

II. LET YOUR CONSCIENCE BE YOUR GUIDE.

-- DISCUSSION Q'S: --

INTRODUCTION

The essence of the Christian faith is not moral people, but people who are connected to God. A conscience is good, but is insufficient for a relationship with God.

DISCUSSION

Who was the dumb kid in your neighborhood growing up who had 'no' conscience?

What did he do?

Is there a thought or action that once left you with a clear conscience that you now know to be wrong?

What accounted for this change in conscience?

When was the last time you wished you could shut your conscience off?

EXPLANATION

- Read I Corinthians 4:3-4.

Based on Paul's words, are we justified by a clear conscience?

How do you think we can become more aware of our spiritual "blind spots?"

What are blind spots you've identified in your own life, your GC, in the Church?

APPLICATION

How are we to maintain a Biblically rooted conscience when the majority believes something else?

How do our hearts become callused against immorality?

MISSION

Understanding a conscience as a thermostat means that it can be reshaped or redefined. How does that impact your hope for the world, including those that are written off as having "no conscience"?

How can we practically encourage others to align their values with what God wants?

What is the essence of Christianity, if it is not morality?

Read Job 1:

What's the best wisdom/reaction you've received during a difficult time?

HOMEWORK:



stupid summer

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TODAY'S VERSES:

Jeremiah 17:9

Matthew 22:19-21

Romans 13:6-7

Matthew 17:24-27

I Corinthians 4:3-4

Romans 7:14-25

MY NOTES:

[OURELEMENT.ORG/STUPIDSUMMER](http://ourelement.org/stupidsummer)

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

ourelement.org/events



CARWASH & JAMBA

Today 12:30-2:30p, \$10

MOM'S DAY OUT

Lompoc Aquatic Center
August 17, 3-6p

EKIDS! BAPTISM CLASS

August 11, 12:45p

NEWCOMER PARTY

Friday, August 16th, 7p

BAPTISMS

September 1st
Signup to be baptized:
<http://goo.gl/CHfIGt>



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-- SERMON NOTES --

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

We all know the inner nagging that drags our thoughts back to our past. But a conscience is not quite what we usually think it to be. And most important of all, Jiminy Cricket's advice "Always let your conscience be your guide" is wrong.

"Conscience" is essentially a Greek concept with a few bits of the Old Testament word "heart" thrown in. The Greek word for "conscience" is *syneidesis*. Originally the word signified a look back into one's past, an evaluation of remembered events in relationship to good and evil. To the Greeks, as reflected in their literature, conscience was usually a "bad conscience," one that relentlessly plagued its owner by accusations about past failures.

Paul argues that those with Old Testament law and those without it are equally without righteousness. In Romans 2:15 he writes that pagans *"show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them."* What Paul describes is the moral faculty that God has designed into human nature. Even those without specific knowledge of God's standards realize intuitively that moral issues exist, and they go on to establish standards in moral areas. But being sinners, we all fall short of the goodness that is expressed in our own standards. They do not do even the good they know of (Romans 2:1). Aware of guilt, we attempt to quiet our accusing conscience by blaming others and/or by excusing our actions.

Paul also points out that the Jews took comfort in knowing God's will, being "instructed by the law" (Romans 2:18). The Hebrew people not only shared humanity's moral sense, but they also had unique access to true moral content. In the law, the Jews had

a revelation from God of His own standards of right and wrong. Thus moral faculty was married to accurate knowledge of moral content. But Paul goes on to argue that just as the pagans act against their uninformed conscience, the Jews have acted against their informed conscience. All humans break the moral code in which they themselves believe.

Our conscience should serve as a witness to the rightness of moral standards AND a conscience also serves as a witness against those who violate their standards, yet, a conscience has never succeeded in producing a truly moral person.

Scripture suggests a number of reasons why a conscience is inadequate as a moral guide. A conscience exists as a faculty of moral evaluation. There is no guarantee that one's evaluation is correct. What a person's conscience says is right may not agree with what God says is right. Even a believer's conscience may be weak. A weak conscience may trap a person into serious sins. As a person's conscience can be "defiled." Someone with a weak conscience is particularly susceptible to acting against what he or she believes is right. Continual violation of a conscience can corrupt a conscience and bring a constant state of defilement (Titus 1:15).

Scripture does not regard a conscience as an infallible guide any more than as a motivator of good behavior.

What the Old Testament sacrifices could not do, the blood of Jesus accomplishes. That blood offered to God does "cleanse our conscience from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God" (Hebrews 9:14). Through Christ we are cleansed "once for all" (Hebrews 10:2, 10, 14). With our sins forgiven and ourselves cleansed, we have the assurance that God himself no longer remembers our lawless acts (Hebrews 10:17).

Cleansing is both objective (accomplished by Jesus' sacrifice) and subjective (experienced increasingly as we appropriate what Jesus has done for us). There will be times when our conscience will still entice us to look back to the past and shout out accusations. Then, we must remember that our sins are forgiven (and the past gone). We must forget them (and it) and look ahead to how we can serve the living God.