

WHAT IS SIN?

ANSWER: Sin is rejecting or ignoring God in the world he created, rebelling against him by living without reference to him, not being or doing what he requires in his law—resulting in our death and the disintegration of all creation.

Bible Passage:

1John 3:24–10

Memory Verse:

1John 3:4

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)

Virtue: Forgiveness

Big Idea: Sin is rejecting or ignoring God’s moral law and rebelling against him.

Aim: To understand what sin is and how it affects our relationship with God.

LEADER’S NOTES:

The concept of sin is increasingly foreign in today’s world. God is consistently erased from society, and life now seems to happen without any reference to his existence. The Western world generally buys into the belief that we are inherently good and are gradually corrupted by external influences. Original sin is an alien doctrine to those both inside and outside the church. This lesson will encourage us to investigate the doctrine of sin and to more fully understand the devastating effects of sin on God’s creation. As a result, we will more fully appreciate the fact that everything in the world is tainted by sin and **deepen our understanding of the significance and beauty of the sacrificial, atoning death of Jesus on the cross.**

Things to remember:

- Some people may be familiar with the concept of sin and mistakenly believe that they have nothing more to learn.
- Some people may feel heavily burdened by their personal sin; leaders must therefore communicate with wisdom, gentleness, and grace.
- We need encouragement to grasp the fact that humanity can never deal with the problem of sin without God’s intervention.

Question 15 Review

Since no one can keep the law, what is its purpose?

That we may know the holy nature of God, and the sinful nature of our hearts; and thus our need of a Savior.

INTRODUCTION TO QUESTION 16

You will need to encourage the group to carefully search the headlines of local news outlets using their smartphones.

Ask the group to identify something from the news that they might describe as lawless (you may need to ascertain if they understand what lawlessness is).

Introduce Question 16: "What is sin?"

Explain that sin is described in today's Bible passage as lawlessness. Most people think of bad criminals when they think of lawless people, people who break laws established by the governments. Question 16 will facilitate a big examination of the doctrine of sin.

TEACHING OUTLINE

Q.16: WHAT IS SIN?

Ask the group if they can see ways that the world tries to push God out of the picture and live as if he doesn't exist. Do they ever live without giving God a thought?

Explain that God is deeply saddened when people ignore him as the Creator and sustainer of the world. God hates when people rebel against his law, and he calls it sin. People sin when they break God's law. God's law can be broken actively by doing something or even by thinking something.

The first sin occurred in the world in the garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. Since that time all people have been born with a sinful nature. We are all prone to sin. That is why Paul says in Romans 3:23 that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We are never able to keep God's law fully because we all fail to meet the mark. When we fail to live in the way that God intended us to, we break his law and

our sin separates us from God. Breaking God's loving law leads to death and destruction, for God clearly states in his Word that he will punish sin.

Ask the group to name the kinds of sins that they might be guilty of committing.

READ: 1John 3:4–10

4 Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.

5 You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.

6 No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.

7 Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous.

8 Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

9 No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God.

10 By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

Introduce the group to John and his first letter to the churches in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). John is writing to the people of God in order to help them live in a way that glorifies God. John reminds those he's writing to that every time they sin, they are breaking God's law.

Sin is a conscious decision to choose to do things our own way instead of God's way. It says "I know best" rather than "God knows best."

John does, however, highlight the solution to sin! Remind the group that we do not always have to be separated from God by sin or face death and destruction because of sin.

Read verse 5 and identify who John is writing about. It's Jesus! Jesus is the only one who can deal once and for all with sin. Humans can try to live better lives, they can try to keep God's law, but even the best efforts will be unsatisfactory. But Jesus, the only sinless man ever to live, can deal with our sin. Jesus never broke any of God's laws, he never pushed God out of the picture, he never thought, "I'll do this my way instead of God's way." He submitted to God and was perfect in every way—in how he

acted and in what he thought. Because of his perfection, he was the only one that could restore our relationship with God and bear our punishment, death, and destruction. The perfect Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment that was due for our sins.

When Jesus died on the cross, he made the way for the forgiveness of sins and for a relationship with God. When we ask Jesus for forgiveness, a great exchange happens. Our sins are taken by Jesus, and his perfection comes to us (sometimes it's described as the righteousness of Christ). We are made right with God when we trust in Jesus.

If we are "in him," as John says, if we are forgiven and righteous because of Christ, surely our love for sin, for living our own way, must be banished. Out of great love and gratitude to God for our forgiveness in Christ, we will try to live like Jesus.

We won't stop sinning, but we will stop loving sin.

Consider it this way, when sports players change teams they leave behind the old team's uniform, songs, cheers, and behavior and move to the new team. They put on the new team's uniform and learn the new team's way of doing things. Sometimes they may slip back into their old ways, but they'll try to act successfully as members of the new team.

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

As time allows, invite group members to share his or her testimony with the group. Encourage the focus to be on the devastating effects of sin and the salvation and restoration that can be found in Jesus alone.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

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

- 1. Aren't some sins worse than others?** No! God declares that all sins are offensive to him.
- 2. What about those who don't ask Jesus for forgiveness?** the only way to be made right with God is to ask Jesus for forgiveness Those who don't repent of their sins and seek God's forgiveness will be separated from him forever.

More to consider:

Have you personally repented of you sin and sought forgiveness in JesusP

Are you striving to live in a God-glorifying way?

Are there particular ways that you sin or are tempted to sin?

VIRTUE VISION: Forgiveness

Consider what being forgiven means to you. Begin by focusing initially on you personal experience of forgiveness in your home. Consider the enormity of the forgiveness that Christians have because of Jesus's death on the cross. God's incredible mercy and grace. Consider how being forgiven might affect your relationships with other people, friends, siblings, and even enemies.

Having experienced such monumental forgiveness in Jesus, could you possibly have a right to withhold forgiveness from anyone?

Memory Verse

"Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness." (1 John 3:4)