

# How Can I Develop a Christian Conscience?

Crucial Questions

**R. C. SPROUL**

# How Can I Develop a Christian Conscience?

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

# How Can I Develop a Christian Conscience?

R. C. SPROUL



LIGONIER MINISTRIES

*How Can I Develop a Christian Conscience?*

© 2013 by R.C. Sproul

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

Printed in China

RR Donnelley

0000223

First edition, seventh printing

ISBN 978-1-64289-050-1 (Paperback)

ISBN 978-1-64289-078-5 (ePub)

ISBN 978-1-64289-106-5 (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

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

How can I develop a Christian conscience? / R.C. Sproul.

pages cm. -- (The crucial questions series ; No. 15)

ISBN 978-1-56769-327-0

1. Conscience--Religious aspects--Christianity. 2. Christian ethics.

I. Title.

BJ1278.C66S67 2013

241'.1--dc23

2013014033

## Contents

<b>One</b>	The Question of Conscience . . . . .	1
<b>Two</b>	The Creation Ordinances . . . . .	11
<b>Three</b>	The Razor's Edge . . . . .	21
<b>Four</b>	The Legalist Distortion . . . . .	31
<b>Five</b>	The Distortion of Lawlessness . . . . .	39
<b>Six</b>	The Degrees of Sin . . . . .	47



## Chapter One

# The Question of Conscience

**I**t is vitally important for Christians to consider the issue of conscience. In the classical view, the conscience was thought to be something that God implanted within our minds. Some people even went so far as to describe the conscience as the voice of God within us. The idea was that God created us in such a way that there was a link between the sensitivities of the mind and the conscience with its built-in responsibility to God's eternal laws. For example, consider the law of nature that the Apostle Paul



## How Can I Develop a Christian Conscience?

says is written on our hearts. There was a sensitivity of conscience long before Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the tablets of stone.

The famous philosopher Immanuel Kant was agnostic with respect to man's ability to reason from this world to the transcendence of God. Even so, he offered what he called a moral argument for the existence of God that was based on what he called a universal sense of oughtness implanted in the heart of every human being. Kant believed that everyone carried with them a genuine sense of what one ought to do in a given situation. He called this the categorical imperative. He believed there are two things that fill the soul with an ever-new and growing wonder and reverence: the starry heavens above and the moral law within. This is important to note because even in the realm of secular philosophy, there has historically been an awareness of conscience.

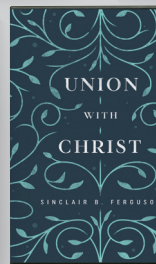
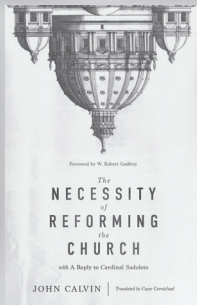
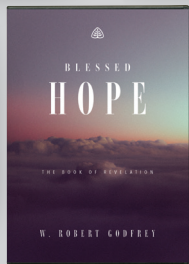
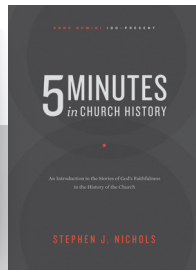
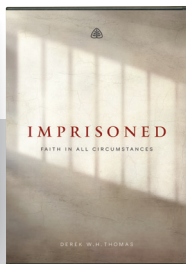
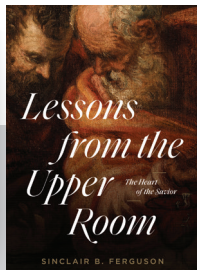
Historically and classically, the conscience was seen to be our link to the transcendent ethic that resides in God. But with the moral revolution of our culture, a different approach to conscience has emerged, and this is what is called the relativistic view. This is indeed the age of relativism, where values and principles are considered to be mere expressions of the desires and interests of a given group of

people at a given time in history. We repeatedly hear that there are no absolutes in our world today.

Yet if there are no absolute, transcendent principles, how do we explain this mechanism that we call the conscience? Within a relativistic framework, we see the conscience being defined in evolutionary terms: people's subjective inner personalities are reacting to evolutionary advantageous taboos imposed upon them by their society or by their environment. Having reached a period in our development when these taboos no longer serve to advance our evolution, they can be discarded with nary a thought of the consequences.

As a professor some years ago, I counseled a college girl who was overtaken with a sense of profound guilt because she had indulged in sexual activities with her fiancé. She explained to me that she had spoken of her guilt to a local pastor. He counseled her that the way to get over her guilt was to recognize the source of it. He reasoned that she had done nothing wrong; rather, her feelings of guilt were a result of her having been a victim of living in a society ruled by a puritan ethic. He explained that she had been conditioned by certain sexual taboos that made her feel guilty when she shouldn't and that what she had done was a mature, responsible expression of her own emerging adulthood.

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