

X'ENT NEWS

PROVIDING EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP
THROUGH QUALITY CHRISTIAN TRAINING

Volume 25 Issue 1

May 2017

2 Timothy 2:2

And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.



On the surface this seems like such a simple principle. It is as though it requires little effort or thought. After all, God is our Creator and the Sovereign One. It was as a result of His divine love that He sent His only Son to redeem us. Think of the great exchange: God treats Jesus as though He lived our life and He treats us as though we lived the life of Christ. Amazing! It seems that with such knowledge our love for God should be all that God intends. But is it? Do we even scratch the surface of what it means to love God as we should?

Consider the greatest of all commandments as stated in Deuteronomy 6:5, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." Our Lord Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment. Note this exchange between Jesus and a lawyer as recorded in Matthew 22:36-38, "'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?' And He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with

all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.'" This is the great and foremost commandment."

No doubt these words are very familiar to you. But ask yourself if you really love God with your entire being. Are you consumed with a love for God? Does your love for God far exceed your love for any other person or thing – including yourself?

Once again consider the words of Jesus as stated in Luke 14:26, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple." Note also His words in Matthew 10:37, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." And lastly consider Luke 9:23, "And He was saying to them all, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take

up his cross daily and follow Me.'"

In a very practical sense this means that because our love for God far exceeds our love for ourselves and for any other person or thing, we will have absolute confidence in God regardless of the road He takes us down. Should He take our loved ones sooner than we expect, we love Him. Should our lives run down a difficult path, we love and trust Him.

Our biblical love for God will also be demonstrated in our priorities. How can I love Him far above all and yet not spend substantial time with Him? How can I love Him as I should and not gladly serve Him in joyful obedience?

Sadly, many people are quick to claim a love for God, but is it a biblical love? It seems fair to say that none of us love God as we should. In light of this, we must constantly strive to grow in our love for our Savior and our God.

♦Rocky Wyatt



Book Nook

*Conscience:
What It Is,
How to Train It,
and Loving Those
Who Differ*

Andrew David Naselli
and J.D. Crowley

Reviewed by
Ethan Thompson

Out of all the books I've had the privilege to read, I've never read a book that focused on the conscience. This book by Andrew David Naselli and J.D. Crowley was truly helpful as it brought to bear biblical principles and insights surrounding the nature and function of the conscience. The main purpose of this book is to encourage Christians to put conscience "back on their radar" and to show from Scripture what God intended and did not intend the conscience to do. After laying some ground work in chapter 1 relating to the conscience, in chapter 2 the authors define the conscience as "your consciousness of what you believe is right and wrong." Additionally, out of all of the biblical principles surrounding the conscience, the two that rise to the forefront of the list are (1) God is the only Lord of your conscience, and (2) you must obey it.

Particularly helpful in chapter 2 is the way that the authors describe what the conscience can be (positively and negatively), and what the conscience can do. Positively, the conscience can be blameless, clear, clean, and pure (Acts 23:1, 1Tim. 1:5). Additionally, the conscience can be cleansed, cleared, perfected, purified, washed, purged and sprinkled clean (Heb. 9:9, 14; 10:22). Negatively, the authors list 6 things that the conscience can be. It can be weak (1 Cor. 8:7), wounded (1 Cor. 8:12), defiled (Titus 1:15), encouraged to sin (1 Cor. 8:10), evil or guilty (Heb. 10:12), and seared (1Tim. 4:2). These two lists highlight just how crucial it is that we as believers seek to clearly understand the conscience, and glorify God by obeying it.

Now to what the conscience can do. It can bear witness or confirm (Rom. 2:15, 2 Cor. 1:12), judge or try to determine another person's freedom (1 Cor. 10:29), lead one to act a certain way (Rom. 2:15), change, and function as a guide, monitor, witness, and judge.

This is why individuals feel guilty and, for believers, feel guilty when they either have sinned or are contemplating giving in to sin. Thus, believers should strive to have a clear conscience before God and seek to obey it when it indicates to them certain areas in need of change to come more in conformity with God and the truth of His word. When you choose not to obey your conscience you risk searing it. By choosing to ignore the conscience in matters of sin, you will eventually become numb to sin and fail to feel proper conviction over your sin.

Chapters 3 and 4 are about what you should do when your conscience condemns you, and also how you should "calibrate" your conscience. In chapter 3, the authors make the point that often our consciousness of truth grows faster than our obedience to truth. This explains why we feel convicted over our sin when we know what we should be in Christ and we're not yet there in our walk with Him. The main encouragement from Chapter 3 is that even when you sin and your conscience condemns you, you need to realize that you have a Lord who can clean your conscience. Chapter 4 addresses how we can go about "calibrating" our conscience. The point is that it is possible to have a conscience that is misinformed about something. As we continually grow in Christ, we should increasingly strive to have a more biblically accurate conscience.

I found chapter 5 to be the most helpful. It addresses how we're to relate to fellow Christians when our consciences disagree. Crowley and Naselli have put together a list of twelve principles to follow when we disagree on such matters. It is a helpful list for all Christians to read through so as to be able to conduct disagreements well. The one principle of twelve that I found most helpful is the first one: Welcome those who disagree with you (Rom. 14:1-2). I like this principle for the fact that it emphasizes the Christian's obligation to love others. It's easy for us to become cynical, judgmental, and critical of others who do not agree with us on everything. We must remember that we are to honor God by showing our love to others even when we disagree.

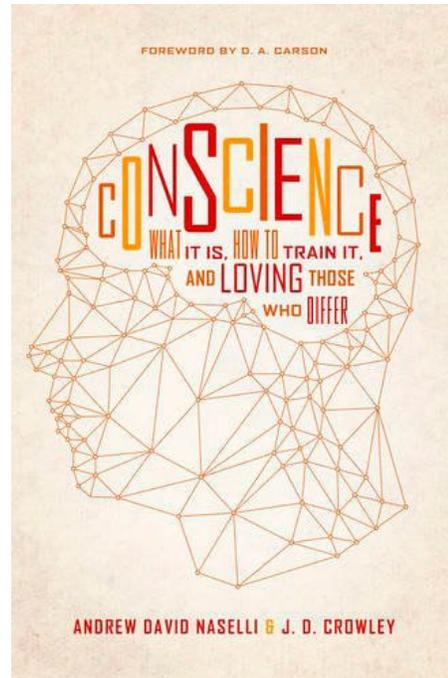
Chapter 6 raises an interesting dynamic of how we should relate to others in cultures with different conscientious standards. The changes are minimal but the one thing that I took away from the chapter is that it is

a long and patient process. J.D Crowley shares a story where as a missionary he experienced an instance in which a certain group of believers that he regularly interacted with had convictions about not playing worship songs with a certain instrument because in that culture it stood for pagan practices. Yet Crowley goes on to say that as he patiently allowed the group to work this issue out, they eventually all came to a more informed conscience and realized that they can play any instrument as long as they're doing it as unto the Lord. This was a long process. It's the same for us today when we encounter others from another culture with whom we disagree. We must remember to act patiently.

Critique

I would give this book a 9.5 out of 10. I really feel that the authors did a good job with the issue of how it is that a believer is to deal with their conscience. This book has been helpful to me in understanding this confusing issue. Secondly, I feel that the authors did a good job staying on subject and emphasizing the thesis, which is "to put conscience back on the daily radar to show Christians what God intended and did

not intend the conscience to do." My only criticism is that the authors could have saved time by including their definition of the conscience in chapter 1. Nonetheless, I highly recommend every Christian to read this book. It was a blessing to be able to read it and give a review of it.



Where are they now?
Doug Link

Upon entering full-time ministry at Grace Church of Tallahassee in 2007, I was given the task of writing a short update for the upcoming XL Ministries newsletter. Nearly 10 years have passed since that update, and I am finding it to be a profitable exercise to reflect on God's faithfulness since that last time.

In June, Carrie and I will celebrate our twelfth anniversary. We are the grateful parents of Caleb (8), Hudson (7), Owen (3) and Abigail (10 months). Like being a pastor, the role of parent has proved to be such

a fulfilling, challenging, difficult, and joyful blessing. Please pray for the salvation of all of our children and for our parenting, that it would be characterized by faithfulness. Our family loves Grace Church of Tallahassee, and I count it a unique blessing to serve in the church that trained me up while a college student. I serve as an associate pastor overseeing ministry to our youth and families. I also provide pastoral oversight to those who assist in our music ministry. I would ask you to pray for me to "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, and gentleness" (1 Timothy 6:11) to those whom I shepherd.

Ten years in and I am still very grateful to the Lord for the opportunity to serve the local church and I hope that He would grant

me many more decades of pastoral ministry. I'm so thankful for XL Ministries and others whom the Lord has used in my life to train and equip me for this calling.

