

KEEPER OF VALUES

THE GOOD CONSCIENCE 4



T. M. MOORE

A REVISION STUDY FROM
THE FELLOWSHIP OF AILBE

Keeper of Values

Strong Souls 21
Keeper of Values
The Good Conscience 4
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Welcome to *Keeper of Values*

A good conscience is essential for a strong soul, which is indispensable for a life of knowing, loving, and serving the Lord.

One of the roles of the conscience is to store and maintain the primary values that must guide our thoughts and affections into words and deeds. We need to understand those values and make sure they're being lodged securely in our own soul.

ReVision studies are designed as brief introductions to the subject under consideration. We hope they will enlarge your worldview, help you to become more firmly rooted in Scripture, equip you to minister to others, and stimulate you to want to learn more about the Word of God and the Biblical worldview.

We're happy to provide this study at no charge. If you find these studies helpful, we hope you'll consider sending a gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, to help us in making these resources available to others.

May the Lord bless your study of His Word.

T. M. Moore
Principal

1 A Matter of Conscience

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” Matthew 6.33

What’s on your conscience?

In this study of the nature and nurture of the soul, we have explained that the soul is comprised of three equal and interacting spiritual components. The *mind* processes thoughts and information. The *heart* generates affections. And the *conscience* manages our default priorities and values. What comes to expression in our lives – our words and deeds – is a result of a continuous process in our souls, where what we think, how we feel, and what we value interact with God’s Word and Spirit to determine what we will do or say.

It’s not quite that simple, of course, but in the most general of terms, this is how human beings function. This is what it means to be made in the image of God, to grow into the image of Jesus Christ, and to image His resurrection life to the world around us.

Scholars debate the relative importance of the components of the soul. Some insist the mind has the priority, while others contend for the heart. Personally, I’m inclined to believe these two are so inextricably involved with one another that we need to keep them both sharp and functioning at the highest levels.

But what about the conscience? The Scriptures have less to say about the conscience than about the mind and the heart, but what they say is important. As we have seen, the conscience, because it holds our default values and priorities, plays a kind of arbitrating role between the mind and the heart, helping to process thoughts and affections into appropriate actions. So it’s important that we have a good or a clean conscience – two adjectives describing a healthy conscience which Paul employed in his writing. One of the powerful effects of the Gospel, once we have received it, is that it purifies and renews our conscience so that it can carry out its proper function in the soul (Heb. 9.14).

But what makes for an *un*healthy conscience? To be brief: Wrong values.

The role of values

Some Christians don’t like to talk about values. They prefer to focus on virtues rather than values, and, of course, virtues are extremely important. But they don’t cover everything the conscience requires to do its job in the soul.

The character, or the degree of goodness, of a person’s conscience is constructed, to a certain extent, on values. *Values* are simply those settled views, beliefs, opinions, convictions, default choices, and courses of action, which we hold to be most important. Our values are foundational in that they play a huge role in determining how we think and what we feel strongly about. We’re not usually conscious of our values. Instead, having become so used to exercising the same preferences over and over, our values simply settle into our conscience without our having to think about them every time they come into play. Within the conscience, values shape our thoughts and affections, and this shaping, in turn, determines the course of our daily lives.

So if our values are bad or weak or unhealthy, it doesn’t matter how nobly we think or how earnestly we feel, we’re going to *live* according to the patterns, priorities, and practices that are agreeable to our consciences. Any values less than those the Lord prescribes in His Word are by definition bad, and sooner or later, and increasingly, they will lead us into bad choices and sinful actions.

A faulty conscience at work

Let me see if I can illustrate this. Suppose you become convicted, let’s say, during a sermon or Bible study,

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that you need to spend more time in prayer. In your mind it makes sense, and in your heart, you feel like it would be important to do so. So, you tell yourself, starting tomorrow, you're going to pray more.

And perhaps you do for a day or so. But soon your prayers begin to trail off. You don't get up as early as you said you would. You choose not to keep those prayer appointments with God that you wrote down on your schedule. And the time you do spend in prayer is becoming as shallow and unfruitful as it ever was before you heard that sermon.

What's happening? Well, even though you have a *good idea* about praying more – your mind is rightly engaged – and you *really feel like* you should pray – your affections are revved up for it – there's a problem in your *conscience*. You still *value* certain things more than prayer – such as, sleep, busyness, following distractions, or just goofing around. Because you didn't consider the role of your conscience in the matter, you simply let certain *unexamined values* linger there when you should have served them notice and evicted them forthwith. It is important to identify the values operating in your conscience and make a conscious effort to evict those that are less than what God prescribes. Then you could begin to employ your mind and heart in building a *new* values foundation in the soul, one that would allow you to have greater success in realizing the life of prayer you thought and felt like you wanted to have.

If bad, weak, or wrong values are manning the operations of our consciences, we'll have a difficult time realizing the promises of life in the Kingdom of God.

But if we can identify, own, embrace, and nurture certain *Kingdom* values in our soul – those values which are firmly lodged in the Law and Word of God – then we'll find a more harmonious and fruitful interaction of all the components of our soul, and greater consistency and power in living the Kingdom life in Christ. Seeking the Kingdom and righteousness of God is the *defining value* for the soul. The better we understand what this involves, the more our values will line up with God, and we will be operating out of a good conscience in all our choices and actions.

For reflection

1. Where do values come from? What influences lead us to settle on one priority over another? Do you think it's important to be aware of these influences? Explain.
2. In your opinion, what are the most important values to lodge in your conscience, so that seeking the Kingdom and righteousness of God will be your *highest* priority in every situation?
3. What's the difference between values and virtues?

Next steps – Conversation: What do you think would be some strong, Kingdom values to lodge in your conscience? Talk with a Christian friend about this question.

2 Calling

You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. 1 Thessalonians 2.10-12

It matters who's calling

We all get phone messages. And text messages. And email messages.

Sometimes they pile up, clog up, and jam up. Some we never get to; most will just have to wait. We have other things to do, things we *value* more than responding to every forwarded message, casual caller, cute cat video, or earnest inquirer. We'll get to them when we can, that's the best we can do.

We scan or scroll through our messages throughout the day, just to see who's calling. Because it might matter. If the message is from someone we *want* to hear from, or someone who *has a claim on us* that we must heed – like a boss, a child, or your spouse – then we get right on it. Such messages go to the head of the list and are responded to right away.

But most messages aren't like that. And for many Christians, God's calling them into His Kingdom and glory does not hold priority of place in their lives. God matters to them, to be sure. He even gets special time during the week when He's all the focus.

Well, mostly.

But we have a lot of things to do, and we can't take up *all* our time thinking about God or how we might please or serve Him. Things are pressing on us, you know? That is, *other* things, *other* matters, situations, and opportunities are *calling* us, and we need to take care of them. They have *greater value* to us than the fact that God, as Paul says, is continually calling us into His own Kingdom and glory.

God calling

Probably most Christians treat the calling of God as a kind of punctuated equilibrium. He breaks into their lives to "call" them to some activity or task, but only from time to time, and only for that activity or task. He "calls" us to believe the Gospel, and we do. He "calls" us to this or that church, and we go. He "calls" us to some ministry or other Christian activity, and so we participate. He "calls" us to make a special gift, go on a mission trip, send a note of encouragement to a friend, and so forth. Our lives run on their own schedules, so whenever God "calls" us to do something, we'll try to get it done.

But most of the time, other things have *prior* claims on our lives. We have jobs, families, friends, responsibilities, things we like to do or must do. We can't respond to every *calling* from God because, well, there just isn't enough time. We say, when friends press us to consider this or that Christian opportunity, "If God *calls* me to it, I will." But aren't we just using the language of piety to relieve the discomfort of pressure to do something we'd rather not do?

We are *called* of God. Of this there is no doubt. But for most Christians, the way they understand God's calling is not the same as the way God issues it. And they have not yet learned to *value* His calling as He intends, as the defining and guiding value of our lives.

Ongoing and all-encompassing

Paul describes God as *continually* calling us to His Kingdom and glory. Every day, and for every moment and activity of every day. His calling on our lives is not merely occasional. It's continuous, ongoing, and all-

encompassing. God calls us to His *glory* in all the everyday details of our lives (1 Cor. 10.31). He calls us to His Kingdom as the priority in *every* situation, the defining outlook, motif, aspiration and driving force in every aspect of our lives (Matt. 6.33).

Many Christians understand this. They understand that God's calling is *total* and *unrelenting*. He does not call us occasionally, or every so often. He does not call us when a big project needs to get done. He does not call us through some crisis or in the face of some emergency. God is always calling us into His own Kingdom and glory, in *every* situation, in *all* our relationships, roles, and responsibilities.

Whatever else we must do, whatever task or duty, obligation or priority, it must be defined by the higher value of seeking to fulfill our calling to the Kingdom and glory of God.

And what a glorious privilege this is! The God of heaven and earth, Lord of nations, Ruler of all creation, Redeemer, Savior, and King – this God is calling *us*, calling us to *enter His Kingdom and glory*, there to be transformed in every aspect of our lives so that we lay down our lives at every moment for His service and praise.

When this calling becomes the ruling value in our conscience, so that we hear God calling us to His Kingdom and glory in every situation, it teaches us how to *think* and *feel* about our lives. It filters out every extraneous or distracting thought or emotion. All of life becomes an arena for knowing and serving God, a platform for enjoying and declaring Him, an opportunity to grow in and reflect Him to the world. Everything in life comes to be defined in terms of our primary calling to the Kingdom and glory of God. Our time is the Lord's. Our work is for Him, whatever it may be. All that we are and have, every moment and all our strength, are drawn, pulled, bent, inclined, invested, and employed in heeding the calling of God into His Kingdom and glory, pursuing His righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit in all we do.

Set this as a value firmly in place in your conscience, and everything about your life will change.

For reflection

1. What does it mean to be called to the Kingdom of God? How would you be able to recognize someone for whom this was their highest priority?
2. What does it mean to be called to the glory of God? What opportunities do you have each day to fulfill this calling?
3. Why do you suppose more Christians don't have this Kingdom-and-glory calling as the highest value in their conscience?

Next steps – Conversation: Suggest some ways to stay mindful of God's calling throughout the day. How can Christians help one another in this matter?

3 Seeking

Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. Romans 14.16-18

When God calls

As we have seen, God is continuously calling us into His Kingdom and glory (1 Thess. 2.12). When His calling becomes the primary default *value* in our conscience, it will shape the way we think and feel about our daily lives, so that *seeking* the Kingdom and glory of God will become the defining value toward all we do.

God calls us to His Kingdom. That's of the highest importance to us. Our response is to seek that Kingdom and righteousness in, through, and for everything in our lives (Matt. 6.33). We value the work of seeking because it helps us realize the calling of God, which we value above all else. Calling and seeking are default values in a good conscience.

Human beings live for the future. We're cognizant of our past, and we make our way in life through the present. But humans are future-oriented creatures. That is, we're always going somewhere, working at some project, getting on to the next task, *seeking* something that lies just ahead of us a bit. *Seeking* describes a basic orientation to life.

So the question, where a good conscience is concerned, is not *whether* we shall have seeking as a value, but in particular, *what* will we seek as the *defining* value for all our seeking?

Happily, Jesus has sorted that out for us, hasn't He?

Kingdom, power, righteousness

Jesus instructed us to "seek first" the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Paul explains the Kingdom of God in terms of power (1 Cor. 4.20) and righteousness, leading to peace and joy, for a way of life that is approved by both God and men. The ability to realize this power for those ends depends on the work of God's Spirit within us, as He makes us *willing* – hear that conscience word? – and able to do what is pleasing to God (Phil. 2.13).

We must settle Kingdom-seeking into our conscience as *the* defining value. God is calling us into His Kingdom, and we want to seek that Kingdom in response to God's calling, so that we may know the transforming power of God's Spirit at work within us, willing and doing and remaking us into the very image of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 3.12-18).

So, what does this involve?

Seeking the Kingdom

Obviously, seeking the righteousness, peace, and joy of the Holy Spirit – the Kingdom of God – must begin in our own soul, how we *think* and what we *cherish*. When seeking the Kingdom has become a settled value in our *conscience*, we will devote our *mind* to the task of understanding the righteousness of God's Law and the work of God's Spirit. We will make time to read, study, and meditate on these critical components of the Kingdom to which God is calling us, so that we understand them clearly and learn to process our ideas, thoughts, and plans through a called-to-the-Kingdom filter.

But we'll also need to hone our *affections* to *desire* the Kingdom first, foremost, and in all things. As we

discover the beauty of the Kingdom, the promises available to those who seek it, the wisdom and power of God's Law, and the exceedingly-abundant-beyond ability of the Holy Spirit to transform and use us in God's Kingdom (Eph. 3.20), we will find that our *heart* becomes more firmly set on *heeding* this calling of God to enter His Kingdom and glory more deeply and consistently.

As our mind and heart become devoted to seeking the Kingdom, seeking the Kingdom will become a settled value in our conscience, and we'll find this value beginning to be reflected in our words and deeds. We'll *talk* about the Kingdom more freely and eagerly, and ask others about their experience of seeking the Kingdom and knowing its power for righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. We'll find ourselves *explaining* the Good News of the Kingdom to people who probably never think about such matters, and we'll do so not apologetically but gladly, boldly, and even urgently.

Then we'll begin to look for ways to bring our *actions* each day more into line with the Kingdom we are so earnestly seeking. We'll want to *do more* Kingdom kinds of things, like Jesus did when He came to bring the Kingdom near to human experience. Old thoughts and affections having been transformed in our Kingdom-seeking souls, we'll find that we desire *more time in the Presence of God*, have *more love* for people, want to be *more helpful and encouraging*, and look for ways to *embody Kingdom verities and values* in every area of our lives. We'll go out of our way to *meet new people*, and we'll *initiate more conversations* that might lead to Kingdom outcomes in others.

We'll have Kingdom of God on the brain and in the heart, once we've settled the value of seeking the Kingdom in our *conscience*; and we'll find, increasingly, that we are choosing our words and deeds with a view to *expressing and advancing the Kingdom of God* into every area of our lives. Love for God and neighbor will increase to the extent that seeking the Kingdom and righteousness of God becomes a defining value in our conscience.

Those who know themselves called to God's Kingdom and glory, and who cherish that calling as a high privilege and glorious adventure, will set seeking that Kingdom and glory as a default value in their conscience.

For reflection

1. What kinds of activities go into seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness?
2. Is this a part-time or full-time calling? Explain.
3. What are the greatest hurdles you need to overcome in seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness?

Next steps - Transformation: How would you describe your approach to seeking the Kingdom and glory of God at this time? Can you think of some ways you might improve this?

4 Renewal

*I thought about my ways,
And turned my feet to Your testimonies.
I made haste, and did not delay
To keep Your commandments. Psalm 119.59, 60*

New values, new light

Seeking the Kingdom of God in every aspect of our lives will shed new light on our daily experience in many ways. We will begin to see things in our lives and our world that are not consistent with the presence and progress of the Kingdom of God, to which we have been called and which we are seeking. Obstacles and roadblocks will pop up to obstruct God's calling and deter our Kingdom seeking. If we don't find ways of overcoming these, we'll end up frustrated, and perhaps even abandon or minimize the Kingdom values we've begun to embrace.

Because, at the same time, our vision of the Kingdom to which God has called us, and of His glory, which He calls us to enjoy and express, will grow and expand; and we will see our world and our Personal Mission Field through a new lens, fraught with prospects for righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. We'll want more of what we see in our calling, and we'll discover new ways of making real Kingdom progress in our lives.

The Christian life is always a work in progress. What Paul described as a "law of sin" continues to operate in us, so that our mind, heart, and conscience still bear some of the marks and tendencies of a more self-centered than God-centered agenda, and our words and deeds, as a result, will always fall a bit short of glorifying God in Kingdom ways (Rom. 7.15-25).

Thus, we need to have yet another Kingdom value in place, so that, when we recognize these obstacles and potential deterrents to what we earnestly long to realize, we won't back down before them, but will take them on and overcome them and continue making progress in seeking the Kingdom to which God is calling us (Rom. 12.21).

And that value is what I choose to call *renewal*.

A work of God

But we need to understand that the work of renewing our souls and lives is really God's work. For our part, we must embrace renewal as a value to be firmly set in our conscience, so that we yield our minds and hearts to whatever the Spirit of God reveals and we follow wherever He leads to bring our new life in Christ to greater fruition.

Renewing our soul and life in the Lord is a daily process involving three steps. As we take each of these by faith, the Spirit meets us with the Kingdom power we need to keep moving forward (1 Cor. 4.20; Phil. 2.12, 13). We cannot renew ourselves; but we *can* take those steps toward daily renewal that will find us launching into the arms of the Spirit, Who will carry us on by His power.

First, we must be clear about what needs to be renewed. What sins continue to manifest in your life? Whether it's a thought you continue to indulge, some affection that's out of whack, or certain words or deeds that are not in line with the righteousness, peace, and joy of God's Kingdom, you need to face up to your shortcomings and name them for what they are.

It's easy to excuse ourselves in the face of shortcomings, failings, and imperfections. After all, no one's

perfect. But Jesus *commands* us to pursue perfection, for this refracts the very character of God to the world (Matt. 5.48). So if we are to settle the value of renewal in our conscience, we'll have to get it into our thinking and our heart that, whenever the Spirit of God convicts us of some sin or shortcoming in our lives, our immediate response is going to be not to excuse or defend ourselves, but to agree with the Spirit, confess, and repent.

We're going to admit our shortcoming, name it for what it is, and thus begin the process of laying it aside (Eph. 4.17-24).

Then, second, we can seek the Lord's counsel for whatever next step will enable us to resume our journey of seeking the Kingdom and glory to which God is calling us. Let's say we discover, under the leading of the Spirit, that we've been harboring a bad attitude toward a co-worker. We resent him for whatever reason. We speak uncharitably about him behind his back, and secretly wish he'd get fired. Whenever we think about this person we scowl and get angry or depressed. And then the Spirit shows up one day and points all this out to us.

So what do we do now? We look to the Spirit to lead us in the Kingdom path, the path of righteousness, which He will do one step at a time (Ps. 139.23, 24). Perhaps the next step is, whenever you think of this person, rather than scowling and getting angry, you offer a brief word of thanksgiving to the Lord for him. You think about whatever his positive contribution is to the workplace, and then you dwell with thanksgiving on that. And if you have spoken ill of this person to anyone else, you go and confess your sin, and share your new thinking about him. Take up just that much of a next step, and when you need the next one, to replace those negative thoughts with ones more like the way you'd like others to think about you, the Spirit will be there to lead you.

Finally, you must act. Inward transformation comes to expression in outward actions – words and deeds. When renewal has become established as a value in your conscience, and as the Lord leads you to renew your thinking and affections, you'll want to bring renewal to full fruition through active obedience. Look for opportunities to show the love of Christ to this unlovable colleague, and when those opportunities arise, make the most of them (Eph. 5.15-17).

A lifestyle of renewal

The really great thing about embracing renewal as a value in your conscience is that it transfers so readily from some specific application or situation into every area of life. The more sensitive we become to the Spirit's lighting up our soul and life, and the more diligent we are at practicing the steps of renewal, the more renewal will work out in every area of our lives. We will grow in our Kingdom-and-glory calling and realize more progress in Kingdom-seeking as we take up the work of renewal every day, in every area of our lives, every time the Spirit leads and guides.

We have a great salvation (Heb. 1.2), and by fixing renewal as a value in our conscience, we will daily seek opportunities to realize more of the presence, promise, and power of the Kingdom of God.

For reflection

1. When we fail in our Kingdom-and-glory calling and lapse into sin, we're falling back into the ways of our sinful flesh, like before we were made alive in Christ. Why is *renewal* a good word at such times?
2. The calling to be renewed is a *daily* calling. What will this mean in your life?
3. Review our verse for today (Ps. 119.59, 60). Can you see in this verse a link between renewal and the Law of God? Explain.

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Next steps – Conversation: How can believers help one another to take up the work of revival more consistently? Whom can you encourage today by sharing what you're learning about Kingdom values?

5 Holiness

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. 2 Corinthians 7.1

The logical corollary

The work of renewal is that process by which we “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit”, as Paul puts it. We won’t have much incentive to embrace renewal as a value unless we’re actively seeking the Kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit to which God is calling us. Hearing and seeking *God’s* calling are the top priorities in our conscience; renewal follows day by day as a result of our journeying toward the Kingdom and overcoming obstacles along the way.

But renewal must be undertaken against a backdrop and within a framework that allows us to know when our work of renewal is on target. And that background is what Paul refers to as holiness, the holiness that comes from being immersed in the holy and righteous and good Law of God (Rom. 7.12). When renewal is a working value in our conscience and life, and we are being cleansed in soul and body of all filthiness and every Kingdom-detering thought, affection, word, or deed, then we’ll be in position to perfect holiness, as Paul instructs.

So we need to understand what holiness is, and what it should look like in our lives. Perfecting holiness is the fourth key value to lock into our conscience if we are to have strong souls and press on in Christlikeness.

Understanding holiness

God is at work in everyone who believes to perfect holiness. We won’t achieve complete holiness in this life. That awaits the day when, as we see Jesus face to face, we are finally, fully, and uniquely made holy, made like Him (1 Jn. 3.1-3). If this is what we hope for, then we’ll want to add holiness to the values that define our conscience and life.

But what is holiness? Holiness is both the *reflection* of God and His character, and the *refraction* of that glorious image into the world through our lives. God *is* holy; but God *shows* His holiness to the world through those who are being cleansed of all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and who are working to perfect holiness in the fear of God. God is holy. Christ is holy. The Law of God is holy. The standards of holiness, in other words, are readily available.

The question is whether we will *so value holiness* as to embrace those standards and work toward achieving them in every aspect of our lives.

Begin here

Paul’s counsel is that the pursuit of holiness must take place within the proper framework, and that framework is the fear of God. If holiness is to be a working value in our conscience, then the fear of God must be a settled affection – as we have seen, the *primary* affection – in our heart.

Why should we fear God? Well, because He’s God – holy, good, true, righteous, loving, merciful, all-powerful, and hating evil. We need to remember that, in a very real sense, we have no business seeking to be in the Presence of God, or to know Him in His glory. Apart from Jesus Christ, that way is the way to complete annihilation.

Yet *because* of Jesus we can seek the Kingdom and glory of God, Who is calling us to these. Even so, along the way we may find ourselves remiss in the work of renewal, of cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. God loves us more than we love ourselves, and to help us along the way toward His

Kingdom and glory, He will from time to time lead us through some difficult places, and subject us to some unpleasant conditions which we'd just as soon avoid (Heb. 12.3-11).

So we should fear the Lord with reverent awe simply because of what He's capable of doing when it comes to sinners like you and me. We do not want to know His discipline and displeasure, and so, in fear of being subjected to that, we work hard at perfecting holiness. And when we must know it, by His good pleasure, we know it to be His love, beckoning us to return to the path of holiness through confession of sin and repentance.

But that means we must have a clear vision of what holiness looks like in a human life, and here we can do no better than to study Jesus and follow Him in the path of obedience to God's commandments (1 Jn. 2.1-6).

The more we read, meditate, and understand the Law of God, and all His holy Word, the more He will form us into the holiness or righteousness He desires for us (Ps. 1). And the more we study and meditate on Jesus, as we see Him in the gospels and contemplate Him risen and exalted in glory, the clearer will be our understanding of the standard of holiness which must inform our thoughts, shape our affections, and come to expression in our words and deeds.

Value holiness! Take seriously the apostle's command to bring holiness to perfection. Let every work of renewal which God accomplishes in your soul and life be but one more brick in the edifice of holiness God is building you to be. Every increase of holiness – God's work in us toward which we earnestly strive and constantly labor – will bring us that much closer to realizing God's calling for us.

For reflection

1. Why is fearing God linked to growing in holiness?
2. Perfecting holiness suggest having certain kinds of goals for our walk with the Lord. How can we nurture a healthy fear of God?
3. How can believers help one another in this value of perfecting holiness?

Next steps - Transformation: Do you agree that Christians should cultivate fear of the Lord? Why or why not? How would you counsel a new believer to "perfect holiness in the fear of God"?

6 Mission

Then they said to one another, "We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news, and we remain silent. If we wait until morning light, some punishment will come upon us. Now therefore, come, let us go and tell the king's household." 2 Kings 7.9

Swallowed up in grace

By the grace of God, those four Samaritan lepers had stumbled upon an incredible boon and blessing. Figuring they had nothing to lose, those poor, starving beggars ventured out to the camp of the besieging Syrian army in the hope they might find something to eat. What they found so astounded and delighted them, that, when their consciences recovered from the initial euphoria, they knew they had to tell everyone.

As we increase in the holiness of God – the result of being daily renewed in our calling from God and actively seeking His Kingdom – we enter the new reality of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God, Paul tells us, *is* righteousness. Righteousness, or holiness, is the *character* of the Kingdom, the identifying attribute of that realm of eternal life that has broken into human experience and is being advanced on earth as it is in heaven, under the watchful eye of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the power of His Spirit.

When, by God's grace, we are drawn more deeply into the righteousness of His Kingdom, we know we have arrived at a place of incredible boon and blessing. We can feel giddy with joy at knowing the Presence of God more truly and seeing Christ and the Spirit at work within us, willing and doing of the Father's good pleasure. For with the righteousness of God – the character of the Kingdom – comes the peace of God that passes understanding and the joy of the Spirit which nothing can quench. Peace is the *condition* of the Kingdom, and joy is the *consequence* of the righteousness and peace we have come to know there.

And when you know such peace and joy, don't you just want to tell someone else?

Mission as a value

This is why the fifth value we need to fix in our conscience is mission. Jesus came to earth on a mission from God, to open the way to eternal life and to bring near the Kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. And He told His followers that, in the same way He had been sent to earth, He is sending us to the world as well (Jn. 20.21).

Christians are a people with a mission. More even than those Samaritan lepers, we have hit upon some really *good news*, and our calling is to invite and call and summon others to join us in this blessed adventure (Acts 1.8).

But because we naturally fear what others might think of us, we need to settle the value of mission in our conscience, so that, whenever the fear of man arises, our settled value of mission can override any hesitancy we might feel, and we can get on with our mission.

Put another way, if we value being bearers of the Good News more than we value what others might think of us, we will have no difficulty overcoming every fear of man, to urge upon them the Good News of God's grace in Jesus Christ (Rom. 12.21).

Setting mission as a value

But how do we do that? How do we establish mission as a value in our conscience so that, as often as the opportunity arises, we will proclaim the Good News to others? Let me suggest some practical steps you can take.

First, identify the [Personal Mission Field](#) to which God has sent you. By mapping out your Personal Mission

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Field, you will set before your mind and heart the people God is sending you to, week after week, as an ambassador of His Kingdom (2 Cor. 5.20). Once you've mapped out your Personal Mission Field, then begin praying for the people you see there every day. Pray that God's Spirit would strive with them (Gen. 6.3), to help them see the futility of their lives as they are at present, and to implant in them a desire for something more lasting and meaningful. Pray that God will open doors of opportunity for you to engage these people in conversation, and to share with them the Good News of what you have found by the grace of God.

Start looking for ways to get to know these people, and to show them the love of Jesus. Learn their names and use them. Offer to pray for them and seek specific prayer requests. Look for opportunities to listen, encourage, or help the people God is sending you to each week, so that they will be able to see the hope that is in you and experience the touch of Jesus' love.

Make it your goal to tell the Good News to every person in your Personal Mission Field, believers too, and do it in a way that is sensitive to their interests, time, inclinations, and receptivity.

Look, we're simply starving, leprous beggars who, by the grace of our sovereign God, have been called into a new experience of life, a life of righteousness, peace, and joy with which nothing in this world compares. And when mission becomes a settled value in our conscience, we will want others to know about this Good News as well.

As you grow in the Kingdom and glory to which God is calling you, let the peace and joy you discover there overflow like a river of living water to share the Good News of God's grace with everyone in your life (Jn. 7.37-39).

For reflection

1. Have you mapped out your Personal Mission Field? Do so today and begin praying for people right away.
2. How has the Good News of Christ and His Kingdom affected your life? In what ways?
3. Write a prayer you can use to overcome the fear of man, whenever you feel that fear rising in your heart.

Next step – Transformation: Map out your Personal Mission Field by [watching this brief video](#). Then download and work through the worksheet attached to the video.

7 Legacy

*Instead of Your fathers shall be Your sons,
Whom You shall make princes in all the earth.
I will make Your name to be remembered in all generations;
Therefore the people shall praise You forever and ever.* Psalm 45.16, 17

Good today, good tomorrow

We're considering the values that should lodge in our conscience, to strengthen it for guarding and directing our mind and heart, as we follow Jesus in the normal course of our daily lives. A good conscience has the right values in place as default priorities in every decision, choice, or action. We've examined five values that I think are most conducive to directing our thoughts and shaping our affections in ways most likely to promote a Kingdom lifestyle: calling (to God's Kingdom and glory, and to our own Personal Mission Field), seeking (the Kingdom and righteousness of God), renewal (daily increase in Kingdom living), holiness (becoming more like Jesus), and mission (living as witnesses and ambassadors of the Kingdom).

To these I'd like to add one more: legacy. As our forebears in Christ, faithful in their generations, have left the Gospel and many blessings for us to enjoy, so it should be important to us, a matter of the highest priority, to leave something behind for others, to help them on their journey into the Kingdom and glory of God.

As the Kingdom of God comes to fruition in and through our lives, we can expect to touch the lives of others with many good things. We will help people learn, encourage them in the use of their own gifts, show them how to work their Personal Mission Field, inspire them by our example of service and love, impart vision and skills to assist them in their own callings and ministries, and many things besides. If doing such things now is a good thing, wouldn't finding some way for this to continue after we're gone be a good thing as well?

But how do we do that?

Faithful, teachable, able

Paul explains in 2 Timothy 2.2, elaborating on an idea expressed in our text for today. The sons of Korah, who wrote Psalm 45, envisioned a day when the current leaders of Israel would be replaced by their sons, to extend the Kingdom of God beyond where their fathers had ever been able to take it. Paul, following our Lord's mandate in the Great Commission (Matt. 28.18-20), instructed Timothy to a similar kind of vision, and through Timothy he instructs us as well. If we can invest in a few people, so that they embrace the Kingdom values we've been discussing in this study – embrace them so soundly and fruitfully that they pass them on to others – then those folks may be the ones to keep our Kingdom contribution going long after we have finally entered the eternal Kingdom and glory of the Lord.

Paul encouraged Timothy to embrace a legacy vision reaching to the second generation beyond himself. He should teach men who would be able to teach others also. So, in teaching people about the Kingdom of God, Timothy would also have to give them, not only the values and skills for Kingdom living, but also a vision and the incentives and skills necessary to impart that lifestyle to others, as well as any disciplines, tools, and other resources he might be able to provide.

If we value leaving a legacy of Kingdom calling, seeking, renewal, holiness, and mission, then we too will make it a priority in our lives to search out others to whom we can impart these values and the way of life that goes with them. This must be a lifelong commitment. As J. I. Packer wrote in his book, *Finishing Our Course with Joy*, no matter how old we get, there's always something we can learn and always someone we can

lead. And that means we can work to leave a Kingdom legacy for as long as we continue in this life.

In his instructions to Timothy, Paul counsels us to look for a particular type of people: faithful people – people who have demonstrated a real desire to know the Lord, follow Him, and serve Him with their lives. Look for people who are hungry for God’s Word, eager to pray, committed to Christ and His Church, and willing to embrace the Kingdom values that can bring such peace, joy, and fruitfulness to their lives. People who make excuses, are habitually “too busy,” or don’t follow through on things they’ve promised or agreed to do – such people may be sincere Christians, but they’re not the kind of *faithful* people who will allow you to leave a legacy of Kingdom living to the second generation beyond yourself.

Next, teach these people. Spend time with them. Study the Word, read good books, take up projects and activities together, become prayer partners and soul friends, encourage one another in working your Personal Mission Field, and work hard to stimulate one another to love and good works (Heb. 10.24). Gaining a Kingdom vision and embracing Kingdom values and a Kingdom way of life doesn’t just happen. Don’t wait for your church to do something, take charge yourself. Look for resources that emphasize the priority and values of the Kingdom of God, and work through them together with the faithful people you’re equipping as part of your legacy.

Put them to work

Then, finally, give the faithful people you are teaching opportunities to train others as well. Bring them into your disciple-making efforts and let them share in teaching and leadership roles. Encourage them to take the things you’ve taught them or the tools and resources you have provided and to begin looking for faithful people of their own. Give them a vision for instilling Kingdom values in the people in their Personal Mission Fields, and be available to encourage and assist them in as many ways as you can.

As we journey deeper into the Kingdom to which God is calling us, seeking Him and His glory, working for renewal, bringing holiness to completion, and striving to bring others into the Kingdom of God’s love, let’s leave some markers along the way, to guide and encourage those who will come after us. Take as a value in your conscience, making disciples of faithful people who will teach others also, and you’ll be able to say truly and confidently with the sons of Korah, “I will make Your name to be remembered in all generations; therefore the people shall praise You forever and ever.”

For reflection

1. Meditate on Matthew 28.18-20 and 2 Timothy 2.2. Why is it important, when we’re thinking about a legacy, to think in terms of people and their Kingdom-and-glory callings?
2. What opportunities are available to you through your church to help others grow in the Lord?
3. How can you make leaving a legacy a more permanent value in your conscience?

Next steps - Transformation: Where would you start to begin fulfilling the challenge of 2 Timothy 2.2? Whom can you approach to join you in this legacy-building work?

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Questions for reflection or discussion

1. Why is it important that we establish firm, Biblical values in our conscience?
2. What is the role of prayer in helping to make sure the right values are in place in your conscience?
3. Why is it so important that we seek the Lord daily for renewal? How are you planning to do that?
4. Have you mapped out your Personal Mission Field? What opportunities for leaving a legacy can you identify there?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this study about the role of the conscience in keeping good values for the soul? How are you working to implement that lesson?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.