



Basic Doctrines: Sin

iFOLLOW

Walking with Jesus

The iFollow Discipleship Series



About the iFollow Discipleship Series Pastor's Edition

Categories

The iFollow Discipleship Series is designed to be used in congregations to assist people in their pursuit of God. This assumes that individuals are in unique places in their journey and there is no perfect set of lessons that everyone must complete to become a disciple—in fact discipleship is an eternal journey. Therefore the iFollow curriculum is a menu of milestones that an individual, small group, or even an entire church can choose from. The lessons can be placed in three general categories: **Meeting with Jesus** (does not assume a commitment to Jesus Christ); **Walking with Jesus** (assumes an acceptance of Jesus Christ); and **Working with Jesus** (assumes a desire to serve Jesus Christ).

Components

Each lesson has a presenter's manuscript which can be read word for word, but will be stronger if the presenter puts it in his/her own words and uses personal illustrations. The graphic slides can be played directly from the Pastor's DVD or customized and played from a computer. There are also several group activities and discussion questions to choose from as well as printable student handouts.

Usage

The lessons are designed to be used in small groups, pastor's Bible classes, prayer meetings, seminars, retreats, training sessions, discussion groups, and some lessons may be appropriate sermon outlines.

Credits

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Basic Doctrines: Sin

Learning Objectives

1. Understand that sin is a painful reality inherent in our nature
2. Recognize the freedom from sin which is available exclusively through Jesus
3. Accept the divine grace God has offered us

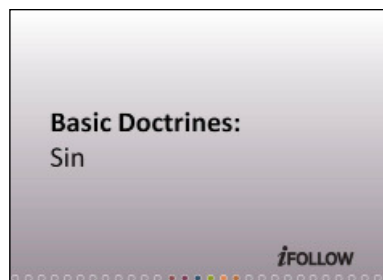
Content Outline

- A. The reality of sin
- B. “Original” sin
- C. Different types of sin
- D. Corporate vs. personal sin?
- E. Freedom from sin

Background Material for the Presenter

The solid optimism of former generations that everything in the world will get better and better no longer rings true today. After seemingly endless “wars to end all war,” the world is far from being a safe place. The threat of terrorism has made us all feel extremely vulnerable. Science, which was supposed to be the harbinger of a better world, now threatens to wreak havoc on that world. The common sources of energy are being depleted. The icecaps are melting. Crime is a sad fact of life everywhere. Morally, human beings appear to be going downhill, not improving. The gap between rich and poor is constantly widening. Our daily installment of news almost invariably tells us about atrocities and moral decay. No wonder someone once said that the Christian teaching of human sinfulness is one teaching that is easily verifiable. That is, that’s one doctrine we don’t need to take on faith.

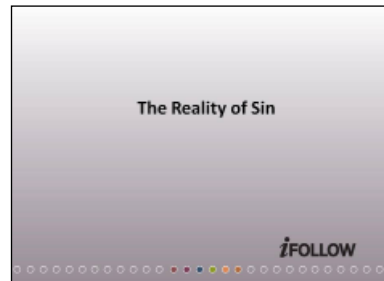
Yet, as bad as sin is, it’s not the end of the story. Sin is



real, but so, thank God, is divine grace.

The Reality of Sin

What is the essence of sin? How does the Bible define it? First John 3:4 (NIV) states, “Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.” The New Living Translation reads, “Sin opposes the law,” while the traditional KJV rendering defines sin as “transgression of the law.” But it is not just any law that humanity has broken; it is God’s law. Humans have rebelled against their Maker, pretending that they themselves are the measure of all things rather than in humble trust submitting to the wisdom and love of God.



According to the Bible, (Isaiah 14:12-15 for example) sin entered the universe before (possibly long before) it entered this world, when a highly placed angel named Lucifer chose to rebel against God’s government. When Lucifer, now Satan, and his angels were cast out of the presence of God, they looked for a place where they could reign supreme.

God could have destroyed these beings, but had He done so, the law of love which had created and which ran the universe would have turned to a law of fear. So He chose to allow Satan and his angels a limited period of time to give their way a try, so that the consequences would be revealed to all.

In Genesis 3, the story is told of Satan using a serpent, speaking through it to tempt a newly-created pair of humans, the first on this world. God had chosen the simplest test He could devise: He had designated one tree from which Adam and Eve were not to eat. Eve wandered near to the tree, where the “serpent” (apparently not allowed to follow them around and tempt them as he does today), assured her that God had deceived her, this fruit was good; that in fact, it would make her godlike. Forgetting that she was already created in the image of God, Eve ate the fruit, and shared it with Adam, who ate too.

The pair were put out of the garden so that they could no longer eat the fruit of the tree of life and live forever, an act of mercy on God’s part! Because God immediately put His long-determined plan of salvation into effect, promising them a Redeemer, Satan had to find other ways to continue sin’s reign on this planet, and one of them is that he has propagated, ever since, the idea that God punished them. Why, it is often asked, did God punish them so severely for something so small? He warned of consequences, to be sure. In what way was that punishment?

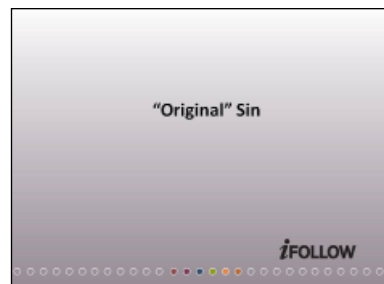
The theory is also promulgated that the tree was the tree of knowledge (leaving out that

inconvenient part about evil) and that God didn't want the people to know too much. This was the beginning of the nonsensical controversy between faith and reason which still goes on today.

But what really happened at that fateful tree? It wasn't just a matter of whom to believe. It wasn't solely about which action was done. It was a crisis of trust. And isn't that the central crisis of human life to this day? Whom can one trust? Can one trust anyone? Eve trusted the serpent, but if you could have asked her, she would likely have said she trusted her senses, her perceptions. The Bible notes that she "saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom." (Gen. 3:6) She chose her own way over God's. That's the essence. Sin is rebellion.

"Original" Sin

Are we all, then, guilty of Adam and Eve's sin? Are we born guilty and "deserving of hell"? Theologians often distinguish between the sinful acts that we commit and the sinful nature that we possess. It is clearly and easily recognizable that the original sin of Adam and Eve has had all-pervasive consequences that impact everyone. Sin entered the world through one person, and through this sin death came to "all." (Rom. 5:12, NIV) Our spiritual DNA, you might say, was corrupted, and now sin has pervaded our world so much so that it has become part of our nature. It is an everyday struggle to eschew our sinful tendencies and reflect Christ.



Most of us are familiar with the timeworn expression that the apple does not fall far from the tree. We use it to mean that children often will make the same choices their parents make, whether good or bad, simply because of the genes that they have inherited, along with the upbringing those parents give them. Likewise, because we have inherited a sinful nature from Adam, we are in constant battle with our fallen natures.

Along with this legacy from our first parents, we inherit a genetic legacy from our biological parents: traits such as eye color, hair color, height, and smile that define our faces and forms. Unfortunately, our birth parents also gave us many other traits that we all too often wish they hadn't: a predisposition to overeat, to get impatient, to flare up easily, or to be oversensitive. We even may joke that our poor character traits are a result of the "bad blood" on one side of the family tree or the other. But there's more truth to this statement than we might think. It is our blood that carries the genetic material that makes us who we are, and all of us are, ultimately, descended from Adam and Eve.

However, the fact that we all have been corrupted by their fall has led some to teach that we all are deemed by God to be sinners even before we sin. That is to say, we are not only subject to inherent tendencies to selfishness, pride, and sin, we are **born guilty** as if we had actually acted on those tendencies. As if we had been there and eaten the

fruit ourselves. The widespread rite of infant baptism is linked closely with the acknowledgment of this belief. The idea is that a newborn child who dies without having been baptized will be lost eternally because the child is a sinner, and if this sinfulness is not somehow taken care of, the child loses eternal life. This is often what is meant by “original sin.” There is no scriptural support for this practice, nor for the idea that a child who dies is automatically condemned to destruction. (For a fascinating study of the centuries of debate that have hammered out various opinions on original sin and sinful nature, see the Wikipedia article, “Original Sin.”)

In Romans 7:21–24; 8:7, 8, Paul describes the powerful tendencies toward sinful behavior with which all of us are born. It has been argued endlessly as to whether this refers to before or after conversion. But nearly any godly person recognizes from personal experience that the tendencies remain, and remain troublesome, for life!

On the other hand, through the ages some Christians have declared that they have achieved a state of perfection. Yet, those who claim perfection delude themselves. It is contrary to the clear words of Scripture. Quoting Psalm 106:6, Paul stated, “There is no one righteous, not even one!” (Rom. 3:10, NIV) His fellow apostle John is just as adamant: “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves” (1 John 1:8, NIV)

Fortunately, the good news is that we also “inherit” something from our heavenly Parent when we receive by faith the potent gift of the blood of Jesus. Read in Romans 7:18–21 how the apostle Paul describes the efficacy of Jesus’ blood in the warfare with our fallen natures. Jesus helps us to put to death our sinful natures. He renews a right spirit within us. His blood cleanses us from all sin. And what is more, it delivers us from the stranglehold of sin in our lives. Victory over self is more than possible by accepting the power in Jesus’ blood. (See also vss. 24 and 25.)

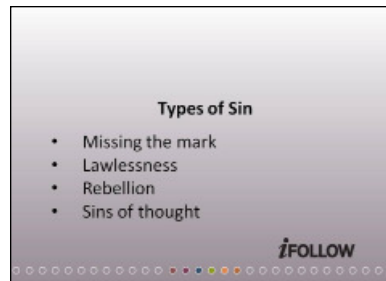
“Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, or a day. It is a continual growth in grace. We know not one day how strong will be our conflict the next. Satan lives, and is active, and every day we need to earnestly cry to God for help and strength to resist him. As long as Satan reigns we shall have self to subdue, besetments to overcome, and there is no stopping place. There is no point to which we can come and say we have fully attained.” (White 1953-57, p. 947)

Types of Sin

Scripture refers to several different types of sin. We will take a short look at five.

Missing the mark People make mistakes. It’s a fact of life. And not every mistake is a sin. Dropping and breaking something valuable, cutting incorrectly (even if you did measure twice!), bumping into someone, and so forth, are not sins. We use the word mistake for them, and we can see what that means by taking the word apart: it’s a miss-take. Try again. But there is another kind of missing the mark. It’s not done deliberately, but it’s

wrong, just the same. Speaking sharply or hastily can come under this heading. The person did not intentionally speak to wound (that comes under a different heading, below), but did, just the same. You can generally tell if it was truly unintentional by the fact that the person is instantly repentant, apologizing and trying to make amends. Amends, not excuses! “I’m sorry **but** ...” is not recognition of guilt. And this is guilt, small though it may seem. If it’s the sort of thing that wouldn’t happen in a perfect world, it’s sin.



The problem is, we tend to either be too judgmental about such things, acting as if a really converted Christian would never do such things, or to blow it off as “just the way things are” and not really sin at all. There’s a middle ground, where we do not beat ourselves up for these mistakes, but do acknowledge our responsibility for them, and God can help us live there.

Lawlessness Some people have such seared consciences that they are nearly amoral. That is, they don’t even recognize a law that applies to them, and may not be conscious of guilt at all, even if they have done appalling things. Only God knows how to deal with these souls. He sees from cause to effect, and knows their background and upbringing. Likely they either weren’t taught right from wrong to begin with, or were taught harshly and unjustly, leading the person to believe God hates them anyway, so why try? This does not mean they are not living deep in a very dangerous life of sin. They are definitely guilty, whether they know it or not. It does mean that meeting with a little understanding from some compassionate person is the only chance for them ever to be likely to see a better way.

Rebellion At heart, all sin is rebellion. Even that momentary lapse we call “missing the mark” wouldn’t have happened if we didn’t still tend to react first according to what we want or like, and what is that, if it isn’t choosing our own way over God’s? Our foremother and forefather decided what their eyes and noses and tongues told them about the fruit (not to mention what the serpent told them) was better than what God had told them. That’s rebellion. From the two-year-old tantrum to the 80-year-old alcoholic, rebellion still reigns in most human hearts.

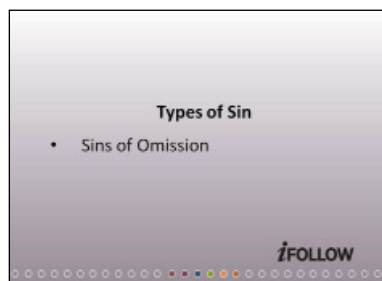
Sins of thought The power of thought distinguishes human beings from the rest of the animal world. But all too often Satan perverts this most powerful gift and uses it for our destruction and to alienate us further from God.

Thoughts, fantasies, even which video games we choose to play show the inherent sinfulness of the human. “If it were true, would it be right?” We don’t have complete control over what thoughts occur to us. But we do have control over which ones we encourage and hold on to. An old proverb admonishes, “You can’t stop the birds from flying over your head, but you can prevent them from building a nest in your hair!”

Jesus knew that sin begins in the thoughts, which is why He warned us, in Matthew 5:28,

to guard the mind. Our thoughts, whether positive or negative, have a powerful impact on our bodies and eventually lead to action (see Matt. 15:19). James 4:8 also advises us to guard our thoughts. David must have struggled with this problem, as well, as we see in Psalm 19:14. David pleads with God for help to keep his thoughts pure. It is a prayer that all of us should pray daily. Think about it. Wrong deeds, wrong words, wrong actions all begin with wrong thoughts. Keep the thoughts right, and the words, deeds, and actions will be, as well.

Sins of Omission There is also a category of sin that is usually referred to as “sins of omission.” This refers to the willful neglect of duty, the conscious refusal to do something that one knows ought to be done. In Matthew 23:23, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for leaving “the more important things” undone, and in the parable of the sheep and goats, found in Matthew 25, He turns the “goats” away for things they didn’t do. James, too, in 2:16, points out that fine sentiments don’t warm people without clothes or feed the hungry.



Matthew 25 also contains the parable of the talents, in which Jesus makes it clear that we are responsible to God for the gifts and talents He has entrusted to us for the furtherance of His kingdom. Burying them does not exactly have the result the unrighteous steward might have hoped!

On the other hand, if the devil can see that we are doing the best we can to live righteous lives, he can always tempt us to overdo the good! Even Jesus rested, and encouraged His disciples to do the same. Far too many Christians think that if God gave them a cluster of gifts, He means them to put them all to use all the time. They end up in hospital beds or psych wards wondering where they went wrong. Faithful stewardship includes balanced care for our whole selves, body, mind, heart, and soul.

The bottom line is, sin is everywhere, and it’s more powerful than we realize. To see its full power, it would be necessary to see the full potential of what humans might have been.

“The full seriousness of sin can only become apparent when we have understood the full potentialities of human existence as created in the image of God.” (Macquarrie, p. 238)

Sin is deadly. When we willfully engage in any sin, from the most innocuous act to the vilest, we are, in essence, telling God that we know better than He does. Sin is the equivalent of telling God He deserves no supremacy in our lives. The true horror of sin is trusting in our own wisdom.

Corporate vs. Personal Sin?

So it is clear that ever since the Fall, the world has been tainted by sin. The results of sin are visible in nature. They are visible also in wars, in the evil of slavery and other forms of exploitation, and also in the ways in which we ravage natural resources. The world of the past and of the present is full of materialism, egotism, injustice, and perversion.

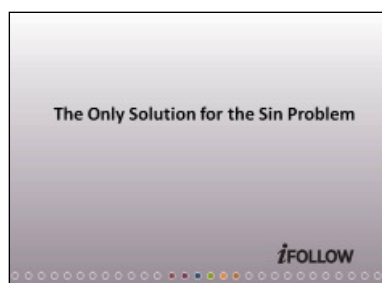


These facts raise many difficult questions. Foremost among these is whether we as individuals carry any responsibility for these things and if we should assume any guilt for this corporate state of sinfulness. The following considerations may help us to deal with this dilemma.

1. Consider how corporate wrongs in our world may be seen against the background of the great controversy. "Behind the rise and fall of nations and the play and counterplay of human interests lies the unseen struggle between the Godhead, together with the host of loyal angels, and Satan with his hosts of fallen angels—a struggle that directly impacts all human activity." (Holbrook, p. 995)
2. Consider the totally destructive nature of sin. Sin wants to destroy everything that has any value. Sin and death are synonymous, and they are everywhere. There is, therefore, no hope for this world without divine intervention, because the power of sin and death far exceeds our human abilities to deal with them.
3. But also consider that we all have some influence. We can all make small decisions that at times may increase or diminish, however slightly, the evil in this world. We can work for peace and justice. We can do acts of compassion. We can choose to cooperate with all who want to protect the environment. What do such passages as Ecclesiastes 9:10, Luke 16:10, and Philippians 4:8, 9 contribute to our understanding of this issue?

The Only Solution for the Sin Problem

There is no easy or cheap solution to the sin problem. Sin cannot be overcome by human determination and perseverance. Sin is larger than we are. The solution must therefore also supersede our possibilities. There is a lot of confusion among people about the issue of salvation. Many claim there are many different roads to the kingdom. The roads differ, they say, but they all lead to the same destination. But they are wrong. The Bible clearly teaches that:



Jesus is the only door for His sheep--John 10:6-9,

no one comes to the Father except through Him—John 14:6,

and “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”—Acts 4:12.

What could be truthfully stated is that all roads, one way and another, lead to the cross. Over and over again, God uses the circumstances and beliefs in a person’s life to bring him or her to the point where there is a choice to make. If they choose not to enter the Door, but turn back again, He will keep giving them that opportunity until they make a clear Yes or No decision.

We do not know who will enter through the gates of the kingdom. Thank God, that decision is in the hands of the One to whom judgment has been given, the One who is love and justice personified. But we do know one thing: Those who receive eternal life do so only because Christ died for them. Some may never have had the privilege of learning about their Savior. But that takes nothing away from the fact that if they are saved it will be through the name of Christ, even if they have never themselves heard that name. Even these will have had multiple times in their lives where they could choose the Way of Jesus, the way of humble self-sacrifice, compassionate love, and submission to the Creator, or the wide road of evil, the way of selfishness, indifference to others or their needs, and pride.

So why does it have to be Jesus? Isn’t that kind of exclusive? Aren’t Christians boasting when they claim their way is the only way?

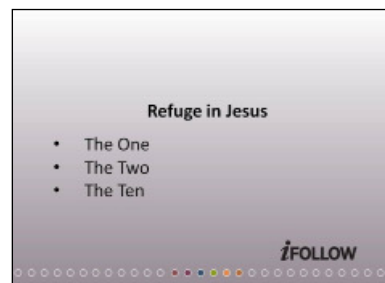
Yes! They are! If Christians claim their way is anything at all, that would be the wide road above. Caution! That’s Jesus’ way that is the only way. Philippians 2:6-8 assures us that Jesus was God in person. Hebrews 1:1-5 asserts the same thing, adding that all that exists is upheld by Him.

People who argue this (on either side) need to be able to see both sides to the coin. First, all humans, saved or not, will eventually recognize the Godhood and authority of the Son of God. They will, at that point, if not before, acknowledge that He is the Way, Truth, and Life; the only Way, Truth, and Life!

Secondly, Christians need to recognize that God loves all His children, and has been speaking to all in their own languages and customs since the very beginning. When you find Truth in any worldly religion (and it is there to be found), that is God’s voice, according to Romans 1, which says that God has spoken in “many and diverse ways,” enough that there is no excuse, and to James 1:17, which says that every good and perfect gift is from God alone. All these paths, including the truly evil and sinful ones, can bring the sinner to his or her knees at the cross, even on death row or in the middle of an ungodly ritual, but they have the choice. Will they look and live, or will they insist that their way gets them over the wall perfectly well, thank you?

Refuge in Jesus

Revelation 5:9-14 gives what is one of the most magnificent and unarguable portraits of Jesus' power and glory. In this amazing scene, the four "living creatures", twenty-four elders, and, by implication, the saints on earth (see verse 8) proclaim that the Lamb is worthy, "because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation." (Verse 9) Their song of praise is joined by a gazillion angels (the modern scientific term for what John takes so many words to say in verse 11), and every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, and in the sea! That pretty much covers it, wouldn't you say?



Why are these beings all singing so joyfully? They've been rescued! (Or humans that they love have been.) Revelation 14:4 speaks of those who "follow the Lamb wherever He goes." Many of these people have been, in a very real sense, through hell. They know with every fiber of their beings that they would not be alive without Jesus' constant presence, guidance, and protection. They have taken refuge under His wings, as the Old Testament writers liked to put it. They have no intention of letting Him go—ever!

Who wouldn't make the same choice, once they can see for themselves what lengths He has gone to, is going to, and will go to, just to save them, because they mean that much to Him?

Today, while we wait, in a time in which the world is plagued by rampant lawlessness and a relativistic philosophy—which claims that good and evil depend simply on cultural circumstances and communal and personal preferences—there must and will be a people who will cling to God's side like limpets, living their lives by His Law, the only one in the universe that actually brings the freedom all the law systems promise—His law of love as defined by what Alden Thompson calls "the one, the two, and the ten." (Thompson, p.

The One: God is love, and whoever doesn't love doesn't know Him. 1 John 4:8.

The Two: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Matthew 22:37-40

The Ten: The further decoded Law of Love known as the Ten Commandments, found in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5.

God has done for us all that infinite love could. He's still doing it. It is safe to shelter from sin in His refuge.

Handouts in this Package

1. Participant Notes



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Action Plan
& Presenter
Notes

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Additional Resources

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Discussion Questions

1. God has done so much for us. What are some specific steps we can take to accept His gift of grace more fully into our lives?
2. We tend to think of rebellion as an outright attack and rejection of authority. Yet, it can come in much more subtle forms. How could you tell if, perhaps, you yourself are harboring some rebellious attitudes toward God?
3. How have you experienced the reality of inborn tendencies to evil? What must we surrender to Jesus in order for victory to be possible in our lives?
4. What are some ways we can follow the example of Jesus in trying to do our small part to make the world a better place?
5. What is the Christian's duty toward preserving the environment and the wildlife of our planet? What about helping to feed, clothe, shelter, and provide for the millions of the desperately poor on the globe?
6. Discuss the difference between our sinful natures and the sinful acts we do. Why do we still have sinful natures even when we are not sinning but doing right?
7. Name some sins of commission (doing things that we should not) and sins of omission (not doing things we know we should). Which do you think are harder to avoid, or does it vary?

Group Activity

Activity 1

Purpose: To deepen understanding of the different types of sin.

Preparation: For “missing the mark”: Any game where the player has to hit the mark: a dart game, a small hoop and ball, or a simple tennis ball and empty can. You may do this activity outside if you wish and if it is practical.

For “lawlessness,” try to find a story of a criminal who has been reported to feel no remorse. Or you may ask participants to share one they know of.

For “rebellion,” at some point (early in the presentation), make an arbitrary rule, such as, all people have to sit in one particular area, or no one can speak for a certain period of time. Try to make it something that someone is likely to rebel against.

For “sins of thought”: Instruct participants not to think about theft. (Or any unkind act of your choice.)

For “sins of omission,” ask for a show of hands on how many have accomplished every single duty they had today.

Assignment:

1. Missing the mark. Allow each participant 3 tries to hit the target in your game. Give one point for each success. Briefly discuss the following: One of the words we translate as “sin” originates from the Greek word, pronounced “hamartia.” It means to miss the mark of aim—to wander from the right way. What mark are we missing when we sin?

2. Lawlessness. Share the stories of a person or persons who seem completely amoral, who does not even appear to have an awareness of sin or law. Is there anything you can think of that might help such a person?

3. Rebellion. Point out (keep it light and humorous) any “rebellion” that has occurred against your arbitrary rule. Discuss the feelings that arise when a rule is arbitrary or hard to explain. Is it possible to see the “don’t eat the fruit” rule in this light, or is that our present sinful attitudes speaking? If no rebellion has occurred, discuss that. Were there thoughts of rebellion? Did people obey assuming you would eventually give them a reason? What is the relation of trust to obedience?

4. Sins of thought. After instructing participants not to think of theft (or whatever), ask them what they’re thinking of. Discuss how difficult it is to keep minds pure. If

anyone has succeeded in “not thinking about” the chosen subject, how did they do it? (Almost certainly by thinking of something else, which opens the opportunity to talk of keeping minds “stayed on Jesus.”)

5. Sins of omission. Ask for the show of hands and discuss the results. Is there anything anyone would be willing to share? Has everything not done been a sin of omission? What makes it a sin or not?

Debrief: Discussion, sharing, and debriefing will take place throughout this activity.

Time: Allow five to 10 minutes for each part. You may need more for some and less for others, but the whole set should be possible to keep within 45 minutes.

Activity 2

Purpose: To consider more deeply the three things Jesus told the Pharisees they had neglected, in Matthew 23:23.

Preparation: You will need Bibles, concordances, tables or desks, and writing materials. If the group is large, divide into small teams. If it is small, you may choose to do the study together, with one scribe writing notes on the board.

Assignment: Read together Matthew 23:23. Then have participants or groups do a cross-reference Bible study on the three words: judgment, mercy, and faith. Have each person write at least one example of how the attributes of judgment, mercy, and faith can be displayed in his or her life.

Debrief: Have each group share some of its discoveries. Some may share, if they wish, the examples they plan to put into practice in their lives.

Time: Allow 10 minutes for the Bible study (possibly longer if the group does it together), and 15 minutes for sharing.

Handout

Key Concept 6: Sin

Scripture Focus: Isaiah 14:12-14; Matthew 23:23, 25:45; Romans 5:18; Philippians 2:6-8; Hebrews 1:1-5; Revelation 5:9-12

Concept: Since the fall of Adam and Eve, sin has held us in a trap. But God didn't leave us there but provided a way of escape through the voluntary death of Jesus.

Sharing and Receiving Scripture

A. Concerning sin, what is our goal from here to Heaven? Is it to simply live the best we can, knowing our sins are forgiven? Or is it to strive on a daily basis to cast sin out of our lives for the One who died to save us?

B. Read Revelation 14:12. Why should it be our goal to overcome sin in our lives?

1. Because sin separates us from God—both now and for eternity---if we harbor it
2. We should do our best to overcome, but God doesn't expect perfection
3. We should just do our best and not worry. Our sins are forgiven when we ask
4. Those who remain faithful to the end, will be the ones ready to meet Jesus
5. Why even focus on overcoming sin? Our sins are already buried in the depths of the sea
6. Other....

C. Read Romans 8:6,7. How do the two opposite forces control our minds for the bad or the good?

1. The mind controlled by sin will ultimately bring death
2. The mind controlled by God's Spirit brings life and peace
3. A person can sin and still have life and peace. It's just a matter of asking for forgiveness
4. Sin is Satan's way and puts us at odds with God. That's why we feel so awful when we do sin
5. We can try, but there's no way we can please God when we're deliberately sinning
6. Other....

D. According to Matthew 23:23 and 25:45, what is most important here?

1. According to Jesus, the most important law is how we treat others
2. The important matters are justice, mercy and faithfulness toward others
3. God's laws are given to show us how to live and be obedient
4. When we give to another person; we're giving to Jesus Himself, because they are His children

5. We need to find the healthy spiritual balance between obeying God's laws and loving others
6. Other....

E. In John 14:6 and Acts 4:12, what rescue plan is given?

1. Jesus is our mediator; a High Priestly role Christ took on when returning to Heaven
2. We as humans have left God, yet Jesus bridges the gap to bring us home
3. We can't find salvation through anyone else besides Jesus who died in our place
4. We can't work our way into Heaven; salvation is a gift
5. The closer we become to the Way—Jesus—the less attractive sin will be to us
6. Other....

Applying the Message of Scripture

Choose one of the following options and work on a solution. If you have opportunity, share your solution with someone else.

Option 1: Have you ever known a person who appears to be “perfect?” They seem to never miss the mark. Yet their lives are often lacking the joy of the Lord. Discuss how their “righteousness” can result in bondage.

Option 2: Write about a time when you received victory over a sin in your life. What helped you the most?

Option 3: In what ways can you minister to “the least of these” as mentioned in Matthew 25:45? Take a look at verses 42 and 43 for starters. What organization or individual in your community has one or more of these needs that you could meet, either singly or as part of a group?

Valuing Scripture in Your Life

A. Be honest and ask yourself, “Am I so concerned about obeying God in specific areas of my life that I forget to love others?” If so, ask God to soften your heart and give you a hunger to reach out to others. Make a list of what you can do to take care of “the least of these” you know.

B. Read John 10:7 then close your eyes and imagine Jesus as a shepherd, opening the sheep gate of salvation for you. You may not feel worthy, but Christ's look of compassion and winsome smile are inviting. Will you accept? You might like to try drawing a picture of this.

Try This:

A. Find the song “Trust and Obey,” number 590, in The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal. Prayerfully read over the words, asking God to help you truly to trust Him. Then sing or hum it whenever you get a chance. If you don’t have a hymnal, you can find it on www.cyberhymnal.org and learn it there.

B. The effects of sin are all around us—sickness, suffering, death. Find one or two things that you can do to help alleviate any negative effect in someone or in the environment. For example, you could plant flowers in a common area that is looking drab. Or send a note to someone who is suffering from depression or loneliness.

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Basic
Doctrines:
Sin