

The Ministry Medical

No. 2: Are you serving with a clear conscience?

I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. (1 Tim. 1:3)

“My conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise, God help me. Amen” (Luther at the Diet of Worms, 18 April, 1521)

Conscience: ‘a man’s judgement of himself according to the judgement of God of him’ (William Ames, *Conscience and the cases thereof*, 1643)

1. Am I more concerned about the verdict of God or the verdict of man?

We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts. (1 Thess. 2:4)

I care very little if I am judged by you ... It is the Lord who judges me. (1 Cor. 4:3-4)

Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day (2 Tim. 4:8)

“Those who praise us are probably as much mistaken as those who abuse us... If we have the approbation of our God, certified by a placid conscience, we can afford to be indifferent to the opinions of our fellow men, whether they commend or condemn. If we cannot reach this point we are babes and not men.” (Spurgeon, *The Blind Eye and the Deaf Ear*, Lectures to my students)

2. Am I being faithful in warning and watching over people or am I neglecting my duties out of laziness or fear?

This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. (1 Corinthians 4:1-2)

Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you. For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. (Acts 20:26-27)

And it’s about watching over the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Being shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. ...Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honourably in every way. (Hebrews 13:17-18)

3. Am I speaking and acting with sincerity or duplicity?

Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's grace. (2 Cor 1:12)

I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit— I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. (Romans 9:1-2)

...wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God. (1 Corinthians 4:5)

4. Is my conscience becoming more sensitive or more seared?

...holding on to faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and so have suffered shipwreck with regard to the faith. (1 Tim 1:19)

...whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. (1 Tim. 4:2)

5. Am I coming to Christ for a clean conscience or am I just living with suppressed guilt?

My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. (1 Corinthians 4:4)

"The fear [of judgment] seeps through, but it's veiled. It appears as ...a lingering sense of not measuring up, and defensiveness... If your life were truly known by others, would you feel exposed and ashamed? Are there secret sins currently in your life that you don't want to confess? Are there sins that, when you confess them, you are already planning on doing again? If these questions reveal hidden sins, be overjoyed that you feel guilty." (Ed Welch, *Running Scared*)

let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience (Heb. 10:22)

Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

(Psalm 139:23-24)

- Kevin DeYoung, *The Art of Turning*
- Tim Keller, *The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness*
- Christopher Ash, *Pure Joy: Rediscover your conscience*
- Ed Welch, *Running Scared*, chp. 19-20