

Church of God

Sunday School



WHAT IS SIN?

DAILY READINGS:

- ❑ **Monday:** The Bible definition of sin (1 John 3:4; James 4:17).
- ❑ **Tuesday:** Sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:1-2; Ephesians 5:5; 1 John 3:6).
- ❑ **Wednesday:** God requires His people to be holy (Leviticus 11:45; Leviticus 20:7; 1 Peter 1:14-16).
- ❑ **Thursday:** All have sinned, or missed the mark (Romans 3:23; Psalm 14:2-3; 1 John 1:8).
- ❑ **Friday:** The story of King Joash shooting his arrows (2 Kings 13:14-20).
- ❑ **Saturday:** Sin has consequences (Genesis 3:9-24; James 1:15; Romans 6:23).

MEMORY VERSE: *"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."*
—Isaiah 59:2

The Importance of Understanding What Sin Truly Is

The story has been told of a young boy who returned home from church one Sunday morning and was asked, "What did the preacher preach on today?" He answered that the preacher had talked a lot about sin. When asked what exactly the preacher had said about sin, the young boy replied, "I do not remember, but I could surely tell that he did not like it!" Like this young boy, many people realize sin is something bad, yet they do not understand what it really is. There are many doctrines being taught in the religious world about sin. One doctrine is that the devil was once an angel in Heaven who committed sin and was cast out. Another doctrine teaches that babies are born with sin and must be baptized so that they will not go to hell. Yet others teach that all Christians sin every day, often not even realizing they are sinning. Are any of these doctrines true? The Bible has the answer to what sin truly is and what God has to say about it.

A **"doctrine"** is a set of ideas or beliefs that is taught or believed to be true.

Why is it important to understand what sin is? God is a holy God, and He requires His people to also be holy. Sin is the opposite of holiness. It is against God. It will prevent you from having a relationship with God, and it will also keep you out of Heaven (Revelation 21:27). God has a perfect plan for your life, and "every good gift" comes from God (James 1:17). However, if you allow sin to remain in your heart, it will prevent you from having all the good things God has for you (Jeremiah 5:25). Sin will destroy your life. This is why it is vital you understand what sin is and how to keep it out of your life.

The Bible Definition of Sin



In 1 John 3:4 we read the definition of sin: ". . . sin is the transgression of the law." The word *transgression* means "to break or disregard." When you break (disobey) or disregard (ignore) God's laws, you have committed sin. To commit sin you must first understand what God's commands or laws are. *The World Book Dictionary* says sin is "breaking the law of God on purpose." Sin is a willful transgression. In other words, you must exercise your will in breaking God's laws. You choose to overstep God's commands to go your own way.

Secondly, sin is not doing what you know you should do. James 4:17 tells us that "to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Once you understand what

God's will is but you refuse to do it, it becomes sin.

When God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, He presented them with a choice (Genesis 2:16-17). Choices have consequences, and God made it clear what the consequence of disobedience would be: "for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." This same consequence is defined in the New Testament as well: ". . . sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:15). Is this talking about a physical death? No! Adam lived many years after his sin in the Garden of Eden. He was 930 years old when he died physically. Disobedience brought about a spiritual death, a separation from God. Because of their sin, Adam and Eve had to leave their beautiful home in the Garden of Eden, the place where they had walked and talked with God (Genesis 3:8, 23).

Sin, no matter how great or small, separates us from God. Everyone has sinned, and God cannot have fellowship with sinners. God knew we would need a way to be cleansed of our sins. Sin prevented us from having the right relationship with God. We could not have His presence (living within us), we could not talk to Him (through prayer), and we could not live a life pleasing to Him (free from sin). He sent His Son Jesus to die for the sins of the whole world. Why? Because of His great love for us (John 3:16).

What Sin Is Not

Hundreds of years ago, men in positions of church leadership were often called "Church Fathers." Some of these men were Polycarp, Ignatius, Jerome, Augustine, and Tertullian. Many of the Church Fathers wrote long documents that explained their understanding of the Scriptures. Over time many of their opinions became church doctrines, but not all of these writings were inspired by God. Thus, many false doctrines were formed.

Two of the false definitions of sin are (1) unconscious sins (sinning without knowledge) and (2) inherited sins (being born with the sinful nature of your parents). Because sinning requires knowledge (Romans 7:7-8) and your will, the doctrine of involuntary or unconscious sins cannot be true. Also, the doctrine of inherited sin could not be true either, for babies do not have an understanding of right and wrong (Isaiah 7:16; Romans 9:11). God holds each person accountable for their own sins, not for the sins of their fathers (Ezekiel 18:19-20). When we understand the definition of sin (to disobey or ignore God's laws) requires our will and knowledge of those laws, we can see that these definitions of sin do not come from the Bible.

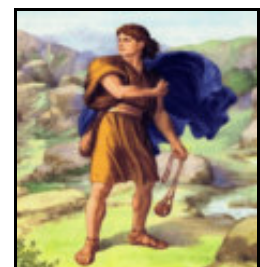
There is another "false definition of sin." This one is very deceiving. Have you ever had a wrong thought come into your mind? Then, did you feel like you had sinned for having that thought? That is a trick of the devil. When a wrong thought comes, it is called temptation. Temptation is NOT sin. Hebrews 4:15 tells us that Jesus "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Every Christian will have wrong thoughts come into his or her mind; what is done with that wrong thought determines whether he or she sins.

To Miss the Mark

In the original languages of the Bible (Hebrew and Greek), one of the words for *sin* was an archery term that meant "to miss the mark [or target]." The mark was obeying God's commandments. Yet, no matter how hard the people in the Old Testament tried, they could not obey all of God's laws all the time. God knew people would need someone to help them. Just as the Prophet Elisha laid his hands on King Joash's hands to guide him as he shot an arrow through an open window (2 Kings 13:14-17), we need Christ living in our heart, guiding us and enabling us to hit God's mark. Without Him, we will miss the mark every time!

"The Book of Judges contains the record of 700 men in the Tribe of Benjamin, all left-handed, and 'everyone could sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss' (Judges 20:16). The left-handed marksmen in the Tribe of Benjamin rarely if ever fell short of their target.

"They were known as men of the sling, with a deadly accuracy which never missed the bull's eye. On the other hand, the Bible contains no record of a man, save Jesus Christ, who never missed the moral standard of Almighty God." (Bible.org)





1. Why is it so important to understand the true definition of sin? _____

2. What does 1 John 3:4 say the definition of sin is? _____

3. What does the word "transgression" mean? _____

4. Before you can commit sin, what must you first understand? _____

5. What are the consequences of sin? _____

6. Name one false definition of sin: _____

7. How do you know this definition is untrue? _____

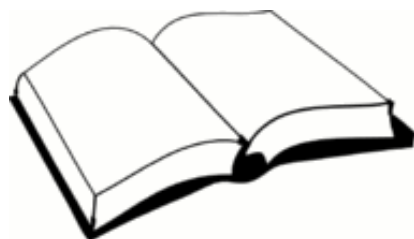
8. In the original language of the Bible, what did the word *sin* mean? _____

9. There are many misconceptions concerning sin, such as:

"God sees my heart, and that is what counts." "It is only a sin if I get caught."

"Everybody is doing it." "I just made a mistake."

Pick one statement and explain why it is wrong: _____



"Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, takes off your relish for spiritual things, whatever increases the authority of the body over the mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may seem in itself."
 —Susannah Wesley

Defining Sin and Its Consequences

What would it be like if sin was defined by people (instead of by God)? What would the definition of sin look like? Would it be a long list of Do's and Don'ts? In ancient times many people looked forward to cloudy days as they believed God could not see them because of the clouds. If they committed sins on a cloudy day, they considered it a free day because God would not see it.

A recent US survey showed that 87 percent of the people surveyed believed in the existence of sin. However, in that same survey only .05 percent believed they were going to hell. Are that many people truly hitting the target? Jesus let us know that few would find "the way, which leadeth unto life" (Matthew 7:14). Could it be that people are redefining sin and its consequences, or in other words, moving the target?



Moving the Target

One day, a young man entered the barn of a friend to look for something he wanted to borrow. Wandering around the barn, he noticed that his friend was clearly an expert archer—every arrow that had been shot throughout the barn had made a perfect bull's-eye. Hundreds of arrows were perfectly, beautifully, in the exact center of the bull's-eye of every target he saw! The young man set off to find his friend. When he found him, he excitedly asked: "How do you make a perfect shot every time? It's amazing!" The friend answered him, "It's quite easy—I shoot my arrow, and wherever it lands—that's where I draw the target!"

