

THE STILL SMALL VOICE OF CONSCIENCE

by
Joel M. Skousen

When you finish reading this, you may not view life in quite the same way again—even if you are indifferent about, or passionately dislike what I have to say. I do not claim or presume that the reader will actually change what they are—that’s a more difficult and individualized process—but what I do claim is that once a person understands the workings of conscience, in detail, they will never be able to escape its constant commentary on one’s thoughts, desires and actions. That is what will be different.

Those that already listen well to conscience, perhaps even without realizing it, will understand better how they get reminders, helps, and warning signals; and will better be able to teach others around them about this great secret to life. If you learn to recognize the inspiration and heed its advice, it will become your **constant guide to a better life.**

In contrast, those that have become experts in evading the warnings of conscience will not be able to rationalize, make excuses and justify their own problems and mistakes with the same ease as before. Promptings to change will never be as easy to disregard. Nervous feelings warning about bad habits, thoughts or actions will never be as easy to hide from again.

This might sound negative, but it is really a very big positive. When we develop the self-control to follow conscience accurately and with consistency, we find ourselves living better, happier lives. Eventually you will even long for more of its promptings and warnings—simply because, by following that little voice in our mind, everything in life goes better. It warns us not to say things we shouldn’t, not to buy things we can’t really afford, and not to do things that will get us into trouble. It helps us avoid accidents, illness, investment mistakes, and bad judgment.

With those kinds of benefits, why wouldn’t everyone want to listen? Simply because we can’t take the beneficial promptings without taking the criticism it offers about our improper thoughts and behavior as well.

The criticism or guilt feelings that come via our conscience are sometimes so uncomfortable that people become expert at evading it or shutting it down. In fact, most people learn early in their youth to hide from the voice of conscience. They develop a myriad of ways to cover it up, deny it, rationalize it away, and in other ways deaden its tiny whisperings so they can feel good about doing what they want to do. But in deadening the voice that criticizes and brings legitimate guilt, they also kill the whole “goose that lays the golden eggs” —that source of divine truth that leads to a better life. Of course, the fruit of conscience is not necessarily wealth, but truth—which is ultimately more valuable than gold.

My purpose in this writing is to help re-sensitize your mind to the voice of conscience, and in the process, encourage you to learn to love its promptings and heed its counsel. Almost everyone needs to be reminded from time to time how to recognize the signals of conscience. It’s like getting a reality check that rebalances and corrects our self-image so that we no longer live under the illusions of false pride. I realize that this can be emotionally painful, but the ultimate spiritual consequences of hiding from reality are not very pretty. In its worst form, it leads to haughtiness, verbal abuse of others, and bad judgment—or, in its most chronic forms, mental illness or suicide.

But those who take the tough road of listening to conscience, and develop the self-control to follow its counsel will come to possess an inner peace that will give constancy to their lives amid a world that is headed for increased turmoil. I can’t promise you happiness, per se, in a world that is capable of

tremendous cruelty to others, but I can promise you the internal peace that comes from knowing you have done your best in any given circumstance.

Many people have periods of happiness here and there in life, but never really get a solid handle on the workings of conscience, because they only selectively listen to the things they want to hear from conscience, picking and choosing what is comfortable or what leads to success in a job or business.

But without listening to the personal signals that criticize our bad personal habits, we make lots of little errors in daily living that eventually add up to bigger problems, including irritations to a spouse and conflict with others.

Probably, the most crucial signals from conscience are those little **warning feelings** that precede every instance of bad judgment that is going to cause you trouble or put your life in danger. Often these warning feelings are **so subtle they are all too easy to dismiss**, even when the consequences are grave. Let me give you a few real-life examples of people who failed to heed the warning voice of conscience, and the sad consequences that followed.

You will probably see similar habit patterns and mistakes of disregarding conscience in your own background. Hopefully, by seeing how easily these people could have avoided nearly fatal accidents and serious injury by listening, you will be sufficiently motivated to correct any similar bad thinking patterns in your own lives.

The Reader's Digest used to have an interesting section each month called "*Drama in Real Life*" with stories of people caught in life-threatening situations that normally lead to heroic acts of rescue or escape. Most all result in tremendous suffering. I have often wondered how differently these situations would have turned out if people had listened to the warning voice of conscience. Rarely do any of them admit to these warnings even though some make an urgent appeal to God once in trouble. Only a few recall any premonitions or warnings beforehand, though none relate it to conscience—just strong nervous feelings. In each sample, you will notice there were a series of little mistakes and missed opportunities to see what was coming, that they missed.

First, there is the bad habit of taking undo risks, especially unnecessary ones that athletic, youthful individuals do for thrills, pride, bravado, daring or peer pressure. What they all have in common is that the more they engage in danger, the more they desensitize the warning voices in the mind—especially when they have survived similar dangers before. Putting oneself constantly in danger exposes a person to nervous feelings so often it is possible to become insensitive to crucial warnings when you need them most.

In the process one also loses the ability to distinguish between two different types of nervousness: one form addresses the "correctness" of what you are about to do, and the other reacts to the danger or unfamiliarity itself. Sometimes the act may be dangerous, but still correct to proceed. Other times the act may be safe (physically) but you are warned not to proceed for other timing or moral reasons. That is why all of us have to learn to distinguish between these two types.

People who make it a habit of not heeding nervous feelings always make big mistakes eventually.

The first story is about excess bravado under peer pressure where a fellow allows himself to go beyond a barrage of nervous feelings in his quest to "meet the challenge". He was an experienced "free solo" rock climber and is invited by his climbing partner (who has superior in skills) to compete with him (first mistake), climbing dangerous cliffs. He then discovered as his friend starts out on the first pitch that he intends to do it without the aid of safety ropes (second mistake).

The more cocky and talented partner taunted him into more and more difficult reaches (this “friend” also shows severe insensitivity to conscience in what he pushes others to do). Our “hero” fails to decline each increasing challenge despite growing fatigue. The tired climber feels extremely nervous about the last, death defying section, but can’t resist the taunting of his friend (the third and near fatal mistake). He described this last desperate ordeal in gripping detail. He barely survived in the end, and his partner made some light comments, further indicating no remorse for his part in the near disaster. (*Reader’s Digest*, Feb. 95, “Death Grip” pg. 128).

At least at the end of his story the author admits his mistake and seems determined not to repeat it. I wonder though. People who persist in being friends with those who are chronic violators of conscience are asking for trouble.

Next, let’s look at the bad habit of letting the fact that “everybody else does it” cloud obvious dangers, and undermine the warnings of conscience. There was a young woman who took a job tending the children of a couple working in the bush in Africa. Everyone regularly swims and bathes in the Epulu River, even though there are crocodiles lurking. While this is rationalized because the river is the only source of bathing water, and “everyone does it,” one would think that prudence would dictate making a shallow “safe pool” next to the river, or at least having an armed person present and watching for danger. They did neither, and she was caught in waist deep water by a huge crocodile, while washing her hair.

She doesn’t mention any nervous premonitions directly related to the attack. But she does mention having felt that it was “time to go”—she mentions the lateness of the hour. While I cannot be sure without talking to her, often people get nervous signals about something coming but don’t know why or to what it is directed. In mentioning the “lateness of the hour,” was she simply attaching a reason to her nervousness? I don’t know, but in any case, despite whatever warning she may have had, she took the time to wash her hair in deep water. A large crocodile grabbed her arm and wouldn’t let go, spinning and thrashing her around under the water. A nearby male friend came to help her, and after a horrible death struggle between her, the friend, and the crocodile, the crocodile finally tore her arm off, but she lived. —Great heroism on the part of the friend, but definitely avoidable. (*Readers Digest*, July 94, “In the Jaws of a Crocodile” pg. 70).

In the next example, a couple from Europe goes canoeing and camping in Canada. They saw at least two messages from other campers on the lake warning of the presence of an aggressive black bear. They agreed to be cautious and sought out another campsite farther down the lake. They found another site with a cabin on it, but it was already partially occupied by some hunters (strangers, but not unfriendly).

Because of the known danger, the hunters invited them to share the cabin with them. They declined, rationalizing that they came to be in the outdoors, and would rather stay in their small tent. They probably wanted their privacy too, which their little tent would provide. But that tent didn’t even come close to providing any protection from the bear attack that came in the morning. The girl escaped, but her companion took the brunt of the attack, only barely surviving—with serious injuries. (*Reader’s Digest*, Jan 95, “Caught in the Jaws of Death”).

It is amazing how huge consequences come from disregarding **very small warnings**. In hindsight one may question why they didn’t get a stronger warning when it was a matter of life or death. But, sometimes that’s all we get. The crucial point is that the warning was there, however small. They got it but disregarded it. That’s why it’s important to develop a habit of always watching out for nervous feelings and not disregarding them so easily.

Here are some examples of failures to heed strong and clear warnings. In the first, a couple picked some mushrooms in the wild, without any particular training (informal or otherwise) in mushroom identification. But they did call a Korean friend when they got home, who knew about mushrooms

(indicating they must have felt some anxiety about the dangers involved). The friend could not say for sure over the phone but cautioned them not to eat them until she could come over and check them out. They declined, rationalizing that it would only make them sick, or that jokingly, “they would die together.” And they almost did. (*Reader’s Digest*, July 89, “Transplant Emergency” pg. 43.)

Next, a surfer in Oregon, who was a victim of a shark attack, doesn’t specifically mention his own feelings, but he does mention failing to heed several other more open warnings of shark danger: First, he noticed schools of fish leaping out of the water, which he knew was a sign of escape from a predator. Second, he heard fishermen mention having seen a huge shark, 30 miles to the south, attack and kill a large sea lion. And third, even as he was paddling out, two other surfers, who were leaving, said that they saw something, and felt nervous (somebody listens).

He failed to heed all of these warnings, and got struck by the shark, and barely survived—mostly because of his buoyant surf board which kept the shark from dragging him under (*Reader’s Digest*, July 95, “Encounter with a Great White” Pg. 74).

Let us suppose he didn’t feel any particular nervousness inside, despite the outward warnings. **Why do some people get warnings and others not?** First, some forms of immoral behavior lead to loss of warnings. If the beneficial warnings or signals from conscience are from a divine source as I believe, then there may be penalties involved in becoming insensitive—because they get in the way of wrong things a person persists in doing.

In another case, a handicapped mother (in a wheelchair), leaves her young daughter by the swimming pool while she goes to answer the phone. While on the phone, she hears a splash and fails to heed any warning feelings to go back and check, rationalizing instead that it is the dog. By the time she returns the daughter has drowned and is only barely revived by her heroic efforts (*Reader’s Digest*, April 89, “I have to save my baby” pg. 65).

I do not wish to appear harsh about someone else’s misfortune, but it often amazes me how tiny the warnings signals may be. Most of the time it is nothing more than a fleeting thought which crosses your mind. It is up to us to grab each interrupting thought and hold on to it until it is analyzed for possible accuracy—and then act upon it, even if there is only a chance it is right. This takes consistent practice until one begins to gain a conviction of its efficacy. So many little thoughts pass through our minds during the day, it becomes easy to treat them all lightly—that’s the big danger.

In another story a woman was canoeing in waters known to harbor crocodiles and actually admits to feeling extreme nervousness prior to crossing a stretch of water where the attack occurred. She ignored this clear warning and was severely mauled by the crocodile—barely escaping alive (*Reader’s Digest*, Oct 89, “Crocodile Attack” pg. 71).

In another case, a man demonstrated multiple bad judgments in going along with a friend on a Mexican jet ski outing. The friend, an experienced handler of “Jet Skis” talks our future victim into going out into the ocean despite his nervous feelings. He was even more nervous when he sees the patched up condition of the Jet Ski he is about to rent. He notes that the operator has to use starting fluid to get it started—a bad omen if you are going far out away from land and have to restart it.

Sure enough, his machine stops out in the ocean and cannot be restarted. Then there is another error—his buddy offered to take him back in with his jet ski, but he was afraid to leave the jet ski because of the high deposit required on the rental. So his friend went off to get help, leaving him alone to drift. The jet ski sank, and he was left to drift in the ocean in his life jacket—a mere speck, and is only miraculously found (*Reader’s Digest*, Nov. 95 “A speck in the Endless Sea,” pg. 141.)

Finally, there was the sad case of a man with clear, distinct warnings that went unheeded. He was driving on a bumpy orchard road with cans of volatile fluid in the back of his vehicle. He got a distinct nervous feeling prompting him to secure those cans. He disregarded the warning, and shortly afterwards, they exploded, engulfing the vehicle in flames. He suffered severe burns and barely survived, attributing much of his recovery to the miraculous hand of God. Sadly, he never mentioned the sad lesson he should have learned: that had he heeded the warning of God through his conscience, he wouldn't have needed the "miracle" and would not now be permanently disabled. (*Ensign*, March 1994)

Let's now take some time to discuss in detail the full range of ideas and signs that come from conscience, including warning signals, how they appear and why they are sometimes difficult to distinguish from our own thoughts.

HOW CONSCIENCE WORKS

What precisely is conscience and how does it work? Although it is not possible to precisely define conscience in purely scientific terms, or determine how it functions, physically, I will try to describe the process according to my experience—which is almost identical to hundreds of other people I have talked to.

There are several mental experiences that everyone seems to sense regularly in life—some more than others, of course, but these are the universal ones:

1. From time to time, **thoughts or ideas** seem to appear in the mind out of nowhere, which are not linked to what we were thinking about—that feeling that you just got "interrupted" or got an idea from "out of nowhere." Most inventors get key concepts and ideas like this at the moment of a break-through, often in a direction different from anything they had been thinking about previously.
2. There are little **reminders** that come to mind, seemingly out of nowhere, prompting us to remember something, or go back and get something when leaving the home. It could be a reminder to call someone, to think about someone or to do something. I have found that when I act on those reminders when they come, it often turns out to be very timely: the person is home when I called, or the person needed help at the time I was reminded to call or visit.
3. There are **Promptings** that push us to do something we know we should do, but don't feel like doing. For kids, it is often a prompting to do homework instead of playing with friends. For moms, it may be a prompting to turn off the television and clean up the house or do the dishes. For dads, it can often be a prompting to fix something the wife has been nagging about for months, when he feels "too tired" or wants to watch television.
4. And last but certainly not least, there are those very helpful **Nervous feelings** that warn people about doing something that isn't quite right or a danger to us. It could even be over an offensive word in anger, about eating too much, about buying junk food, splurging on something one can't afford, or making a bad investment. The contrasting feeling we are looking for are **Calm Feelings** or assurances that you're on the right path.

Social scientists have spent considerable time and effort trying to explain of these phenomena in terms of environmental preconditioning, or subconscious workings of the mind. The mental pressure of conscience is generally referred to as guilt, and many psychologists are quick to ridicule the validity of guilt, especially in matters which do not appear to have any immediate negative consequences.

It is true, that learned guidelines and environmental experiences can partially precondition the mind. But I do not believe in environmental determinism per se. I believe that environmental influences are compared to our own set of desires and ultimately against our innate personality set points—those innate

proclivities to do and believe only what they are comfortable with.

Our own innateness plays a far greater role in explaining why people placed in similar environments aren't affected in the same ways. Some, in fact, are completely immune and unaffected by certain environmental conditions, while others are easily susceptible.

Others attribute the foregoing phenomenon to some "sixth sense"—a mystical kind of "gut feeling" that persons without a religious explanation use to define spiritual experience. Naturally, religious people attribute these things to divine intervention in the lives of mankind. Because the mind interacts with both its own internal, preconditioned feelings and external spiritual input, all of these explanations can be correct, but at different times. Let me explain in more detail how I view each of the four listed ways in which we receive influence by our conscience.

1. **IDEAS THAT INTERRUPT YOUR TRAIN OF THOUGHT**

Everyone experiences ideas occasionally that seem to "come from nowhere"—an interruption of our present train of thought. These ideas always form expressions in the mind that **sound like our own voice—same grammar, same syntax, same vocabulary**—like talking to yourself. The only thing distinguishable is that the idea didn't seem to come from us—it felt like it was external and original.

Science alone simply has no credible explanation, in my opinion, for these phenomena, especially when you get a warning about someone else when you had no possibility of knowing there was a problem—other than to attribute them to coincidence. But, alas, these kinds of connections between people and unknowable events are simply too powerful to be mere coincidence.

You may disagree or have other ideas, but whatever your final conclusion, don't let it stop you from becoming more aware of the phenomenal accuracy of conscience in interacting with and prompting us about our thoughts and actions.

I believe that wherever thoughts are processed in the conceptual middle of the brain, there is a **receptor that is capable of receiving spiritual input**. What is spiritual input? I think it is simply a refined medium of communication different from anything we can measure in physical spectrum. But there exists an ability of the mind to detect these spiritual signals.

Although the mind is an idea processor, it doesn't appear to be able to distinguish easily the original source of any idea unless they come through one of the 5 senses (to see, feel, hear, touch or smell). Neither can it tell when an idea is received from outside the mind except when our own thoughts are interrupted by something that is a clear departure from our present train of thought.

In addition, there are **two different spiritual sources of ideas** that can come into our minds: One type is the inspiration and promptings we may receive from divine sources and the other type are temptations and enticements from opposing satanic forces. Neither divine nor satanic influences in the mind are accepted by the academic world, because they cannot be proven or measured scientifically. But, they are nevertheless quite real.

I believe everyone receives external spiritual influence whether they consciously acknowledge them or not. In fact, it really isn't necessary to know their nature to make use of them—and that may be even preferable from God's testing purposes, so that man doesn't know the "source from whence they come."

What makes the two forms of spiritual communication difficult to prove or even detect is that they both come into the mind as ideas that sound like our own words and thoughts. It is therefore both easy and natural to confuse them with our own human input and analysis. This adds to the interesting nature of

life's test we are going through.

Thinking is a fairly conscious process. Sometimes it is not deliberate, as when your thoughts are just drifting from one thing to another. But the better thinkers in life are consciously aware of the thinking process and heading in a distinct mental direction most of the time.

In contrast to this conscious thinking process, external spiritual input always comes as a very subtle "interrupt" in your thought patterns. This happens most often when the mind is not engaged in heavy rational thought, or external sensory overload—that is, when it's open to being interrupted. They may or may not have to do with the subject in your mind, but generally one can recognize them as external since they come as a surprise.

Try to distinguish these interrupts from random thoughts. Some people's minds are much less ordered than others and have lots of idle, random thoughts. These people have the most difficult time perceiving external spiritual impressions—often because they have learned to tune out almost all random thoughts rather than go through the more difficult exercise of controlling and analyzing what they are thinking about.

This is an excellent way learn to discipline the mind. Force yourself to concentrate on every thought that floats into the mind, and analyze it for credibility. When you do that, not only do you find that some ideas are valuable, but there are many worthless ramblings as well. And as you start to analyze and classify these random thoughts, you will naturally start to have less of the truly wandering variety—simply because the process of analyzing and classifying ideas naturally brings order and discipline to the mind.

2. REMINDERS

These are some of the most pleasant helps that come from an active conscience. The prompting to go back in the house for something you forgot, or the reception of a hint to look in a certain place when searching for something lost. You might be reminded to pay a bill before it's overdue or to call someone you've had trouble reaching. When you respond right away, things go better. I have found that if I disregard a reminder, I usually don't get reminded again and only remember on my own that I was reminded, once it is too late.

In business, you may be reminded to do something now, even though there seems to be no immediate pressing need—and later you learn that something unexpected came up confirmed why it had to be done then. In finance, you may be prompted to take some financial action before anyone realizes the market is going to change.

I have also found it very valuable to assume reminders are from the divine source, and **give thanks and credit accordingly**. After doing this for many years, I now have the conviction that, because of this attitude of gratitude, I get a lot more beneficial reminders than I did as a youth. Perhaps someone up there is pleased when someone recognizes this divine source of reminders, blessings and warnings.

3. PROMPTINGS

The kind of promptings I will address here have to do with nagging feelings from conscience that we should overcome some bad habit, or do some specific thing we know we should do, but don't feel like doing. They can often feel like a reminder, but the difference here is that reminders are usually about something you aren't resistant to. Promptings almost always are pushing you to act because the source of the prompting knows you are going to be resistant.

Most people get these all the time, and these are the promptings or pushing feelings of conscience that

nobody wants to hear. When we tell these to “go away” we are unwittingly telling the Lord to “get lost” and He does distance himself—an unintended consequence that will eventually prove costly toward our long-term progress.

When one makes a habit of disregarding promptings to change and improve, one no longer merits certain common blessings—like protection, good judgment, and freedom from illness—at least not in the same degree as before. When we regularly deny inspired suggestions, we are often left to fend for ourselves, and sometimes denied help when we most want it.

Some talented people do quite well on their own, by the world’s standards, without paying attention to conscience, but they **never know what they are missing** had they learn to seek both professional competency and divine guidance. How does one calculate the value or merit of information one never receives? We can’t—but are simply left on our own—and we wonder why things just don’t seem to go well anymore, or why life doesn’t seem to have any spark anymore. Eventually major errors begin to creep in; some moral, some not.

The cutoff of inspiration is gradual, just like the acquisition of a refined conscience. The Lord almost always avoids immediate consequences, to enhance this earthly test—so it’s not obvious that there are eventual consequences for mistakes of bad judgment.

All of us remember the promptings we got as teenagers to do our homework when we least felt like it. Rationalizations would flood in: “You can do it later,” “You can do it after you play with friends,” etc. Both teens and adults deal with the daily promptings to get up on time, or to help your Mom or wife with household chores, when you would rather watch TV. Some of the hardest promptings to handle are the ones that prompt you to do something better with your time than what you are doing—when it’s not actually wrong, but not the best use of your time.

In short, promptings almost always come when you are resistant—proving that you really need that nudge. It takes a lot of internal self-control to overcome your natural weaknesses, and to get good at always doing what you know you should do “especially when you don’t feel like it.” Following that little rule, as I will discuss later, is the best defense against depression.

Lastly, you need to distinguish between nagging feelings that come from recurring expectations from job, church, spouse, or family that are really NOT what you should be doing at this specific time. In other words, sometimes you feel nervous about acceding to a recurring demand when there is something better or more important that you should be doing. That’s what conscience is for—to help you order your priorities when there are multiple conflicting demands.

Don’t let other people or expectations make you feel guilty about things when you know there is something more important that you should be doing at that specific time. It may even be for the sake of your own health or stress level that conscience will tell you to decline an obligation rather than spread yourself too thin. Learn to say no when you feel right about your decisions without regret. Always let conscience be your guide, above rigid or set expectations.

4. **NERVOUS FEELINGS**

Whenever we receive any temptation, or create a thought of our own volition that is incorrect or less than correct, we will always receive a negative feeling either from our own mind (when it has been trained to analyze correctly) or lacking that, from the divine source through conscience, or both. Most often, this signal from conscience appears as an instantaneous **nervous feeling, anxiety or fear as to the correctness of the thought or intention.**

It usually is very subtle, unless life threatening (when it may be quite strong). When people make a habit

of ignoring nervous feelings, they become calloused to them, and they run the risk that these critical signals will become almost imperceptible to them.

There are significant differences in people's abilities to sense these little nervous warning feelings—especially in the small things. Some people are simply more sensitive to divine truths than other people—and it isn't necessarily related to the presence of organized religious training. Many people seem to feel divine promptings or warnings even in the absence of religious training. And others who receive a lot of formal religious training don't necessarily feel comfortable with it and do not internalize the still small voice of conscience. There is also the factor that all religious teachings may not be equally correct or divine—which may act as stumbling blocks for some very good people who don't feel comfortable in organized religion.

You might expect, or hope that the warning signals of conscience would be stronger and clearer the greater the danger or the mistake, but that isn't necessarily true. Sometimes we get penalized for years of disregarding conscience. And sometimes, for people who are brought up correctly by their parents, and who know better, the Lord turns down the volume (to a mere whisper, sometimes) to help us further refine our sensitivity to truth and to test our allegiance to even the smallest hint of error.

These nervous feelings can even disappear altogether if people becomes so hardened in evil desires (and thus become insensitive to them) that they no longer hear them. God is very reluctant to break the hidden veil around the earth, that obscures the spiritual world around us and which keeps His presence hidden. That's part of this earthly test, to see who can sense small spiritual signals, rather than wait for some dramatic intervention by God.

It is important to differentiate between the nervous feelings that come from conscience and other normal nervousness that comes as a result of having to do something unfamiliar, new or outside our comfort zone. For example, a young person might be asked to give a short talk in front of an audience. It may be a proper and good experience, yet he feels very tense about it, as in stage fright.

Thus, it's important to realize (and to teach your children) the difference between nervousness related to correctness and that which comes from doing something new or unfamiliar.

One way to resolve the question is to ask yourself a question that addresses the rightness of the action. "Should I be doing this? Is it the right thing to do?" Assuming it is right; one will feel calm about answering, "yes" to the question, even if you're still nervous about the performance. Sometimes if still in doubt, it helps to reverse the question and ask if it is "wrong" to do this. By now, the correct answer should be more clear.

Sometimes there are legitimate gray areas of doubt, especially when dealing with situations where there is nothing wrong with the action (that is wholly legal and good by everyone's standards), but where doubts still exist. Worse yet, one might feel good about it, but a parent or spouse may not. What do you do, then?

In these cases, we have a conflict between someone's mind and another's conscience. Which one is getting the proper signal? I recommend one or two approaches.

Sometimes it is helpful to seek out the advice of another person whose judgments you know to be wise and trustworthy, and who is good at listening to conscience. Ask for their opinion before you give them any rationalizations or justifications about the issue. Trustworthy, wise people may not always be those we consider our closest friends. Learn to distinguish between people you like and people in whom you have higher trust in their wisdom or good judgment. Hopefully, every parent should strive to be such a person of trust for their own children.

In like manner, every person should make it his highest priority to find a mate with a solid feeling for conscience. One of the most interesting things I learned from my mother's refined intuition is that wives can often spot or sense a bad business deal even when they know nothing about the technical matters involved. Sometimes it is easier for them to feel the nervous feelings of conscience since they are not wrapped up in the business process or in the desire to make it go through.

Every one of the bad business deals made by my late father was presaged by my mother, who could always sense when my Father was going to have problems with an unreliable business partner. My mother's judgment never failed, and my father didn't always learn from his business mistakes. Other than this flaw in his investment decision making, he was otherwise a wise and loving father with deep spiritual insights into life.

If you have no source of trust to check your doubts with, start mentally going forward with the plan in your mind. If it is the wrong choice, the nervous feelings should increase the closer you get to action. That is a definite warning sign you don't want to miss. In fact, the presence of rationalizations is always an indication that you don't feel calm about it.

With high risk financial decisions, there can be an additional risk of "digging yourself in a hole," where one bad investment leads to more pressure to salvage it with yet another risky deal. It takes courage sometimes to walk away with a modest loss, rather than get deeper into a bad situation.

Unfortunately, like in a commitment to marry the wrong person, too many people get so far down the road that pulling out can get very embarrassing, and expensive. Nevertheless, I have found that it is always better to listen to the warnings of conscience, no matter what the consequences—even if one has to notify all the guests that the wedding is called off. I've stopped counting the number of divorced people I've known who had such warnings in their mind after they committed to marriage, but were too embarrassed to back out.

CALM FEELINGS (as the contrast to nervous feelings)

The positive side of conscience works like this: when we think of appropriate thoughts and actions, we will feel calm about them (as to the correctness). It is still natural to be anxious about new or difficult things ahead, even when correct. In reality these calm assurances are what produce that internal peace that comes from doing what is right. Most of the time, calm feelings are simply the complete absence of doubt and nervous feelings (about the correctness).

One of the most important things naturally fearful people can learn when confronted with constant worry about a child or spouse who is away, is to simply ask, "Is he OK?" or "Will he be alright?" If true, you'll feel a calm confirmation and then you can stop worrying about it and trust in your feelings. Sometimes that takes some self-control to force yourself to stop worrying and trust your feelings in conscience.

Watch Out for Rationalizations

In contrast to the above, evil spiritual forces attempt to imitate calm feelings whenever possible. This is most often done by getting people to rationalize away nervous feelings, or in other ways, talk themselves into something that isn't right. Everyone knows what that process feels like. Rationalizations are especially powerful when they match your own desires to do something. When you want something badly enough, watch out for powerful rationalizations which may drown out nervous feelings.

It is important to establish a habit pattern of learning to recognize rationalizations just as they begin, and to cut them off. The deeper one gets into these excuses the more the false hope increases that it will turn out well, when it won't. Rationalizations are a trap. Be careful also not to be guilty of trying to feed

rationalization to someone else you may want to have join you in an activity. His or her nervousness may be your last chance to escape future consequences—since you may already be “past feeling” the proper nervous feelings.

So, why do so many people persist in pushing past those warnings, even when they know better? As mentioned before, it is often because they established a habit pattern of disregarding conscience very early in life, or heeding peer pressure too often. Sometimes it is also the failure of parents to reinforce and correct conscience when their children are young.

All too often one parent will intervene with the one who is upset and offer permissive counsel like, “let them go, dear—they’re just having fun.” Bad judgment like this isn’t easily corrected, even in the face of continual problems with your kids. Permissive parents tend to excuse continued problems as if they weren’t permissive or “loving” enough! That’s where innate resistant to tough discipline in a parent causes a real blind spot—where they only feel nervous about being too strict, and not about being too permissive.

All too often, the parent’s own conscience has become so clouded that they don’t even feel intolerance for most bad behavior. It has long been a source of consternation to me when observing families with out of control children, where the children’s behavior doesn’t seem to bother the parents at all—or at least not enough to stop it.

Differentiating Good and Evil Signals in Conscience

Promptings from the Lord always point you in directions that you will ultimately feel right about doing. Satanic temptations and enticements, on the other hand, are not so predictable. While they more often than not appeal to the carnal or egotistical side of your desires, they may involve complete falsehoods, or even partial truths, depending on how the dark side thinks they can best get you to make an error.

Thus, you cannot judge the source of external spiritual input by the substance of the thought alone. Satan will often use full truth, partial truth, or even excess truth (meaning, more than what is appropriate for the circumstances) to get you to make a mistake. Ultimately, the loss of internal peace and confidence will, if humbly recognized, indicate the nature of this source of ideas.

In general, Satan will attempt to counter what the Lord desires for us, though he may and does use rationalizations that you might think are OK. When Satan supplies the original bad idea in your mind, the Lord responds with nervous feelings to warn us of something is wrong with that idea. You may not know what the right answer is, but at least you know this isn’t it. Satan begins to counter with rationalizations to make you feel good about it—that’s the process of implanting a false sense of calmness. It takes significant time and experience to detect the difference and become good at it, so don’t be discouraged if you get fooled once in a while.

The reason that rationalizations are so convincing, if you insist on listening to them, is that the Lord does not always persist in providing warnings to those determined to go their own way. Sometimes He does, when the issue is extremely serious, but often, the Lord allows us to be led away by our own desires, especially when we refuse to learn by any way other than bad consequences.

The greater, long-term danger of rationalization is that conscience itself becomes dull and insensitive. The mind is very quick and can learn to easily evade the subtle warnings of conscience or bring out well-used rationalizations to help out. The Lord believes in letting people follow their innate desires if they are determined to do so—that’s part of the test of life. Things don’t go better in life when you stifle the voice of conscience, no matter what the movies and commercials infer about immorality, worldly attitudes and “life in the fast lane.”

Let's now look at how Satan works on people who are resistant to normal sins and temptations. Once a person becomes fairly good at recognizing temptation and is resolved to stay true to their principles, they become fair game for "**overshooting the mark**," (being tempted to go beyond that which is appropriate).

In this deception, Satan takes advantage of a person's desire to do something good or significant, and feeds them ideas that will get them to go to an extreme that will result in the person rejected or discredited. This is a real danger mostly for good people with lots of drive or ambition.

I've seen a lot of examples of this with good people involved in the struggle for political truth and freedom. The Lord has his own timetable for reversing tyranny and his sword of justice doesn't usually fall upon evil until the majority of people have become corrupt enough to deserve what comes. It's easy to get discouraged as years go by and we continue to lose liberty. Some may even be tempted to take revolutionary action before the Lord is ready to approve, or before a large enough minority is inconvenienced enough to join in.

Among the best people—those most sensitive to issues of truth, the temptation to overshoot the mark is the hardest deception to see, and difficult to undo once you go down that path.

Selective Spirituality

Of all the deceptions, the most subtle, is spiritual blindness. It begins by disregarding promptings, no matter how small or insignificant. But the more common malady among otherwise good people is being a good listener to things we want to hear and becoming deaf to promptings we don't want to hear—that's what leads to partial spiritual blindness.

If one seeks only for worldly success, especially prestige and self-advancement, it is easy to become receptive only to promptings or temptations which lead to getting ahead quickly—toward wealth and personal advancement, or recognition. It's not that those things are bad in and of themselves, but when we only desire divine help for reasons of self-aggrandizement, and not self-correction, the Spirit of Truth is offended and one gets cut off from higher truth and help in the future. People who play this selective game with truth may be allowed to advance for many more years, but eventually they stumble or fall when a major warning or prompting is missed.

A highly successful lawyer, for example, will often use his success in the legal field to think he is so great, he doesn't have to lose weight, exercise, or treat people more courteously. In other words, his pride in one justifiable area allows him to cover his other weaknesses and dismiss them. Even religious leaders can get carried away with excessive pride and use flamboyant language and gestures in sermons, or brag about their presumed relationship with God.

Someday, they'll find out that the Lord is offended when people only want to hear things that lead to greater wealth and recognition but reject the warnings and criticism that lead to greater humility and goodness.

This process of "selecting only the truth you want to hear" will create "limits" on your personal progress. Anyone who places limits on the types of truth they will accept is courting eventual disaster, and will suffer from spiritual blindness generally, and will lack vision about essential advanced truths that lead one out of the dangers that will befall society.

GETTING RESTARTED WITH CONSCIENCE

I cannot overemphasize the importance of allegiance to truth as it comes via conscience. Even if you are not a religious person, or if you dispute my belief that God is the source of the positive promptings to conscience, try the following test:

For the next month, try to assiduously follow every prompting of conscience you feel is right, and see if two things don't happen. First, if you are diligent in listening and responding to the promptings, they should increase in quantity, and get even more specific about mistakes you have been making. You will get more promptings than you want or are comfortable with, if your initial experience is like mine.

In the process, you will notice how conscience will tend to focus more and more on your personal bad habits, rather than on simple reminders to do important things during the day. All told, you should be able to look back on your experience and say that things went a lot better when the promptings were followed carefully and not resisted.

It is easy to become discouraged during this test. Your comfort levels will be challenged constantly, and there are dark spiritual forces out there that don't want you to start listening closely to this guiding voice and will do anything to keep you from improving your sensitivity and commitment to self-control. Remember that the positive promptings of conscience almost always involve things that we normally do not want to do—because “it's too hard,” you think, or inconvenient.

Get in a habit of forcing yourself to comply with every little prompting that you feel is right, no matter how trivial it seems—like picking up a piece of trash you see on the floor, or putting things back in their proper place. Often those come just to test how committed you are to listening and doing.

Some will overdo it thinking that they have to comply with every single thought that comes to mind. That's not what I'm saying. You always need to be listening for that brief but subtle confirmation that it is the right thing to do at that specific time. Sometimes you shouldn't stop and do some small thing when there are other more pressing priorities. If you leave off this last step, Satan can easily flood your mind with useless distractions that divert you from more important things. That's all part of the **trial and error part of developing better judgment with conscience**.

Secondly, when you are reminded or prompted to do beneficial things, like remembering something you forgot, give credit to the Lord, even if you aren't sure it came from Him. If these things are from Him, He will be appreciative of your remembering and will bless you with more promptings. Try this and see.

With the exception of those dedicated to being indecisive or rebellious, I have never, had any person come back to me after trying this test and say that they didn't begin to have an increase in promptings, and more positive outcomes when promptings were followed.

Finally, here are **two simple rules** to help everyone tie into the workings of conscience with more sensitivity and success. These aren't mechanistic rules because they simply get people to focus on the two prime signals of conscience that involve a change in behavior. These signals are not the same for everyone, but individualized to your personal needs. Memorize them and teach them to your children:

- 1. Never do anything you feel nervous about, as to the correctness.**
- 2. Always force yourself to do what you know you should do, especially when you don't feel like it.**

The **first rule** ensures against major errors. Yes, occasionally, if you and your wife are too cautious, you may lose an opportunity or two. But the important thing in life is to avoid major mistakes, from which you may not be able to recover. Life and the heavens can always guide you to other opportunities if you miss one through excessive caution, but when we disregard conscience, and make a major error,

sometimes it takes years to recover.

When nervous feelings come, remember, that they don't tell you what you should do, only that what you have concluded is, at the least, not quite right. You have to apply yourself and think it through again, until you find a solution you feel is right. The reason **God works this way is so that we grow**. If He simply provided all the answers directly in prayer, we would become dependent and weak and wouldn't grow. By teaching us to hear a caution and then work hard to find out why, we grow and become better people.

Often we can't find an answer when we want it, so we have to wait until something does come to mind. Even if the answer is right, you may feel nervous because the timing of your action may not be right. In any case, waiting will usually makes the problem clearer at a later time. This is especially important as to lifelong decisions like marriage. If in doubt, wait. It will become clear with time.

The **second rule** ensures that you will put pressure on yourself to do the positive things you are prompted to do in life, that you know are right.

This second rule is the most important way to overcome depression, bar none. No one gets severely depressed without disregarding the first rule. And no one gets out of depression without living the second.

Whenever depressed, just ask yourself, "What should I be doing right now?" Several things will come to mind—you probably won't feel like doing any of them (especially if an evil, brooding spirit is bearing down on you). But choose one you feel best about, and then muster all your willpower and force yourself to get up and do it. Depression has a hard time plaguing a person that is actively doing something productive. This process gets easier every time you try it.

Remember also that the more you progress, the more subtle will become the temptations and trials. Rely on that still small voice of conscience and you will always have just the amount of inspiration and help you need to make it through—not without trial and effort, mind you, but there will always be a way out.

Even if you never come to a complete surety of the truth of what I have said here, following conscience to the best of your ability at any given level of progress will ensure that eventually, you will come to a deeper understanding of these promptings over the course of this life. And when you finally meet your maker, you will recognize him as that friendly voice in your mind that always kept pushing you on towards perfection of the heart.

I honestly think that the Lord wants us to learn from conscience—not simply become mechanically obedient to it. That is why I think the signals are so subtle—so that you really have to feel and think about them, and figure out what is right when you get conflicting signals. It may be frustrating at first, but keep learning from the mistakes you make in listening and eventually you will get better at it.

This much I have learned; that no matter how intelligent and well trained we may become in life, we never know enough about the future to become independent from divine wisdom and foreknowledge. That is why conscience will always be around—because we need it.

SUICIDE AND CONSCIENCE

Lastly, I have to mention suicide because it has become epidemic in our society and is a classic case of Satanic voices overwhelming the divine voice inside one's mind. The major flaw in professional counseling is that establishment training in psychology denies the most important factor involved in suicidal thoughts—the overwhelming role of Satanic depression in a person's spirit. They either don't

believe in Satan or have been conditioned by their secular training to never touch religious principles and to excuse all depression as a chemical imbalance, treatable with **mood altering drugs**—that I have found actually suppress the workings of conscience.

When SSRI drugs are used to treat depression, I believe that they end up suppressing the mind's reception of the signals of conscience, including the bad signals from Satanic influences that often cause mental problems and erratic behavior. That's why they appear to work, while the patient is on them. These drugs are used a lot to help children suppress chronic ADD and other mental control problems and there are some pretty bad side effects.

During withdrawal from these drugs, there appears to be a high correlation between withdrawal and suicidal thoughts which many have complained about. My personal opinion is that this is caused by the sudden reintroduction of satanic influence of the mind that was suppressed before.

I found out about this suppression of conscience while trying to help a good friend's teenage daughter who was abusing drugs and having moral problems. I taught her about the workings of conscience in order to re-sensitize her mind to those divine corrective signals. But, she clearly didn't like hearing them, not wanting to change her behavior.

Her parents finally took her to a psychiatrist who put her on mood altering drugs, and she seemed to improve for a while, at least in attitude. I saw her about a month later with her new "carefree" mental attitude and asked her what made the difference. She said, "Once on this drug, I couldn't hear that nagging voice of conscience anymore!"

That was a wake up call for me. Yes, the high level of satanic influence might be suppressed when on a drug, yielding temporary stability, but she was no longer getting the corrective voice of conscience either. And, with the crutch of mood altering drugs, people rarely learn to overcome their own problems, until they get off of them, and tie into the beneficial signals of conscience. So, parents beware of the lure of psychotropic drugs, the dumbing down of conscience, and their potential link to suicide.

I've had a brother commit suicide, and have known several others who have succumbed to it. I have never met anyone with suicidal thoughts that wasn't under the constant barrage of Satanic depression, and feeding them thoughts about how there's "no way out" except by killing themselves.

More than just trying to talk someone out of their negative thoughts, it's important to teach them how Satan can also speak to their mind without them recognizing it—because everything coming through conscience comes in their own voice and grammar. People with suicidal thoughts always think they are talking to themselves, but it isn't necessarily true. Teach them that any idea about killing themselves is coming from Satan. It's not really them, and how to resist it.

The two rules of conscience really help here. When anyone is depressed remind them of rule #2, to stop sulking and get up and do something they know they should be doing, especially now that they don't feel like it.

If you've raised your children with this habit since they were young, they should have already developed the self-control to know how to force themselves to act when depressed. It's the most important training you can give them so that they develop a natural resistance to suicidal thoughts.

Sadly, few parents watch out for the signs of depressive inaction and have not learned how to discipline bad attitudes and get their children into action when depressed. If you don't teach this when they are young, and expect them to do it, it will be much, much tougher when under the severe Satanic depression which often comes in their teens or young adulthood.

Don't forget to pray your heart out as well for Satanic spiritual influences to be lifted from your home, and teach your kids to pray deeply as well when they recognize Satan's influence on them. That said, remember that you can't pray away Satanic influence if you are permissive and allow bad influences to enter your home constantly through television, cellphones, books or the influence of problem friends in public schools. A lot of societal shielding is necessary in today's world until children get old enough and strong enough spiritually to see and resist. That's why homeschooling has now become so important with discerning parents.

TEACHING CHILDREN ABOUT CONSCIENCE

When teaching your children about the workings of conscience, be careful not to convert the signals of conscience into specific rules alone. Rules are important in a home, but they aren't as effective long term as teaching a child how to be self-governing through listening to conscience. I realize that it is sometimes easier for parents to create a rule rather than explain how they had a feeling before something went wrong, but of the two, the latter will yield better results.

My own mother made this mistake. She had an excellent conscience, but whenever she observed her children doing something wrong, she would correct us and sometimes make up a new rule. There were never enough rules to cover everything, and we could usually find exceptions to the rules. If she had instead corrected us and then asked, "Didn't you feel nervous about that before you did that?" we would have begun to listen for those warning signals.

It's not enough to just tell kids "let conscience be your guide" because there is more than one voice in each person's mind, and they need to learn to differentiate between good promptings and rationalizations and temptations, as I explained earlier. Parents have to learn to correct the errors of conscience children make, but many are reluctant because they themselves haven't been listening to all the signals. Believe me, once you start teaching children about conscience and correcting them, they'll let you know when they see you not doing what's right. That's OK, as long as they do it respectfully.

When you apply the things I've mentioned here, you should be able to feel a distinct improvement in your ability to listen, and you'll also experience an improved ability to detect the things your children are doing wrong—and that includes their attitudes as well. **When you correct bad attitudes** before they become bad actions, they will make fewer mistakes.

At what age can you begin to teach conscience? In my experience, a child doesn't begin to really understand or hear his conscience until somewhere between 3 and 5 years of age.

You can tell when a child is starting to perceive conscience when they start looking around to see if someone is watching when they are about to do something they shouldn't, or when they become evasive or tell lies. Once they get to this age, instead of only telling a child what they did wrong, you need to start probing about how they felt before they did something wrong.

Get used to asking first if they had any nervous feelings before they did what they did. This will be most effective if the thing they did caused harm to themselves or broke something. If they don't remember feeling anything, don't be afraid to explain to them that they should feel a tiny nervous feeling whenever they are about to do something wrong.

The first step is to teach children to pay attention to the thoughts in their minds. Most children have a hard time picking up on the warning signals because they are running around doing things so fast, and their mind is running at such a pace, that they do not slow down their thinking enough to hear anything. Don't be afraid to demand a child slow down and stop acting in erratic ways—at all times. Uncontrolled

behavior is the biggest enemy a child has to picking up on the signals of conscience.

The Importance of Developing Self Control

In preparation for teaching a child to abide by the tiny signals of conscience, you have to teach and expect a child to learn self-control when they are young. If you have to count to 3 or 5 before they obey your call to “come!” you’re allowing your child to develop a very bad habit of procrastination and perhaps even rebellion. If they can ignore and defy your verbal demands think how easily they will evade the tiny voice of conscience.

The foregoing has been about errors and mistakes a child makes and teaching them how to listen to nervous feelings that warn against mistakes. But the other half of a child’s problems involve failure to do anything good or right when they aren’t being directed by the parent. That’s where teaching children how to hear promptings from conscience comes in.

When children get to that age when they are starting to hear their conscience, they have to face the transition from a world of constant playing or being entertained to one of self-direction and begin to make productive decisions.

In this stage of life, they often complain to parents about being “bored” with “nothing to do.” That’s a sign that they aren’t used to checking their conscience for what they should be doing. I don’t expect kids to pick up on being productive all on their own. This takes some direction from parents—teaching them how to use a book, how to clean up their room, make something, or draw a picture or other productive activities.

Once given some training and expectations, conscience can now begin to prompt them in little ways. Once you develop a good routine at home with chores for the kids, and lists of things they can do or learn in their spare time, you’ll start to see they still come up with the “I’m bored” routine. That’s a good time to suggest they **check their mind for what they should be doing**.

If they immediately come up with a string of rationalizations and excuses of why they don’t want to do those things, then you know they are starting to be fed excuses from the dark side of conscience. It’s natural. It happens to all of us, but it’s a good opportunity to sit down with them and explain how to tell the difference between the good promptings we get and the negative excuses that come into the mind to stop us from doing what’s right.

It takes a few years of interacting with your children about what you are feeling and what they are feeling for these concepts to sink in and become natural for them. Don’t think that you can sit them down and explain conscience from A to Z to them and be done with it. It is in the little reminders and corrections you give a child about his or her conscience that is most effective.

But hardly anyone even thinks consciously about conscience anymore, let alone how to correct it in others. That’s why we’ve become a rule-making people, and a legalistic society. It’s a poor system except in helping citizens avoid major crimes.

At the micro level of life, rules are never specific enough to cover every situation and every contingency, so it is natural for people to think they have a lot of leeway in their behavior, beyond the rules. But they don’t, really. Conscience has an opinion about almost everything—though it won’t allow you to use it like a Ouija board—asking yes or no questions on who to marry or what stocks to put your money into.

MENTAL HABITS THAT DETER THE OPERATIONS OF CONSCIENCE

There are two tendencies in behavior that lend themselves to problems with conscience. The first are people that don't control their thoughts or expressions well. Those types of people tend to get the most false signals and often develop chronic bad judgment.

The second are people who think too fast or flit from one thing to another without thinking. They need to consciously slow down in order to hear the small voice of conscience, as I suggested with training children.

A third group are intellectual and scientific oriented people who lack any feelings for seeking out or dealing with spiritual promptings. Intellectual and scientific pursuits require very heavy emphasis on the deductive and inductive thought processes from sensory inputs alone.

They also take great care to exclude random and non-traceable inputs. This can easily lead to bias against feelings or the acceptance of spiritual input that can't be proven. Not all intellectuals have this problem.

Increasing Your Self Control

It does little good to hear the promptings of conscience unless one develops sufficient self-control to force yourself to follow those promptings. Conscience is an internal process. Once you've left home, there's no one to prod you do what you know you should be doing by your conscience. So, if you haven't developed ample self-control skills, you'll fail at what I'm trying to teach here—perhaps not in the listening part, but certainly in the follow-through part.

For example, people often get reminders from conscience to do something, and put it off until it is convenient. That may involve listening to a rationalization or it may be a lack of self-control. It takes a lot more self-control to abide by a prompting in conscience because the voice or idea is so tiny and because there is no one hovering over you to enforce it. And though there usually are consequences for evasion and procrastination eventually, they may not show up for years. By that time, you probably won't even relate the failure to your chronic failure to listen and act.

So, how do we improve self-control? The answer lies in the interesting link between the physical and the mind. When the mind is required to put pressure on the physical side of self, either to suppress improper or untimely urges, or to make it perform something difficult, the mind gains strength and gets better at controlling urges that come from a complaining body. The mind does not develop the same degree of self-control when it is only required to operate on mental aspects alone. The mental effort required to suppress an idea is often easier than suppressing strong physical drives.

Thus, it is no surprise that forcing yourself to do strenuous and invigorating physical exercise is one of the best ways to develop mental self-control. Hard breathing, calorie burning exercises are perfect for improving both mental and physical strength. There is also something about the slow fatigue that builds up over long distances and time with aerobic exercise that builds endurance and mental toughness. If you are not used to heavy exercise, get a good checkup and work up gradually in your toughening process.

Once a person has developed good mental powers over physical control, they need to start applying this control to other weaknesses—being overweight is a common but tough one. Bad speech or conversation habits are another (these are especially difficult to break). Ultimately, one needs to apply themselves to eliminate bad mental habits of daydreaming, drifting, or erratic thinking.

CORRECTING CONSCIENCE

The most common problem with conscience is people's tendency to make permanent rationalizations that seal off reception of certain signals. They no longer hear the warnings. In other words, people talk

themselves into accepting that a problem is no longer a problem—or that it is beyond their capacity to change. They become immune to any future nervous feelings on that subject and their judgment begins to deteriorate in other areas. Here is a list of some of the most common areas where people cut off the signals of conscience, and no longer hear them:

- Eating junk food, overeating in general and accepting the weight problem
- Ignoring bad behavior in their children
- Watching too much TV and unhealthy movies, music, books and other “entertainment”
- Indulging in addictions: alcohol, pornography, smoking, etc.

There are many more but those are some of the most common in our society.

It’s hard for any person to see what they are missing in conscience, but others close to them can see faults more easily. Your parents, spouse, or close friends can sometimes be your biggest help in correcting conscience. They will often be reluctant to intervene and help you see unless you invite them in to give you helpful observations.

There are risks in that of potential offenses, but not so much if you are dealing with someone who is also good at listening to conscience. They’ll hear the signal and know how to tread properly on your feelings.

There are many professionals who people are often encouraged to pay to help, but most of these don’t understand any of the principles I’ve espoused here. Most of the rehab or self-help systems professionals develop for dealing with these problems involve gimmicks to reduce the pain of change. In fact many will tell you that “self-control doesn’t work.”

In reality, **self-control always works**, it is people that fail to develop enough of it or the mental strength to endure the pain that all change requires. The great thing about getting good about listening to conscience and finding the control to abide by it is that these larger addictions never happen. If they ever do, applying yourself to the little self-control restrictions of conscience will help build the mental strength to tackle the larger addictions, with the help of God, family and friends.

CONCLUSION

Within the workings of conscience are found the essence of our **final examination** on earth. No matter what you do publicly on earth—no matter how much fame, fortune or power you accumulate, the core judgment concerning your conduct on earth will center around how you have reacted to the thousands of promptings you received in conscience over a lifetime.

We’ve all made mistakes, but no matter what has gone on before, we can always repent, change, and repudiate our past and begin the healing process by linking yourself to the still small voice of conscience—which will lead you back to that God who sent us here.

But the longer one waits, the more difficult the process of change, and the more distant the voice of conscience becomes. It takes many years to become accurate and sensitive to the whisperings of conscience, even when we try our very best to listen and obey; so be patient. But don’t ever allow yourself to become lax. Learn to love the still small voice of conscience, and always be on guard for correction. Commit yourself to act when you know what is right—especially when you don’t feel like it. That’s the key to a better life.

Thanks for listening

Joel Skousen