

²⁷ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

- In what way did Jesus raise the bar on what was considered sin?

Read James 4:17

If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.

- How is this kind of sin different than the other kinds of sin we have been discussing?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

- Having examined these Scriptures what should a person conclude about their own sinfulness?

THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

Read Isaiah 59:1-2

¹ Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear.

² But your iniquities have separated you from your God;

your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

- What do these verses say about the negative effect that is the result of sin?

Read Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- What do you think of when you think of wages?
- What do you think is the kind of death that is the result of sin?
- How does it feel to know that although you are a sinner who has earned the wage of death, God provides a way to remove that consequence?

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Seeking God

Searching for truth and meaning in the Bible

Study #6: The Problem of Sin

A DEFINITION - WHAT IS SIN?

We live in a culture where the concept of sin has become entangled in legalistic arguments over right and wrong. When many of us consider “What is sin?” we think of violations of the Ten Commandments. Even then, we tend to think of murder and adultery as “major” sins compared with lying, cursing, or idolatry.

The truth is that sin, as defined in the original translations of the Bible, means “to miss the mark.” The mark, in this case, is the standard of perfection established by God and evidenced by Jesus.

Sin is mentioned hundreds of times in the Bible, starting with the “original” sin when Adam and Eve ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil from which they had been commanded not to eat (Genesis 3:6).

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT SIN

Read Romans 3:23

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,...

- From this verse, who would we conclude is a sinner?
- What does it mean that sin is a falling short of God’s glory?

Read 1 John 1:8

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

- What does this verse imply about those who claim to have no sin?

Read 1 John 3:4

Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.

- What do you think is the kind of law being discussed in this verse?
- What do you think it means that sin is lawlessness?

Read Galatians 5:19-21

The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jeal-

ousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

- What do you think it means that these acts of sin are obvious?
- What do you think about the kinds of sins in this list? Does it surprise you that any of these are considered sin? Are there any listed for which you need clarification?
- What does it mean that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God?

Read 2 Timothy 3:1-5

¹ But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. ² People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, ⁴ treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God - ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.

- Again, note the sins that are listed...any surprises or questions?
- How does this sound a lot like our culture today?

Read Mark 7:20-22

²⁰ He went on: “What comes out of a person is what defiles them. ²¹ For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come - sexual immorality, theft, murder, ²² adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. ²³ All these evils come from inside and defile a person.”

- Again, note the sins that are listed...any surprises or questions?
- What is significant about the fact that they come from inside a person?

Read Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28

²¹ “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ ²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment.