebody who's got a testimony that you should follow.

The Bible teaches you to follow, say, whose faith follow. Speaking of those that have the rule over you and the Word of God and so forth. But not just to elevate a preacher or a pastor, but a spiritual Christian.

Somebody who's walking with God. Somebody who's seasoned in the Word of God and in their understanding. And they do what's right. And your personal walk with God, your spiritual convictions that you develop through life and through your relationship with God can be influenced by other Christians.

By spiritual Christians. They can be influenced. I mean, you know that you can be influenced by other people. He that walketh with wise men is going to be influenced, shall be wise.

But a companion of fools is going to be influenced, shall be destroyed. You understand that you're influenced, that can be influenced by others. Well, when it comes to developing spiritual convictions to live your life by and to please God, you can have them influenced by others.

[6 : 21] Now, this is not to contradict what the first one said, that they're personal. When God deals with your heart, it's for you. But it can be that you live a certain way and somebody else picks it up.

Or the Lord opens their eyes by seeing your example. And I'll show you the scripture. You're supposed to be an example. Now, here's one case where someone picked up a conviction and made a decision based upon a preacher.

And it wasn't necessarily that he was speaking from the mouth of God at this time. Look at 2 Chronicles 28. And here's where the children of Israel and the children of Judah, the split kingdom, they're at war.

And Syria is involved as well. And it starts earlier in the chapter. But I'm just going to pick it up in verse number 8. The children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren.

That is, the children of Judah. So they won and they conquered and now they're taking their own Jewish brethren from the southern kingdom captives. 200,000 women, sons and daughters and took away much spoil from them and brought the spoil to Samaria.

[7 : 28] And here comes the preacher. Verse 9. But the prophet of the Lord was there whose name was Oded. And he went out before the host that came to Samaria and said unto them, Because behold, and notice this, he doesn't say, Thus saith the Lord.

He's not preaching from the mouth of God to them. He says, Behold, because the Lord God of our fathers was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand. And ye have slain them in a rage that reacheth up unto heaven.

And now ye purpose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondmen and bondwomen unto you? But are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God? Are you sure you want to do this?

This is what he's telling them. Verse 11. Now hear me, therefore, and deliver the captives again, which ye have taken captive of your brethren, for the fierce wrath of the Lord is upon you. Then certain of the heads of the children of Ephraim.

And here's these guys, their heads, they stood up against them. And in verse 13 said unto them, Ye shall not bring in the captives hither. Stop right where you are, men of war, and send them back.

[8 : 30] They're not coming in because we're not allowing this to happen. Ye shall not bring them in hither, for whereas we have offended against the Lord already, ye intend to add more to our sins and to our trespass. For our trespass is great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel.

So they are men left the captives and the spoil before the princes of the congregation. And they got it resolved. So what happened here is the people changed their actions and what they were doing from the war and the captives and the spoil and just kind of that natural tendency from wartime and bringing it back and rejoicing and all of it.

And the preacher's like, what are you doing? This is not good. You're making a bad decision here, a mistake. You need to turn around and change that. And he convinced these other men.

They said, hey, he's right. We've sinned already ourselves. We're guilty. We don't need to add more to it. And they changed their mind. They developed what I'll call the conviction about this thing based on a preacher standing up and saying, I don't think you're making a right choice here.

And when they waited out and thought it over, they realized, yeah, we are guilty before God already. We are going to make this worse. And they made a decision to stop doing something. So from the beginning, I said that your convictions can be God trying to stop you from doing something wrong or maybe help you to do something right.

[9 : 45] And this would be a case where the Lord can intervene and use another spiritual Christian who has some understanding and his eyes of faith open and observant to the ways of God and intercept that.

Now, let's look at another case of this. Come to 1 Peter. Let's hop around the New Testament a little bit. Chapter 5. I want 1 Peter 5.

We're also going to get 1 Timothy 4. And then eventually go back to, well, we'll skip that.

Let's just get these two verses. 1 Timothy 4 and 1 Peter 5. So your convictions can be influenced by a preacher, by a spiritual Christian.

And 1 Peter 5. Notice that the preacher is supposed to be that example and that kind of leader in spiritual matters, one that you can look up to and follow.

[10 : 49] Look at chapter 5 and verse number 2. This is a command. Peter's giving command to say, Now, Paul uses that same language.

Flip over to 1 Timothy 4. Peter says, It's being in samples to the flock. Leading by example. 1 Timothy 4. Notice the command from Paul to this preacher and pastor over a church.

In verse 12, he says, Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Be an example, Timothy. All right. Turn to one more place really close here. Titus chapter 2. Titus chapter 2. You're to teach by doing.

And so you can influence others, if you're spiritually minded, by your testimony and by your living for Jesus Christ and living right and living according to your own scriptural convictions can influence someone else.

[12 : 10] And they don't even have the word of God necessarily. They just see it in you. Titus chapter 2. This is a command for the aged men and the aged women to do these things, to teach.

Verse 2 says that the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith and charity and patience. The aged women likewise. That they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false acuters, not giving of wine.

So leading by example.

Teaching by doing. Teaching by doing. This is influencing others and their development and their convictions they're going to live their lives by. So your spiritual convictions or someone else's can be influenced by a spiritual Christian.

I think that's pretty easy to see. Now, at this point, I want to interject something that I'm pretty passionate about. I try not to let it consume me.

[13 : 16] It doesn't consume me. But when I get talking about this, I tend to get into it a little bit and make it sound like you might perceive that it's more than it is. But here's a statement I want to make and then I'll follow up with explaining it.

There's a difference between a spiritual conviction that you receive from another Christian that you see, that you believe, that they might be leading you in and teaching you. There's a difference between receiving a spiritual conviction from their testimony and a difference between spiritual conviction and what I'm calling intimidation.

And that's a broad word, but it's the idea that another believer is telling you and heavy-handedly saying, you need to start doing this and pushing you to a place that God hasn't even dealt with your heart on, but they think that you need to start doing this or stop doing that.

They might have more understanding and they might be further growing in the Lord and see you as a young believer. Instead of letting God work through your heart and convict you and let you open your eyes and see some things, they try to force it on you and push it into you.

And that's not God's direction. God doesn't command that believer to do it in that way. Let the Spirit of God grow them and open their eyes. And there's a difference between spiritual conviction and intimidation.

[14 : 33] And in the pulpits, I've witnessed this and I despise it. I've witnessed preachers settle for intimidation when there's no conviction present in the service, when God's not bearing witness to the message that he's, you know, his top five message that he carries with him across the nation.

And when it's not bearing fruit in this service, then it's obviously the people's fault. And he'll settle for a way to, again, I don't want to overdo this. So just, you know, let it sift it through if you understand what I'm trying to say.

I've seen guys do it. I've seen them in a pulpit not get response on Monday night and not get response on Tuesday night. And then Wednesday night, they got a different style of invitation that everybody moves to.

Everybody responds. And it wasn't a spiritual conviction coming out from the pulpit, from the Word of God, from the Lord. It was a tactic. It was a little... I've heard it a few ways.

Here's one. This one's kind of made its way around. I've seen this one twice specifically where it was this message about revival in America. And the statement came down to the very end was, if you don't believe that God can send revival, if you think God can't do it, then you just keep your seat.

[15 : 49] You just stay where you are. But if you believe that God can do it, then you come and pray for it. You come and ask God. And so, well, what are you going to do? Are you going to stay put?

Or are you going to... It puts you in a dumb spot. I know what I did. I didn't budge. I can't stand that stuff. And there was a time when I was the only one in a whole section.

I was the only person in the whole section that just stood there and waited it out. And I felt like, am I being a jerk here? I'm not. I really don't want to be a jerk.

I think, no, you're the one that's being the jerk here. I know what you're doing. It just... If the Lord's not... Here's the difference. If you find yourself like in an invitation kind of situation, you've been around this, some of you, most of you, if you find that the motivation you have for your decision is because you want the preacher to think you're okay or that you're following what he's saying, or if it's not God that has touched your heart and inside said, you need to get this right and bring something to mind.

If it's not God on the inside, if it's him intimidating you, then it's not a spiritual conviction from God. It's a preacher that's a big man with a big voice and he can intimidate and he can put it out there.

[17 : 11] And it's entertaining and it's exciting to have a guy that stumps around and kicks and screams. And I saw a guy going, there's like these folding chairs around in this tent meeting.

He's just going nuts all over the church. And he kicks his leg out and it gets caught in a folding chair and it flips up in the air and he's shaking his leg to get the folding chair off. And off it goes with a big clang and nobody noticed because he's just screaming so loud that it's so loud in there from his voice.

Big guy, big voice. And it just was part of the act. I don't know. Part of the excitement of the meeting. But when it comes to the invitation, I mean, those guys that are in your face and staring you in the eyeballs and just so aggressive, you're like, you feel like I have to, whatever he says, I have to do it.

Or he's going to get me or God's going to get me or something's happening here. And it's just, to me, it's just intimidation. And I'm not, I don't hate the people preaching. And I believe they preach and try to preach.

But I also see them, when it comes down to not getting results, there's a way to get results. I've seen it, I told you, two specific times. Here's another time. This is a different thing totally.

[18 : 19] We had an anniversary Sunday. And so it was a big push to bring friends, bring neighbors, bring your lost. I mean, we always would celebrate our church's anniversary with a big deal for the kids and really try to make it an evangelistic event.

Well, we had this preacher in. And this guy was, he had his face in all the Sword of the Lord publications and all over the meetings. He preached all these fundamentals, circles, blah, blah, blah. And so he gets up there and he's this big shot and he's going to preach the meeting from Sunday to Wednesday.

And we're really looking for, you know, praying about it. And it was a full house. I mean, it was, you know, some exciting day. And he preaches a message. I don't even know what it was about.

But at the end, at the climax, at the time where it's kind of like, all right, let's, you know, let's reel them in. Let's draw these lost souls to Christ here. He turns the invitation to asking the pastor to stand up in the front, in the middle and said, he started puffing them up.

You folks need to appreciate your man that God put here. He cares about you. He prays for you. He preaches. And he turned the thing into saying, if you appreciate him and you are thankful to God for him, then you come up here.

[19 : 36] And this invitation is for all of you to come up here and to shake his hand and let him know you love him. And that was it. And so, of course, what are you going to do? Well, I don't love you. Well, don't appreciate you.

I guess I'll just stand here and wait. So everybody has to come out of their pew and walk the aisle. And it took 15 minutes to just hustle people through. Just, just shaky.

And I'm standing like right there. I'm in the second pew right on the aisle. And I know him. I was a young man at the time, but I grew up around him. I know the kind of man he is. He can't stand that stuff.

He can't stand people doing that to him. And he's just like, yeah, thank you, brother. Yeah, thank you. I appreciate you too. And he's just going through them, letting them run through. Yeah, thank you.

And I mean, people that barely even come to church but once a month or once every six months, I appreciate you, Pastor. You know, and he's like, yeah, praise the Lord. Yeah, okay. And when it got about done, he just, he looked over at me and I was like, and I kind of smiled.

[20 : 36] He rolled his eyes. He's like, and I just said, I love you, Pastor. And he's like, thank you, Tobe. And off I went. And that was the invitation. And then, and after we talked about it, he's like, that stinking guy, I'm never having him back here again.

But that guy was like, oh, if I puff this guy up, if everybody comes, he's going to think, and he's going to associate that with me and have me back. And that's a style and a little bit of a professional tactic from the pulpit.

If it's not happening and you've never been around it, praise the Lord for it, but there are so many preachers that are patting each other on the back and name dropping here and thank you, brother, here.

And it's such a circle of let's stay tight together and have you to my meeting and you have me to yours. And it's disgusting. But that's all, I'm going somewhere else.

I knew it was going to happen. Sorry. But it's back to this intimidation stuff from the pulpit. It's pushing to try to get a result.

[21 : 39] And here's another one. This is online with this. Guys want to see people saved, right? They want to see people respond to the gospel or to their version of it if it's not working.

And this guy preached a message about, it was, again, another kind of anniversary, a different preacher. And he told the pastor beforehand, I didn't know this, but I heard afterwards, the pastor, he said, we ought to, or he's like, we're going to have, you know, a lot of lost people here.

We want to really, and he said, I think I'm going to preach about Judas Iscariot. And he said, I've really had good results with that one as far as people getting saved. This message about Judas Iscariot.

And so the pastor's like, okay. And whenever you hear somebody say, I've had good results with that, I'm going to use that here. He just, he knows. It feels like, are you praying about this? Are you seeking God?

What should I be preaching? What do you want? He's like, this one works here, so I'm going to do it. It's just, and so he already told me, he's like, I was kind of like, I don't know. Just by the way he talked, I don't know.

[22 : 40] And so sure enough, he got up, he preached about Judas Iscariot, and there's a verse that says in John 13, as Satan entered into him. And so he took that, and he put it on everybody in that place to saying, there's a time when you reject the gospel that Satan enters into you.

Like, what are you talking about? That's not true. Not that way, not the way he put it out. And what he was doing was trying to retread people or make them think, well, what if I'm really not saved?

And he said those words, if you're not truly saved, you're on your way to hell. There'll be a time you'll never be able to come back. And he scared everybody in there with this 45 minutes of this.

And I know there was two people that were stand out in my mind still. I think about four or five people walked the aisle to get saved. Two of them were people that had been in that church for 20 years.

One was my Sunday school teacher back when I was in a junior high. And I mean, I understand somebody could be lost, but all he did was cast such doubt and deception and confusion from a misapplied scripture to people who just, eh, I don't want to die and go to hell in case.

[23 : 51] What if I didn't pray the right prayer? What if I'm truly not? And stuff like that. And what it comes down to is him pushing something from the pulpit that's not God. He's not bearing witness to his word because it's not applying it correctly.

And it ends up with confusion. I know what's going to happen with that person in five more years when somebody preaches another message about did you really mean it when you prayed those words?

They're not going to have that assurance. They don't get it. It doesn't work that way. All right, we're kind of getting off track. That's my fault. But I wanted to caution you that you can have your convictions influenced by a preacher and you can get help.

And sometimes just a preacher can say something, not in the message, as far as not from the scripture, but just in passing, like I just really have a problem with that about his own life. And you can be like, yeah, that makes sense.

I should have a problem with that too. And you can develop your convictions from a spiritual leader, from a spiritual Christian. And you should. You should. But beware of somebody who wants to push you when God's not pushing you or tells you you need to do this.

[24 : 57] They could be pushing you into a mistake or trying to get you to go ahead of God or trying to be like them, conforming you to them rather than to Jesus Christ. And we've got to be careful of that. All right, let's move on.

We've got a little bit of time. We'll start the next one. There's a third section here under spiritual convictions. And this is an easy one to grasp. Turn to Psalm 101.

Let's take this as an example. Psalm 101. Now, we're talking about spiritual convictions where God deals with your heart.

And the third thing I want to say about these, first, they're personal. Second, they can be influenced by a spiritual Christian. And then third, spiritual convictions can be developed from a scriptural principle.

A scriptural principle. This is why certain verses can speak to you and the Lord deals with your mind about something and the same verse means nothing to somebody else.

[26 : 10] And you would say, well, the Bible says this. You can't push that on them because they'd be like, it doesn't say it that way. It doesn't say that. Well, the Lord can deal with you from a scriptural principle. Here's one.

Psalm 101. And notice verse number two. I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. Oh, when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk, notice, within my house with a perfect heart.

I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes. I hate the work of them that turn aside. It shall not cleave to me. Somebody can read that Bible verse and say, that television in my house has wicked things coming out of it.

And it has the work of them that turn aside coming out of it. Can you not see that? And therefore, I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes.

And somebody can read that and say, now if a preacher gets up and says, bless God, you're not supposed to have a TV in your house. And if you do, and a computer screen or a cell phone.

[27 : 18] Can he say that? Is that what the Bible says? Is that how it applies? It's a principle that you can personally, the Lord can deal with you about if you've got a problem with it.

If you've got an issue going on, the Lord can open your eyes and say, hey, you're setting something wicked before. Now, if a preacher takes that and starts pushing it that way, was there TVs when David wrote that?

Was there the internet? Was there computer screens? So literally, no. But practically speaking, as a principle, God can deal with your heart from that verse. But I cannot put that on you and say, all of that stuff is sin if it's in your home and you're setting wicked things before your eyes and disobeying the scriptures.

I can't say that. Preachers have said that for years. And we have a TV in our house. And I'd have to admit it as well as you would. If I didn't have it, we'd probably be better off.

I'd probably be a better man if I never watched TV. It's probably true for all of us. I mean, what good does actually happen? It's really just something to kind of unwind, really, and just enjoy something as a family, praying and hoping that it's not corrupting any more than everything else.

[28 : 34] But there's just a principle there. That's all I'll call that, a principle from the scriptures that I can. I mean, you could take that in a different way. And it could mean something, forget TV and Internet.

It could be something completely different. It could be somebody with a conviction about playing cards. And I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes. I hate the work of them that turn aside.

It's not going to cleave. That could mean that to you and have nothing to do with the other things. So that's how these can be developed from a biblical principle. Look at Psalm 63. Here's another one.

It can be a biblical principle, but not a biblical command. And so you can develop a conviction based on a Bible verse, based on a Bible passage, a truth.

That is not necessarily a command, but God can deal with you from it. Here's one. Psalm 63. And look at verse number one.

[29 : 30] O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee. Early will I seek thee. Now, I could go to other places to describe this, especially in the Psalms 119.

There's plenty. You can develop a spiritual conviction. Look at Proverbs 8. That's another one. Same thing. A spiritual conviction that you need to be in your Bible early in the morning.

First thing in the morning. Or in prayer, early in the morning, before anything else. Proverbs 8. Look at verse 17.

I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me. Now, it doesn't say early in the morning, but that's, you can take that, God can say that to you.

If you don't have a walk with the Lord, if you don't have it developed in a time that you're in the Bible, or in prayer, and you're reading through there at some point, and that thing hits you, it can just be like, God can just right there say, you need to give me your morning.

[30 : 43] You need to get up earlier. You need to start purposely focusing on me. And a lot of Christians do. That's their time, early in the morning. I know a guy who works, his job has him leaving his house around 4.30 to 5 o'clock every day, and he texts me from Pennsylvania.

He texts me at times when he's getting something from his Bible, and my phone's dingling at crazy hours, three hours before, and it's him because he's up early, and he's in his Bible, and he's like, oh, did you ever see this, or I got something here, or it's just exciting.

He gets fired up, and he likes to keep me in the loop, and I'm not going to tell him to stop because I love that stuff, but there's a, I can't say that's a biblical command that you have to get up at 4 o'clock in the morning and get on your knees and pick up your Bible.

I can't say that to you, and I can't say that those verses say that either, but God can say that to you, and God can use those verses to say that to you. It's a spiritual conviction, not exactly a biblical command or a scriptural conviction, do you see the difference and how that works.

You read your Bible, and you read something like that, it can trigger things in your thoughts, and the Lord God can use it to develop a scriptural conviction, or spiritual conviction.

[32 : 10] There's more on this, a little bit more, and another area that I want to take a little time with, so we'll stop right here, and we'll conclude with this third part of spiritual convictions that they can be developed from a biblical principle.

I hope this is making sense to you. Everything we're doing, as far as I can tell, it's coming from the Bible, and it's within the reality of your walk with God and your Christian life and your convictions that you live by.

You want to make sure that they're coming from the Lord, that they're coming from His Word, that they're not being forced on you by somebody who God never told to do that, and He never told you to follow them, and you just want to know that you can hear the voice of God and follow it.

So let's be dismissed there, and we'll come back.