

How to Get Rid of a Guilty Conscience

Matthew 5:21-26

I. Why Would You Want to Get Rid of a Guilty Conscience?

- A. **v21-22** - Because God is not as concerned about what you do as He is about the attitude that prompted you to do it.
- v21** - The consequence for murder was capital punishment.
 - In the Jewish system, the one who committed murder was tried before the local elders & stoned to death.
 - During the 1st Century capital punishment could only be carried out by the Romans.
 - v22** - Lord Jesus said that the one who provokes himself to anger is just as guilty before God & deserves the same sentence.
 - Raca** (ῥακά) = idiot, lit. “empty” headed. This is to scorn someone’s intelligence.
 - The consequence - trial by the national supreme court (the Sanhedrin).
 - You fool** (μωρός) = where we get our word “moron”, stupid. This is to scorn someone’s morality.
 - The consequence - burning in hell (Gehenna - the garbage pits south of Jerusalem).
- B. Because a guilty conscience could destroy the effectiveness of your life message.
- What are some of the benefits of a clear conscience?
 - It’s a part of your Christian discipline (**Act 24:16**).
 - It’s a cause for rejoicing (**II Cor 1:12**).
 - It’s a condition for receiving forgiveness (**Prov 28:13**).
 - It’s an essential weapon for fighting Satan. **I Tim 1:18-19 - Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith.**
 - It’s important in supplying you power for your witness (**I Pet 3:16**).
 - This is the testimony your total life presents to the world.

II. v23-26 - How Can You Get Rid of a Guilty Conscience?

- A. The answer is to correct the damage - not just pretend it didn’t happen.
- What do most Christians do? **I Jn 1:9 - If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.**
 - So - you confess your sin to God & He will forgive you - right?
 - v24** says if you can right a wrong you are obligated to do it!
 - But **Act 26:20** says, **I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.**
 - ILL: My Reconciliation with an elder in Glendale.**
- B. Steps to take in making restitution.
- Look into the mirror of God’s word. **Jam 1:23-25 - Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it — he will be blessed in what he does.**
 - How do you use the mirror? Ask yourself:
 - Have you stolen anything?
 - Have you lied to anyone?
 - Have you lost your temper lately?
 - Do you harbor bitterness?
 - Have you acted cool to anyone?
 - Plan & then rehearse your apology.

- a. **ILL: The Prodigal Son.** Lk 15:17-19 - When he came to his senses, he said, “How many of my father’s hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men”.
 - b. Place yourself in the other person’s shoes & then express yourself with a repentant heart (Jam 4:8-10).
 - c. The apology must come from a humble heart. **ILL: Jacob’s Apology to Esau (Gen 33:1-3).**
 - d. Actually confess that you were wrong! Not “I’m sorry, please forgive me” but “I was wrong, will you forgive me?”
3. **v25-26** - Plan the right time to do it.
- a. Saturate the matter with prayer before you go.
 - b. **v25** - Approach your opponent at his most convenient time - when he is in the most receptive mood.
 - c. You wouldn’t approach a wife/mother at supper time when she’s trying to fix the evening meal.
 - d. Make it at a time when neither of you will be rushed.

Remember v24! Make restitution before you worship. Clear up your horizontal relationships before you involve yourself with the vertical one!

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