



“I shall always be ready to remind you of these things...”
2 Peter 1:21



CABOT WESTSIDE CHURCH OF CHRIST

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When We Meet

Sunday
 Bible Classes – 9:00 am
 Worship – 10:00 am, 5:00 pm
Wednesday
 Bible Classes – 7:00 pm

Our Elders

R.D. Hopper
 Norman Kemper

Our Deacons

Troy Hunter
 Kelly Kendall
 Tony Ramick

Our Preacher

Alex Hale

Conviction in Our Culture

by Alex Hale



Many in our society often praise the idea of free speech ... until someone comes along and offers a viewpoint that is different from their own. Others believe the philosophy, “Keep your opinions to yourselves.” Many people live their lives with the mentality that if you want to believe something, that is fine – just don’t try to share it with someone else. This view is particularly strong when it comes to issues of faith and scripture. Through the years, Dan Cathy, CEO of Chick-fil-A, has been maligned because of his personal beliefs regarding the biblical definition of marriage. Last week, gospel preacher and blogger Ken Weliever shared that within a week’s time, he had read of three stories about protests against the fast-food chain Chick-fil-A at three different locations – Toronto, Canada; Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana; and the University of Kansas in Lawrence.

Back in 2012, the then-mayors of Chicago and Boston, along with other major cities, publicly declared that Chick-fil-A would not be welcome in their cities. At that same time, Lisa Henson, CEO of the Jim Henson Company, announced that her company would stop providing Muppets toys for Chick-fil-A kids’ meals because of the company’s “anti-gay marriage” stance.



What did Dan Cathy say that caused so much controversy? In an interview with a religious publication, he answered a question about marriage and the family. Below is what he said.

We are very much supportive of the family – the biblical definition of the family unit. We are a family-owned business, a family-led business, and we are married to our first wives. We give God thanks for that.



Dan Cathy

When we see someone vilified in the public for expressing strong religious views, it can cause us to think twice about telling people what we believe. We should have enough courage and conviction to speak up, even if it means disagreement or rejection. Regardless of the response, we have a God-given responsibility to share our faith (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15). To help us in this area, let’s explore the biblical concept of a **conviction**.

A conviction is based upon a personal decision.

In Matthew 16:13-16, after Jesus asks a very personal question, Peter gives a very personal answer. Peter had seen Jesus perform many miracles. Peter had heard the teachings of Jesus. Based on the evidence, Peter was willing to personally take a stand by confessing, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*”

At that point, this confession was not in line with popular opinion. Most had a different answer about Jesus. The Pharisees believed He was under the power of the demons. Some thought he was a reincarnation of John, while others claimed that He was Elijah or another prophet. Unfortunately, many times (perhaps unknowingly), people form their beliefs based

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more on popular opinion than conviction. Francis Schaeffer calls this “51% morality.” As disciples, we must realize that many times, we will be in the minority (Matthew 7:13-14; Luke 6:26).

Many people base their standards upon someone else’s convictions. This could be called “piggybacking” on the spirituality of a family member or friend. When it comes to our faith, many of us have made decisions based upon our religious heritage. Note, however, what Jesus does not ask Peter. He does not ask, “Were your parents believers?” He does not ask, “What synagogue do you come from? Who is the rabbi there? Who are the elders there?” He asks, “*Who do you say that I am?*” This is the same question we must individually answer.

A conviction is revealed during times of pressure.

It is one thing to say that you believe in front of the disciples and Jesus; it is another thing to say it when the pressure is on.

- It is one thing to carry your Bible into the church house on Sunday; it is another thing to have it on your desk on Monday.
- It is one thing to bow your head and pray silently to yourself; it is another thing to ask your non-religious family members if you can pray together before a family meal.
- It is one thing to talk about the gospel during Bible class; it is another thing entirely to do it with your friends in the neighborhood who are not Christians.

We do not truly know what our convictions are until they are tested. In Acts 4, Peter and John had been speaking publicly about Jesus. They are told, in essence, “Don’t do it again.” The same people who had Jesus crucified are commanding Peter and John to keep their mouths shut!

Have you ever experienced something like this? The boss wants you to fudge on some numbers and your job is on the line. Your boyfriend says to you, “Hey, I love you. Come on. We’re going to get married anyway.” Your unbelieving spouse rolls their eyes at you when you tell them you are getting ready for church. On the first day of class, the science teacher mockingly says, “I hope no one in here believes in that Intelligent Design nonsense.”

What did Peter and John do? They kept speaking about Jesus! When the storms of life blow up, what do we do? When the tests come back positive from the doctor, do you really believe that God is in control or does that just sound nice? When you lose a job, do you really believe that God can provide? When you are overwhelmed with guilt because of a sin that you have committed, do you really believe that God can forgive your sins, or is that just something we say? When a loved one dies, do you really believe in the hope of heaven, or do we just like to sing about that in church songs?

A conviction is proved by how you live your life.

In Matthew 16, Peter says that he believes – this conviction is proven in places like Acts 4. For us, this can be a real challenge, because most of us know how to *say* the right things. However, this is not always indicative of our lifestyle. Gallup says this is an epidemic in our society, calling it “incongruent values.” This simply means that there are a lot of people saying they believe one thing but living a different way altogether.

- We say our family is important, but we skip our days off and never have time to read to our kids or go to their games.
- We say our health is important, but we do not exercise or eat right.
- We talk about how important it is to be financially sound, but we do not live within our means.
- We say the church is important, but if we miss services it is not that big of a deal to us.

A conviction does more than just say you believe something.

- A conviction does more than say, “Do not take the name of the Lord in vain” – a conviction changes the channel.
- A conviction does more than say, “Keep the Lord’s day holy” – a conviction comes to worship even when it is hard.
- A conviction does more than say, “Do not commit adultery” – a conviction looks away when lust is tempting.
- A conviction does more than say, “You shall not murder” – a conviction releases bitterness and forgives.
- A conviction does more than say, “We are committed to traditional marriage” – a conviction stays with his or her spouse and raises a family by God’s design.

Conclusion

As we close, I do not want you to think that you have to be perfect before you can speak up and share your convictions. Quite the opposite is true. People will respect you if they see that you are authentic – that you are honestly putting every effort into serving the Lord. Many people will respect you if you share your convictions with them. Some will not. However, we still have the responsibility. Peter was told to stop preaching the name of Jesus. We, too, have times in our lives when we can decide to be quiet instead of speaking the truth. Peter chose to speak in the face of those who could cause him great harm. He chose to speak in the face of those who would not agree. Will we have the courage to do the same? Will we have the conviction?

Readings for Week 38

- Habakkuk; 2 Corinthians 7
- Zephaniah; Psalm 74; 2 Cor 8
- Jeremiah 1-4; Psa 130;
2 Cor 9
- Jer 5-7; Psa 75; 2 Cor 10
- Jer 8-10; 2 Cor 11