

Denial

Denial is avoiding the pain of suffering by not agreeing with God about what is right or wrong about what we do to others or what others do to us. Denial is evident in a lighthearted response to being treated or treating others in a painful or wicked way, such as, "Oh, it wasn't that bad". The following diagram¹ shows how a person who is in denial has moved over the line between right and wrong to include things *God* would consider wrong in *her* view of what is right. Or she may move the line over the other direction and become legalistic, saying that something is wrong which *God* has not defined as wrong. Either way she defiles her conscience. First Timothy 1:19 says that the result of rejecting a good conscience is to experience shipwreck with regard to our faith. There are two ships, one of which is functioning according to a good conscience. This ship is able to discern when there is danger of encountering something wrong and uses its "depth-finder" to avoid rocks and shallow waters (illustrated by the sand bar on the left). The rocks symbolize sinful behaviors, while the sand bar symbolizes legalism. The other ship, however, does not have a good conscience and thus has no way of knowing what dangers need to be avoided. Therefore, it runs into the rocks and is shipwrecked. Spiritual shipwreck is what happens to a person who is in denial and has not faced the painful circumstances of her life. Instead, she responds in bitterness and tries to hide or ignore the pain by pretending that there are no problems at all.



¹ Mark Stortvedt, *The Scriptures: A Mirror to the Soul* (Kearney, Nebraska: Morris Publishing, 2008), 74.