

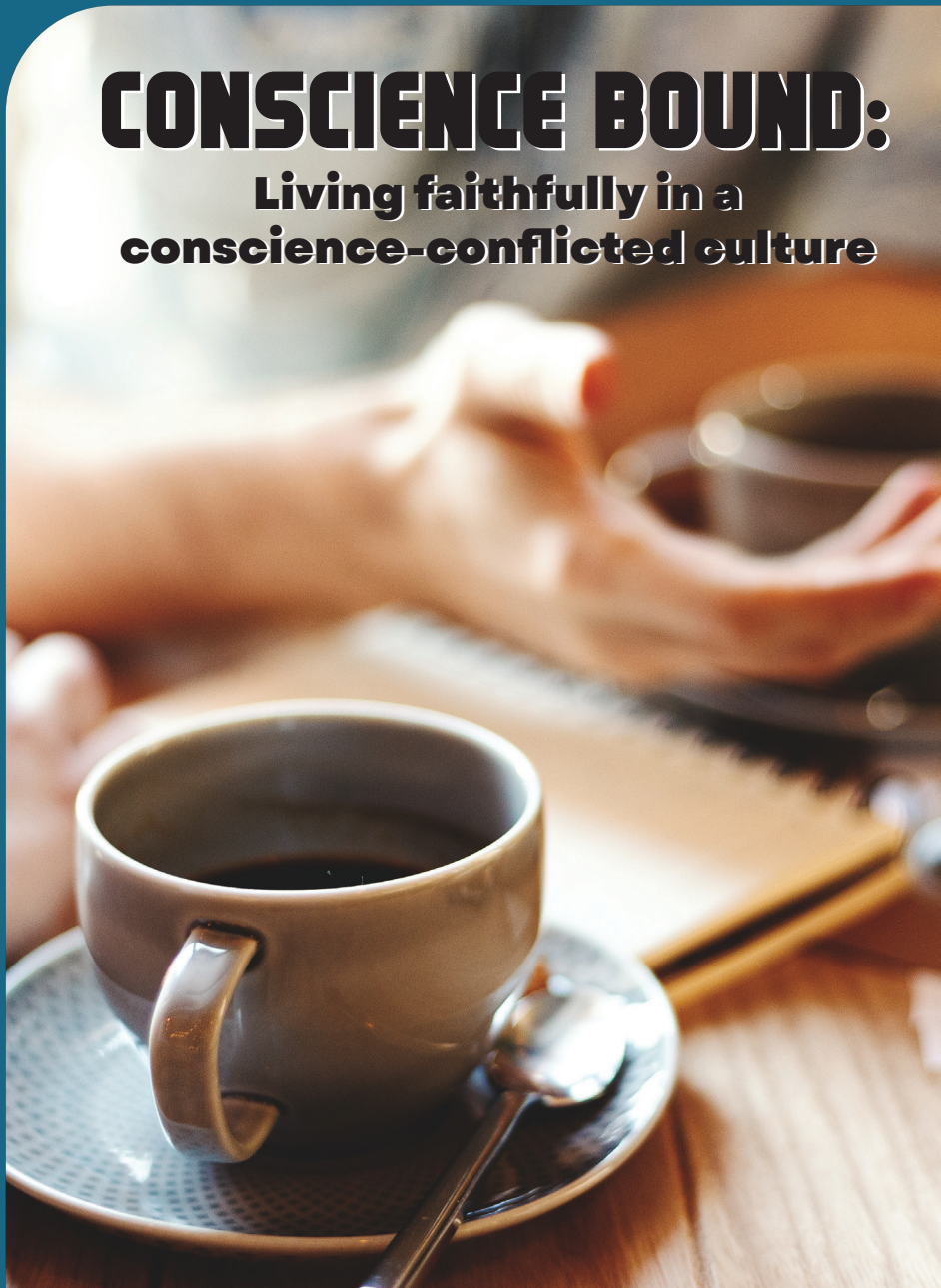


CHRISTIAN LIFE RESOURCES
— FOR LIFE • FOR FAMILY —

CONSCIENCE BOUND:

**Living faithfully in a
conscience-conflicted culture**

CLEARLY CARING MAGAZINE | SPRING 2026



A coworker now identifies as female and asks you to use the new name and pronouns. Your best friend scheduled an abortion and asked you to accompany her to the clinic. Your son lives with his girlfriend and plans to visit for the weekend.

“What does my conscience call me to do?”

WHAT IS CONSCIENCE?

“Conscience” is a word that has morphed over the years. In the New Testament, it is a compound word which literally means “joint-knowing.” It reflects an intuition sparked by objective truth. The Apostle Paul wrote:

Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing

witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.

The objective truth is “the law...written on their hearts.” The “witness” (the way others see them) is how that truth appears to others through you. Even non-believers follow an objective truth imprinted on their hearts, as seen in their actions.

Today, the emphasis shifts from an objective source of authority or truth to a subjective conviction. It is sometimes referred to as a “gut-feeling” or “sincerely held belief.” The focus today is not on the belief, but on sincerity.

Here are some examples:

Oprah Winfrey:

“Whatever your secret, live your own truth; life is too short.”¹

¹ Oprah Winfrey, quoted in O, *The Oprah Magazine*, July 2003.

“What I know for sure is that speaking your truth is the most powerful tool we all have.”²

William H. Young wrote:

Modern thought has replaced individual intellect, common sense, reason, truth, and virtue with “feeling” and assorted trivia—subjectivism. Modern thought has displaced objective reality with the “culturally constructed” reality of the group.³

And to remove all doubt, ask Elsa:

*It’s time to see what I can do
To test the limits and break through
No right, no wrong, no rules
for me
I’m free⁴*

2 Oprah Winfrey, acceptance speech, 75th Golden Globe Awards, Beverly Hills, CA, January 7, 2018, NBC broadcast.

3 https://www.nas.org/blogs/article/modern_vs._western_thought_americas_affliction (accessed 3-3-26)

4 “Let It Go,” music and lyrics by Kristen Anderson-Lopez and Robert Lopez, performed by Idina Menzel, track 5 on *Frozen: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack*, Walt Disney Records, 2013, audio recording.



As Christians wrestle with matters of conscience, we are called – gently but firmly – not to let the voice of pop culture drown out the Holy Spirit’s (Romans 8:5-6; Colossians 3:1-2).

A rightly calibrated conscience is trained by Scripture (John 17:17), purified by Christ’s blood (Hebrews 10:19-23), and persistently refined by the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:17-4:2).

I cannot overstate the value of *persistent* Spirit-sourced refinement. A single reading of Scripture, a well-spoken phrase in a sermon, or even



a one-off Bible study does not suffice. Navigating the challenges of life requires more than a superficial exposure to God's word (Hebrews 5:12-6:3).

When we settle for less, our faith can become shallow – more decorative than transformative – and our conscience drifts without the anchor of God's living word (Hebrews 4:12). When that happens, we swing and sway to the blowing wind, either searing our conscience because of repeated compromises or hyper-inflaming it, searching

for legalistic perfection where it cannot be found (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

Martin Luther wrote:

*Yet it is safest to turn to a middle road, to turn too much neither to the right nor to the left. For both are dangerous, and, as I said already, for this reason also, the office of the word was instituted, that we might teach both, that is, the Law and the Gospel.*⁵

⁵ Martin Luther, *Only the Decalogue Is Eternal: Martin Luther's Complete Antinomian Disputations*, trans. and ed. Holger Sonntag (Minneapolis: Lutheran Press, 2008), 199.

When God's word rightly calibrates the conscience, it will create friction with a culture that lacks such calibration.

THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE WORLD

We have a distinct advantage in our God-given faith. Our worldview is anchored in eternity – perceiving the world in the shadow of its Creator and shaped by the hope of life that never ends.

Without this faith, is it really so surprising that a godless culture embraces subjectivism? Should we be shocked that in the absence of an eternal hope, the world places all its bets on the here and now?

Christians believe that existence in this world can be hard, uncomfortable, painful, and disappointing (Acts 14:22; Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Peter 5:10). Doing right requires turning the other cheek, going the

FURTHER READING: QUESTION & ANSWER

As a Christian and a medical professional, what am I to do when seeing patients who are going through methods to transition genders? My work in endocrinology has included procedures that aid transitioning. I may also need to train the patients how to inject themselves with hormonal treatments. I am uncomfortable because I know those transitioning are using their God-given bodies in a sinful way. Am I guilty of complying with sin and/or condoning it, thereby bringing guilt upon myself? I love my Lord. I love my job. Can I keep my current vocation and do it in a God-pleasing way?



<https://christianliferesources.com/family-topics/sexuality/transgender/qa-on-medical-personnel-transitioning-patients>

extra mile, and loving those who hate you (Matthew 5:38-44). We understand this because of faith. Those without faith, however, don't get it. That is why they focus on things of this world, seeking to create a "heaven on earth." For those who think like that, Christian beliefs get in the way.

THE CONFLICTS

The baker is asked to create a cake for a same-sex wedding, the pharmacist to dispense birth control to a single person, the teacher to use a student's chosen pronouns, the granddaughter protests for abortion rights, and an uncle advocates for medical aid in dying.

What do we say and do when our deeply held beliefs are challenged?

The answer can vary.

We must remember that we are both members and victims of our culture.

God wants us to be active and influential members of our respective cultures (Jeremiah 29:7; John 17:15-18), but not become victims of cultural practices that are contrary to God's word (Psalm 1:1; Romans 12:2). We are to be forces of good (Matthew 5:13-16; Romans 12:21).

Understanding these distinctions helps us navigate the conflicts.

WHY YOU?

There are over 8 billion people in the world, occupying nearly 30 billion habitable acres that have existed for millennia. Yet here you are as God's child called to glorify Him, at this time, before these people, in this predicament, and in this place. It is not an accident.

In the crucible of conflict, remember why you are there. Your prime directive for all your life is to glorify God (Isaiah 43:7; 1 Corinthians 10:31). As God's child, you



are part of God's plan to accomplish good (Romans 8:28). Navigating the conflicts means drawing on the circumstances and your gifts to make this happen.

Glorifying God occurs personally (Psalm 86:12), publicly (Matthew 5:16), passionately (Romans 12:11), and purposefully (1 Peter 2:12). While the circumstances, challenges, and conflicts will vary, your mission remains the same: to lead others to know Jesus Christ and to glorify God as His children.

THE TEMPTATION

Our contentious culture tempts us to be divisive, argumentative, vindictive, and dismissive. In other words, we are tempted to fight like the world. We want to win every argument, take the high moral ground, and, where possible, maybe even punish those who were so wrong. Yet we are reminded:

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On

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the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. (2 Corinthians 10:3-4)

We are to live differently, and we will suffer for it (John 15:18-20; 2 Timothy 3:12). Yet the call persists to be Christ-like as we engage the world (1 Peter 2:21). We can leave vengeance to God (Romans 12:19), and engage the erring in a thoughtful, loving, and sacrificial way (Philippians 4:5; 2 Timothy 4:2; 1 Peter 3:15).

SPECIFICS

By now, you might be frustrated that I have not

given you specifics. That is intentional. It is a tall enough order for us to resist fighting like the world. But here is some advice:

Everyone is different (Romans 12:4-6; 1 Corinthians 12:1-31). How you relate with people is different than how I relate. You might be able to say things and act in a way that would look weird coming from me. The mission, however, is the same for both of us. Leading others to glorify God requires open lines of communication, built through careful relationship-building, to foster dialogue.

That may mean I won't like how you do it, or you won't like how I do it. The reality is, once you are firmly seated in God's word and His direction for your life, be you! Use your gifts, your approach to interacting, and your approach to building a bridge.

My prayer is for the rest of us to give you the space. The Apostle Paul spoke of being "all things to all people" with the goal of their salvation (1 Corinthians 9:19-31). We know that not everyone agreed with Paul or the way he did things. Nevertheless, Paul did not lose sight of the fact that he was the messenger and that salvation is the work of God through the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:14; 1 Corinthians 3:5-7).

These are difficult times, and none of us navigates them perfectly. Lean on the counsel of others who share your desire to glorify God. Be open to different ways of reaching the lost and lovingly restoring the erring (Galatians 6:1-2) – remembering that God uses the most unexpected people and moments to do His most beautiful work. After all, aren't we living proof? 



Rev. Robert Fleischmann has been the National Director of Christian Life Resources since 1988. He is adjunct to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary where he teaches a pastoral approach to bioethical issues. He teaches an online Master's certificate course at Concordia

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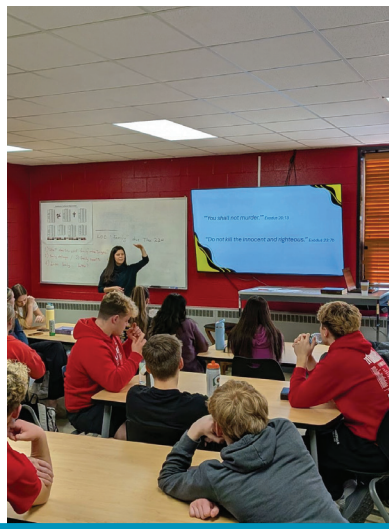
CHRISTIAN LIFE RESOURCES **BRIDGE MINISTRIES**

We know that God values every life. Bridge Ministries, led by Rachel Greiner, helps people like you live that out in practical ways. Here are simple yet powerful ways to make a pro-life impact in your community.

“Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.” (Isaiah 1:17)

1) Book Student or Parent Talks

We offer presentations on topics like valuing life, influences, navigating technology, and healthy relationships. Talks can be customized to fit your school, youth group, or church setting. Book your talk today and invite your group into honest, Christ-centered conversation.



2) Team Up with Fellow Church Members to Form a CLR Branch

Join with others to form a CLR Branch and make a pro-life impact. It’s easy—we’d love to discuss options and ways your congregation can get involved.

3) Volunteer with One of Our Wonderful Affiliates



You can make a difference with one of our wonderful affiliates, whether in-person or virtually. Even a few hours makes an impact. Call us and connect with Rachel Greiner to get started.

4) Use Care Boxes to Comfort and Reach Out

Care Boxes bring comfort to church members who experience a miscarriage or infant loss, and they can also be used as a gentle outreach to friends and family. Churches can also host events where they create boxes for their community and beyond. People who have received boxes have said, “It was the most thoughtful thing I’ve ever received!” and “Impacted me in a profound way!”



We're here to partner with you. Get involved today by contacting us at 414-376-0594 or rachelg@christianliferesources.com.



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