

Conscious of Your Conscience

A mother was helping her young son with a spelling test. The exam included several pairs of homophones.

Mom asked her son, "Do you know the difference between 'conscious' and 'conscience'?"

"My teacher says 'conscious' is when you're aware of something. But 'conscience' is when you wish you weren't aware of it!"

Isn't it amazing to think about how the Holy Spirit conditions our heart? Conviction is a powerful gift for our walk on the narrow path of righteousness. Like some of the gifts we may have received at Christmas, it may not seem like a blessing at first.

The Holy Spirit always calls us to come up higher. We may feel "good enough," but the Lord reminds our heart we have room to grow.

The Bible is clear about people who get to the place where they do the wrong thing so often they're not even aware of it. Some behaviors fail to measure up to what we claim to believe.

In this new year, I want to grow more conscious of my conscience and more fully aware of its voice. How pure are my thoughts? How aware am I of those thoughts? How can I display excellence in everything I do? It seems the answers to these questions dwell in the depth of my conscience. The Holy Spirit tugs at me to remember what is expected of a child of God.

Scripture also tells us the conscience matters. Paul, in writing to Timothy, warns of those who "depart from the faith and pay attention to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils" (1 Tim. 4:1b). We wonder how these faithless ones reached such a low point.

Paul gives the clue in the next verse: They have “their consciences seared with a hot iron” (1 Tim. 4:2b). He writes of a similar problem in Titus when, speaking of those who are “defiled and unbelieving,” he says, “Even their minds and consciences are defiled” (Titus 1:15c).

When the world considers the conscience, it often pictures the cartoon man with the tiny demon on one shoulder and an angel (or conscience) on the other. Both figures whisper to our comic friend, trying to convince him to go their way.

I don't recommend taking life principles from comic books. But Spirit-filled believers will recognize the idea of both lies and truth coming as whispers deep in our spirit. Satan has lies he strives to share with us; after all, he is the “father of lies” (John 8:44c).

These lies began in the garden. There, the enemy's words led Eve to question God's good work in creation. And the lies continue all the way through Scripture, culminating in the book of Revelation, where this one “who deceives the whole world” (Rev. 12:9b) meets his match for the final time.

Our conscience, informed and inspired by the Holy Spirit, speaks much more powerfully than our cartoon angelette. We should consider whether we regularly heed its words of warning. Through a predictable pattern of sin, we may have seared and scarred our conscience so as to decrease its volume and dull our inner hearing.

We should also recall the dangers of mob mentality or groupthink. This occurs when everyone walks the same walk, talks the same talk and thinks the same thought. God calls us to a higher path. The crowd should not influence a turn to the left or right. We must take a careful peek at our peer group. Lead us not into the temptation of group pleasing. May our conscience always remind us to take note of the seat we choose.

We see this lack of crowd control in the psalmist's cry as he asked God to "search me ... and know my heart; try me, and know my concerns, and see if there is any rebellious way in me, and lead me in the ancient way" (Ps. 139:23-24). He made a conscious appeal to the Lord to inform his conscience.

It's appropriate to note that my conscience has no work to do with other people. My elbows should remain attached to my ribcage when coping with my own season of conviction. I have my own eyeful of lumber. Jesus' response to those who stood ready to condemn the woman caught in adultery informs a godly perspective: "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7b).

May we walk with Jesus while conscious of our conscience. We must learn to walk before spelling matters at all.

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