

# What Can I Do with My Guilt?

Crucial Questions

**R. C. SPROUL**

What Can I  
Do with My Guilt?

Crucial Questions booklets provide a quick introduction to definitive Christian truths. This expanding collection includes titles such as:

Who Is Jesus?

Can I Trust the Bible?

Does Prayer Change Things?

Can I Know God's Will?

How Should I Live in This World?

What Does It Mean to Be Born Again?

Can I Be Sure I'm Saved?

What Is Faith?

What Can I Do with My Guilt?

What Is the Trinity?

TO BROWSE THE REST OF THE SERIES,  
PLEASE VISIT: [LIGONIER.ORG/CQ](http://LIGONIER.ORG/CQ)

CQ

# What Can I Do with My Guilt?

R. C. SPROUL



LIGONIER MINISTRIES

*What Can I Do with My Guilt?*

© 2011 by R.C. Sproul

Published by Ligonier Ministries  
421 Ligonier Court, Sanford, FL 32771  
Ligonier.org

Printed in China

RR Donnelley

0001121

First edition, eleventh printing

ISBN 978-1-64289-044-0 (Paperback)

ISBN 978-1-64289-072-3 (ePub)

ISBN 978-1-64289-100-3 (Kindle)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without the prior written permission of the publisher, Ligonier Ministries. The only exception is brief quotations in published reviews.

Cover design: Ligonier Creative

Interior typeset: Katherine Lloyd, The DESK

All Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

The Library of Congress has cataloged the Reformation Trust edition as follows:

Sproul, R.C. (Robert Charles), 1939-2017

What can I do with my guilt? / R.C. Sproul.

p. cm. -- (The crucial questions series)

ISBN 978-1-56769-258-7

1. Guilt--Religious aspects--Christianity. 2. Forgiveness--Religious aspects--Christianity. I. Title. II. Series.

BT722.S67 2011

234'.5--dc22

2011014993

## Contents

<b>One</b>	Guilt and Guilt Feelings . . . . .	1
<b>Two</b>	Dealing with Guilt . . . . .	21
<b>Three</b>	The Cure—Forgiveness. . . . .	35



## Chapter One

# Guilt and Guilt Feelings

**D**uring my career as a seminary professor, I frequently have been called upon to teach courses on Christian apologetics. The term *apologetics* comes from the Greek word *apologia*, which means “to make a reply.” Thus, the discipline of apologetics is not concerned with apologizing for being a Christian, as the term might suggest. Rather, its aim is to provide a rational, intellectual defense of the truth claims of Christianity and to answer objections that people raise to the faith. This can be a very abstract, philosophical enterprise.



## What Can I Do with My Guilt?

As I engage in apologetics, I often converse with people who are not Christian believers; some of them are indifferent, while others are openly hostile to Christianity. For this reason, when I have these discussions, I often encounter questions about various truth claims. I think, as Francis Schaeffer used to say, that it is the Christian responsibility to give honest answers to honest questions, as far as we are able, so I try my best to do that.

Sooner or later, however, particularly in discussions with skeptics and people who are philosophically hostile to Christianity, I pause from my attempts to give answers and raise a particularly pointed question of my own. I say: “We’ve discussed the abstractions, the rational arguments for the existence of God and so on. Let’s lay those aside just for a moment and let me ask you this: What do you do with your guilt?”

This question often provokes a dramatic shift in the tenor of the discussion. It touches on something that is a visceral matter for many people, something that affects them at an existential level, so it moves the discussion beyond the abstract realm. In most instances, the person with whom I am speaking does not become angry when I ask this question. Sometimes the person will say that he has no guilt or that guilt is simply a term invented by religious

## Guilt and Guilt Feelings

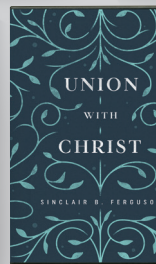
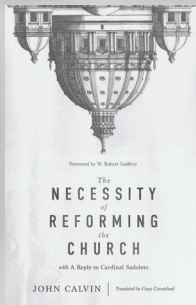
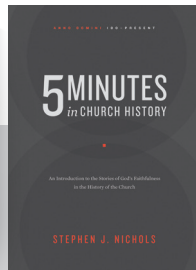
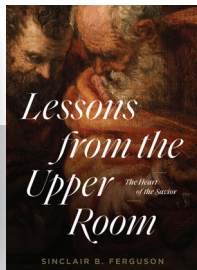
people. Usually, however, the person treats the question seriously and tries to explain how he is dealing with guilt. This, I think, is evidence that every human being knows what guilt is. Every human being, at some level and at some point in his or her life, has to deal with it.

### Guilt: An Objective Reality

What is guilt? In the first place, we have to say that guilt is not subjective but objective because it corresponds to an objective standard or reality. That leads me to the simplest definition of guilt that I can compose: Guilt is that which a person incurs when he violates a law.

We understand how this works in the criminal justice system. If someone breaks a law, a statute that has been enacted by a government, and that person is apprehended for having broken the law, he may have to appear in court. The person may say he is not guilty, in which case he is entitled to a trial, frequently a trial by jury. At such a trial, evidence is produced and testimony is heard. At the end of the trial, the members of the jury come to a verdict. They decide whether, in their judgment, the person is, in fact, guilty of breaking the law he is charged with violating.

We want to see men and women  
around the world connect the deep truths  
of the Christian faith to everyday life.



Order your copy of this title, download the digital version,  
or browse thousands of resources at **Ligonier.org**.



LIGONIER MINISTRIES