

Dealing with Sin

BS #6

Perspective on the Bible study:

This lesson fits on the “upward” part of our diagram and is designed to answer the question: “Well, if all my sins are forgiven and I still sin, then what?” Or, put another way: “What do I do when I blow it?” Of course, the good news is that a believer’s sin is forgiven. But God has also built in a human response – confession/repentance – that is necessary for us to experience his forgiveness.

Below is a short outline of the whole lesson. Remember to leave time for the application at then end. This is pretty emotionally powerful and if you assign them to do it on their own, odds are they won’t do it.

Again, there is a lot of material here – you can summarize or move through it. I think it can be done in one lesson if you avoid tangents and are prepared. Be sensitive to the needs of the group and, if necessary, take it into next week.

Hook to the Lesson: draw the diagram and tell a story from your life about Confession/forgiveness

Bible study Overview:

I. Sin described/defined: 1 John 3:4, 1 Cor. 6:9-11, Matthew 5:28

[Grey area excursion]

II. Sin dealt with:

A. Col 2:13-14

B. 1 John 1:8-9

Relationship/Fellowship

Exhale/inhale

Application

Sin List exercise (this is powerful!)

EXPLORE

HOOK:

Redraw our now famous diagram. For the past few weeks we’ve discussed the beginning of the Christian life – how one becomes a Christian, what happens when one becomes a Christian, etc. We never grow past this in some ways – our Christian life always reflects back on God’s mercy as expressed in salvation.

Tonight we’re going to talk about one of the critical topics that is necessary for growth in the Christian life -- dealing with sin. Now we’ve already seen that when we become a Christian Christ pays for our sins. But the reality is that we still indeed DO sin . . . so what do we do then?

**Share a personal story – sometime you’ve done this.

GOING DEEPER

I. Sin Described/Defined

Q How would you define sin? (What is “sin”?)

Q How does 1 John 3:4 describe sin? Whose law?

sin is “lawlessness.” This is a nice one word definition, but it still leaves us with many questions. The Bible actually gives us many illustrations about sin. Some are pretty direct. Others are word pictures. The bottom line: sin is comprehensive -- our actions AND our attitudes. For example....

Have someone read 1 Cor 6:9-11

Q What actions are listed here as sin? (vs 11 – “such were some of you” like we talked about, changed lives. These are the sorts of things we might expect on a “sin list.”)

But let’s also look at Rom 1:28-32

Q Anything seem surprising to you? We tend to think of the “biggies” -- murder, stealing, or whatever. The Bible includes things like gossip, envy, etc. This is because the Bible sees sin as a heart issue as well as a behavior issue.

Q Have someone read Mt 5:28 (5:22 for women?) Here Jesus describes purity of heart is as important as purity of action.

Q Generally speaking, what are some of the thoughts/intentions that are common in most of our hearts that are outright displeasing to God?

NOTE: If we measure our lives by the external, we can make a case for righteousness -- sometimes. But if we look at our heart -- what we love, how we feel about others and our selves, what we think about God (or don’t think) -- we are vulnerable -- we are sinful.

Theological Comments: Gray Area Excursion

[This excursion helps answer the question regarding “grey areas” – things not specifically mentioned in the Bible. Don’t get hung up in this section! Keep it moving . . . you can spend days arguing whether something is sin or not. This is a 5-minute excursion – if you can’t do it quickly, skip it. If you aren’t careful here you’ll end arguing over movies, gambling, or whatever the whole time. It may be best to skip it and leave more time for the sin list at the end]

When the Bible doesn’t directly address an issue, it provides guidelines for thinking through whether some action or thought might glorify God . . . or whether it might be wrong or sin.

Of course, the Bible doesn't primarily consist of a book that tells us everything right or everything wrong. Should you go to that R rated movie? Is it ok to have a beer once I'm 21? Can I date that person? How far can I go on a date physically?

Though the Bible doesn't definitively answer these, there are definite guidelines put forth. Let's look briefly at Rom 14:13-23 to give us some principles for so called "gray areas" -- areas that aren't specifically addressed in the Bible. Give some background info on meat sacrificed to idols and then have someone read this passage. Then summarize 3 principles (you need to go to 1 Cor. 10 for the 3rd). ***Provided examples from your own life.*

3 principles:

1. don't cause anyone to stumble (v21) -- sometimes the case
2. whatever is not of faith is sin (v 23) -- this is a good standard
3. do all to the glory of God (I Cor 10:31) -- this is a good standard

So, "sin" is attitudes and actions that are displeasing to God. When in doubt, we are to "do all to the glory of God." The reality is, however, that we sin all the time. So, how do we deal with this sin?

II. Sin Dealt With

Have someone read Col 2:13-14.

Not surprisingly, Christ is the solution to our sin problem. Look at the verse.

Q How does Paul describe our former state? Our present state? What has Christ done for us? Tell "certificate of debt story" (debtors' prison. list of debts. when canceled torn up, thrown away. you could never be charged for those again.)

However, this leaves us with a dilemma. Our sin is paid for/canceled. But we also understand a little bit about the pervasiveness of sin in our lives. So, what do we do when we sin? How do we daily deal with our sin? There is a key passage that deals with this, 1 John 1:5-9

Turn to 1 John 1:5-9. Read 1:5-6

Q What does it mean that "God is light"? He is morally perfect -- no moral flaw in him. His very presence exposes sin in our hearts and minds. When people stand in the presence of God they will be speechless -- they won't mutter nonsense about how "good" they are.

John goes on to delineate a couple of things that we can never say because God is light:

1. Some (1:6) claim to know him, but walk in darkness.

Q Why is this a problem? (note vs. 5, 6) If God is light and we know the God who is light we won't walk in darkness. Our lives will increasingly be characterized by LIGHT, not darkness.

2. Some (1:8) claim to have no sin or to have not sinned (1:10).

Q What is wrong with claiming to have no sin? It's impossible for a believer to know that God is LIGHT and to think that he or she has no sin.

The proper response is in 1:9: we CONFESS our sins

Q What is the result?

(talk through verses 8-9 in more detail...)

Q What does “confess” mean? to agree with God. Confession is something that goes on our entire Christian life – just like “repentance.”

**Share examples from your life!

Q Why is God “faithful” and “just” to forgive us our sins? Why not “merciful” and “kind”? Merciful and kind would imply God was forgiving something that wasn’t legitimately paid for – something that we didn’t deserve. Faithful and just points back to Christ. God is faithful and just to forgive us because the price has been paid.

It is helpful to explain the difference in our RELATIONSHIP with God and our FELLOWSHIP with God. (draw these two columns out somewhere...)

Relationship

**never changes
maintained by God
judicial forgiveness**

Fellowship

**changes when we sin
maintained, in part, by us
experiential forgiveness**

Example: a dad allows his son to borrow his Mercedes and the son puts a huge dent in it in the high school parking lot. The son decides to hide it – he doesn’t think that his Dad will notice. He tries to go on like life is normal. He knows that his dad loves him and always will but a significant barrier now exists. This is like confession – our relationship with God doesn’t change when we sin – our fellowship with him does.

Q So, how do we respond when we sin? 1 John 1:8-9 says we “confess.” How do we do this?

Explain Spiritual Breathing, exhale-inhale.

**Tell a recent story. Talk about doing this all the time, like breathing – not just at some holy service.

You must illustrate this well with stories from your own life. As the country preacher used to say, “we ‘fess ‘em as we duz ‘em.” Certainly one of the keys to the Christian life is learning to moment-by-moment confess one’s sins to God. A good first step is a sin list...

Application

Make a sin list in your small group. Bring paper and pens. You will be pushed for time, but even if you only give them 3-4 minutes for it, it is worth it. If you assign it for them to do outside of the group, not many will. Do everything you can to leave time for this!

Assign Sin List: Explain that it is often helpful to get alone with God and ask the Spirit to bring to mind things you've done or thought – whether recently or far off – that are sin. Something you've found helpful is to jot down all these things as they come to mind and then write 1 John 1:8-9 across the list. It is simply a tangible way to reinforce what God has done in Christ. In a few minutes they won't do anything more than get started, but encourage them to do it again when they can put more time into it.

You probably should say that the list is just between them and God and they can write in code if they want (in case they want more privacy). The point is that you are willing to call something "sin," that you are willing to change, and that you are willing to believe that Christ paid for it.

A little "ditty" that is helpful:

- 1. call it sin**
- 2. call it forgiven**
- 3. call on God to change you**

When you've given them a few minutes ask them to write "1 John 1:9" across the list and eat it (just kidding)! You can have them tear it into tiny pieces and throw it in the trashcan or flush them down the toilette. Just something to symbolically show they are paid for and made obsolete by Christ.