

# Mercy Hill Church

1 John • Revealing God's Children • 1 John 3:4-10 • No Date

## Main Point

No one who abides in Christ continues to love sin.

## Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What is one area of your life that you think you pay more attention to than the average person? Why do you think you pay so much attention to that area of your life?**

**Imagine that you chose to be indifferent in that area. How quickly do you think it would spiral out of control? Why?**

There are certain parts of our lives where indifference is not an option. For most people, these areas of emphasis differ according to their priorities. One person might pay more attention to finances than another; another person might be more vigilant about their diet than someone else. But for the Christian, indifference is not an option when it comes to a walk with God. As we face the reality of sin, we must recognize the only remedy of sin and the removal of Satan's power so that we have proper reverence for our Savior.

## Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 3:4-6.

**Do you think that generally people take sin seriously enough? Why or why not?**

**What about Christians? Do you think we take sin seriously enough?**

**What might be some reasons why indifference can creep into our view of sin in our lives?**

**How do these verses speak to that temptation of indifference?**

Sin is a sobering reality. In fact, these verses are a stark reminder that sin has no place in the life of the true Christ-follower. This truth is so important that John goes so far as to say that everyone who remains, or abides, in Christ does not sin and that if someone does sin they give evidence that they don't truly know Jesus.

**Do these verses indicate that Christians never sin? If not, what do they mean?**

**What is the difference between sin and a lifestyle characterized by sin? Why is that an important distinction to draw?**

Christians sin. We know this not only from experience, but because John has already told us it's true (1:8). But true Christians take an active stance, rather than an attitude of indifference, to the reality of sin. They choose to engage in the fight rather than lapsing into a lifestyle of habitual sin. Though we will never live a sin free life until we reach heaven, the true Christian will not grow weary of confronting, repenting of, and trusting in the forgiveness of Jesus for their daily sin.

**Why is Jesus the only true remedy for sin?**

**What is the difference between trying not to sin and trusting in Christ for the forgiveness of your sin?**

Because sin is more than the occasional mistake and is instead a condition that has corrupted our hearts, the only remedy to the problem of sin is to engage the heart. Only through Jesus can we be forgiven of our sins through His substitutionary death and have a new heart that is bent toward loving God.

| > HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 JOHN 3:7-10.

**Do you think it's fair for John to say that the one who commits sin is of the devil? Why or why not? In what way does the cross destroy the works of the devil?**

**How do these verses reveal the depth of the change Jesus brings in us?**

**Why is the phrase "born again" appropriate when thinking about this change?**

**Is that phrase personally meaningful to you? Why?**

When we sin, we take part in the devil's plan. But when we are born again, we have a new nature that wants to follow and please God. But John wants us to know that it's one thing to claim to be born again; it's another to offer evidence of that fact. Because we are so dramatically changed by the grace of God when we become Christians, our lives will always reflect that. Just as you can certainly identify the type of tree growing by the fruit it produces, so you can identify the children of God by their lives.

## Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**In what ways are you being tempted right now toward an attitude of indifference?**

**Is there any way you can remind yourself of the seriousness of sin? What is it? What are some ways you can be on guard against spiritual indifference this week?**

**Given what Jesus has done for us in breaking the power of sin and the devil, what is the appropriate response to Him?**

**How is that response modeled in the way we worship? In the way we pray? In our relationships with others?**

## Pray

As you close your group, thank God for breaking the power of sin and the devil. Ask Him to renew the passion inside you for holiness. Pray that you would be on guard against spiritual indifference this week.

## Commentary

| 1 John 3:4-10

The opening statement in these verses appears obvious: When we sin, we break the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. This lawlessness is characteristic of the spirit of Antichrist, and sinners see no reason to concern themselves with God's laws. But that doesn't change the problem of sin, much as the false teachers might want it to. Sin is not removed from the world by simply creating a theology or philosophy that says we are above sin or incapable of sin. Sin has to be dealt with. God has dealt with our sin. You know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. Jesus dealt with sin in the only way suitable to God. He lived a sinless life, and then made the ultimate perfect sacrifice. His perfect life became the model, the new creature God wants to make of all His children.

The next statement is breathtaking: no one who lives in him keeps on sinning. This statement is followed by an even more absolute statement: no one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. To put a cap on it, verse 9 says the person who has been born of God cannot go on sinning. These statements can be alarming; we know we have sinned. We may be wrestling with sin that keeps cropping up in our lives. If this letter intends to comfort us with the assurance of our salvation (5:13), statements like these can have just the opposite effect. So what do we do with these statements?

Christians do sin, as acknowledged elsewhere in this letter (1:8-2:1; 5:16-17). Repeated exhortations not to sin (2:1, 15, 29; 3:12, 18; 5:21) would be needless if we could not sin or if we did not sin. The kind of sin meant here is continual; it means we cannot adopt a lifestyle of willful, unrepentant sin. The verbs in these sentences are present tense, which means, as the NIV has translated it, don't "keep on sinning." We will sin. We may sin badly. But we will never settle down into a lifestyle that is characterized by sin. It's important, too, to remember the context. False teachers claimed that Christians do not sin, or cannot sin, or are free to

sin, and that if they do sin, it is of no great consequence. It is an extreme situation that calls for extreme language, so Scripture dispels this groundless teaching.

Verse 7 warns us not to be led astray. This is probably a warning against the false teachers and antichrists who apparently felt free to sin, while denying that they were doing anything wrong. Our text counters with the bold assertion that the person who does what is right is righteous. Doing what is right does not make a person righteous. But the false teachers must recognize that if a person is righteous, he or she will do what is right. You cannot claim to be righteous, as did the antichrists, while living in open sin.

He who does what is sinful is of the devil makes it clear that the sinning antichrists were not righteous, but were of the devil. This does not mean that when a Christian sins, he suddenly loses his place as a child of God and takes his place as a child of the devil. Rather, it means that the antichrists—since they claim righteousness while living in sin—are children of the devil. To sin is to take part in the devil's plan, which automatically sets a person in opposition to God. Scripture takes seriously the nature of believers as born-again, Spirit-filled, new creatures in Christ. It will not tolerate any casual attitude toward sin. Sin and salvation are opposites. Wanting to sin is not part of being led by the Spirit or having Christ in us. Refusal to take this warning seriously should call us to reexamine our commitment to Christ.