

Guilt: Is God Judging Me? When your conscience may or may not bite!

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- I. The Contemporary War Against Guilt
 - A. Examples in society (see examples from: *The Vanishing Conscience* by John MacArthur, chapter 1)
 - B. Explanations for the effects of guilt
 1. Environment
 2. Sickness
 3. Heredity
 4. "False guilt"
 5. "Shame"
 - C. Efforts to eliminate the effects of guilt
 1. More sin
 2. Chemicals
 3. Blame shifting
 4. Self-Esteem
 5. Self-Gratification
- II. The biblical understanding of guilt
 - A. Definition: *A legal _____ or _____ to punishment*
 1. The fact of guilt vs. the feeling of guilt
 2. The idea of "false guilt"
 - a. Dealing with guilt
 - 1) We must never minimize the _____ of guilt
 - a) Guilt is universal because _____ is universal (Rom.3:19, 23).
 - b) Guilt is serious because _____ is a holy Judge (Rom.1:18, 2:5-6).
 - c) Guilt will _____ even if it is explained away or if its effects are somehow lessened, and where guilt remains punishment is inevitable.
 - 2) We must never minimize the _____ of guilt
 - 3) We must never underestimate the _____ of guilt.



3. The "warning light" that reveals guilt

a. The importance of a clean conscience

1) Explicit references (Acts 23:1, 24:16; I Tim.1:19; Hebrews 13:18)

2) Implicit principles from Romans 14:23

If we don't believe a certain action is right, it would be a sinful choice to go ahead with it. If we choose to do something we are not sure is right, we remove ourselves from the realm of faith and obstruct our relationship with Christ (James 1:6-7).

b. Variations of conscience referred to in Scripture

1) A _____ conscience (I Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:15; Ephesians 4:19)

Such a conscience has been silenced through repeated sin, bad theology, or excuses.

2) An _____ conscience (cf. Lev.4:22-24; I Timothy 1:13;

Hebrews 5:14)

Our consciences need to be continually trained to understand the "whole counsel of God," because we are culpable for our sins of ignorance (and for our ignorance itself).

3) An _____ conscience (Rom.14:1-5, 23)

Sometimes we believe that a desire, thought, or action is morally wrong when the Bible does not actually condemn it. In those cases we are required to act according to our conscience (Rom.14:23), but we should also seek to retrain our conscience according to biblical standards (Rom.14:22).

So our conscience should not be our "guide," as the old saying goes, but it should be our "guard."

4) A _____ conscience

c. The solution to guilt

The only true answer to guilt is forgiveness through repentance. God must remove the guilt of our sin through His appointed means of repentance. This is true before salvation (Luke 24:47) and after (Matt.6:12).

