

Grok, define Guilt by OMISSION

Legal Explanation of "Guilt by Omission" (Failure to Act) In law, "guilt by omission" (also called liability for an omission or criminal liability for failure to act) occurs when a person can be held criminally responsible not for doing something wrong, but for failing to do something they had a legal duty to do, and that failure causes harm or death. For someone to be guilty by omission, four elements are usually required:

1. There must be a legal duty to act
You are not normally required to be a hero or rescue strangers, but a duty arises in specific situations such as:
 - Parent → child
 - Spouse → spouse
 - Doctor/nurse → patient
 - Lifeguard, police officer, etc. → people they are paid or sworn to protect
 - Someone who voluntarily starts a rescue (you can't start helping and then abandon the person)
 - Someone who created the peril (e.g., you knock someone unconscious, you now have a duty to get help)
 - A statute explicitly imposes the duty (e.g., some countries have "Good Samaritan" laws that require you to help; many U.S. states have "duty to report" child abuse laws, hit-and-run laws, etc.)
2. The person must have knowledge of the facts giving rise to the duty
You have to know (or reasonably should know) the danger exists.
3. The person must have the physical ability to perform the required act
If you're paralyzed or the situation is impossible, you can't be guilty.
4. The omission (failure) must be the proximate/legal cause of the harm
If the person would have died anyway, the omission didn't cause the death.

Classic examples in criminal law:

- A parent watches their toddler drown in a bathtub and does nothing → charged with manslaughter or murder by omission.
- A driver hits a pedestrian, sees them lying injured, and drives away instead of calling 911 → felony hit-and-run (omission after creating peril).
- A nurse walks past a patient coding and ignores the alarm → possible negligent homicide.

In most common-law countries (U.S., UK, Canada, Australia, etc.), there is no general duty to rescue strangers if you did not create the danger. Continental European countries (France, Germany, Italy, etc.) often do have a general duty to render easy assistance ("omission of easy rescue" statutes).

Biblical Verses That Affirm

Responsibility for Omissions (Sins of Omission) The Bible repeatedly teaches that failing to do good when you have the ability and opportunity is itself sin. Here are some of the clearest verses:

1. James 4:17 (the classic “sin of omission” verse)
“Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.”
(NKJV)
2. Matthew 25:41–45 (the sheep and goats judgment – Jesus explicitly judges people for what they failed to do)
“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’ ... ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’”
3. Luke 10:30–37 (Parable of the Good Samaritan)
The priest and Levite are condemned not for harming the injured man, but for walking by and doing nothing when they had the ability to help.
4. Proverbs 24:11–12
“Deliver those who are drawn toward death, And hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, ‘Surely we did not know this,’ Does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds?”
5. Ezekiel 33:6 (the watchman analogy – failure to warn)
“But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman’s hand.”
6. 1 John 3:17
“But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?”

In short:

Legally → you are only liable for omission when you have a specific duty.

Biblically → God holds people accountable for failing to do good whenever they know what is right and have the ability, even without a formal “duty” under human law. The Bible’s standard is stricter than most secular legal systems.