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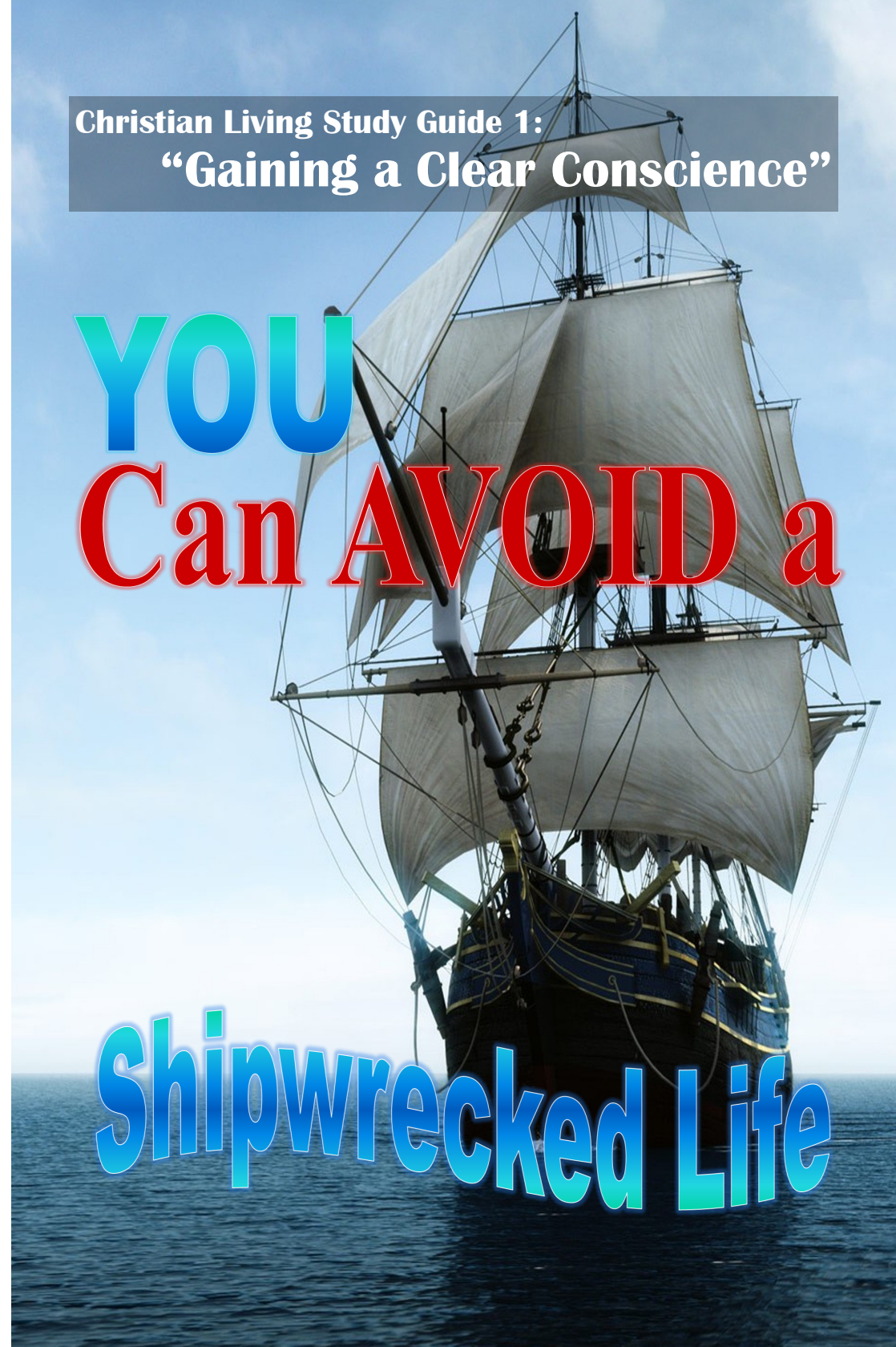
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Christian Living Study Guide 1: “Gaining a Clear Conscience”

YOU
Can AVOID a

Shipwrecked Life



Clear Conscience

Having a clear conscience before God and man is so important that the apostle Paul referred to it as a powerful weapon in the fight of faith. In fact, without it, Paul warned that a life is shipwrecked!

“(Hold) faith, and a **GOOD CONSCIENCE**; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck,” 1 Timothy 1:19.

1. What does it mean to have a good or pure conscience?

ANSWER: A “good conscience” is from the Greek word *ayagos* meaning a “strong, healthy” conscience that is without any offense toward God and toward men.

- [Acts 24:16](#) “*And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men.*”

No one has lived so perfectly as to have never wronged anyone. But the term “pure conscience” (2 Timothy 1:3) is from the Greek word *kauapos*, meaning “cleansed or purged.” God instructs us to purge our consciences (in the Blood of the Lamb) from our past dead works so that we can serve the living God.

- [Hebrews 9:14](#) “*How much more shall the Blood of Jesus (Yahshua), Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, **purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?***”



DEFINITION OF A CLEAR CONSCIENCE: When you can look all people in the eye knowing they cannot accuse you of having done them wrong without trying to make it right.

LESSON STUDY—1 continued

- 6) Why is it important to deal with and forgive offenses against me before I can consider what I have done to cause offense in the other person (question 6, p 6)? _____

- 7) What are the two eternal goals in making a confession to those I’ve offended (page 7)?
 - _____
 - _____
- 8) Why does restitution involve restoring more than was originally taken (question 11, p 10)? _____

- 9) What is the “mirror” GOD would have me use to view my offenses in their true nature (question 7, p 7)? _____

- 10) What are the steps I should take in gaining a clear conscience?
 - Prayerfully determine _____ (question 5, p 4).
 - List _____ (question 6, p 6).
 - Comprehend and list _____ (question 7, p 7).
 - Work out a plan _____ (question 10, p 9).
 - Ask forgiveness, starting with _____ (question 12, p 11).
 - Pray and _____ (question 13, p 11).

IT HAPPENED SO LONG AGO, IT DOESN'T MATTER NOW

When you have prayed and asked *God* to reveal your offenses, all offenses He reveals are important to take care of. As it says in Matthew 5:23,

*“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and **THERE REMEMBEREST** that thy brother hath aught against thee...”*

LESSON STUDY—1

- 1) What did Paul warn could happen if a person doesn't hold faith and a good conscience (1 Timothy 1:9): _____

- 2) What does it mean to have a “good conscience,” according to Acts 24:16?

- 3) How urgent is it to take the time to confess our past wrongs to those we've offended (Matthew 5:23-24)? _____

- 4) What five things does *GOD* take into account in having a clear conscience before Him (see question 3, p 3):
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
- 5) What are the 8 godly attitudes one must have to approach an offended person and make things right (question 4, p 3-4)?
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____

2. When should we seek a good conscience?

ANSWER: Right away! Having a clear conscience is so important that *God* doesn't even want us to worship Him until we have first made our offenses right with the people we've wronged. Thus, if we wish to serve *God*, having a clean conscience should be a very high priority.

- Matthew 5:23-24 “*Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”*

3. What is involved in having a conscience void of offense?

ANSWER: *God* takes into account our thoughts, words, actions, attitudes, and motives. Where we have done wrong to *God* or man in any of these five areas, we must confess it and prayerfully do all we can to make it right.

- EVERY THOUGHT should be made right—2 Corinthians 10:5.
- EVERY WORD will be accounted for—Matthew 12:36
- EVERY ACTION will be judged—2 Corinthians 5:10
- EVERY ATTITUDE is read by Heaven—Proverbs 6:13-14
- EVERY MOTIVE is to be established in righteousness—Jer. 17:9-10

4. What are the 8 attitudes necessary to gaining a clear conscience?

ANSWER: They are listed in Matthew 5:3-10. These right attitudes are so important in gaining a clear conscience that you should not even begin contacting those you've wronged until you first prayerfully seek to have these 8 attitudes. When you ask a person to forgive you, be:

- POOR IN SPIRIT—like a beggar, who is grateful for what is given, not demanding of the person's forgiveness.
- TRULY MOURNFUL FOR YOUR WRONGS—ask the Holy Spirit to show you your offenses through Heaven's and the other person's eyes. This vision will break the hardness of the heart.
- MEEK—fully yield your rights to *God's* control. Usually those we've wronged have violated our rights in some way. Yield rights.

- **SPIRITUALLY HUNGRY**—when you long to please GOD and want His righteousness so much it’s like a hunger (which doesn’t diminish with time), you will want it badly enough to do what it takes to make your past wrongs right.
- **MERCIFULNESS**—Showing mercy is not getting the punishment we deserve. When you seek forgiveness with those you’ve wronged, you’re asking for mercy from them. But, you also must show mercy towards them for their offenses toward you as well.
- **PEACEMAKING**—The purpose of seeking forgiveness isn’t just to have gone through the motions, it is about seeking to bring peace and even salvation to the hearts of those you’ve offended. A right confession will bring peace to the heart, delivering from all bitterness and wrath.
- **PURITY IN HEART**—Seeking a clear conscience isn’t just about removing the pressure of guilt. It is about dealing with the root problems which caused the offense in order to completely restore the one whom we’ve offended.
- **WILLINGNESS TO SUFFER**—Seeking forgiveness, in the true sense of the word, involves making restitution for our wrongs. This process may cost us something. Be willing to do whatever it takes to make your past wrongs right, no matter the cost.



5. What is the first step?

ANSWER: The first step is to determine whom we’ve wronged. We cannot determine whom we’ve wronged simply by introspection. This is measuring our wrongs against what we think is right or wrong. The Bible tells us not to use this standard of measurement in 2 Corinthians 10:12:

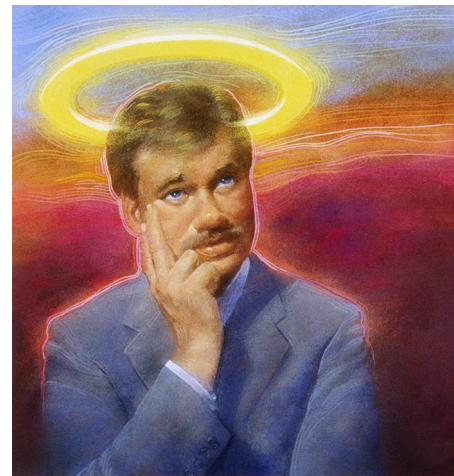
“For we dare not... compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.”

Choose to contact the offended person with either a phone call or a personal visit. Of these options, the personal visit is most ideal. By speaking directly with the individual, your sincerity comes through in voice and body language. Clarification can take place, if needed. And it is possible to gain the verbal assurance that you are forgiven at the end.

14. How to avoid the pitfalls of pride.

Because genuine repentance is so big in freeing hearts from bitterness and bringing about restoration, the enemy of souls will work to prevent it from taking place. One of the main ways the devil does this is through manifesting pride in the heart of the potential confessor (you). If he can get you to rationalize away your need to make this confession, he will prevent the restorative workings of Divine grace from fully touching your life, or the lives whom you’ve offended. Here are some prideful ways the enemy tempts us to rationalize away our need for confession:

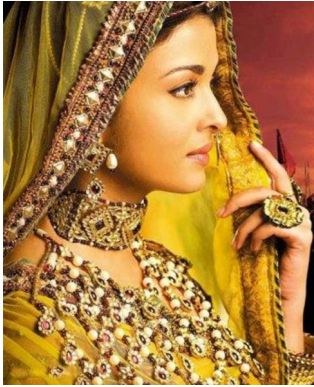
IT HAPPENED BEFORE I WAS A CHRISTIAN



Having become a Christian is all the more reason to seek a conscience “void of offense with GOD and man.” Perhaps your confession will prove a powerful testimony of the newly changed life you now lead in *Yahshua*.

MY SINS ARE ALL COVERED BY CHRIST’S BLOOD, SO WHY DO I NEED TO GO THROUGH THIS?

It is true that Jesus’s Blood cleanses our past sins. But, it is also true that if we don’t make past wrongs right with the people we’ve offended, our witness, ministry, and ability to serve God can be shipwrecked (1 Timothy 1:19). In addition, we ARE to be our brother’s keeper in the sense that we are to care when he is weighed down with bitterness or offenses. These things can deny him salvation (Matthew 18:35). So it isn’t enough to just have our own sins covered. Once we are saved, we are to do all in our power to help our fellowman also find deliverance and salvation.



Our approach in prayerfully winning the heart of the offended one is to be similar. We should prepare ahead of time by prayer, asking *God* to soften the heart of the offended one and prepare him or her for our contact ahead of time. Fasting during this prayer time is also a very good idea.

Then we should carefully and prayerfully choose the right setting to speak to the offended one.

We should also plan what we will say before we approach the offended individual.

WRITE OUT THE WORDING FOR YOUR CONFESSION

While it is not best to make your formal apology in a letter, writing out what you will say ahead of time is a very good idea.

Job 34:3 *“For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat.”*

When you choose what words to use in your confession, keep in mind that your focus must always be on your part of the offense. In no way should blame be projected upon the other person. Do not say something to the effect of, **“I was wrong, but so were you.”** Also, do not allow pride to rear its ugly head by saying **“IF I was wrong...”** Avoid making excuses for the wrong or speaking in a flippant manner by simply saying **“I’m sorry,”** without going any deeper.

Instead, say something like this: **“God has convicted me that I was wrong in _____ (list your wrong attitudes, behaviors, and words). I am sorry that I have hurt you in this way. Would you forgive me?”**

SELECT THE BEST VENUE

It is easiest to write the offended person(s) a letter. This avoids personal confrontation. But, personal contact is vital to fully achieving the goals.

So, if we cannot use personal introspection to determine whom we have wronged, how **do** we determine which people to make things right with? The Bible tells us that *GOD* is the only One Who really knows our hearts. He is the only One Who can determine what needs to be made right, as it says in the following verses:

Psalm 26:2 *“Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.”*

(“reins” is from the Hebrew word פלייה *kilyaw*, which is figuratively the mind, or the innermost self)

Jeremiah 17:10 *“I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins...”*

The first step in having a heart truly “void of offense” in *GOD*’s Eyes, is to pray, asking *GOD* to call to mind all the people you have offended. When you pray, claim Psalm 139:23-24, asking *GOD* to reveal the names of those you need to make things right with. Pray this prayer over and over (over a period of time) until no more names of people are brought to your mind.

Psalm 139:23-24 *“Search me, O GOD, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”*

When you have prayed this prayer, use the checklist below to help you list the people, against whom you have committed offenses:

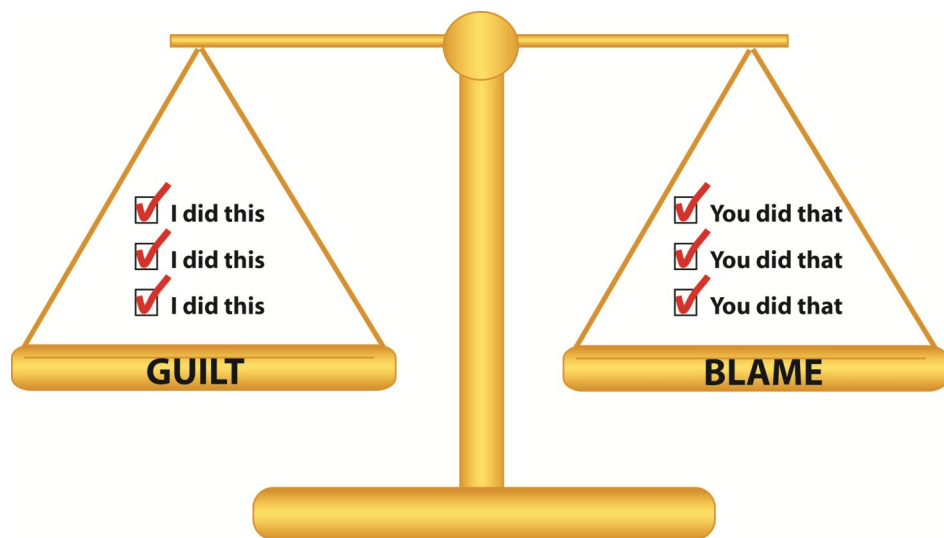
- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> GOD | <input type="checkbox"/> Your spouse |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Your father | <input type="checkbox"/> Your pastor(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Your mother | <input type="checkbox"/> Your teacher(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Your child(ren) | <input type="checkbox"/> Your friend(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Your stepfather | <input type="checkbox"/> Your neighbor(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Your stepmother | <input type="checkbox"/> Your employer(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Your brother(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> Your business associate(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Your sister(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> Store owner(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Your relative(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> The government |

When *God* no longer brings more names to mind in response to your prayer, your list of offended people is complete. Now you are ready to proceed to the next step in gaining a clear conscience.

6. What is the second step?

ANSWER: List **THEIR** offenses toward you. Usually offense is a two-way street. This means that it is likely that those whom you have offended have also done something to offend you.

Why is it necessary to list others' offenses before we can deal with our offenses to them? Because it is human nature to balance guilt with blame, as is illustrated below:



While we feel there is something to blame in another, we cannot fully see or be cleansed from our own guilt. For this reason, we must begin by acknowledging and forgiving the hurts others have inflicted upon us.

Consider the names of the people whom you have offended. Then list (on a separate sheet of paper) how each of these listed persons has offended or harmed you. Once you have completed the list of how each person has offended you, pray over these offenses. Ask *God* to give you forgiveness and love toward those who have offended you. Ask Him to remove any bitterness. And begin actively praying for the salvation of these listed names.

Matthew 18:21-22 “Then came Peter to Him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till 7x? Jesus (Yahshua) saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until 7x: but, until 70x7.”

12. How do I start making things right with the One I've offended most?

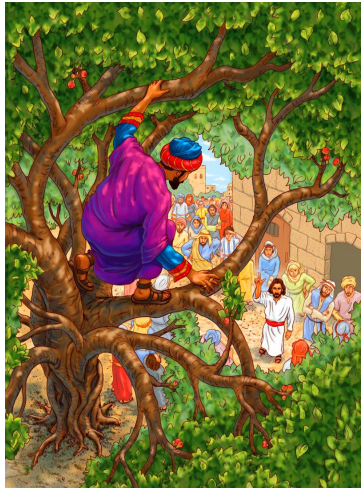
ANSWER: Ask forgiveness, starting with the One you've wronged the most—God. The two great commandments instruct us to “1) love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; 2) and (love) thy neighbour as thyself;” (Luke 10:27). When we truly love God, and the people in our lives, we will not demonstrate attitudes, behaviors, and speech that is hurtful or offensive to anyone. This is why the Bible says that “love is the fulfilling of the Law,” (Romans 13:10). Thus, in causing offense, we have broken God's Law of love. For this reason, the first One we must seek forgiveness from is God Himself. As you seek forgiveness from God, be specific in listing your sins (1 John 1:9). You may wish to pray the following prayer (or pray something similar):

“Dear Heavenly Father, I confess that I have sinned against You. You have said (in Matthew 25:40) that when I do something to offend one of my fellow humans, I have done the offense against You. I confess the sin of wronging You and _____ (name of offended person) by _____ (name your offense). I repent of this sin which I have done against You and _____ (name). I now confess this sin to You and thank You that You have promised to forgive me and cleanse me from all unrighteousness through the Blood of Jesus Christ (Yahshua).”

13. How can I approach those I've offended?

ANSWER: Pray and plan ahead. There are many important factors to consider. You need to prayerfully choose the right wording for your confession. You will need to determine the proper venue. It is also important to choose the best time to approach the individuals on your list. Start with the human you have offended the most. Then prayerfully gauge his/her level of offense. If it is extreme, you may find great wisdom and value in praying and fasting for a brief period prior to making your approach. Consider how Esther approached the king in the Bible. True, she was not confessing a wrong. Still, her example gives many insights for approaching a person in a potentially explosive situation. She fasted and prayed for three days before going to him, then she chose the right time and setting. In the end, God was able to use her to win the heart of a king.

A biblical, example showing how restitution is part of repentance is given in the story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19). Zacchaeus was a tax collector. He had wronged many people by overcharging them in the amount of tax they had to pay. He would then pocket the overage. In this manner, Zacchaeus had become a very wealthy, albeit unpopular, man.



When Jesus (*Yahshua*) came to his town, Zacchaeus wanted to meet Him more than anything. He left his tax collection booth and ran to join the crowd pressed closely around the Saviour. Being too short to see Jesus (*Yahshua*) over the crowd, Zacchaeus climbed a nearby tree. From his perch there, he expected to at least watch the Saviour pass by beneath him. But, the Saviour didn't just pass on. He stopped, under the tree, looked up and called Zacchaeus down. In that instant, Zacchaeus' heart melted. He gave his heart fully to the Lord. As evidence of this fact, he knelt at the Saviour's feet and promised, "... *Half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken any thing from any man be false accusation, I restore him fourfold,*" (Luke 19:8).

Not only did Zacchaeus offer to pay back his ill-gotten gain, he promised to restore four times what he had taken! His was a true, heartfelt repentance; evidenced by his willingness to make such complete restitution!



11. Why does the Bible say to give more than was taken?

ANSWER: Because God wants the offender to fully cover the person's loss. Simply restoring the stolen merchandise doesn't fully restore the shop-owner's losses. He may have had to replace the stolen merchandise, which would include shipping costs. He may also have lost an opportunity to sell the item during the period of waiting for the replacement to arrive. This is why God tells the offender to pay double what was stolen (Exodus 22:1-7).

Now you are ready to begin prayerfully working toward two eternal goals:

- 1) **To gain a clear conscience before God and man (Acts 24:16)**
- 2) **To be used as an instrument of salvation for those you have offended.**



Only when these two deeper goals exist can true repentance and the removal of the offense take place.

7. What is the third step in gaining a good conscience?



ANSWER: **Comprehend and list YOUR offenses toward others.** It is very easy to minimize one's own offenses. Therefore, it is important to again seek God's help in this process. Ask Him to show you your offenses through Heaven's Eyes and through the eyes of those you have offended.

As you pray for this revelation, use the mirror of the other person's perspective to help you see your offenses from their viewpoint. Ask: "If I were to ask those who are offended with me what I did against them, what would they say?" Then write down the prayerful revelations which come to mind. This is the mirror which will show you the true nature of your offense. Sort your list of those you've offended into a new order. Put the names of those you've offended the most first, down to the one you've offended least.

Prayerfully ask God to reveal your wrong WORDS, ACTIONS, and ATTITUDES toward each person you have offended. Fill in the table (page 8) for each person you've offended (Make copies of the table, as needed.)

MY OFFENSES AGAINST _____ (name)

Offensive Words <i>(List them under the appropriate category below)</i>	Offensive Actions <i>(List them under the appropriate category below)</i>	Offensive Attitudes <i>(List them under the appropriate category below)</i>
Critical	Careless	Proud
Judgmental	Dishonest	Deceptive
Slanderous	Disobedient	Willful
Untruthful	Sensual	Presumptuous
Harsh	Disrespectful	Selfish
Disruptive	Lazy	Ungrateful
Vulgar	Destructive	Unreliable
Profane	Indulgent	Disloyal
Contentious	Tardy	Unconcerned
Indiscreet	Wasteful	Insensitive
Unkind	Unjust	Angry
Cruel	Forgetful	Rebellious

8. Why is identifying one's offensive attitudes important in genuine repentance?

ANSWER: Attitudes are the fundamental “life-force” from which our actions and words spring. Wrong attitudes are actually more hurtful than the wrong words or actions. Our words and actions are like the fruit which grows from the attitudinal root. As it says in Matthew 12:34, “...Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”

9. Why can't I just apologize to the offended people and get it over with? Why the long process to prepare?

ANSWER: Because true repentance is not just “going through the motions” with those we've wronged. The real goal is to actually be clean in Heaven's Eyes. In so doing, we also seek to bring salvation to the heart of the offended one. How does a godly confession of wrongs lead to salvation? Because when a person has become resentful and offended by something we have done, this person is brought low by the spiritual cancer of bitterness. But, when we offer an apology with Holy-Spirit-filled attitudes, genuine repentance, and the impress of Heaven; our attempt at reconciliation brings the prompting of the Holy Spirit to the recipient. This gives the opportunity for forgiveness to replace bitterness in the offended person's heart. And as they are enabled to forgive, God can forgive them also (Matthew 18:35). This brings salvation. Thus, a godly repentance brings the opportunity for salvation to those we've offended.

10. What is the fourth step in gaining a good conscience?

ANSWER: Work out a plan of restitution toward those you have wronged. You must be willing to suffer blows to your pride, pocketbook, or reputation. Whatever the cost to make the wrong right, seek the blessing of Heaven deeply enough to be willing to pay it.