

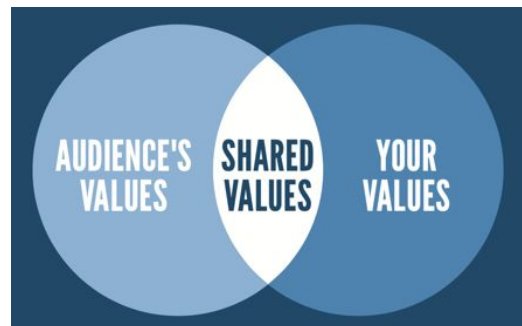
## **The Big Picture**

Based on our research to date, many conservative white Catholic and evangelical Protestant women appear to be at a moral inflection point. While conservative government officials have advanced issues they care about—e.g., defending religious freedom, restricting access to abortion care, and growing the number of conservative judges on the bench—these women report feeling conflicted over morally questionable policies and practices, especially around immigration and the detainment of those seeking refuge in the U.S.

Focusing on the morality of some issues while sidestepping the immorality of others is generating significant emotional and spiritual conflict among these women. This conflict provides an opening to begin a different kind of conversation with these women—one that is grounded in faith and helps them to expand the definition of “pro-life” to include valuing all life, not solely the unborn. Change will not happen overnight—our goal is to open a dialogue that helps soften the ground for shifts to occur by using messaging that meets our audience’s needs, raises questions, and offers solutions not previously considered.

## **Meeting our Audience’s Needs**

Ultimately, human beings make decisions and are motivated to act not based on policy or logic, but rooted in what we believe is right or wrong, or what should or should not be, based on our faith and the values that we hold dear. In this context, it is common for activists to strongly disagree with some of the deeply held values and beliefs of target audiences. This can lead activists to explicitly and implicitly dismiss, argue with, or even ridicule perspectives that are different from their own. It can also lead both audiences and activists to see their values as fundamentally and irreconcilably at odds with one another. In some cases, that may be true. However, we must recognize that we cannot—at least in the short term—change our audience’s core values any more than they can change ours. So, to be effective, we need to tap into the Venn diagram of values—the places where the values of the audience overlap with those of advocates. When we build our messaging on their pre-existing values—values that we also share—we can foster familiarity and help audiences to put more weight on the values and beliefs that lead them to be supportive, rather than on those that interfere with support. There are many shared values that emerged from our research that provide ready pathways for creating change. When we start by evoking these values, we cue our audiences to remember their better angels and the ideals that they strive to live out in their daily lives.



In addition, empathy—the capacity to listen and seek understanding through the prism of your audience’s good intentions—is vital to persuasive communications and our efforts to create behavior change. After all, nearly all humans have a deep psychological need to see themselves as good, and very few want to see themselves as harming others. When our communications convey that we understand our audience’s good intentions, we help meet their emotional needs and also help manage negative emotions and feelings that may interfere with behavior change. Importantly, empathy doesn’t require that you agree with a perspective—only that you can genuinely understand it.

### **Core Message**

*“The issues our country wrestles with are complex. While the Bible doesn’t provide specific guidance on who to vote for or what policies to support, it does provide us with foundational principles. These principles should be prayerfully considered and debated, but in a loving manner that honors Christ.*

*By contrast, the extreme language we often hear around issues like immigration and abortion only serves to divide us. After all, a person can be a committed Christian and still support a candidate that supports access to abortion care. As Christians who deeply value life, we care as much about babies at the border as we do about babies in the womb.*

*We must take more time to listen to each other and to leave space to try to understand why we disagree. Let us lead with compassion and empathy, and perhaps understanding will come later.”*

### **Supporting Messages**

- **Abortion—Better Ways to Reduce Abortion Rates:** “Many people don’t know that the country of Hungary, where abortion is legal, found a way to reduce their abortion rate by 30%. Their government rolled out massive family-support programs like family tax benefits, paid childcare leave, maternity support, and free summer camps. Meanwhile, many Latin American countries where abortion is illegal continue to have much higher abortion rates than the U.S. To make matters worse, women in Latin America are getting sick or dying from botched, illegal abortions. So, instead of one life ending, two souls are gone. No matter what we do, it’s likely that abortion will always exist. We can decide to either turn our focus to what will *do* the most good—or stand on our principles and focus on what will make us *feel* the most good.”

- **Abortion—Struggling with Certain Situations:** “When you hear stories of 12-year-old girls who are raped, it is hard to believe that these young girls—victims of a horrible crime—should be expected to carry a pregnancy to term. They have already experienced so much trauma. Life is a gift—yet, it can be difficult to try to understand or know what to do in specific scenarios like this where a desire to protect the unborn is confronted by a desire to protect the living as well.”
- **Immigration—Caring for Babies at the Border:** “There are many issues weighing on people’s souls, especially the situation at the border. When you think of how people seeking refuge are being treated—families ripped apart and kids held in jail cells—it can make you sick to your stomach. This is not who we are as Christians. This is not how we treat people. All life is sacred—we are called to care as much about babies at the border as we do about babies in the womb.”
- **Immigration—Inhumane Treatment of Detainees:** “Many have been shocked to learn about the treatment of migrants and asylum seekers being held in U.S. detention centers—how children were being taken from their mothers and fathers and put in small prison-like cells and how many were being held for weeks without access to basic hygiene products, like soap or a toothbrush. Our churches have spent decades doing mission trips to places like Honduras and Guatemala, to show the people Christian charity and to spread the Gospel—of course they would see the United States as a safe refuge during their time of crisis. But that’s not what they found when they arrived here. Instead of empathy and compassion, they were met with cruelty.”
- **Immigration—U.S. Actions Purposely Cruel:** “The cruelty inflicted on migrant families at the border wasn’t by accident—it was a choice. The U.S. government recently ended programs in many Latin American countries that allowed people to stay in their own country while they applied for asylum. Those programs had prevented many people from risking the dangerous journey in the first place. With those gone, they had no choice but to leave to seek asylum. Also, while the number of people crossing the border has gone down year-to-year, the number of people the government had chosen to detain has gone up significantly. The decision to separate families was also something new. Many believe this was intentional—to scare people into not seeking refuge in the U.S.”
- **Immigration/Women—The President’s Callous Words Bearing Fruit:** “The Bible, from cover to cover, is expressly concerned with how we use words. ‘The power of life and death are in the tongue.’ How the words we speak can bring us closer to God—or cast us far from Him. That’s why we are increasingly disturbed by the things the President says. His foul words offer us a clue about his value system—especially his values related to women. And when it comes to his own callous words about immigrants and people seeking refuge in America—look how they have borne fruit in his actions to separate children from their parents at the border? Words matter, and Trump’s words—and his actions—are very concerning.”

### **Invoking Shared Values**

Some of the most successful messages draw their strength from elevating the core values we share with our audiences. Embedding these values in our messaging allows us to better connect with our

audiences, and to decrease the likelihood they will become defensive and reject our messaging outright. Depending on the messenger and the context of the story being shared, these values could include those listed in the table below.

Shared Value	Ways of Expressing These Values Effectively
<b>Compassion, empathy, and understanding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“As followers of Christ, we strive to support and love one another unconditionally—even when we disagree. When we come to find that someone may not believe what we believe, let us leave some space to try to understand why. God has given us all different paths to walk that have led to this moment together—we must respect that. Let us try to lead with compassion and empathy, and perhaps understanding will come later.”</li> </ul>
<b>Empathy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“God sends us opportunities and experiences for a reason. Through them He teaches us how to go out into the world and to see Jesus in the faces of all people we meet. He teaches us to be kind and to show empathy and love to all people—and to leave Him to know and judge what’s in their hearts.”</li> </ul>
<b>Unity (over division)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“As Christians right now, we’re all so tired of the division. It feels more important than ever to be listening to all sides and to be asking for guidance from God.”</li> </ul>
<b>Valuing all life (used in context with expanding the definition of pro-life)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Human life should be valued at every level. The Scriptures are very clear that human life is sacred, and each person is created in the image of God.”</li> <li>“Because life is sacred, we should create conditions for human flourishing across the board.”</li> <li>“Together we can move toward broad human flourishing that honors the sacredness of human life at every level.”</li> </ul>
<b>Protecting the poor and marginalized</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“The Scriptures remind us again and again to care for the poor and the vulnerable.”</li> </ul>
<b>Open communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“I am hoping to discuss something that may be a bit taboo—how this election has been difficult for me when it comes to my faith and values and politics. I’m feeling conflicted in many ways, and I often don’t feel I have a safe place to talk about it.”</li> </ul>
<b>Prayerful consideration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“It is so important to be humble and prayerful—to listen to one another and to look to God for guidance.”</li> </ul>
<b>Being welcoming and learning in Christian community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Our churches welcome so many different people, from so many different backgrounds and places in the country. Listening with an open heart and an open mind to their stories and their journeys to finding Christ is so important. Christian growth happens in community.”</li> </ul>