

# A clear conscience

## Biblical Material: Proverbs 20.9

'No one is perfect. Can anyone really say their conscience is completely clear?'

### You will need:

- Labels saying 'hand' and 'arm' and 'conscience'.
- A bell.

### Introduction

Ask pupils to apply just the hand and arm labels to you. Christians believe there is another part of us which is invisible. It is called a conscience. The conscience is not a part of the body like a hand, so we cannot put the label on any part of the body. Having a conscience is the ability to recognise the difference between right and wrong in our behaviour. It's almost like having a 'voice' or feeling inside. Part of the role of conscience is to act as a warning, like a fire bell. Ring the bell. It warns people of wrong behaviour.

Sometimes the conscience goes wrong, just as an alarm system could develop a fault if it wasn't checked regularly. Some people's conscience does not tell them that certain things are wrong. Christians believe this happens when the conscience is ignored too often. People become deaf to its 'voice' and no longer hear it. Sometimes an alarm goes off even when there is no fire. A smoke alarm can be activated by burning the toast! In a similar way, some people have an over-active conscience. That means it keeps telling them they are doing things wrong when they aren't. If this happens, it needs checking out with other people you trust, just as you would check a smoke alarm.

### Core Material

Read the Biblical Material. A clear conscience means the 'voice' inside is saying, 'You have done nothing wrong.' Nobody has a really clear conscience: everybody has done something wrong at some time.

Once Jesus was teaching when people dragged before him a woman who had broken the law. The accusers were pleased with themselves: she had been caught 'red handed'. All Jesus had to do was pass sentence and condemn her. After that, they would throw stones at the woman in

order to kill her. Jesus quietly drew in the dirt with his finger, and said, 'Anyone who has never done wrong can throw the first stone.' Then he continued writing on the ground with his finger. The people put down their stones and went home. No one had a clear conscience. Every person was reminded, by their conscience, of the wrongs they had done. When Jesus eventually looked up, he asked the woman where everyone was. 'Is there no one to condemn you?' asked Jesus. 'None,' said the woman. 'I don't condemn you either,' Jesus replied. 'Go home, but don't sin again.' (John 8.1-11).

Knowing we all do wrong is not depressing: it can make us gentle in our treatment of others. It does not mean we have to accept wrong. Jesus told the woman to stop sinning.

### Prayer/Reflection

Ask the pupils to sit quietly and listen while you ring the bell.

(Sound the bell quietly) *When conscience whispers, help us to listen with care.*

(Sound the bell loudly) *When conscience shouts too often, may we listen but check.*

*Whether it shouts or whispers, help us, God, never to ignore your warning system.*

*Note.* For guidance on prayers and reflections see pages 9-11.

