

Episode 004

The Leaders' Convictions (Part 2)

Dangers of Unbalanced Convictions

Introduction

Welcome again to my leadership podcast, we are talking about the leaders' convictions. In Part 1 we talked about the types of convictions. We will now talk about the dangers of unbalanced convictions. This is a crucial area because it explains why someone can have great deep godly convictions only to fall in areas of a weak conviction.

We have seen sad situations where great leaders fall from grace. In recent years, we have seen Bill Hybels who was a powerful advocate of the local church and its innovative reach to the lost, fell due to his questionable behaviour around some women. Carl Lentz, the celebrity Hillsong New York pastor unravelled with an ex-marital affair. Ravi Zacharias, famous Christian apologist held in high esteem shockingly was posthumously proven to be a womaniser and adulterer. And these will not be the last.

In reality, there would be other Christian leaders at all levels who would be found to be with similar issues. But it is often the great or well-known leaders that shock us. Why does this happen? Were they not those with great, even godly convictions? Surely if they have been used so greatly by God?

Let me suggest that one of the key reasons is due to the unbalanced convictions that they had. These famous leaders certainly had strong convictions about the mission God gave them. These strong convictions carried them through the many challenges of ministry to succeed as they did. Yet at the same time, they had significant areas of weak convictions. Areas which eventually led to their downfall. In Part 1, I spoke about the various types of convictions. In Part 2, we look at how the range of such convictions can exist in an individual in an unbalanced way.



Let me unpack some key factors leading to such imbalances in their convictions. And the lessons we need to learn.

1. The Illusion

An illusion of a person's ministry and supposed character can be created when our focus is only on the positive outcomes and impacts. When we focus on their strong convictions and ignore their weak convictions. It is easy for the weak convictions to be hidden in the shadow of the strong convictions. After all, people are often drawn to the strong convictions and its results and fail to notice the weak convictions. Or excuse it.

It is normal for such illusions to occur because our brain is even hardwired to notice the brighter colours more than the muted in a picture. The emotional highlights more than the mundane. The impacting statements more than the ordinary. It takes a particular melancholic bent, a discipline even to gain a more balanced picture.

It is perhaps understandable that we would parade our strongest strengths rather than our weaknesses. Some of our weaker areas are perhaps embarrassing or deserving of a more subtle treatment, out of polite courtesy. In fact, some of our weaker areas may be best kept in the shadows, not out of an attempt to deceive but simply not to frustrate others. If I was to be made a worship leader, I would simply drive the entire team crazy as I have no talent in that area.

The greatest danger is when we ourselves believe the illusion because of success due to our strong convictions, thinking we are fine despite our weak even fragile convictions in other areas. Choosing perhaps to listen only to our fans. As Christian leaders, we must be self-aware enough, sensitive enough to the prompts of the Holy Spirit, to recognise where our significant weaknesses lie. That way, we can be thankful to God for His blessing us with successes and grateful to God for His mercies over our weaknesses.



When we look at how Scriptures records it leaders, it is not afraid to record their strengths and weaknesses, their successes and failures. God sees us warts and all. God sees through every illusion. Yet He patiently works with us and often grants us opportunities beyond what we deserve.

2. The Rise of Imbalance

We live in a world where strong convictions and strong outcomes are rewarded. While often weak convictions are hidden and ignored. Consequently, our inclinations are for stronger convictions to be fed and nurtured while the weak convictions are neglected and starved. Stronger convictions grow stronger. Weaker convictions are further weakened. Furthermore, the pressure also often increases to work on areas of strength to produce outcomes which leaves little energy or time left to address the areas of weakness.

This results in increasing imbalance between the strong convictions and the weak convictions. Imagine the famous Popeye the sailor with huge, oversized muscles in his lower arms while normal everywhere else. That can happen to our character too where we become a caricature of ourselves. It is not sustainable. Alpha male leaders are particularly susceptible to this because they are stimulated by the rush of adrenaline.

The areas of weak convictions may become areas of sinful indulgence. Certainly, the Enemy will attempt to entice us. Areas excused because the rest of our live and ministry seems to be successful, anointed, blessed.

King David was a man with great strengths and convictions. As king, he led Israel excellently. Yet his one major weakness was women. He had about 7 wives (as there is some uncertainty of the exact number) and possibly many more concubines. It was this weakness that led to his plan to have Uriah die in battle so that he could marry Bathsheba. David's strong conviction covered over his weaknesses, which eventually led to this fatal course of action.



Eventually, our areas of weak conviction may destroy the good work achieved in areas of strong conviction.

Nobody's convictions can be at the same level in all areas. Nor should it be. Balance does not mean equal. But imbalance means the weak convictions are undermining the strong convictions. Imbalance means the stability of your life and ministry is off-centre.

3. Tipping Over the Precipice

With increasing imbalance between our strong and weak convictions, the danger of tipping over the precipice increases. Because the stresses of continuing in our strong convictions invariably overflow into our weak areas. For while our strong areas can carry a lot more stress, the same is not true of our weak areas. Yet we tend to think we can cope with more because we tend to measure according to our strong areas. Or because the expectation is to deliver more as per our strong areas. It is said that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. It is the same of our character.

The prophet Elijah was a mighty man of God. Who overcame the 500 prophets of Baal in a spiritual battle at Mount Carmel that easily dwarfs the battle between David and Goliath. Elijah was in his element, a vessel for the miraculous power of God. He appeared invincible! Until Queen Jezebel threatened his life. Suddenly, Elijah crumbled! He had stepped over the precipice. His emotional strength and convictions of God's protection was simply not up to the strain of on-going battles on several major fronts.

How do you know you are near the precipice? Because the feeling of strain is heightened and stays with you longer. It takes much longer to recover. You are beginning to experience more times when you feel like your legs give out. You give in to your areas of indulgence more. These are danger signs.



4. The Remedy to Imbalance

Here are a few quick tips to begin to remedy the imbalance of convictions. Quick tips do not mean the solutions are quick. It will take time and intentionality to address areas of weak convictions.

- Recognise the importance of balance. Until we get it, we will not get to it. For it is likely to be hard work to deal with those areas of weak convictions.
- Recognise the specific areas of weak convictions. The more specific we can be, the better to deal with it. When we have a problem with our car engine, the mechanic does not change the whole engine. He works out the specific problem and deals with that part. Get help, professional help if necessary, to identify those areas.
- Listen attentively to the Holy Spirit. He is the Counsellor. He often pinpoints the areas of concern. The issue is how well we listen to Him.
- Listen to people around us who are close enough to see our cracks. Pay attention to their observations and what they are trying to say to us. Don't shut them down.
- Have those whom we can be accountable to. People feel empowered to speak into our lives when we give them permission.
- Work to strengthen your weak convictions that were identified. Some weak convictions are easier to work on than others. Some areas may need external help. Get to it. It may well save your life and ministry from imploding one day.

Conclusion

Many leaders build their life and ministry on their areas of strong convictions. But neglect their areas of weak convictions. Unless we address the imbalance, it will eventually lead to our downfall. It is time to recognise the importance of balance and address your weak areas. It is better to deal with it now, especially when it is not yet a major issue. By the grace of God it can be strengthened.



Discussion Questions

These questions could be done personally or as part of a group discussion.

1. Is it possible that you may have some major weak convictions that are hidden behind your strong convictions? What would a few of them be? Would you invite people around you to give input?
2. Is it possible that you have invested so much time and energy to improve areas of strong convictions but neglected areas of weak convictions?
3. Are you feeling the danger signs of strain or imbalance in your convictions? Can you describe these?

Actionable Steps

Following questions are to prompt us on suitable actions. Importantly, come up with steps you will take to make progress. Give them datelines and priority.

1. What specific actionable steps can you take to identify some of these weak convictions that have been hidden?
2. What specific actionable steps can you take to remedy the imbalance of convictions in your life?





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