

## The right to remain silent

Contributed by Ed Baswell  
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"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."  
I John 1:9 (KJV)

In 1963, Ernesto Miranda was arrested in Phoenix, Arizona, for stealing \$8 from a bank worker and was charged with armed robbery. He already had a record for armed robbery, and a juvenile record, including attempted rape, assault and burglary. While in police custody, he signed a written confession to the robbery and to kidnapping and raping an 18-year-old woman 11 days before the robbery. After he was convicted, his lawyers appealed on the grounds that Miranda did not know he was protected from self-incrimination.

The case, *Miranda v. Arizona*, made it all the way to the Supreme Court where the conviction was overturned. In a landmark ruling issued in 1966, the court established that the accused have the right to remain silent and that prosecutors may not use statements made by defendants while in police custody, unless the police have advised them of their rights.

Miranda was paroled in 1972, but died in 1976 at the age of 34, after being stabbed in a bar fight. A suspect was arrested and wanted to confess, but in an ironic twist, after being read his Miranda rights, refused to talk and was released.

The result of Miranda's case is what is now called the Miranda Warning: "You have the right to remain silent.

Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to speak to an attorney, and to have an attorney present during any questioning. If you cannot afford a lawyer, one will be provided for you at government expense. Do you understand these rights?"

So, under man's law, you have the right to remain silent, and under God's law, you also have the right to remain silent. But is that what God wants you to do? The Bible makes it very clear: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9).

I am convinced, Christians by the thousands are living in defeat almost every day of their lives because they don't know how to deal with sin. As a Christian, you have the right to remain silent, but, when it comes to sin, it is sinful to be silent. If you are not a Christian, God wants you to admit you are a sinner and ask Christ to come into your heart and save you.

If you are a Christian, chances are, you won't be able to sin for long without experiencing a sense of guilt. It will weigh you down and render you ineffective. But, if you will respond to your sin the way God wants you to, with confession and repentance, you will feel the heavy burden of guilt lift and you can again begin to live the kind of life God has planned for you.

Confession is good for the soul and it means to call sin what it is, as ugly as it may be. If it is jealousy, call it jealousy. If it is bitterness, call it bitterness. Don't call it a mistake, bad judgment, a bad habit, or a weakness--you are simply wasting God's time.

Call sin, sin and understand that there is only one kind of sin that can defeat you if you are a believer and that is unconfessed sin. When you truly confess your sin, that means you have been convicted of that sin and you despise it, you're broken over it and you wholeheartedly want to turn away from it.

In 1979, Daniel Crocker had been on a three-day LSD high when he killed a 19-year-old woman after meeting her briefly at a convenience store. There were no clues and detectives admitted the case would have never been solved had Crocker not confessed.

Not long after the murder, Crocker made some serious changes in his life--he got off drugs, gave his heart to Christ and got involved in a church. In 1986, Crocker married a woman from his church and started a family.

In 1998, he could stand it no longer. He was overwhelmed with guilt and could no longer conceal his sin. He said goodbye to his wife and his two children and flew to Kansas City where he was convicted of murder and was sentenced to ten years in prison.

In an interview, Crocker said, "I know it's hard to understand, but it's the right thing to do, because it was the only way I could be right with God and that is the only thing that matters."

As a Christian, you have the right to remain silent, but it will not be good for your spiritual health, and in some cases, it will affect your physical health. Lay the guilt of the sin in your life at the foot of the Cross of Calvary and the Savior, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and like Daniel Crocker, you will be cleansed and your sin debt will be marked, "PAID IN FULL."

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