

Sin 101

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Hey Group Leaders!

Consider this flow for the study time together with your small group:

1. Set the tone for your group as you embark on this study on “Sin”. What do you hope to take away from these next 6 weeks? Share this with your group, along with a heads up of what they can expect each week:
 - » This series will start with an introductory teaching on Sin, followed by 5 weeks of roundtable discussion videos on this topic.
 - » After each video, you can go through a couple of the discussion questions with your group, give them a reflection point to take away for the week, and close in communal prayer together.
 - » If anyone is keen to learn more on the topics discussed in this theme, check out the “Let’s Go Deeper” resources. Links to any recommended online content can be found at thediscipleshipproject.org/sin.
2. Watch this week’s video, **Sin 101**.
(Don’t feel the need to go through the summary below with your group, this is just a written form of the teaching in the video in case anyone wants to come back and have it as a reference.)
3. Choose a couple of the “Let’s Discuss...” questions below to discuss in your group.
4. Go over this week’s reflection prompt with your group.
5. Choose someone in your group (try to pick someone different each week) to close in prayer, using the prompt below as a guide. Additionally, see if there are any other prayer requests amongst the group and allow your group members the opportunity to pray for each other.

Summary

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT SIN?

First of all, you’re not alone...we have all sinned!

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

While we often think of sin as “doing bad stuff”, the biblical portrait goes deeper than this.

In Genesis 1-2, we begin to understand what God, the Creator, deems as good.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.
Genesis 1:1 ESV

God looks at His beautiful creation and calls it “good” (‘tov’ in the original Hebrew).

Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And God saw that the light was good.
Genesis 1:3-4a NLT

God called the dry ground “land” and the waters “seas.” And God saw that it was good.
Genesis 1:10 NLT

The land produced vegetation—all sorts of seed-bearing plants, and trees with seed-bearing fruit. Their seeds produced plants and trees of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.
Genesis 1:12 NLT

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*God set these lights in the sky to light the earth, to govern the day and night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was **good**.*
Genesis 1:17-18 NLT

*So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that scurries and swarms in the water, and every sort of bird—each producing offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was **good**.*
Genesis 1:21 NLT

*God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was **good**.*
Genesis 1:25 NLT

*Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like Us...
Then God looked over all He had made, and He saw that it was **very good!**”*
Genesis 1:26a, 31 NLT

- Genesis 1:26-28, tells us that God created humans in His likeness and appointed us to rule and reign over the earth with Him.
- God gives humans free will – the power to choose. This reflects His deep desire to have a loving relationship with us. In order for us to truly love, it must be our choice to do so. We see this play out in Genesis 2-3:
 - » Adam and Eve, the first humans in the biblical narrative, are given the opportunity to choose between obeying God and trusting His definition of good or defining for themselves what is good.
 - » God placed these first humans in the Garden of Eden and provided them with a choice – represented by a tree called the knowledge of good (“tov”) and evil (or bad - ‘ra’). He told them they could eat the fruit of any tree but this one.

*In the middle of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the
(tov) (ra)
knowledge of good and evil.*
Genesis 2:9 NLT

- A serpent (later revealed in Scripture to be the Satan, opposer of God) appears in the garden and tempts Adam and Eve, inciting them to not trust God’s wisdom.
- They give in to his deception, and eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. At this moment, shame enters the world:

At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.
Genesis 2:7 NLT

- In Genesis 4, just before Cain murders his brother Abel (these are Adam & Eve’s sons), we see the first mention of the word sin. Cain becomes angry when his offering to God is considered inferior and not accepted, while Abel’s offering of the best portions of his firstborn lambs is accepted by God (Gen 4:3-5).

Then the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why is your face gloomy? If you do well, will your face not be cheerful? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it. Cain talked to his brother Abel; and it happened that when they were in the field Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.”
Genesis 4:6-8 NASB

- Cain shows us just how bad things can get (death and harm to ourselves and others) when we choose to define good for ourselves, rather than trusting God’s wisdom.
- Cornelius Plantinga defines sin as the “culpable disturbance of shalom”. Shalom is God’s intended holistic peace for all creation, and sin is any way in which we disturb and corrupt that peace with the choices we make.
- Loosely translated as “peace”, shalom is actually a whole lot deeper than that.
 - » It’s a Hebrew word that describes the totality of God’s wholeness and harmony. It speaks of holistic flourishing and delight.
 - » Shalom is the very essence of God. The creation stories in Genesis 1 & 2 paint a picture of shalom - beauty, goodness, and intimacy with God.
 - » As humans, shalom looks like healthy relationships and harmony with (1) God, (2) ourselves, (3) others, and (4) the world.
 - » As we step more and more into this wholeness of shalom, we most fully embody our identity as God’s image bearers,

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caring for creation and glorifying God.

- » Sin, at its core, is therefore way more than just doing bad stuff. It's anti-shalom, anti-flourishing, anti-God's path, and anti-fellowship with God. Sin is the force that creates a world that is less than God's ideal.
- We can choose to walk with God, and experience life, or walk in sin and be subjected to death.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gracious gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Romans 6:23 NASB

- Both the Old Testament word for sin (khata) and the New Testament word (hamartia) express the idea of "missing the mark"
- Paul speaks of sin as something we are enslaved to...

Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living. Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but now you wholeheartedly obey this teaching we have given you. Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living.

Because of the weakness of your human nature, I am using the illustration of slavery to help you understand all this. Previously, you let yourselves be slaves to impurity and lawlessness, which led ever deeper into sin. Now you must give yourselves to be slaves to righteous living so that you will become holy. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right.
Romans 6:16-20 NLT

IS THERE HOPE FOR US?

- As ruinous as the reality of sin is, it is not the centre of the story. As Christians, we believe that Jesus is the centre of the story, and the hope for all humanity.
- Beginning in Genesis and throughout Scripture, from the moment humans began to miss the mark and sin, the biblical authors prophetically point to Jesus as God's plan to redeem humanity and free us from the power of sin.

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.
Genesis 3:15 ESV

- Jesus, who was God in human form, was this promised offspring who would crush the devil's head, but in doing so would also be crushed Himself. He is our wounded victor. God became a human to show us what His Kingdom is truly like, teach us how to walk in His wisdom, and ultimately take on the sins of all humanity and defeat the power of sin and death in our lives.
- Around 700 years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah looked forward to the immense sacrifice God would make in coming to us as a man, Jesus:

*But He was pierced for our transgressions;
He was crushed for our iniquities;
upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with His wounds we are healed.*

*All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on Him
the iniquity of us all.*
Isaiah 53:5-6 ESV

- All 4 Gospels record Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross, and His miraculous resurrection and defeat of death. You can read these accounts in Matthew 27-28, Mark 15-16, Luke 23-24, and John 19-21. By accepting what Jesus did for us, His victory over sin and death becomes ours.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.
John 3:16 ESV

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Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but He died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but He was raised to life in the Spirit.

1 Peter 3:18 NLT

He Himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.

1 John 2:2 NLT

- We don't have to wait until eternity to experience new life, we can live it out in our everyday lives, and spread the good news that **Jesus has freed us from sin.**
- Although Jesus offers us freedom from sin and a restored relationship with God, we still live in a world where "sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you" (Genesis 4:7c NLT).
- Jesus used hyperbole to emphasize the importance of dealing with whatever might lead us to sin.

And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.

Matthew 18:9 ESV

- He also used strong language to teach us about the trajectory of where sin will take us. Translated as "hell", He used the Greek word "Gehenna", which actually refers to a real place that His audience would've known about. It was a valley south of Jerusalem that had been used for child sacrifices to false gods, and by Jesus' time was used to burn waste, dead animal carcasses, and even executed criminals. If we continue to choose a life of sin (missing the mark of God's best for us) and rejecting God's offer of a relationship with Him, then we are instead choosing the stark reality of an existence, and eventually an eternity, without God.
- The true gospel declares that whilst we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Through Him we are no longer guilty and condemned, but instead we are made righteous and free.

but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8 ESV

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to Him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.

Romans 8:1-2 NLT

With the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah, that fateful dilemma is resolved. Those who enter into Christ's being-here-for-us no longer have to live under a continuous, low-lying black cloud. A new power is in operation. The Spirit of life in Christ, like a strong wind, has magnificently cleared the air, freeing you from a fated lifetime of brutal tyranny at the hands of sin and death.

God went for the jugular when He sent His own Son. He didn't deal with the problem as something remote and unimportant. In His Son, Jesus, He personally took on the human condition, entered the disordered mess of struggling humanity in order to set it right once and for all. The law code, weakened as it always was by fractured human nature, could never have done that.

The law always ended up being used as a Band-Aid on sin instead of a deep healing of it. And now what the law code asked for but we couldn't deliver is accomplished as we, instead of redoubling our own efforts, simply embrace what the Spirit is doing in us.

Romans 8:1-4 MSG

- Jesus on the cross exclaimed:

...Jesus said, "It is finished."

John 19:30b NIV

We are slaves no more. Free from sin, and alive to eternal life in Christ!

Now that's some good news!

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Definitions

Gehenna: a valley south of Jerusalem that had been used for child sacrifices to false gods, and by Jesus' time was used to burn waste, dead animal carcasses, and even executed criminals

ἁμαρτία

hamartia: Greek word translated as "sin" meaning to miss the mark, or make a fatal mistake

חַטָּא

khata: Hebrew word translated as "sin" meaning to miss (the mark, goal, or path), forfeit, or bear loss

satanas - Σατανᾶς

Satan: one of the titles, meaning accuser or adversary (one who is against), for the supernatural being who actively opposes the good purposes of God. Also known as the devil (meaning slanderer), he seeks to deceive, tempt, and destroy. He is also represented in Scripture as a serpent and dragon.

שְׁלוֹמִים - שְׁלוֹמִים

shalom: Hebrew word denoting a sense of inner peace and wholeness. It is an ongoing, permanent state that God intends for us, not temporary or based on circumstances.

טוֹב

tov: Hebrew word meaning good

Let's Discuss...

- What do you think of when you hear the word sin? How did you develop your current understanding of sin?
- In the Garden of Eden, the serpent is the one who tempts and urges them to go against God's directive to not eat from the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. What role does Satan play in our lives today, especially as it relates to sin? What comes to mind for you when you reflect on this?
- Let's pretend for a moment that there is no heaven or hell, no life after death...how would this impact your choices to sin or not sin? Does the idea that Jesus has "freed us from sin" still have significance for us in this life we are living now? Do we still need salvation?
- How would you articulate what you think Jesus meant on the cross when He said, "It is finished"? What impact does this have on you?

Let's Reflect This Week...

Over the next week, experiment with this idea that there is no eternal existence after death. If you suddenly found out that this is true (*please note - we DO NOT believe this is true!*), how would this affect your thoughts on sin? Would it have any impact on your daily rhythms and routines? How would it change the way you live?

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Let's Pray...

For the wages of sin is death, but the gracious gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Romans 6:23 NASB

- Let's thank God for the gift of life, and salvation from death, that He offers us in both this life and eternity. As we take the time to learn more about sin, ask the Holy Spirit to give us fresh revelations on this topic, and a greater appreciation for the freedom that He has made possible to us.

Let's Go Deeper...

- **The Satan and Demons • Understand Evil Spiritual Beings in the Bible** by BibleProject [video]
- **Sin: Not the Way It's Supposed to Be** by Cornelius Plantinga Jr./Christ On Campus Initiative [article & video]
- **Khata / Sin** by BibleProject [video]
- **Vocab Insight: Gehenna / Valley of Wailing** by BibleProject [video]