

Reviewing Personal Convictions before Crises

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In times of crisis some deep-seated beliefs are tested and/or shattered. Reflecting on our beliefs in God's presence, before crises, help us establish our foundations so we can endure the inevitable and unavoidable storms of life (Matthew 7:24-27; Luke 6:47-49).

We need to examine our convictions. They will be severely tested in time of crisis. Consider the following questions for yourself.

- 1. Convictions about God.** What do I believe when faced with famine, great loss, injustice, disaster, tragedy? God is not behaving the way I thought He would. He is unpredictable. What do I believe about God, His character, His relevance and care? What do I believe about prayer? What about God's power and ability and willingness to intervene on my behalf? What about His promises to deliver, provide and protect? What sustains me when I have no answers?
- 2. Convictions about the way life works.** For example, we might believe that: Life should be fair. People should be trustworthy. God should answer prayer quickly. Goodness will be rewarded. Evil will be punished. But, when these things are not so, what then? What do I believe about living in a fallen world as a believer engaged in ministry that challenges the powers of darkness?
- 3. Convictions about myself.** I may believe that normally, I am a good, patient, kind and reasonable person. I am usually brave and resilient. I can handle hardship, most suffering, and considerable deprivation. But, how then do I explain it when I am angry, resentful, self-pitying, demanding, fearful, and suspicious? How have I handled suffering that is caused by others and not circumstances? How has my emotional reaction either reduced or enhanced suffering of others or myself?
- 4. Convictions about people.** Some of my convictions might be: My good friends won't let me down. They will stand up for me when I am slandered or misrepresented. People can generally be trusted. They will keep their word if they possibly can. But, when we are let down by others, what do we do? Do we stop trusting anyone? What should we do? What are our deep-seated convictions about being part of a body? Do we consider trust, love, cooperation and community to be a nourishing part of life? How do I account for the frailty and weakness of people, as well as my own?
- 5. Convictions I hold about growth and maturity, the value of suffering and pain.** I might believe that: The normal events of life are sufficient to help us grow to be like Jesus. Surely the stress and pressure of the workplace is enough to develop Christ likeness! So, how then will I interpret injustice, the feeling that God is absent or unjust or the sudden loss of a loved one? Am I ready to endure? Am I committed for the long term even if it means suffering?
- 6. Convictions I have about emotions or the process of healing.** Do I believe that emotions are God-given and should be expressed appropriately for healing to take place? How have I allowed myself to express my emotions to God, others and myself in the face of suffering? How

has that contributed or not contributed to my healing process? Or, do I believe that showing emotions is a sign of weakness? How comfortable am I in allowing others express their emotions such as despair, sorrow and anger?

Some of these verses might be helpful to you in continuing to develop your theology of suffering, persecution, and growth: Hab. 3:17-19; Dan 2:16-18/ the book of Job, many of the Psalms; Matthew. 7:24-27; John 16:33; II Cor. 4:7-9; II Cor. 11:23-29; Phil. 1:29; II Tim. 3:10-12.