

## Conviction: The practice of Belief and Doubt

Have you ever considered that your beliefs may change over time? What was once true-deeply true, may no longer be. Have you felt such conviction about something that you were willing to fight for it? Speak up against popular belief? Stand alone? Todd Stocker says "Internal conviction drives external action." Conviction can be felt differently; often described on emotional, physical and spiritual levels.

Can there be belief when there is no proof? In the absence of real, hold in your hand, smell, taste, touch and see with your own eyes kind of proof, does doubt then make a home for itself? Doubt can feel like a puncture or injury to our beliefs, it can feel bewildering, surprising, frustrating, quizzical, even alarming. As Unitarian Universalists, our faith teaches us to make room for both belief and doubt. Our congregation offers a spiritual sanctuary that is unique in its' openness to contemplating these larger issues of belief and doubt. Do your convictions leave room for mine? Do they foster a deeper dialogue and increased communication or do they limit our relationship? Beliefs can often be created out of stories we are told as children, tales of right from wrong, tradition, myth turned fact. They are also created out of the beautiful, harsh, raw, real, life experiences one gathers as they grow into who they are, who they want to be or who they are struggling to be.

In the coming month, as you transition back to school routines, alarm clocks, soccer games and cooler-shorter days and you reflect on these important concepts and questions, we offer readings, quotes and additional questions for further inquiry and larger discussion. Nathan, Heather and The Worship Associates welcome you back again, or for the first time, with full hearts.

Questions for discussion and discernment on your own, around the table, or with each other:

What's the difference between conviction and obligation?

How do faith, doubt and belief limit or support relationships?

Think of a time when you felt deep conviction, what was your conviction? Did it come with a cost? A reward?

How do you share/explain your beliefs with those most important to you? (partner, children, closest friends, minister etc.)

What keeps you connected and grounded when you're feeling doubt?

Quotes:

“The relationship between commitment and doubt is by no means an antagonistic one. Commitment is healthiest when it is not without doubt, but in spite of doubt.”

— [Rollo May, \*The Courage to Create\*](#)

“How convinced are you that man was created in the image of God when you can't see the image of God?”

— [Michael Bassey Johnson, \*Classic Quotations From The Otherworlds\*](#)

“People don't follow words; they follow conviction and without conviction the words are meaningless.”

— [Jennifer Ott, \*Serendipidus\*](#)

It is also our practice, to share brief testimonials from Worship Associates related to the monthly theme:

In high school, my friend Beth knew she was going to be a veterinarian. I don't know how she knew, but her conviction was unwavering and everything she did had that end in mind. I have an uncomfortable relationship with conviction; it just doesn't resonate with me. I have flitted from life's purpose to life's purpose much as a honeybee in flower garden. To stay focused on my most recently discovered life's purpose, I have created reminders all around me; posters, bookmarks, wallpaper on my phone and computers. Is that conviction? Is the fact that I am aware of my own fickle nature a crack in my faith? I wonder if Beth, now a well-regarded vet, did similar things?

-Julien

This summer I have had a significant shift in my belief system, and it all started when I learned to let go and trust in the Universe, God, my higher power, my soul force. The key for me has been letting go of trying to control and being open to the Divine. I believe life is a mix of fate, free will, and mystery that can never be fully understood. I believe the soul is a wondrous spark of divinity, connecting us to transcendence. Previously I had these beliefs, but perhaps not strong enough conviction to enable me to live this way on a daily basis. Now I have a daily practice that keeps my mind positive and receptive. My beliefs have transformed into strong convictions, faith in something intangible, a strong force that is working in response to my actions, my beliefs. My life has had a radical shift now that I believe I am a conduit for what wishes to happen, rather than the one making it all occur. The shift in my consciousness has been unbelievably expansive for me. I respect that many may doubt my beliefs, but truthfully I have a strong conviction and am so happy about my belief in letting the Divine take the lead, I feel inspired to share! ~Alex Businger

I'm nine years old and I'm playing at my childhood friend, Abby's house. I overhear her mom talking to her dad about the day she has had. I remember so clearly, beyond the explanation of how she helped a family that day, she had a look in her eyes and a smile that met that look. I kept listening, intently. Wanting to know what it was that had a person looking and feeling this way about a job. It wasn't until I discovered that she was a social worker and learned everything I could about what she did, that I

realized it wasn't a job at all. From that day forward, I have never looked back. I knew with certain and unwavering conviction, that being a social worker was what I was called to do. –Carly Baker