



# **All in Good Conscience, Part 1**

## **Conscience:**

### **What is It & Why in the World Does it Matter?**

#### **1 Corinthians 8-10**

If you have a Bible—and I hope you or somebody around you does—let me invite you to open it to 1 Corinthians 8.

As you're turning, I want to remind all of us about Secret Church coming up this Friday night. If you've never been a part of Secret Church or don't even know what it is, it's a simulcast that is indeed not a secret. It has about 50,000 people around the world who will tune in, from every state in the United States, from countries like Peru, Zambia, Cambodia, Indonesia and many others. The whole idea is based on Christians around the world who have to meet in secret at the risk of their lives. When they do, as I've learned from my experiences in those underground settings, they make the most of that time.

So Secret Church is a six-hour intensive study in God's Word with concentrated prayer for the persecuted church. It's just a really unique time. I would encourage you to be part of it this Friday night. You can be part of it from your home, on your own or with your family or your group. Just go to [secretchurch.org](http://secretchurch.org) to find information about how to do that.

Personally and pastorally, I want to encourage you to be a part of this Secret Church because of the topic we're covering and that I'm convinced is essential for every Christian, specifically for every member of McLean Bible Church. We're going to be talking about the Great Commission and the Great Imbalance, and how we are unknowingly working against what Jesus has called us to do in the Great Commission. We're missing the purpose of God for our lives, our families and for the church as a whole. I can't overstate how important what we're diving into Friday night is. So to the extent to which you are able, I encourage you to be a part of it.

With that said, even talking about Secret Church is a good lead-in to our time together today. If you've ever been to Secret Church, you know that we cover a lot of biblical ground in a relatively small amount of time. It's like "open mouth, insert fire hose" with biblical content. I would say that our time today in God's Word is going to be a bit like that, as we start a new journey through 1 Corinthians 8-10, in a series we're calling "All In Good Conscience." Before Easter, we finished a series through 1 Corinthians 6 and 7 on "Sexuality, Singleness and Marriage." Now we're moving into the next part of 1 Corinthians,

where we see the word “conscience” referred to eight different times, which is almost half the times this word is used in the entire Bible. This means these three chapters in 1 Corinthians are critical to understanding what God says about our conscience.

Now, this is a word and a concept I’m not sure we totally understand in light of what it is and why it’s important. What I want to do today is show you what the Bible as a whole teaches about the conscience. We’ll be all over the place, looking at different passages in God’s Word. Then starting next week, we will walk verse by verse through 1 Corinthians 8 and 9 and 10 in a way that I hope helps all of us, whether you’ve been a Christian for decades, or you’re exploring Christianity, or anywhere in between. It will help all of us—adults, seniors, kids—to see what our conscience is and why our conscience matters.

I actually want to start with the second part, why our conscience matters, because I’m guessing some of you might be thinking right now, “Wow, a series on conscience. This is amazing, if you like weird-sounding words like ‘con-science.’ What does that even mean? Are we in Disneyworld with Pinocchio here? This is awesome. I’m so glad I’m here today. Can’t wait to come back next week.”

I sense a lack of excitement here, but I want to submit to you that you actually should be really excited about this series. As we walk through all these verses, I’m going to show you that a good clean conscience is critical to your life. Let me start by showing how this is true in at least five ways.

## **1. A good clean conscience is critical to intimacy with God.**

In Hebrews 10:22 we read, “*Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience.*” Do you see that? If you want to draw near to God, then you need a clean conscience. Obviously, you won’t experience intimacy with and closeness to God if your conscience is ignoring God. But you also won’t experience intimacy with God if your conscience is constantly plagued with guilt before God.

I believe many Christians listening to me right now, even really mature Christians, lack intimacy and closeness with God, because they often feel a low-level sense of guilt before God. For some of you, this is for things that happened a long time ago in your life. For others of you, this comes from a constant feeling that you aren’t measuring up to all God wants you to be, that He’s never satisfied with you. As a result, you’re missing out on the intimacy, the closeness and nearness that God has designed for your life.

## **2. A good clean conscience is critical to success in life.**

A biblical understanding of conscience is critical to success in life. I would define success here as peace, joy, happiness and a full, abundant life—the kind of life that only comes from intimacy with God. I’m not talking about success in terms of achieving a certain position or making a certain amount of money. All kinds of people achieve a certain position or make money in ways that make you wonder if they have any conscience at all. In the end, their position or their possessions don’t lead to lasting peace,

joy, happiness and the full life they were hoping for, because achievement and money can't produce those things, but a good clean conscience before God can.

A good conscience means being able to say what Paul said in Acts 23:1: “...*I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day.*” Paul is saying this from prison—hardly a picture of prosperity in this world. But he has a peace, joy, contentment, happiness and fullness of life that nothing in this world can take away. Don't you want that? A good clean conscience before God is critical to that.

### **3. A good clean conscience is critical to unity in the church.**

We're going to see this more next week in 1 Corinthians 8 when we look at how various Christians in Corinth had differences of conscience. They needed to learn how to love one another amidst those differences.

I look around right now at all the places where we're gathered and know all of our consciences are calibrated differently. We have different views on eating and exercise, on medicine and dare I mention vaccines? We have different philosophies on dating and courtship, on parenting or discipline of children.

I was in a conversation this last week with a group leader talking about how the different parenting philosophies in their group are causing some real problems when they get together. Some parents are thinking, “Why do those parents not rein in their wild kids?” Other parents are thinking, “Why don't those parents let their kids do anything fun?” They have different approaches. There are so many different issues. Alcohol. Cigars. Debt. Schooling of children—public, private or homeschool. Whether you go to this party or that party, or no party. Certain fashion trends. Entertainment. Politics. All of these things are related to our conscience.

The reality is we live in a part of the world where we have options when it comes to church, which means we can find a church where we don't have to deal with uncomfortable differences of conscience with other Christians. When we face disagreements on matters of conscience, we can just find another church where people look or think more like us. But the Christians in Corinth didn't have that option. It was a mess. It was hard. If you go back to chapter one, there was a lot of disunity in this church. But God in His Word is calling them together to a Kingdom and to a cause that's much bigger than their individual preferences or convictions on matters of conscience.

### **4. A good clean conscience is critical to mission in the world.**

God was calling them to unity around something much deeper and much more wonderful: the gospel and God's Word and the Great Commission. We'll talk about this more when we get to 1 Corinthians 9. But here Paul, who is writing 1 Corinthians, tells us that he's willing to completely recalibrate his conscience—to the extent God's Word allows it—and totally relinquish his rights in order to reach more people with the gospel.

J.D. Crowley who was a missionary in Cambodia wrote an excellent book with Andy Naselli on the conscience that I would highly recommend. You'll actually see a lot of the truths we're walking through in God's Word today in that book. J.D. tells about planting a mango tree in his yard. It wasn't going very well and only produced about three mangos in the first year it was supposed to bear fruit. But he didn't even get to eat those three mangos, because a Cambodian man who was working near him passed through his yard one day, took his mangos and ate them.

J.D. immediately thought, "The man has no conscience, no sense of right and wrong—stealing mangos from my yard." Then he realized in most parts of the world, it's not theft when you're passing through somebody's property or field to pick a handful of fruit. Just as long as you don't do any serious harvesting, it's normal. This is a right picture of people's willingness to share food with each other. What was actually wrong in this scenario was J.D.'s stinginess in not wanting to share any of his mangos. That was just one example of him needing to recalibrate his conscience and to live and love others accordingly.

Just think if you'd gone into Cambodia and started preaching, "You sinners, stealing each other's mangos and fruit. You need to repent!" In reality, he was the one who needed to humble himself and recalibrate his conscience to be more willing to share. It's a small example, but it represents a big issue. If we're going to reach the nations with the gospel, we have to be able to distinguish between the truths of God's Word and matters of conscience. We need to learn how to love and live with others accordingly. I'm concerned that if we can't even love other Christians in the church amidst differences of conscience, how will we ever love and lay down our lives for people in the world without Christ? There will be more to come in 1 Corinthians 9 along these lines.

## **5. A good clean conscience is critical to living and dying for what matters most in this world.**

That's a big statement and I want to draw on church history to back it up. Five hundred years ago today, April 18, 1521, Martin Luther was brought before the Diet of Worms, where leaders from the Roman Catholic church demanded that he recant his teachings from the Bible that salvation from sin is by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone, not through our works. That was different from what the Roman Catholic church was teaching—and still teaches today. They were threatening to arrest, imprison and potentially even execute him.

Five hundred years ago today, Martin Luther stood in front of those leaders, at the risk of his life, and said these words: "My conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me." That's quite a statement, isn't it? It shows the importance of conscience. A good clean conscience is worth living and dying for.

Now, the Reformation may seem distant to us, but let me ask a couple questions that seem closer to us. What if our government one day declares that affirming what God's Word says about marriage and

sexuality—which we talked about in our last series—is hate speech and that offenders will go to prison? Will you, will we, still declare God’s Word?

Or what if you were required in your line of work to go against your conscience and the teachings of God’s Word or else lose your job? What will you choose—your job, or a good clean conscience?

Teenagers, what if your friends or teachers ask you what you believe about Jesus and the Bible on an issue that’s very unpopular? Would you share the gospel and stand on the truths of the Bible, even if it means losing your reputation?

This is why I would say that knowing what God’s Word teaches about the conscience is extremely valuable for our lives. Our consciences affect small and big decisions that we make every day in our lives. For many Christians around the world, these are decisions that could lead to death. It would be a shame, though, wouldn’t it, to lose your job or your reputation or go to prison or die because you were acting out of a misguided or misinformed conscience?

To put all this together, I’d say this series is going to be really valuable, looking at intimacy with God, success in life, unity in the church, mission in the world, living and dying for what matters most.

Now, here’s the deal. We’ve been using this word “conscience,” but we’ve not explicitly defined what that word means. So let me give you a definition of conscience, then I’ll show you where it comes from in God’s Word. Conscience is your sense of what you believe is right and wrong. In order to unpack that, let’s read through the eight times we see “conscience” in 1 Corinthians. We’ll start in 1 Corinthians 8:7, then we’ll start to put all this together.

*<sup>7</sup> However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. <sup>8</sup> Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. <sup>9</sup> But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. <sup>10</sup> For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol’s temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? <sup>11</sup> And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. <sup>12</sup> Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. <sup>13</sup> Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.*

We’re going to talk more about the context and what’s going on with eating meat, food, idols and all that’s going on in this passage. But let’s just keep listening to how the Bible talks about conscience. Flip over to 1 Corinthians 10. These three chapters start in chapter eight and now it ends in chapter ten, almost like bookends. We’ll start in verse 23:

*<sup>23</sup> “All things are lawful,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful,” but not all things build up. <sup>24</sup> Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor. <sup>25</sup> Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience.*

That’s an interesting phrase: “the ground of conscience.”

*<sup>26</sup> For “the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof.” <sup>27</sup> If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on*

*the ground of conscience.* <sup>28</sup> But if someone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience— <sup>29</sup> I do not mean your conscience, but his. For why should my liberty be determined by someone else’s conscience? <sup>30</sup> If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks?

Eight different times we see the word “conscience.” So what does God mean when He uses that term? What do we learn about conscience from God’s Word? Well, follow along.

### **Your conscience is personal.**

We see this in 1 Corinthians 8 where it talked about “their conscience” and “his conscience.” We just read in 1 Corinthians 10:29 where Paul says, “*I do not mean your conscience, but his.*” So conscience varies from person to person. No one person’s conscience is exactly the same as another person’s conscience.

I think of an email a couple in our church sent me recently describing their differences of conscience on a divisive issue and how they were learning to understand each other better than they ever have. Even in a relationship as close as marriage, consciences are not identical to someone else’s. I see husbands and wives nodding their heads right now. We know this. We know that no one’s conscience is exactly the same as someone else’s.

### **Your conscience is imperfect.**

This causes you to realize that your conscience is not just personal, it’s also imperfect. No one has it all right all the time—except for one. There’s only one Person Whose conscience has been perfectly calibrated to God’s definition of right and wrong. His name is Jesus and you are not Him. Your conscience, your sense of right and wrong, does not perfectly match God’s will. This means we all have room for growth and maturity in our conscience.

### **Your conscience can change.**

This leads to the reality that your conscience can change. Your sense of what is right and wrong can get better, or it can get worse. To use language from 1 Corinthians, it can get stronger or weaker. In 1 Timothy 1:5 Paul writes, “*The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.*” So in using this language, we aim for what? For a good conscience. We’re aiming for a conscience that aligns more and more and more with God’s will.

### **Your conscience needs calibration.**

Because we’re all sinners, we’re all prone to think and act according to our ways instead of God’s ways, so we need to continually calibrate our conscience—our understanding of right and wrong compared to God’s definition of right and wrong. When you hear “calibration,” think about a clock. If you’re setting

a clock, you want to calibrate it to what the actual time is, so you're not thinking it's one time when actually it's a totally different time. So we all need to calibrate our conscience in a few different ways.

First and foremost, we need to calibrate our conscience in alignment with God's Word. In His Word, God defines what is right and wrong, good and evil, helpful and hurtful—for our lives and for others' lives. This means the more we learn God's Word, the more our consciences can be calibrated in alignment with it and the better our consciences can become. You may have a clear conscience about lying or gossiping or looking at pornography, but your conscience is not good at that point, because it's out of alignment with God's Word. You need to recalibrate your conscience around the reality that all of these things are sins against God.

I mentioned Martin Luther earlier. Many of you know there were significant parts of his conscience, most notably his anti-Semitism, that were completely out of line with God's Word and extremely destructive. This is why we all need to start right here, in alignment with God's Word.

Then second, we need to calibrate our conscience in tune with God's Spirit, knowing there are many thoughts we have or decisions we make where we don't have a direct word from God in the Bible. Think of all the issues I mentioned earlier, like eating, exercise, medicine, vaccines, dating, marriage, parenting philosophies, children's schooling, teenage activities, entertainment choices and politics. All of these are issues where we have principles from God's Word to guide us, but we don't have exact words from God about how to think or what to do. This is why we have differences of conscience. It can be frustrating because we all want to follow God. But there is good news —God has not left us alone. In this effort to follow Him with a good clean conscience, God has given us His Holy Spirit to live in us, to guide and direct us, to give us wisdom and discernment, to calibrate our sense of right and wrong, and to give us a sense that “This is good” or “This is not good,” “This is wise,” or “This is unwise.”

We're also not alone in the sense that our conscience can be calibrated in a humble learning from and selfless love for other people. I think of the people in my life who have helped me see things I didn't see before and learn things I didn't know about regarding what was good or not good, wise or unwise. We all need this from others. It's part of what I love about being in a church family where not everybody looks and thinks exactly like me.

As we'll see more next week, we need to calibrate our consciences in selfless love for other people. In all of this, think of your conscience like a guide. Again, we're not talking about Pinocchio and Jiminy Cricket here. We're talking about a God-given guide to all the things we talked about earlier—intimacy with God, success in life, unity in the church, mission in the world, living and dying for what matters most, and ultimately living and dying for what brings God the most glory.

As we'll see, right after all this talk about conscience in 1 Corinthians 10:31, Paul writes, “*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*” We want consciences that are leading us to live for the glory of God. Likewise Hebrews 13:18 says, “*Pray for us, for we are sure that we*

*have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things.*” Your conscience is like a guide to acting honorably in everything.

Think about it this way. Looking forward, your conscience warns you before you do wrong and urges you to do right. Your conscience, by God’s grace, is the sense—hopefully driven by God’s Word and God’s Spirit—that says, “This would be good to think or desire or do,” or, “This would not be good to think or desire or do.” Then looking backward, your conscience convicts you when you’ve done wrong and commends you when you’ve done right.

Are we starting to see what a good gift our conscience is? Where would we be without this moral compass that God has given to us by His grace. If I’m about to think or desire or do something that is not good for me or not good for others, I want a reliable conscience that says, “Stop.” Or if I think, desire or do something that’s not good for me or good for others, then I want a reliable conscience that says, “You should not have done that.”

Every one of us needs a conscience that is a good guide and every one of us needs to realize that our conscience needs a guard against two things in particular. This comes straight from 1 Timothy 4:1-3 where Paul writes:

*Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.*

Based on this passage, we realize we need to guard our consciences against two things. First, we need to guard against insensitivity. The language here speaks of a “seared” conscience, which refers to people who have so ignored their God-given sense of right and wrong that they no longer pay any attention to it. It’s like they’ve lost their moral compass which is extremely dangerous. We never want to be insensitive to our conscience.

While we need to guard against insensitivity, at the same time we must guard our consciences against oversensitivity. The very next verse, verse three, talks about people in the church who are creating rules for the church that God had not given, like forbidding marriage and requiring abstinence from foods. It wasn’t good either for people to impose their conscience on others when God had not spoken on that particular issue. You or I may believe very strongly about school choice or politics or a host of other issues, but we must be very careful not to impose those matters of conscience on another Christian brother or sister unless God has spoken clearly on those things.

When we put all this together, I hope we’re seeing the importance in our lives and in the church of a biblical picture of conscience. Just to review, the conscience is your sense of what you believe is right and wrong that guides what you live and die for. It’s personal to you, it’s imperfect, it needs to grow in maturity by being more and more calibrated around God’s Word and God’s Spirit, through learning from and loving others.



Now, let's bring all of that to a head. That's a lot of information. I want to show you how Jesus uniquely relates to our conscience. This is the part I've been looking forward to most today. Two final truths.

### **Jesus is your only hope for a clean conscience.**

This is the gospel and it is the greatest news in all the world. I want to invite you, particularly if you're exploring Christianity, to listen very closely here.

Every one of us has been created by God with a sense of right and wrong written on our hearts. Good and evil are not arbitrary or accidental. Morality is by divine design. Every single one of us has turned aside from God to ourselves, from what God says is right and wrong to what we think is right and wrong; from what God says is good and evil to what we think is good and evil. We do this in the way we think and act. The Bible calls this turning from God "sin." Our sin separates us from God, so the result of our sin in this world is death—eventual physical death for all of us, then eternal spiritual death, experiencing separation from God forever and ever.

But the good news of the Bible is that God loves us and has not left us alone in this separation from Him. God has come to us in the person of Jesus, Who has done what no one else could ever do. He lived a life with no sin, completely perfect, unlike any of us. Then, even though He had no sin to pay a price and to die for, He chose to die on a cross to pay the price for the sins of anyone who would trust in Him. Three days later He rose from the grave in victory over sin and death.

Follow this. This is the greatest news in all the world. For those of you who have never trusted in Jesus, I have good news for you. Today, all of your guilt can be gone through faith in Jesus, if you will only trust in Jesus. I know of no other religion in the world that makes this astounding claim and it is true. When you turn from your sin and yourself, trusting in Jesus as Savior and Lord of your life, God Himself forgives you of all your sin. God knows everything you have done, but He wipes the whole slate clean, no matter what you have done. He wipes it all away the moment you place your faith in Jesus. All of your guilt is gone by God's grace.

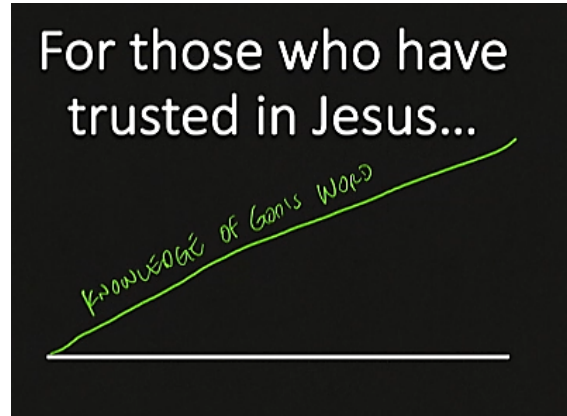
And not just that; as if that weren't enough. All of your guilt can be gone and all of God can be yours. You can be fully restored to relationship with God through faith in Jesus, completely restored to full, abundant life with God that will never, ever, ever end. Even when you die, you will live forever with Him. All of God!

If you've never placed your faith in Jesus, I urge you: let today be the day. Let this moment be the moment. Turn from your sin and trust in Jesus. Today, through faith in Him, He will wipe the slate of sin clean from your heart and will restore you to relationship with Him for all of eternity. That's the best news in all the world. God has brought some of you here today to hear this right now, so you might believe this and receive forgiveness and eternal life with God today.

So let's keep going. For those who have trusted in Jesus, please listen closely here. I mentioned earlier that there are many of you who, as Christians, are constantly plagued by guilt. Maybe you're haunted by sin from your past. Maybe you're constantly weighed down by sin that remains in the present, a besetting sin you still struggle with.

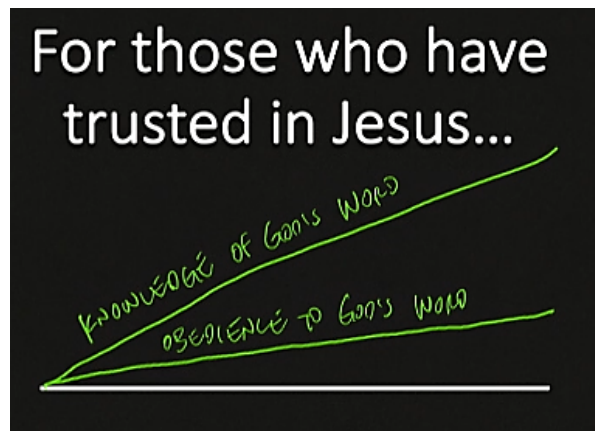
In their book on conscience, Crowley and Naselli use a picture I thought was so helpful. It looks something like this. They describe how as we grow in the Christian life, we learn more and more and more knowledge from God's Word. So picture this line as knowledge of God's Word. We're growing to understand more and more what God desires for our lives, what God calls us to experience life. The problem is, at the same time, our obedience to God's Word often just doesn't keep up at the same pace.

Particularly if we're in God's Word every day, learning God's Word, we're constantly seeing we have so much room to grow. We feel like we can never catch up. We still struggle with different besetting sins

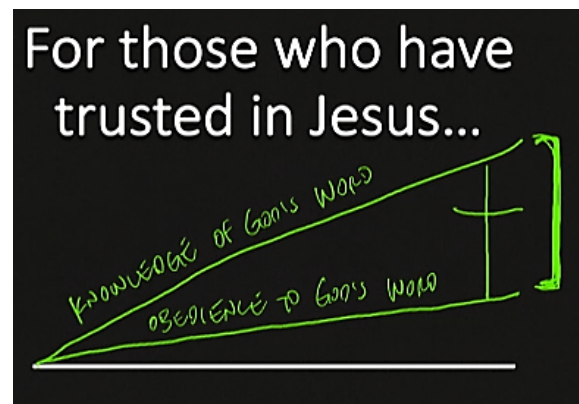


we have a particularly hard time with. This means there's this gap between what we know and how we want to live.

These authors used this picture to make the point that if we're not careful, this gap can be so burdensome, so heavy, so discouraging that we think, "I just can't keep up. I'll never get it. I'm never doing enough." We start thinking, "God is never pleased with me." I think this picture describes so many of our lives.



And it's at this point that they draw a cross right between the two lines to paint a clear picture and reminder that we all need every single day. God's pleasure in us is not based on our performance for Him; God's pleasure in us is based on Jesus' performance for us. He has died on the cross to cover over all our sin. His grace and mercy are sufficient to cover this gap in all our lives, which we all need.



We read in 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." He promises to forgive and cleanse us! So what do you do when your conscience and your inability to live up to God's Word constantly weighs you down? Well, number

one, 1 John 1:9 says you confess your sin continually. The whole point is right in that verse. We've studied this as a church family. We've memorized it.

What we don't need to do is deny our sin and pretend it isn't there, or defend and rationalize it. The Bible says, "Don't deny it and don't defend it." Instead, be honest with God about your sin. Confess your sin continually. I sin. You sin. We all sin. We all need to continually be honest before God and with each other. We struggle with sin.

So confess your sin continually, then as you do, trust God's grace completely. Trust God's grace to cover over your sinfulness. Look back at 1 John 1:9. It's really interesting, isn't it? If you confess your sins, God is faithful and just. Why does it use those two attributes of God? I would expect that verse to say, "If we confess our sins, God is gracious and merciful." That feels like it would be more comforting. When I do something wrong, I don't think, "I want to go before a judge who's faithful to the law."

Why is it comforting that God is faithful and just? Don't miss this. This goes back to trusting God's grace completely. When you trust in Jesus, you can know that God's faithfulness guarantees your forgiveness. God's faithfulness means that when you confess your sins, God will always, always, always be faithful to forgive you. You can bank your life on that. If God were to refuse to forgive you, He would be unfaithful to you, but He is not unfaithful. He is faithful.

So believe this, particularly when you are prone not to forgive yourself, or you don't believe you're forgiven. When the adversary tries to accuse you and beat you down for sin in your past or a besetting sin in your present, hold fast to this reality: God is faithful. He loves you and He forgives you completely.

Then a couple verses later in 1 John 2:1-2, the Bible says, *"But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world."* Did you hear that? Jesus is your Advocate. Jesus is for you. When you sin, know that Jesus is still for you. Feel that Jesus is for you. For all who have trusted in Him, He's for you.

Specifically, He's the propitiation for your sins. You're thinking, "What does that mean?" It's a word that describes how Jesus turns aside the judgment and condemnation we deserve for our sin. In other words, the entire price for your sin has already been paid. You don't need to live in a state of guilt and condemnation when God has said, "There is no more guilt. There is no condemnation for all who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

There is no more condemnation for believers. Why? Follow this. Because God's justice at the cross, poured out on Jesus, His Son, in love for you and me, makes possible complete cleansing of your conscience. Complete cleansing. No other religion or religious leader in the world makes possible a clean conscience before a perfect and holy God. This kind of conscience is yours by faith in Jesus, not through your works, but by trusting His love for you. Just trust in His love for you.

I got in the car this morning to come up here with a couple of my kids. My music playlist coming through the car was on “Random” but the first song that came on was not random. It’s a song I haven’t heard in a long time, by a friend of mine named Aaron Keyes, called “Not Guilty Anymore.” I just sat there listening to these words and thought, “I’ve got to share these today.” So I just want to read these words over you. For every single one of you who has trusted in Jesus, will you just hear and receive these words from God for you today? God is saying:

It doesn't matter what you've done  
It doesn't matter where you're coming from  
Doesn't matter where you've been  
Hear Me tell you I forgive

You're not guilty anymore  
You're not filthy anymore  
I love you, mercy is yours

You're not broken anymore  
You're not captive anymore  
I love you, mercy is yours

Can you believe that this is true  
Grace abundant I am giving you

Cleansing deeper than you know  
All was paid for long ago

There is now therefore no condemnation  
For those who are in Jesus

You are spotless  
You are holy  
You are faultless  
You are whole

You are righteous  
You are blameless  
You are pardoned  
You are Mine

You are not guilty anymore. Jesus is your only hope for a clean conscience. Believe that in Jesus you have a clean conscience by which you can draw near to intimacy with God. Jesus is the only way to a clean conscience.

### **Jesus is the only way to a good conscience.**

Then the final truth is that Jesus is the only way to a conscience that makes intimacy with God possible, success in life, unity in the church and mission in the world. Jesus is the only way to a good conscience that guides you to live and die for what matters most in this world.

Here’s how I want to close. Over the course of this series in 1 Corinthians 8-10, I want to give you at least six questions to ask to practically help as you make decisions on a daily basis—small things and big things—Lord willing, with a good clean conscience. I’m going to give you the first two questions today, then we’ll pick up with them next week. So here’s the first question we all need to ask if we want a good clean conscience.

#### **Number one, what does the Bible say about a particular decision, action, thought or desire?**

Wherever God has spoken clearly, you need to align our conscience with His Word. But then, on issues where the Bible is not clear on exactly what you need to do, you need to ask a second question. **Number two, what does my conscience say?** What do I sense, as best I can—based on God’s Word and God’s Spirit—that I should think or desire or do in this situation? The thing is, most people ignore the second

question—maybe both questions. Or most people stop with this question and think, “All right, I’m just going to do what seems right to me.”

I want to show you over the coming weeks that there are at least four other questions we need to ask if we’re actually going to live with a good clear clean conscience. So more on that next week.

As we bow our heads all across this room or wherever you are, I want to give some of you right now, before God, an opportunity to have all your guilt gone, to be restored to relationship with God right now for all eternity. If you do not know what it means to have a clean conscience before God, if you have not put your faith in Jesus in this way, I invite you right now—with your heads bowed and eyes closed—to say this to God in your heart: “God, I know I’ve sinned against You. I know that because of my sin I’m separated from You. But today I believe Jesus died on the cross for my sin, that He rose from the dead in victory over sin. Today I’m asking You: please forgive me of all my sin. Please wipe the slate clean in my heart and restore me to relationship with You. Today I trust in Jesus as the Savior and Lord of my life.”

If you pray that to Him, if you place your faith in Him in that way, right now the God of the universe wipes the slate clean of sin in your heart. By faith in Jesus, He restores your relationship with Him forever.

O God, we praise You for how this reality is playing out in hearts right now, how You are forgiving people of sin and drawing people to Yourself right now. All glory be to Your name for this grace. We pray, God, help us to live in this grace. Help us every single day to live grace-driven lives, not guilt-ridden lives. Help us trust Your love for us. Then out of the overflow of grace in our lives, God, we pray that You would calibrate our conscience according to Your Word and Your Spirit, according to what is good for our lives, for others’ lives and for Your glory in the world.

We pray that over the coming weeks You would teach us, grow us, mature us, individually and as a church, so we might have good clean consciences before You that are ultimately bringing great glory to You and ultimately leading us to live and die for what matters most in this world. Thank You so much for Your Word. Thank You so much for the gospel. In Jesus’ name we pray all these things. Amen.

**Permissions:** You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material provided that you do not alter it in any way, use the material in its entirety, and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. For web posting, a link to the media on our website is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved by Radical.

All Scriptures are quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

**Please include the following statement on any distributed copy:** By David Platt. © David Platt. Website: [Radical.net](http://Radical.net)