

Living Guilt-Free



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The Need for a Conscience

Titus 1:15: To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.

Our consciences are not necessarily foolproof guides because we can deceive ourselves or be deceived or simply lack understanding.

1 Corinthians 4:4: My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.

Acts 24:16: So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

An Overly Active Conscience

An overly active conscience is like a nagging person, who badgers you and accuses you and hounds you night and day with broken records of actual or fictional failures or inadequacies.

No matter how much you do or how hard you try, it never is enough to still the nagging voice inside of you. An overly active conscience gives you a much-inflated sense of duty.

It nags you until you are convinced that you never measure up to what is expected of you.



Unrealistic Expectations

An overly active conscience is very susceptible to unrealistic expectations. This propensity to attract and become in bondage to unrealistic expectations comes from our need to have the approval of others. To an overly active conscience, ridden with unrealistic expectations, acceptance is always seen as conditional and that person must continually prove her worthiness to others.

An overly active conscience will make you think that you deserve to be punished in order to be worthy. Forgiveness is not enough; your conscience tells you that you deserve punishment.

Healthy vs. Sick Consciences

A healthy conscience performs a needed function in our lives. It causes us to review what happened, how we responded, assess our culpability and learn from our mistakes or failures. When your conscience goes on auto pilot, however, and never gives you a break, then you are dealing with a sick conscience. Not a corrupted or polluted one necessarily, but one that is unhealthy and destructive, feeding messages that are lies and emotions that are debilitating.

Believing Wrong Messages

Wrong messages from others:

- Overbearing parents
- Critical mates
- Demanding managers
- Anyone in a position of authority

Wrong messages from our culture:

- The image of the ideal woman
- The “you-can-have-it-all” message

Wrong messages from the past:

- Failures from your past
- Rejections from your past
- A dysfunctional family life from your childhood

Erasing Wrong Messages

Isaiah 43:25: I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.

The flashes of memory of past sins, the words of condemnation spoken by someone in authority over us, the feelings of worthlessness caused by our failures—we collect these types of messages all through our lives and store them in some part of our brains for future guilt and shame.

Paul addressed this struggle in his second letter to the Corinthian Christians, as he taught them how to fight their spiritual battles:

2 Corinthians 10:3 - 5

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

To erase wrong messages which plague you with guilt and keep you mired in lies, you must bring every individual thought into captivity and force it to be obedient to Christ. You must recognize the wrong thought pattern and then by a specific choice and decision on your part, you learn to erase that thought pattern giving you those wrong messages by replacing it with right thoughts.

One very effective way to get rid of wrong messages that keep you in bondage is by Scripture memorization.

John 8:31b – 32: Jesus said “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Psalms 119:69 – 72: Though the arrogant have smeared me with lies, I keep your precepts with all my heart. Their hearts are callous and unfeeling, but I delight in your law. It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees. The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.

Are you bombarded with wrong messages from other people—lies that have been smeared in your mind for years? Delight in God’s Word.

Psalms 119:104 – 107: I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws. I have suffered much; preserve my life, O Lord, according to your word.

Have you suffered much from wrong messages which others have taught you, or from an overly active conscience? Your life can be preserved and you can be set free from those wrong messages by the Word of God.

Isaiah 40:8: The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.

Finding Healing for a Sick Conscience

Isaiah 58: 6 – 9a

Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

God's Grace

C. S. Lewis, when asked to identify the one thing about Christianity that set it apart from all other religions, responded, “Oh, that’s easy. It’s grace.” The sad truth, however, is that many of us never live in that wonderful grace, even after we’ve received it, even though we believe it and sing songs about it. Our daily experience often does not reflect that we have been given this amazing grace.

Living in grace is your escape from the plague of an overly active conscience and from those wrong messages that may be plaguing you.

This week’s breakout rooms are for one thing and one thing only: PRAYER.

James 5:16: Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

These passages are included to help you find Scripture that addresses some of the wrong messages you have believed. If you memorize them, you will make a huge first step toward defeating the enemy and setting yourself free!

God's Cure for Wrong Messages

My past sins are too great.

Psalms 103:8 – 12: The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

Isaiah 43:25: I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.

I am not very smart or talented.

Psalms 139:13-14: For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

Matthew 25:23: *(From the parable of the talents)* His master replied, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"

I've messed up too much, too often.

Philippians 3:13-14: Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Isaiah 43:18-19: Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.

Isaiah 61:1-3: The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.

I can never do anything for the Lord.

Philippians 4:13: I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

1 Thessalonians 5:24: The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

I don't have the right looks or personality.

1 Samuel 16:7: But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

1 Corinthians 1:26-29: Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.