

OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

Phil O. Waldo
Lead Pastor



1224 Hancock Drive
Boone, Iowa 50036

Phone: 515 432-3329

Website: www.booneopenbible.com
E-mail: office@booneopenbible.com
pastor@booneopenbible.com

SERMON TITLE Compelled by Conviction

SERIES

DATE 10/15/2023

KEY SCRIPTURE 2 Timothy 3:1-5; 2 Chronicles 7:14

SYNOPSIS Are you a Cultural Christian, a Congregational Christian, or a Convictional Christian?

HIGHLIGHTS



☞ **Compelled by Conviction**

The winds of our nation have changed drastically in my lifetime.

- **When I was a kid...** for church-goers, drinking alcohol was largely frowned upon. Today, many Christians don't even see drunkenness as a problem.
- **When I was a kid**, swearing was only used amongst the roughest crowds. Today, even for some Christians, it's almost an issue of pride to use the coarsest language.
- **When I was a kid**, it seemed everyone had some church affiliation and most attended at least occasionally. Today, more and more people have zero church background.

Now, you could hear all this and simply think, "boy, he's getting old." Well, ok. But, some may think of even more things that have changed. And, God told us in advance that this would happen:

☞ **2 Timothy 3:1-5**

But mark this: **There will be terrible times in the last days.** 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God- 5 **having a form of godliness but denying its power.**

A couple of weeks ago we talked about the three kinds of people in the Church: The Critic, the Consumer, and the Contributor. Critics and Consumers abound, but God is looking for Contributors; people who invest their time, talent and treasures into the Church, which is his bride.

Today I want to talk about three kinds of Christians in America. I'm not talking about differing denominations or those who call themselves Christian, but are actually part of a cult. I'm talking about people you would likely think of as Christian. Even amongst those, there are essentially three kinds, and it's beginning to make a big difference which kind of Christian you really are.

Ed Stetzer, from Wheaton College, came up with these three types and makes some predictions about Christians in America...

*The word "Christian" will become less used and more clear. The fact is that **not everyone who uses the word "Christian" is using it the same way.** (He identifies the three categories):*

☞ **Cultural Christians** are simply those who, when asked, say they are a Christian rather than atheist or Jewish.

☞ A **Congregational Christian** generally does not really have a deep commitment, but they will refer to themselves as Christians because they have some loose connection to a church.



☞ **Convictional Christians** are those people who self-identify as Christian and orient their life around their faith in Christ.

So, what's the trend? Well, first, the trend is that less people are calling themselves Christians and those who are will take it more seriously. In the future, the word Christian will mean more to Convictional Christians. However, it will mean less to those who were nominal Christians in the first place. Churches that are preaching the Gospel and are focusing on biblical truths are going to become more clearly distinct from the culture around them.

I already mentioned 2 Timothy 3:5... "having a form of godliness but denying its power," which fits two of these categories and is a warning for all of us. We want to be Convictional Christians, not just Cultural or Congregational Christians. Hopefully these descriptions don't describe you...

Isaiah 29:13

The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their **hearts are far from me.**

This verse describes people who say a lot of the right things, but don't really love or follow the Lord. Ezekiel 33:31-32 talks about people who actually listen to preachers and prophets, but don't put their faith into action. It even mentions how they appreciate the preacher as one who sings and plays an instrument, but they don't really do what he tells them to. Listen to what the Bible says about people like this...

Titus 1:16

They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

Do these verses describe you? You might say, "I believe in Jesus; I know God; I love the Lord." Most hearing me today would agree with those statements. But do your actions align with that? Do your actions prove that you are a Convictional Christian? One who centers their life around ☞ the Lord? **Does God have first place in your life, or does he just get the leftovers?** Merely believing is less than God wants from you. He wants your actions to go along with your faith...

James 2:18-24

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. 19 You believe that there is one God. Good! **Even the demons believe** that — and shudder. 20 You foolish man, do you want evidence that **faith without deeds is useless**? 21 Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? 22 You see that his **faith and his actions were working together**, and his faith was made complete by what he did. 23 And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. 24 You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.



☞ **Are your faith and your actions in alignment?** It's been said, "Show me your calendar and your checkbook and I'll know what is most important to you." What would those things say about your priorities?

If you're perfectly honest, you may have to admit that you're not really a Convictional Christian, but rather are a Cultural Christian or a Congregational Christian. God wants us to be Convictional Christians, whose lives are centered around him; whose choices consistently give him priority over everything else. Perhaps you have to admit you're not a Convictional Christian, but maybe you are *feeling some conviction* from this message. That's a good thing! Pain and discomfort are no fun, but they are indicators of life. It's when you don't feel anything at all that there's a serious problem. If you are feeling some conviction, then hear the Word of the Lord...

☞ **2 Chronicles 7:14**

if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

"Called by my name": If you are a Convictional Christian, then you will want to be more like Jesus. You will put God first in all of your life. You will embrace humility, and pray and seek the face of God. If you are a Convictional Christian, then you will turn from your wicked ways. You won't be content with being morally superior to the masses. Instead, you will see your own sin through God's eyes, and confess and repent.

And if even the small minority of Convictional Christians does these things it can make an incredible impact upon our world. Greg Surrat said that God is Gideonizing the Church. When God used Gideon to reduce the army of Israel, he turned that small number of soldiers into a great victory. Likewise, God says that when his people return to him, he will heal their land. If you've been one of those "nominal" Christians, it's time to get back to your roots.

Joel 2:12-14

"Even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning." **Render your heart** and not your garments. **Return to the Lord** your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and **he relents** from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing.

I saw a cartoon this week that said, "It doesn't matter what you've done, God just wants you to come home." He wants you to return and give him priority in everything.

☞ **Paul E. Chapman 5 Ways to Put God First**

The world, the flesh and the devil will conspire together to keep God low on your list of priorities. You must fight for Him. Let me be clear. The Bible doesn't mean you should SAY that God is first in your life. It means to LIVE with God first. Lip service only deceives self. Your love for God is proven by your actions.



How do we put God first? What does that life look like?

1. ☞ Give God the First Hour of the Day.

Psalms 63:1

O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you...

Some translations say, “early I seek you,” and for good reason. It is closely related to the Hebrew for “dawn.” Whether it’s translated “earnestly” or “early,” it speaks of priority. Jesus practiced seeking the Lord in the morning. When you spend time alone with God, you center your mind, heart and soul around him. Your inward man is renewed and grace is given for the day ahead. Give God the first hour of the day.

2. ☞ Give God the First Day of the Week.

Hebrews 10:25

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Sunday is called “The Lord’s Day” for a reason. It is not your personal day of rest and recreation. It belongs to Him. We worship on the day of His resurrection to start the week with God and live the rest of the week in His power. Build your life around God’s family. In the early days of the church, from Acts, they actually met on a daily basis. Give God the first day of the week.

3. ☞ Give God the First Consideration in Every Decision.

Proverbs 3:5-6 NLT

5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. 6 Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.

Pray with a submissive spirit and ask God what He wants you to do. Then do it. Stop making decisions with no thought of God. Stop trying to figure it all out yourself. Trust God. Give God the first consideration in your decisions.

4. ☞ Give God the First Portion of your Pay.

Proverbs 3:9-10 NLT

9 Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the best part of everything you produce. 10 Then he will fill your barns with grain, and your vats will overflow with good wine.

Giving financially to God first is not just an OT Law; Jesus spoke of it in Matthew 23:23. There, he acknowledges that justice, mercy and faith are very important, but so is giving God a tenth of your income. Giving is actually a test. God doesn’t need your money. He wants your heart, and there are few things that people value more than money. Do you love God more than money and things? Your tithing record is the answer. Give him the first portion of your pay.

5. ☞ Give God First Place in your Heart.

Matthew 22:37




'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'

This is the purest measure of God's place in your life. Are you living in happy submission to the Lord? Would you go anywhere and do anything that He asked of you? Does He have first place in every area of your life? Too many have given first place to a job, a person, a cause, a pleasure, a sport, a dream. You are robbing yourself of life's most fulfilling purpose – to live for God. Give him first place in your heart.

Billy Graham... "When we come to Christ, we're no longer the most important person in the world to us; Christ is. Instead of living only for ourselves, we have a higher goal: to live for Jesus."

Francis Chan... "Following Christ isn't something that can be done halfheartedly or on the side. It is not a label we can display when it is useful. It must be central to everything we do and are."

Perhaps God was first in your life at some point, but that is no longer true. You have placed something or someone else on the throne of your heart. Other priorities crept in. The deceitfulness of sin seduced you.

Have you put God on the back-burner? Have you lost your convictions? You can change that  today. **Repent** and make God first in your life again today. **Return to your first Love!**

Revelation 2:4-5

4 Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. 5 Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.

I don't want to be a Christian in name only. I want to be a Convictional Christian, and I want the same for you, too. Let's be compelled by conviction.

Prayer time.