



First Things First

A First Step Programme to help
you Grow in Christ

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Lesson 3 – Sin and Repentance

Making disciples who make disciples

WHAT IS SIN?

To sin is to do something that displeases God. Every person born into the world is a sinner. Even the most beautiful, innocent-looking baby will inevitably sin, because it is not the first sinful action that makes that child a sinner, but rather the child commits that sin because he is expressing the sinful nature with which he is born.

"But I was born a sinner, yes, from the moment my mother conceived me." Psalm 51:5

Discuss: Can you remember a time as a child when you became 'super aware' that what you were about to do was wrong, but you did it anyway? Confession time!

We see the sinful nature very early on in our growing up years. Self is the centre of a child's desires and intentions. The child is bent upon pleasing him/herself and having his wishes fulfilled.

The heart of the problem is that it is natural to please ourselves.

When we act naturally, as a result of the selfish nature with which we are born, we inevitably sin and displease God. In so doing we turn our backs on God.

"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."
Romans 3:23

Sin not only displeases God, but also separates the people He created from the glory He intends for them. This shows the destructive nature of sin. *Sin divides men from God.* Sinners are alienated from Him, they do not know Him, neither can they enjoy fellowship with Him. From birth everyone is separated from God. If this was not the case, every man, woman and child would know God naturally. Obviously, this is not so!

SOME CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

It grieves God	Genesis 6:5-7
It brings guilt	Psalm 51:3-4
It brings separation from God	Isaiah 59:1-2
It brings judgement and everlasting punishment	Matthew 25:46
It enslaves	Romans 6:17
It causes spiritual blindness	II Corinthians 4:4
It causes spiritual death	Ephesians 2:1
It brings lack of hope	Ephesians 2:12
It corrupts	Titus 1:15
It condemns	James 5:12

THE BIBLE DESCRIBES SIN IN DIFFERENT WAYS

The Bible uses more than one word to describe this universal experience of man's separation and alienation from God. The words used can be classified in four main areas.

1. GOING ASTRAY

To miss the mark or go wrong
Deliberately do what is wrong
Fall off a path
To go astray

"We - every one of us - have strayed away like sheep! We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet God laid on him the guilt and sins of every one of us."
Isaiah 53:6

2. DESCRIPTION OF A CONDITION

It is a fixed state in which men are trapped
The Wicked or ungodly
To offend or be guilty

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God
Romans 3:23

3. DELIBERATE REBELLION

This is a state where people feel they can live without God, i.e. in pride people declare their independence from God.

"But those who keep on sinning are against God, for every sin is done against the will of God." 1 John 3:4

4. DEVIOUS ACTIONS OR ATTITUDES

To be contentious, rebellious, or stubborn.
To be evil or bad, i.e. a specific act of evil

"They did not need to be as their fathers were - stubborn, rebellious, unfaithful, refusing to give their hearts to God."
Psalm 78:8

OUR RESPONSE TO SIN

Everybody is responsible for their own sin. We all have sinned and preferred selfishness instead of loving God first and foremost.

God wants us to turn from sin and live.

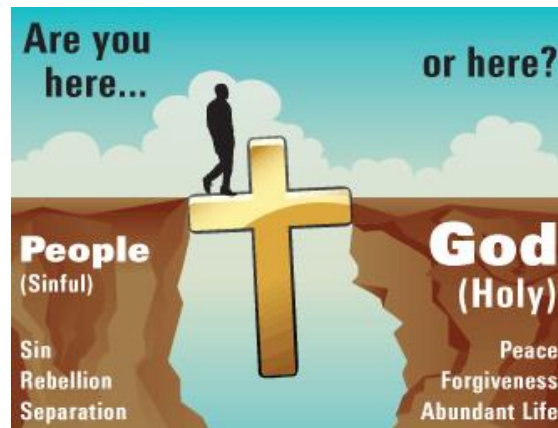
"But if a wicked person turns away from all his sins and begins to obey all my laws and do what is just and right, he shall surely live and not die."
Ezekiel 18:21

Man chose to sin against God's desires. God knew the consequences of that choice, but He gave man the right to choose.

Discussion: Why could God not just step in and stop our poor decision making? (Hint - free will)

Today, we still have a choice, either to remain in our sin, and so continue in our separation from God, or to accept Jesus as our Saviour and Lord.

Jesus sacrificed His life so that we can be saved from the guilt, consequences and power of sin. God cannot have a relationship with a person who has sinned. Our sin separates us from God. However, He has provided a way for our sin to be blotted out and removed. If we choose Jesus, THEN GOD CAN COME AND HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH US. This is what we as human beings were created for. It is why our hearts feel empty when we have no relationship with the one true God.



God wants us to know Him, to know His will for us, to love Him, be prepared to fulfil the purpose He has for us. He wants us to be part of His Kingdom and become His children.

For us to know God, two things must take place:

1. Our sins must be forgiven.
2. We need a new nature.

It is precisely these two problems that Jesus solved at the Cross. By dying for us, our sins and our old nature were put to death on that cross with Him. Making the way for God to gift us with a new nature that loves God and hates sin. Jesus blood was shed so we can receive forgiveness.

It sounds fantastic you say! But these are the facts. God has made a way. It cost Jesus everything, but it is good news to us.

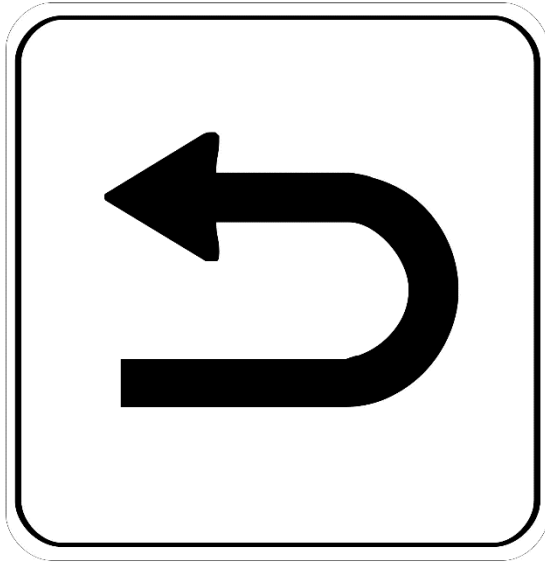
JESUS DIED TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM OF SIN.

Discussion: Why was it so important for God to not only offer us forgiveness but also a new nature?

REPENTANCE

WHAT IS TRUE REPENTANCE?

It is a complete turnaround, in thought and action. It is making a U turn with our lives; it is turning back to God and away from sin.



To repent is the first move of becoming a Disciple of Jesus

1. We change our thinking

There is a new perspective of the nature, awfulness and consequence of sin.

There is a recognition of how awful sin is to a holy God.

2. We change our actions

We turn to God from our disobedience, selfishness and rebellion. We turn away from sin and we submit our lives to God and make Jesus our Lord.

"Jesus began to preach, turn from sin and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near." **Matthew 4:17**

Discussion: Why do you think repentance was the first message Jesus preached?

It is our responsibility to repent. Through the gift of repentance God grants to us, we can then choose to live with Jesus as our Lord. Through choosing to repent we open our whole life to God.

THREE IMPORTANT INGREDIENTS OF REPENTANCE

1. Repentance is RECOGNISING our sin and its awfulness in the eyes of a holy God. God wants us to see our sin and compare it with His holiness. God wants us to see where we stand with Him. He wants us to yield our lives into His hands and to allow the Holy Spirit to show us these things, especially as we read the Word of God.

King David's experience of his own sin is recorded in Ps 51.

Psalms 51:1-3

1 Have mercy upon me, O God,
According to Your lovingkindness;
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies,
Blot out my transgressions.
2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.
3 For I acknowledge my transgressions,
And my sin is always before me.

Discussion: The sinful nature doesn't like to accept blame. Rather it likes to blame others and not take responsibility. Describe how you may have experienced this in your own life and the negative impact on your own relationships.

2. **Repentance is EMOTIONAL.** If we truly recognise our condition before God, we will have a powerful emotional reaction. It will involve a deep sense of offence and regret. We will feel the weight of all that is wrong in our lives. This feeling can only truly be removed when we come through to a place of receiving God's forgiveness. Godly sorrow is part of the Holy Spirit's way of bringing us to the place where we will receive the Word of God for our lives.

2 Corinthians 7:9-10 9 Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. 10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

Discussion: Godly sorrow produces true repentance. Worldly sorrow can be described as '*sorry that I got caught*' or '*sorrow because I'm going through a hard time*'. Worldly sorrow still has 'me' at the centre of it. Because there is SORROW involved with both types – what helps you to see if you are operating in 'worldly sorrow' or 'godly sorrow'?

3. **Repentance involves the WILL.** It is a change of mind, of heart, of purpose, in fact, the whole direction of a person's life. It is a conversion. It is an "about turn" and the start of a whole new life lived under the power of God. The initiative for this act of repentance lies with God, in that He shows us our need and our condition before Him, but we must act upon this revelation.

Romans 2:4 ⁴ Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

The choice to repent is ours.

REPENTANCE: HOW TO DEAL WITH SIN

Tell God honestly when you have sinned and ask Him to forgive you. Never mind how often you need to ask. Remember, as a baby in Christ, walking spiritually results in soul bruises and falls. I've never heard of a baby learning to walk without falling. The beautiful sight to parents is when the child pushes up and tries again. What a heartbreak if the child should lie sobbing and never learn to walk, run and jump!

Whatever you do, don't try to cover up or excuse your sin. That's about as good as putting a band-aid over a cancer and hoping the cancer will disappear. When you've sinned, admit it. Don't justify or excuse yourself. If the Holy Spirit puts the pressure on you, don't get mad; look for the reason and thank Him.

Next week: We cover the subject of **Forgiveness** – both receiving God's forgiveness and extending forgiveness to others.

Memory Verse

"If we confess our sins to Him, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness"
1 John 1:9

QUESTIONS

What is sin?

1. How does sin affect our relationship with God? Isaiah 59:2

(a) _____

(b) _____

2. What about the odd little sin? James 2:10

3. What is the natural man's heart like?

Jeremiah 17:9 _____

Titus 1:15 _____

4. What are some of the consequences of sin?

Psalms 51:10-12 _____

Romans 6:17 _____

Ephesians 2:1 _____

Ephesians 2:12 _____

Repentance

1. When we choose God's way instead of our own, what will rule our hearts?

Colossians 3:15 _____

2. What sort of sorrow works repentance?

2 Corinthians 7:10 _____

3. What example does Acts 19:19 give for repentance?

NOTES