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## PASTORAL LETTER – SEPTEMBER 2020

**Questioner:** *“Pastor, should we send our kids back to school?”*

**Pastor:** Silence. Deafening silence. My thoughts drifted away, then they got sucked into a whirlpool of “what ifs”.

I have been asked million-dollar questions during my pastoral ministry. The questions run the gamut—personal, religious, cultural, health, marital, educational, doctrinal, and even real estate. Is a war ever just? Should an undocumented person be granted a driver’s license? Should gay people be allowed to marry one another?

Generally, after briefly pondering a tough question, I can offer a reasonable conclusion. Preachers are known for being opinionated on matters familiar to them and on matters not familiar to them. But the question involving the sending of a child or children to school in the face of a world-wide health crisis is complex, personal, and difficult. Too much is at stake. Health. Income loss. Life. Transmission. Death. The Unknown.

We have become aware in the past 6 months that even well-regarded scientists are constantly adapting and modifying their opinions. The virus we are contending with has been described as fluid and shrouded in unknowns. Some of the original assumptions that were made to promote safety, including temperature checks, are being reassessed. For example, look at Dr. Anthony Fauci’s recent remarks involving temperature checks:

[Forbes - Dr. Fauci Interview](#)

One little understood aspect of Covid-19 is transmission by asymptomatic carriers. They show no signs of the disease, but can pass it on to others.

Leading scientists don’t truly know everything there is to know about the virus. So it is alright for me to maintain a certain level of caution concerning the potential of the virus to ravage a community. And it’s alright for me to feel vulnerable not only for myself but also for the community of people my family encounters. I’m simply admitting that the best thing we can do is

to heed our conscience when making a decision that involves our well-being and the well-being of others. Be on guard to not fall victim to the worst possible outcome.

God has equipped each one of us with a faculty known as conscience, which I liken to a whisper in a crowded room. A conscience, as defined by Paul, the apostle, “serves as a witness to what we already know” (Romans 2;15, 9:1). In other words, a conscience informs our values and operates like a dialogue partner with us, using our emotions to communicate with us, and using our reason as an internal, shut-down valve, whenever we are going to make a choice that can cause harm to ourselves or others. Therefore, to act against one’s conscience is, like the German Reformer Martin Luther, pointed out, “...neither right nor safe.” In this instance I understand Martin Luther to say that it is damaging to one’s mental health and spiritual wellness to act against one’s conscience.

I always encourage people who ask for my spiritual guidance to follow their conscience. That way they can be at peace with God and with themselves. We should try to keep in mind that a conscience has to be properly informed so that it can be a faithful, reliable inner-dialogue partner.

So, I suggest that we keep up with the science. I suggest that we keep up with our Bible. I suggest that we use our logic. Lastly, it is helpful to recognize that you are an individual, and that what your conscience dictates to you will not necessarily be in harmony with what my conscience dictates to me.

The American novelist, Harper Lee, recognizes this point of view. Lee said, “The one thing that doesn't abide by majority rule is a person's conscience.”

Following one’s conscience is important, as long as the choices and decisions spurred by our conscience do not impinge on the health, safety and welfare of others.

Back to the original conversation as reported in the opening sentences of this letter.

**Questioner:** *“Pastor, you haven’t given me a definitive answer.”*

**Pastor:** *“I can’t because there isn’t one. Follow your conscience.”*

**Questioner:** *“Hmm. Are you sending your son to school?”*

**Pastor:** *“We are following our conscience.”*

More silence. Pronounced silence.

To be continued.

Blessings!  
Pastor Luis