

36. Conscience

What is conscience? It is defined differently by various people. To some it is an innate sense of right and wrong. To others it is something we learn from our parents and our society. Some people are actively guided by their conscience in every undertaking. Others seem to pay little heed to moral decisions and excuse their actions by saying "It's just business" or "If I didn't do it, then someone else would, so I might as well be the one to benefit" or "Everybody does it" or "I didn't mean to hurt anyone."

Is it possible to be perfectly honest? Is it okay to do something wrong if it is a trivial matter or if in the service of a greater good? It may be true that we live in a selfish, competitive world, so nobody is absolutely free from guilt. To survive, maybe we have no choice but to damage someone else's interests in order to protect our own. Does a tiger have less right to live than a deer? Or a deer than grass? But even so, there is no excuse for taking deliberate advantage of other people. Any wrong action deliberately undertaken, no matter how minuscule, should be the last to be forgiven. It is important not to try to hurt others on purpose.

But then, what about those errors that are not premeditated? Should they always be forgiven? What about killing someone by mistake? What if the act is done by someone who is not responsible for his actions, like a child or an idiot?

Comprehension

1. How do we acquire a conscience?
2. Why is it not possible to be perfectly guilt-free?
3. What is the most serious crime of all?

Your opinion

1. Does your conscience bother you if you tell a lie?
2. Do you think honesty is always the best policy or can lying sometimes be





the better option?

3. If you picked up a little money on the street, would you report it to the police?
Why or why not?
4. Could you betray your friend to save your life?
5. Could you betray your country to save your family?
6. Would you have a guilty conscience if you were in love with two people?
7. Can we criticize a soldier who leaked confidential information in order to avoid torture or to save his life?
8. If your parent and spouse were both drowning, who would you rescue first?
9. Do you think it's okay to remarry if your husband or wife died?

