

Dr. Gary Meadors, Knowing God's Will,

Session 11, The Role of Conscience

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Welcome back to our lectures on Biblical Theology for Knowing God's Will. If you'll review the table of contents to get us back in the context here. We started out with the orientation and intro; then we talked about how discernment of God's Will is based in Scripture.

We did a little bit of an overview of how the Western Church, particularly with the Wesleyan Quadri Triangle, adjudicated things, particularly for the larger church, big issues involved. We talked about the Old Testament and the New Testament and saw a number of things there in relation to God's Will as sovereign and God's Will as moral, and that there is no such thing as searching for a personal will. The personal will is our relationship to Scripture, our relationship to God's teaching, and that's very personal for us, but it's not something we have to find.

It's something we are to do, and even the verbs in the Bible in these contexts are to do, not to find. Then we talked about discernment, which requires a worldview and values model because that's the normal way of making decisions. It is to take your issue and relate it to what you know about Scripture to ask yourself, is there a direct text in the Bible that answers my question, or do I have to look for implications of teaching, or do I go to the higher level of what we call creative constructs where we find our answers, and it's at that level that we find a great deal of diversity.

We have a number of different views within the church today about passages and about theological points, and that's something that each person has to work through within their own setting. Then the third part where we come now is what I call discernment, which requires understanding and addressing subjective issues. These are the most difficult for many because many live with an assumption that the little voices inside of them are God speaking to them, telling them what to do, and looking for some feelings of some kind to feel good, looking for peace, for example, and we'll talk about a number of these issues through the subjective challenges. We're going to start today with the role of conscience.

This is lecture number 11, which is GM number 11 in your notes. You've got several items in your notes this time. You have the lecture notes, which sort of outline conscience and decision-making.

I've included an article that I wrote for a dictionary, which is a nice narrative way to read about what we're going to be talking about, and I also gave you a database. I gave you the occurrences so you can see what I'm talking about. That'll take a little

more time for you, but I'm giving you a database so that you can do that homework on your own.

All right, so let's start talking about conscience and the New Testament. Now, there are a lot of stereotypes about conscience, and we'll mention a little bit about that. We're going to talk about the domain of conscience, just what it is, its definition, and a biblical focus on conscience.

I mentioned to you the article that you can read, which will help you, and the notes that you have in front of you—some stereotypes. Many times, people think that conscience is some sort of an internal audience room for the direct communication of other beings, perhaps God.

Some people will even blame the devil. The devil told me to do it, they say. There's a cute little saying: I just do what the little voices tell me to do.

Well, that's not a good approach to life because serial murderers do what the little voices tell them to do. And so, if we're going to follow God, we cannot let the invasion of our self-reflective capacity be equivalent to God. The only thing that we have is scripture.

When you hear these voices, that's yourself talking to yourself. It is an internal aspect, and it's part of what conscience does, and it's a God-given capacity created in God's image for self-reflection, and we'll talk about that in detail. Furthermore, some say conscience is a created capacity for self-reflection.

It is ourselves talking to ourselves, as I mentioned. It's an internal values speech, and I've mentioned to you before that you've got the worldview, and data is run through the worldview, and meaning comes out on the other side. Inside of your mind, you are constantly mauling things over.

Sometimes thoughts pop into your mind, and you'll say, well, maybe that's God talking to me, or maybe it is actually the God-given capacity for self-reflection that God gave you. And there are those déjà vu moments when we've studied something, and all of a sudden, we get it, and it comes to us clearly. We need to be able to ferret that out a little bit, but at the end of the day, nobody can prove the subjective things they claim.

The only thing we have that's solid is the correlation of our assertions with an understanding of God's teaching. So, conscience is a fascinating thing, isn't it? And we're only talking about the biblical pieces. Psychologists use conscience and talk about it; they have their own view of this kind of thing.

So, it pops up in lots of different ways. I want you to reflect on this, true or false. Let conscience be your guide.

Well, I hear that a lot. My conscience told me that this is okay, pastor, so you have to bow to me. In other words, people come into your office, and they will manipulate you with what they claim are these inner voices.

And you sit there knowing that that's not appropriate. And yet at the same time, how do you help them to get out of that kind of way of thinking? Let conscience be your guide is false. Conscience is not your guide.

Your worldview and your values are your guide. Conscience is a witness to those in the internal processing that you have to remind you that that's your worldview, that's your values. And yet, at the same time, we know from the Pauline situation that conscience can tell you what's okay when it's not.

So, conscience can't be your guide. Worldview and values are your guide. But conscience is a God-given internal complex that reminds you about the worldview and values.

You have to evaluate those. You have to be sure that your worldview and values are correct. Then, the conscience gets corrected over time.

Paul thought he was doing God a service when he killed Christians and when he persecuted Christians. At the same time, we know that Paul was going in the wrong direction. He was so convicted by his conscience that his values were right.

Jesus had to interrupt him on the road to Damascus and get his attention to be able to change the way that Paul was thinking. And when that transformed mind took place, Paul took a huge turn, as we well know. Was Luther the famous saying, it's neither right nor safe to go against one's conscience.

Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. Well, that was a great statement. It was a true statement because his conscience did convict him.

And Martin Luther's worldview and values happened to be right. And that's why he can make that kind of a statement. But the fact is that our worldview and values are the basis of our decisions, not our conscience.

Conscience is merely a self-reflective capacity. Conscience can only witness and underline that word witness. Witness is the key term.

And you'll see that when you look at the database. Witness is the key term to the meaning of conscience. And it's interesting that the conscience and the spirit are both imaged in the Bible under the concept of witness.

The spirit witnesses to the word, witnesses to our internal being that we know God is our father and that we are his children. There are a number of texts that talk about that. So, conscience can only witness what exists.

Conscience is not a lawgiver, but it is a witness to the law that you recognize and apply. Okay. Furthermore, conscience is the internal voice of self-reflection.

So, we use the word, and the Bible uses the word pretty much exclusively about conscience being a witness internal to us. It's not an audience room for God. It's not an audience room for the devil.

It is ourselves talking to ourselves from the standpoint of the worldview and value system that we recognize and apply. Conscience goes as the values go. If you are living according to your worldview and values, you'll feel good.

You'll have peace. And that's the right process. The problem is that we've got to be vigilant so that our worldview and values are correct.

Because if they're not correct, we will not be convicted. Why? Because conscience is only able to relate to that worldview and value system. You know, it's a sad thing as you go through life, and I think probably everyone has experienced this at one time or another.

There are Christians who can be very wicked. Not so much moral breach, but they can be very wicked in their relationships to other people. They can be manipulative.

They can be critical. They can be gossipers and feel good about it. Why? Because their worldview and values are messed up.

That's the point of the transformed mind. You've got to be transformed in your worldview and values, and your conscience then has something good to work with. And sometimes, it takes a while.

I gave you that story about billiards when I was young and playing pool and watching my uncles. And I learned that billiards were in a bad place. They were in a sinful bar, so to speak.

And when I saw, when I heard the billiards in that Christian servicemen's center and saw the pool tables, I thought to myself, this can't be Christian. But the problem was not the billiards. The problem was the context in which I understood it.

My conscience bothered me being there with those pool tables. Because why? Because I still had the worldview and values, that pool was wrong because of the context in which I had learned about it. But eventually, I came to realize that it wasn't the pool tables.

It was their context. It was where they were. It's how people were playing it, what they were doing when they were playing.

That's the relationship of worldview and values and your conscience. Your conscience witnesses to those things. So, if your worldview and values are faulty, you'll feel just fine.

Why? Because your conscience witnesses what you have recognized and applied in the appropriate way. As someone comes along and tells you your mind needs to be transformed better, you need to think deeper about this issue, and you change your mind. And all of a sudden, now the conscience has another thing to witness to.

And it's a transition. Sometimes, it takes a little while for the conscience to come around because it's so used to that worldview and complex values. All right.

The domain of conscience. It's an inner critical self-awareness. That's what conscience is.

Those thoughts you have in your mind are you talking to yourself. It is that process of conscience looking at worldview and values that causes you to be self-conscious, as you please, of the things that you believe in. It's an internal witness, and witnessing is the key.

It's a witness to the worldview and values. Furthermore, here's a little stick thing we've had so many times. The data comes in, it goes through the grid of your worldview and values, and conscience checks it.

It's the arbitrator to the worldview and values. It doesn't supply them. It witnesses them, and then the meaning comes out.

So, if you come in and tell me that you're going to do something, and maybe let's assume that I can show that through the scriptures, it's not the right thing to do, but you're going to do it. Why? Because your conscience is clear. Well, the problem is not the conscience.

The problem is that the worldview and values are skewed, and they need to be corrected. All right. Now, here, this is the definition.

I'm giving it to you at first rather than building up to it. Okay. But this definition is something I composed after many hours of reflecting on the text, reading, and so forth.

And I've come up with this. I know it's a little bit; it is an academic definition, something that you have to break down and think about, but we've talked about this enough that you can begin to do that. Notice, what is conscience? Conscience is a critical inner awareness.

You may need to make a big slide out of that particular slide so that you don't have any trouble seeing this because it's a little bit small on the slide. But conscience is a critical inner awareness, a witness. There's the term.

And when you look at the database that I've given for you to look through, you're going to see that concept of witness. In fact, there are a lot of adjectives attached to conscience: a good conscience, a cauterized conscience, a conscience that's been ruined because the worldview and values are bad. And that person has adopted that view.

And therefore, no matter what you tell them, the conscience is witnessing the bad worldview and values that they have. And they end up in the same place. Conscience is critical inner awareness, a witness in reference to norms and values that we recognize and apply.

It does not create norms. Conscience doesn't create a conscious witness. It does not create norms and values but merely responds to our existing software to use a modern analogy with computers.

It can't rise any higher than the software is programmed to go. Conscience must be educated and programmed in relation to a critically developed world and life view. Your conscience is educated in the sense that your worldview and values are educated.

And as a result, it's witnesses in consort with that. You see, it's really about conscience keeping you in line with what you believe. And if you don't believe right, your conscience is not going to bother you.

That's why an atheist has peace and a free conscience. Why? Because their worldview and values are committed to atheism. There is no God.

I have no responsibility to God. And so, conscience goes along with it. Why? Because conscience isn't the judge.

Conscience is a witness. The judges are the worldviews and values. Conscience has to be educated and programmed in relation to a critically developed world and life view.

You've got to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. This development for the Christian is rooted in special revelation, the Bible. Now that's a mouthful, that definition.

But if you break it down and think about the things that we've talked about from a number of different angles, you'll begin to see what we're talking about. But you've got to understand that conscience is a witness, not a judge. You may think it's a judge because you're feeling bad when you violate your worldview and values, and your conscience is bothering you.

But remember, it's not the judge. It's the witness to what you believe. Let's go on. Doing a biblical work study.

Now, I've given you this database to make it easy for you. Some of you are in other countries, and you may not have as many resources. And I've given you columns.

You can ignore the Greek column unless that's something that you read. But I have to have it there because when you do a thorough word study, it has to be done from that base. Therefore, I gave you the translation, and we'll talk a little bit about it.

You can see the first two references in the database are to Ecclesiasticus. That's not Ecclesiastes there. Well, in this particular sense, it is because it's so.

But then you got wisdom, the wisdom of Ben Sirach in 17:10. Those are extra-biblical references and at least a wisdom reference. And then you start the Book of Acts.

The word conscience doesn't occur in Old Testament text. Interestingly, it occurs in the New Testament. It's almost exclusively a Pauline term.

It was very prominent in the ancient world. Conscience comes from the verb to know. So, knowing yourself and reflecting on yourself are what conscience does.

Now, I'm not going to go through the word study with you. I'll let you do that. But that's where all of what I'm talking about comes from.

I very carefully and over a long period of time dealt with those issues and thought about it. So, at the same time, I want to make a point. A single word like the word conscience is not a theology.

For example, if you don't have a conscience in the Old Testament, you have to ask yourself the question, well, in the Old Testament, what do I have? You've got a different word. You got the word heart. And remember, the heart is mainly the issue of the mind, not the issue of this.

It's not the organ. In our culture, heart is an emotional term. In Greek culture, sphagnum is a vow of compassion, as King James said.

But we switched it in our cultures. Maybe your culture hasn't done that, and that's good. But the heart is the mind in Scripture.

A single word is not a theology to make. So, conscience is primarily in Pauline literature within the New Testament, and yet it's used; the idea is still in the Old Testament, as we'll see in a moment. It is often one way to start thinking about a term, and it's me.

In other words, you can start with a word, but you have to ask yourself a question: Is that word a beginning? The concept is bigger than the word itself. You have to be careful with concordances in that regard.

In your notes, I've included the database, as I've mentioned to you, to do your own thinking about the usage. Usage determines meaning. You hear that? Usage determines meaning.

It's not the word itself, but it's the word in its context. Usage determines meaning, and you have to look at the context to see what's going on. You'll see where the word witness is used, and you'll see adjectives used with the noun conscience, a good conscience, a bad conscience, and so forth, to see how that is descriptive.

Do so before you read my article. Look at the passages. That should be one of the first things you do.

You can even stop the lecture, and I don't do that if you like. That's what's nice about the computer. So, before you read my article and hear my lecture, compare the results of your own looking and making notes and so forth, and then when we get into the lecture, you'll see how what I'm talking about is reflecting what that database has provided for you.

So that's an important little tool for you to have. Okay? Now, let's go on. Characteristics of conscience.

Here, you take the notes that I give you. The top of the notes says biblical e-learning course, conscience, and decision making, and it has an introduction. We've already talked about the reviewing of Romans 12, 1 and 2, the transformed mind.

You can go back and review those lectures if you like. Conscience is the term we hear and use frequently, but for most people, it's like an Almond Joey candy bar. Here, in an international lecture, that may not make sense to you.

In the U.S., we have a candy bar that has coconut, chocolate and almonds. We call them almond joeys. And when they advertised this candy bar, they had a little advertisement that said it was indescribably delicious.

Well, a lot of people relate to conscience as indescribably delicious. They don't have a clue what it means, but it's indescribable. Well, the conscience is a little more than that.

It's more describable. Okay, so people will tell me, well, my conscience justifies this, or my conscience has given me a sense of peace, and so forth. And that can be true because if your worldview and values are wrong, your conscience can bring you a sense of peace.

When I can sit across from the desk and show you from the Bible where your worldview and values need to be corrected, and if you're not open to that change, then you can go your very way, and conscience and peace will be yours because you haven't changed your mind. You haven't transformed your mind in a direction that can help you make decisions in life. Conscience is a witness to the worldview and value system.

We recognize and apply. Conscience is a monitor of our thinking. Let's look at these a little bit.

If you look at the bottom of page one of the notes, you'll see there the characteristics of conscience in relation to Christian decision-making. The first characteristic is conscience is a God-given capacity for self-critique. That's a very important thing for you to realize that it is given by God.

He's created us with this capacity. It's an aspect of being in the image of God. It gives us the capacity for self-reflection.

It can't be personified into an aspect independent of us alone. It's not the voice of God. It's not the voice of the devil.

It's our internal voice reasoning with ourselves in relation to our worldview and values and in relation to the things that come to us in life. And it's that transformed mind and connecting our thinking to the Bible itself and to God's teaching that helps us to get things in order. So, if you say your conscience is clear, that really doesn't mean a lot.

And we're going to see that in just a moment. Self-reflection is our self-talking to ourselves, and conscience interfaces with that inner discussion to check and see if we are in line with our values. Now, here's a text that I want you to look at.

And I bring my Bible back over here. I want you to look at 1 Corinthians 4:4. This is a very important text for you. 1 Corinthians 4.4. Now I have to point out something to you.

I pointed it out in the database that I gave you for the Word. There is a verb, and there's a noun. We're primarily talking about the noun because that's what is used for this thing of conscience.

And yet, in 1 Corinthians 4:4, we've got the verb operating, and I'll show you how that works. Now, Paul, in the first four chapters, is kind of giving his defense for his apostleship and that his message of the gospel is correct. This is how one should regard us as servants of Christ, the stewards of the mysteries of God.

They're the stewards, not us. We're stewards because they gave it to us. Now, we're a steward of what the product is.

But with me, verse 2, moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. By the way, a lot of people put this verse in offering envelopes. This stewardship is not about money.

This stewardship is about your brain, about how you think, about how you deal with life. Verse 3, but with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself.

Now watch this, verse 4. I am not aware. That's the verb form, sunoida, for the noun sunetesis, which is the word for conscience. So, I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted.

It is the Lord who judges me. So, Paul searched himself. He used that as an illustration.

Searched himself. I'm not aware of anything against myself, but I'm not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me.

That's the formal translation. Watch how the NIV translates this. My conscience is clear.

They took the verb for conscience and turned it back into a noun. You'll say, boy, that's kind of nasty. Well, it's dynamic equivalence.

It's functional equivalence. They are actually telling you what that says. If you read, I'm not aware of anything. Well, that means that's something.

But when you read, my conscience is clear, you say, ah. But here's the catch. But that does not make me innocent.

Did you notice that? Paul said, my conscience is clear, but maybe I'm wrong. I have to call God in to be my judge. And so you can't walk into your pastor's office and say, my conscience is clear, so I'm going to do it because your conscience only relates to your capacity and your worldview and values.

You could be a rogue individual and feel good about it because your worldview and your values are so messed up. And so that's an extremely interesting passage there. Here's another passage, a little different, where we go back to the noun for conscience.

Romans 2, 14 and 15. I think this is a text that gets skewed. But when you look at conscience in the New Testament, it gets a little better perspective.

First, Romans 2 and verse, let's see, how many verses do I want to read here? Let's do 14. For when Gentiles, remember, in Romans, Paul was addressing Jews, and it's addressing Gentiles. Here, he's going to condemn the Jews on the basis of Gentiles.

That's fascinating for when Gentiles, who do not know the law. See, the Jews were heady.

They were too big for their britches. They thought they were better than the Gentiles because they had the law. He comes back and says that Gentiles who do not have the law by nature do what the law requires.

They are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. In other words, they self-regulate according to their worldview and values better than you do. And we can see this once you get on to this understanding. You can see this in life in lots of ways.

There are a lot of good people that aren't Christian. And you try to witness to them, they don't hear you because they think they're really good. Even though they do not have the law, they are letting their conscience regulate their worldview and values.

They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts. And here it comes into another thing. Now notice this: hearts is mine.

Their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on the day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. So the fact is that Gentiles can stumble across the truth and live better than the Jews were living when they have the privilege of the law. Consequently, we see here that conscience is the witness.

In fact, notice it says very specifically that conscience bears witness. And the Jews were not living up to the law. Why? They were cauterizing their conscience.

They were squelching their conscience, which is telling them, hey, you're not obeying the law. You know better than that. And they did it so long and so thoroughly that they could not deliver themselves from that plight. Now, there are other passages that talk about capacity.

I've given some of those to you here, and you're going to look at those passages yourself because you're going to go through that handout. Furthermore, conscience operates in the mind as a witness. It's the monitor.

Notice the point number two on page three. I'm sorry, my voice is a little thick. The weather's changing here in Florida, and we're in our winter, which isn't bad at all, but it does affect my ability to speak.

Conscience is a witness to the worldview and value system we recognize and apply. We just read that in Romans 2.15. There are others who are called into witness along with conscience. You see, what happens is that we've got an audience room and a courtroom. If you please, that is the imagery.

On the stand is the judge. The judge regulates the worldview and values. We've got a defense attorney, and we've got a prosecuting attorney.

In a sense, they're acting like the conscience, trying to get that person to see they're wrong or to argue that they were right. Consequently, you've got this judge and witness going on. Conscience is the witness.

Worldviews and values are the judges. There are a lot of adjective constructions. Notice I've given you a list there.

Clear conscience. Your conscience is clear. What does that mean? It means that conscience is not bringing anything up that says you're wrong.

In other words, you're correlating with your worldview and values in a proper way. A good conscience is basically the same thing. And look at all those passages.

There's only what I think I mentioned at the beginning. I don't want to guess on that. I remember 20 or so texts.

We got 27 texts. 22 plus 5 in Hebrews. Those are all Pauline.

And Peter has three. So, this is almost exclusively a Pauline term, and it comes into play primarily in the Christian correspondence. So, it's a very interesting word in the New Testament.

So, conscience operates in the mind. Now, I want you to see this here. When the data comes in, it comes into the mind.

It gets adjudicated. And notice the worldview and values are surrounded by the conscience. The conscience is looking in on the worldview and values.

And it's telling you that you're in conflict with those. And then it shoots me down on the other side. We're going to come to the spirit later.

And the spirit operates very much like the conscience. The spirit's called a witness. We could put S's as well as these C's.

And I will later. All the way around here in this worldview and values. And you will see that conscience and spirit operate in the mind very similarly.

Which brings us back to the fact that you can't even say like you could say my conscience is clear. If you say, the spirit told me, you're not done. You have to demonstrate that your claim that it's the spirit has to be justified by your ability to show that from the text of Scripture.

So you're not free by making the assertion. Okay. So, conscience is a witness.

Along with this, the word monitor has a little bit of an overlap. The conscience is a monitor of our thinking in relation to decision-making. It doesn't provide the reasons for decisions.

But the conscience is like a red and a green light directing the traffic in relation to decisions, in relation to your worldview and values. So, with that statement, let conscience be your guide. Well, you've got to pay attention to that conversation inside yourself.

Because that's a God-given capacity that's being created in the image of God, you got to pay attention to that. But you can't be naive in how you do that.

You have to realize that as you have that conversation, you're still responsible to be sure your worldview values are correct. That you actually have transformed your thinking. And that you're not operating from the old nature, but you're operating from the new nature.

Okay. On page three. Without asking, well, wait a minute.

I want to go; before I get away from that, I want to take you over to 1 Corinthians chapter 10 for a moment if you don't mind. 1 Corinthians chapter 10. This is extremely important and a little bit difficult to get your arms around because you don't think this way naturally.

But in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verses 23 to 30, and in verse 25, look at verses 25, 10, 25. That's not chapter 10. Oh, I get something there.

Oh, I'm in 2 Corinthians. Sorry about that. 1 Corinthians.

I knew something was wrong. 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 25. All right.

Paul's dealing with the problem in Corinth of being offered to idols. See what he's dealing with, which is your old worldview. Your old worldview tells you that idols are something and that you have to get beyond that.

And he comes in and deals with it, with the strong and the weak. As you remember, look at verse 23. Excuse me.

All things are lawful, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful, but not all things build up. Let no one seek his own good but the good of his neighbor.

Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the grounds of conscience. Now, that's the ESV. The King James Version said, without asking any questions.

And a lot of people said, well if you don't ask questions in a questionable situation, you're not responsible. Well, that's kind of silly. Would Paul say, well, what you don't know won't hurt you? Would Paul ever say that? No, that's not what that text is saying.

Here's where a newer rendition, even the ESV in this particular situation, upgrades it and says, without raising any questions on the grounds of conscience. You see, the weaker brothers, whose worldview and values had not been well transformed, thought that that meat was still tainted by idolatry. Paul says the meat's nothing.

The idols are nothing. They don't exist. So, you can eat that.

But because he was dealing with those whose transformed mind was behind, who hadn't moved long for enough alone, he said, eat, but don't ask questions on the grounds of conscience. Why? Because conscience is not a ground on which you ask questions. It's the worldview and values.

This text brings out this whole idea that worldview and values is what determines right and wrong, not conscience. Conscience works. And when your worldview and values are wrong, yes, these Christians were feeling convicted.

But Paul was saying, you need to come along. You need to understand that the old life is the old life. The new life is the new life.

And so, this is extremely important. I would suggest, and perhaps we can find it and put it into this particular module. Dr. Hildebrandt is finding articles to go along.

In my bibliography, that article by Gooch is extremely important for understanding 1 Corinthians 10. So, you don't ask questions on the basis of conscience. You ask questions on the basis of your worldview and values because conscience is merely convicting you that you need to ask those questions.

You need to be sure the worldview and values are correct. That is the key. Then, the conscience has to adjust to what's right because worldview and values are the judges.

Conscience is merely the witness to the worldview and values you currently have, but those are open to revision and challenge. That's a part of maturation in relation to Romans 12:1 and 2. I've mentioned it here on page three at the top.

See Gooch's article in my bibliography at the end of the notes. So, what are the conclusions here? Well, conscience does not create your worldview and value set. The worldview and value are a set that's created by your maturation of the transformed mind.

Conscience is a witness to the worldview and values. I've said that over and over. I know I'm very repetitive, but I'm hoping it's wearing in.

Conscience merely monitors our worldview, which we own and which we recognize and apply. The phrase recognized and applied was from F.F. Bruce. It's stuck with me over the years.

All right, let me go back there because that's the end of the slides. All right, so there you have it. I've given you adequate material for you to study and be able to do what the Bereans do and think about this issue.

The hardest piece of what you're going to have to think about is that piece that relates to 1 Corinthians, understanding that you don't ask questions on the basis of conscience. You ask questions on the basis of worldview and values. Paul was confronting a group at Corinth whose transformed mind was behind them, and he was trying to bring them along.

He did it very gently. In fact, the Corinthians context points that out. Sometimes, you compromise what you know is okay for the sake of somebody who hasn't come along.

Now, let me ask you this question. What do you do with people whose worldview and values are belligerent? They refuse to change their mind, even when you can show them from the Bible what's true. Paul was having trouble getting them to change their mind about the meat offered to idols.

Therefore, what do you do when they refuse to come along? Well, I would put it this way. For those who are in the transition, and you're always going to have Christians around you who are in the transition in their worldview and values, you have to deal tenderly. You sometimes have to abstain yourself from something to help them.

But if that goes on and on and on and on, the problem is that they are not being weak any longer. They're being belligerent. They refuse to learn.

People who refuse to learn are treated differently than people who are tenderly making a transition. Now, that would probably take a little more work out, but it's something that's important for you to think about. So, the conscience.

Now, here is a briefer session for us. But the fact is, this is really new material to you because people have stereotypes about what conscience is. And frankly, I think when you look at the Biblical witness, the Biblical material that presents conscience to us, you'll see that it is a witness, not a judge.

And it's a witness to the worldview and values. And they are the judge. And yet, at the same time, in the maturation process of a Christian, you've got to adjust your worldview and values as the Scriptures teach you and inform you.

That first generation that's one of the videos I want God to replay for me when I get to heaven. I want to know more about how difficult it was for Jews who believed in Yahweh to make the transition to Christ as Messiah. If they were true believers, they didn't lose their salvation.

If they were true believers, they made that transition. It wasn't easy for them. We see the witness in the book of Acts about how difficult it was for them.

Consequently, as we make our transition, we make it through the transformed mind and conscience. Sometimes, takes a little while to come along with it, but it is subject to the worldview and values. It's guided by that, not by something else. And so it has to go through a little re-education sometimes.

So, the weak brother in Corinth, for example, would have trouble internalizing their thinking until they had made the transition. Paul was dealing with them in a way that could help bring them along. Paul did not compromise the worldview and values on that basis, but he taught the worldview and values and brought them along as a result.

So, conscience and decision-making. Conscience, when you're working with decisions, whether it's massive decisions, such as war, transgender, and life and death issues, euthanasia, and so forth, or whether it's the decisions in your own personal life, you've got to remember that while your inner voice is telling you one thing or the other, that's not what you listen to. What you listen to is your worldview and values.

Get in touch with your worldview and values. Go to scripture and adjust and educate your worldview and values so that you can make decisions that are in conformity to God's mind rather than your own. It would never do that perfectly.

My thoughts are not your thoughts. Why? Because we're human creatures. We're created beings, and he's God.

We'll never achieve that. In fact, throughout eternity, you're going to be learning. That's what eternity is: an eternal learning of life because we will never be God, and we'll never exhaust the infinite.

So, if you don't like learning now, you're in trouble for eternity because you're going to be eternally learning about God and worshipping him on that basis. So, that's conscience. Our next lecture is going to be on the Holy Spirit, and you're going to have some day-to-day movements in terms of how we talk about the Spirit in relation to how we've talked about conscience because the scriptures present them in very, very similar ways.

Thank you, and I trust that your day will be a very good day and that this material is helping you in your life.