

## HOLD A GOOD CONSCIENCE IN A SINFUL WORLD

### *Note to the speaker:*

Help the brothers to meet the challenge of developing a godly conscience by first calling their attention to worldly influences that affect the development of a good conscience. Explain how to cultivate a good conscience and the benefits that come from following an internal witness bearer

### **IT IS A CHALLENGE TO HOLD A GOOD CONSCIENCE IN A SINFUL WORLD** (8 min.)

All persons have the faculty of conscience

It is our internal witness bearer, the capacity to judge oneself (*it-1* 500)

Literally means co-knowledge, or having knowledge of something with oneself, the voice of “the secret self” (Ps 51:6; Ro 9:1)

Shaped by training and experience, conscience judges and can excuse or accuse one

This inner moral sense implanted in humans at creation and inborn in people of all nations (Read Romans 2: 14, 15)

The conscience can be abused and rendered an unsafe guide (Tit 1:15, 16)

Majority today have distorted view of what constitutes sin

Increasing trend to ‘do your own thing’ has led to perversions of all kinds

Erosion of moral values has resulted in calloused and seared consciences, with wicked men going from bad to worse (2Ti 3:1-3, 13)

Challenge to hold a good conscience in environment where ‘spirit of the world’ predominates (Eph 2:1-3)

### **EVER-INCREASING DANGER OF BEING INFLUENCED BY WORLD** (12 min.)

Vigilance necessary lest love of righteousness and hatred of wickedness cool off (Ps 37:27; Am 5:14, 15)

Worldly influences build up pressures to follow the crowd and do what pleases self (Pr 1:10, 11, 13)

Never minimize possibility of world’s influence

Can be gradual eroding of standards, so that what was once repulsive is now acceptable or allowable

For example, experiences show that debasing music can influence thought and conduct (Ex 32:1-6, 17, 18; *g93* 2/22 25-7; *g93* 6/8 4-7)

Moral breakdown has become so widespread that gross violators become celebrities and are glorified (*g92* 1/22 3-5)

Danger exists because, although most people acknowledge eroded conditions, they still accept them and contribute to them

Especially dangerous to young people who have not seen anything else and consider such conditions as normal

God’s standards have not changed (Mal 3:6)

If we accept worldly viewpoints, we will lose out (Ro 1:28, 32; 1Co 6:9, 10)

Will become displeasing to Jehovah, who knows all (Heb 4:12, 13)

Can also stumble others (Ro 14:13)

Remember principle expressed at 1Corinthians 8:8-13

Experience: A relatively new sister started to leave a theater because of the offensive content of the movie being shown. She saw an elder, with his family, obviously enjoying the movie. She remained and suffered from a troubled conscience for a long time

Educated conscience will prevent our following course of sinful world (1Jo 2:15-17)

### **TO HOLD GOOD CONSCIENCE, BASE PERSONAL DECISIONS ON ACCURATE KNOWLEDGE** (15 min.)

Christians must “hold a good conscience” despite pressures or opposition (Read 1 Peter 3:16, 17)

Conscience must be enlightened, trained in right standards

Conscience educated by accurate knowledge of God’s Word can correctly assess matters and set them straight (2Ti 3:16)

Consider example of Zacchaeus (Lu 19:1-8)

Extent of accurate knowledge reflected in level at which conscience functions

In almost all persons, it judges guilt after the fact (2Sa 24:10; *w82* 7/15 17)

For persons who appreciate God’s will, conscience legislates against embarking on course of action condemned by God (Ge 39:9)

“A good conscience” encompasses all areas of life (Ac 24:14, 16; Heb 13:18)

Guides one seeking neutral employment (Isa 2:4; *w82* 7/15 26)

Directs as to personal conduct and speech (Ro 12:18; 1Pe 2:12)

Leads to displaying “new personality” (Eph 4:22-24)

Accepts direction from elders and faithful slave class (Heb 13:17)

**THE GOOD THAT RESULTS FROM A PROPERLY TRAINED CONSCIENCE** (10 min.)

Cultivate desire for a good, not weak, conscience

Weak conscience would indicate improper or inadequate training

Good conscience, properly trained, will quickly alert us to dangers

Will keep us from hurting ourselves, having negative influence on others, and displeasing Jehovah

Jesus showed that our conscience should move us to take advantage of opportunities to do unselfish, noble, kind, loving things (Lu 10:29-37)

Properly trained conscience will motivate us to set right example, imitating Christ (1Co 11:1)

We will be concerned as to how others are affected by what we do, even in instances where there is no wrongdoing (Ro 15:1, 2)

We will always seek the congregation's peace (Ro 14:15,19-21; w91 3/1 21-5; w89 2/15 18-20)

Elders will maintain ability to help others (Isa 32:1, 2)

Strong, active, yet good conscience enables God-fearing person to have peace of mind and Jehovah's favor

Will go beyond minimum requirements of rules, fully keeping us from things that bring God's disapproval (w82 7/15 27)

Though living in sinful world, will enjoy relationship that Abraham had with God as "Jehovah's friend" (Jas 2:23)

(Adhere closely to the outlined material, and observe the indicated timing of each section. Not all cited texts need be read)