

QUESTION 13:
CAN ANYONE KEEP THE LAW OF GOD PERFECTLY?

ANSWER : SINCE THE FALL, NO MERE HUMAN HAS BEEN ABLE TO KEEP THE LAW OF GOD PERFECTLY, BUT CONSISTENTLY BREAKS IT IN THOUGHT, WORD AND DEED.

50 minute Lesson Outline:

- Catechism Recap (5 mins)
- Introduction to Question (5 mins)
- Teaching Outline (15 mins)
- Discussion and Question Time (20 mins)
- Virtue Vision (5 mins)

Bible Passage: Romans 3:9–20

Memory Verse: Rom. 3:10–12

Big Idea: The law of God has been kept perfectly only by Jesus. No other human has, is, or will be able to keep God's law.

Aim: To introduce us to the concept of original sin.

Virtue: Forgiveness

LEADER'S NOTES:

The concept of sin is increasingly alien to modern society, and the belief in the doctrine of original sin will be offensive to many. The world is inclined to believe that children are born innocent and are corrupted only by the adult influences in their lives. This lesson aims to introduce us to the doctrine of original sin. It will help us to understand that no one has kept or will be able to keep God's law perfectly, except Jesus. Sin affects our relationship with God and with other people. **This lesson aims to help us see how sin corrupts everything and how Jesus can provide salvation because he lived the perfect life.**

Things to remember:

- This is a difficult concept for some to understand. Exercise care and patience in your teaching.
- This can be a frightening topic for some, especially those from non-Christian homes. Be sensitive to anyone who may come from non-Christian homes or who are not yet Christians themselves.

CATECHISM REVIEW OF LAST WEEK, Q12

What does God require in the ninth and tenth commandments?

Answer : Ninth, that we do not lie or deceive, but speak the truth in love. Tenth, that we are content, not envying anyone or resenting what God has given them or us.

INTRODUCTION TO QUESTION 13

Ask the group what they think the worst crimes are. **Write them down:**

Once they've listed some crimes, ask them to **rank them** from the most offensive to the least offensive.

Ask them where they would place themselves on the list. They will probably be shocked at the suggestion that they should even be on the list and protest their innocence.

Reassure them that you're aware that they haven't committed a crime or broken any laws in the eyes of the state, but challenge them to consider whether they've broken God's law.

Ask them once again where they think they should be on the list, given that it's a list being prepared for God. **Hopefully they will put themselves right at the top of the list.**

Eliminate the rankings. Before God, everyone is equally guilty.

Introduce Question 13: "Can anyone keep the law of God perfectly?"

Remind them that God gave his law to show his people how to live, but that everyone except Jesus has failed to keep the law of God perfectly.

TEACHING OUTLINE

QUESTION 13: CAN ANYONE KEEP THE LAW OF GOD PERFECTLY?

Remember Evel Knievel? He was a famous motorcyclist who attempted daredevil stunts. On the September 8, 1974, Evel Knievel planned to jump across the Snake River Canyon in a specially designed Skycycle. All the spectators were disappointed because he didn't make the jump. He fell short. (surprisingly, he was not killed and only had minor injuries.) No one was really interested in how far he did get; the reality was that he just couldn't reach the other side. When you're jumping across a canyon, "almost" is not good enough!

**This is an illustration of how humanity is before God's law.
Every single person fails to reach the standard of God's law.**

Ask the group if anyone here has ever received a perfect score on a test. Congratulate those who say they have. Then ask them if they always get 100 percent on their tests. Explain that it is very unlikely that anyone will consistently achieve 100 percent on every test throughout his or her life. It actually doesn't matter whether we get 100 percent on every exam, as long as we try our best. It's important to see that perfection is impossible to live up to.

READ: Romans 3:9–20

9 *What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin,*
 10 *as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one;*
 11 *no one understands; no one seeks for God.*
 12 *All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."*
 13 *"Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips."*
 14 *"Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness."*
 15 *"Their feet are swift to shed blood;*
 16 *in their paths are ruin and misery,*
 17 *and the way of peace they have not known."*
 18 *"There is no fear of God before their eyes."*
 19 *Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.*
 20 *For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.*

Paul is helping his readers and listeners understand just how bad the situation is for them! Paul clearly explains to them that everyone, both Jews (God's chosen people) and Gentiles, fail to live up to God's standard as revealed in his law—the Ten Commandments. Paul says that everyone is born sinful, and that means that no one can keep the law of God perfectly.

God designed human beings to be able to keep his law perfectly, but when sin entered the world through Adam, everything changed. Adam rejected God's law in favor of living his own way, and every single person who has lived since is tainted by the sin that first appeared in Adam. Everybody is separated from God by sin and that no one is capable of living the perfect righteous life that God demands. God has declared that he will punish those who fail to keep his law. Paul explains that no one is right with God.

Look back through the passage and pull out some of the things it says about people.

Identify the parts of the body that are mentioned in the passage. There is no part of us that isn't affected by sin. Relationships with other people and the relationship with God is spoiled.

Read verse 20 again, and explain that it means it is not possible to save oneself by the law, but rather, through the law people become aware of their sin.

Ask the group if this room is dirty or clean. (Hopefully, they will say that it is clean.) Tell them that although it may be tidy, there may be dust on surfaces that we can't see.

See if they can find any dust using the flashlight on their phones. The law allows us to see where we have failed to live according to God's perfect way, just as the flashlight helps us see dust that we could not see without it.

There is some good news though! Understanding our failure to keep the law helps the beauty of the gospel to shine through. It's like a black piece of velvet that is put behind a diamond to allow the diamond to shine brightly.

There is One who kept God's law perfectly, and that was Jesus. God intends to punish those who have rejected his rule and broken his law, but Jesus wonderfully, willingly bears God's punishment in order for relationships to be restored between God and man.

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

As a group, take turns writing things on either side of the line. Everything on the *Before* side should be things that were true before the fall of Adam. Everything on the *After* side should be what is true of our world now.

BEFORE

AFTER



SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

(Allow for several answers within your group before reading the provided response.)

- 1. Why did God allow sin to enter the world?** God knew humanity would sin, but that he allowed it to happen so he could display his amazing love by sending Jesus to die on the cross.
- 2. What difference does it make if people actually keep the law?** Because God is just and holy, he will punish those who don't keep his law perfectly and fail to repent. People can live as if God doesn't exist and as if his law isn't important, but one day they will stand before God in judgment.

Things to consider:

- How would you describe the concept of original sin to someone else?

- Are you inspired to obey the law in gratitude for God's saving grace in Jesus?

- Consider the urgency of sharing the gospel.

VIRTUE VISION: Forgiveness

Consider the forgiveness that God has extended to you. In light of his mercy, how difficult is it for you to forgive others?

Who do you need to forgive today?

MEMORY VERSE

**None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands;
no one seeks for God. All have turned aside;
together they have become worthless;
no one does good, not even one."
(Rom. 3:10–12)**