

# Shame and Clearing your Conscience

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## **1 Timothy 1:18, 19**

*“This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting this, some have made shipwreck of their faith”*

## **Acts 24:16**

*“So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man.”*

Having a clear conscience allows us to be at peace with God, family, relatives, employers, teachers, former friends, and others, so that no one can point a finger and say, *“You have wronged me and you’ve never made it right.”* Because of the guilt we carry, we naturally blame other people or circumstances in order to rationalize away our offenses. The greater the guilt, the more we tend to blame, which results in bondage to bitterness.

## **Prayer**

*“Dear Heavenly Father, I realize that the enemy will use a defiled conscience to defeat me in temptations and that guilt will only take me deeper and deeper into sin. I ask that right now Your Holy Spirit would bring to my mind those people who I have wronged. I ask this in the precious name of Jesus Christ, amen.”*

## **Clearing Your Conscience**

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1. If someone you know was making a list of people who had hurt them and never asked their forgiveness, would you be on that list? Pray, asking God to reveal anyone who might feel you hurt them.
2. Make a list of all the people God brings to your mind whom you have offended and have not sought forgiveness from.
3. If possible, go over your list with a mature Christian and identify the basic offense against each person on that list. If you need to ask God’s forgiveness for those offenses, do so now. It’s always the right time to get right with God.
4. Rule out those people in whose lives your reappearance now would cause serious difficulty (for example, an old girlfriend who is now married).

5. Make a plan to go to each individual and ask their forgiveness. Do not write a letter; this documents the offense. Do not mention their offense or responsibility in the matter. An example of how to convey genuine repentance is: *“God has convicted me of how wrong I have been in [my attitudes and actions]. I know that I have sinned against God and you in these areas. Will you forgive me?”* Refrain from statements such as, *“I was wrong, but you were too,” “If I was wrong, please forgive me,” “I’m sorry,”* etc.

Contact those individuals by telephone if possible, and be brief. Tell the particular person that as you have been looking back over your life, you realize that you failed him in \_\_\_\_\_ way, naming the offense. Then ask for forgiveness.

When asking forgiveness, keep in mind the following:

- Confess only to those offended
  - Avoid sensual details
  - Be as brief and clear as possible
  - Clear your conscience quickly
  - Clear the greatest offense first
  - Be willing to accept possible rejection of your request
  - Do not include others in your confession
6. Make restitution where needed.
  7. If certain people have benefited you but you’ve never shown appreciation, express to them gratitude for what you have gained. If you have a problem with being grateful, start sending thank-you notes to people who have benefited you, sharing how God has used them to build, strengthen, or challenge you.
  8. Ask God to take back all ground given to Satan because you have purposed in your heart to contact these people and make things right.
  9. Receive Christ’s forgiveness. 1 John 1:9 states, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

Adapted from *Reclaiming Surrendered Ground*, p. 76