

GUILTY CONSCIENCE

Request: Whenever I seem to be faced with a choice between good and good, no matter which way I choose, I seem to feel guilty about the choice. Could you do a study to help me understand this problem?

Let me give a recent example – “I went shopping with my small child. While shopping I was approached by what I perceived to be a homeless man in need of benevolence, I immediately felt protective of my small child so I avoided contact and benevolence and walked away with a GUILTY CONSCIENCE.” My mind says it was OK but my heart say it I should have offered help to the man – thus a guilty conscience!

Important question – What did you feel guilty about in this case? It is important to simplify it to one sentence. This was her answer – “I felt guilt about a LACK OF FAITH.”

This is important in order to restore a guilty conscience to a good one – “But the goal of our instruction is **love** from a pure heart (katharos kardia) and a good conscience (agathos suneidesis) and a sincere faith (anupokritos pistis).”

This lesson will study FOUR aspects of restoring a guilty conscience to a good one.
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1. Guilt works from the conscience of the soul. It is one of the five apparatuses of the soul.

- Consciousness
- Conscience- it is the rational man that finds fault with himself.
- Mentality
- Volition
- Emotion

In Titus 1:15, Paul reminds that the mind and conscience can be corrupted by cosmos diabolicus (1:10-16; 2 Cor.4: 1-2).

2. Conscience is developed through the right lobe of mentality.

Conscience assesses the situation based on taught and accepted norm and standards. “When reflection extends to one’s deeds or thoughts assessed in connection with human responsibility, conscience arises in the moral sense.” (Theo. Dict. of NT, pg.900)

Mentality has two lobes for learning. The left lobe is for perception learning while the right lobe is for comprehension learning.

Conscience is composed of learned norms and standards by which things are judged, to the extent of residue knowledge which forms the basis of what we believe a thing to be right or wrong, good or evil (Rom.7:15-22).

This residue knowledge can be learned from many sources or combination of sources such as schooling, parents, peers, religion, culture / society, community, cosmos diabolicus, and Word of God (Ps.119:11).

Early childhood training can establish ideas of right and wrong that influence the conscience of adults.

Parents, teachers, and adult leaders who demand unrealistic standards regarding a child’s conscious perception of his ability can have a negative influence upon him as an adult in regards to self-devaluation, guilt, and shame.

3. You may have heard people say, “let your conscience be your guide.” However, this is not true for a Christian.

The word of God operating under the filling ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit must be the believer’s guide. **Omniscience is greater than conscience (1 John 3:19-20).**

“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.”
(John 16:13)

“For our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.”
(2 Cor.1:12)

4. Let me return to the case study of our lesson and discuss the motivation of the mother that led her to choose one over the other.

- Why did she feel that it was a lack of faith (Rom.10:17)?
- What doctrinal principle did she believe was violated by not choosing the other option (benevolence)?

Fear was what pushed her in the direction of thinking safety of her child.

Important questions– was it realistic or assumed threat? Was she in a safe environment, were other people near, what other options were available to do both good things? Why isn’t she thinking objectively?

- Why did she choose the path of least resistance? **Is this a pattern in her life (Prov.23:7)?**

“I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience (aproskotos/ abstinence from anything that would cause a believer to stumble in truth) both before God and before men.” (Acts 24:16; 23:1)

- Read Matt.26:34-35, 69-75; 27:3-5; 27:19-26 and explain the conflict of conscience.

“Keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.” (1 Tim.1:19).

“I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing witness in the Holy Spirit.”
(Rom.9:1)

“I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day.” (2 Tim.1:3)