

So,...What Is Sin All About?

One night in the middle of a group session, I threw out a question: “What is sin?” It’s one of those words that can put people off, mostly because we don’t understand it or its definition. But once we understand what sin is about, then we can begin to come to grips with it in our lives. One definition for sin is: *“sin is turning away from God and disobeying the teaching or commandments of God.”* Through our discussion, we drew the conclusion that sin is a word, a thought or an action against the moral law of God and/or the civil law of man and that it could include any of the following:

1. The desire of the eyes
2. The desire of the flesh
3. The pride of life

We also drew the conclusion that God does not originate sin; the hearts of men do. The Bible says in 1 John 2:16 (NIV): *“For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world”*. Just look at the following examples of sin below and you’ll see that the list is a long one:

• Pride	• Greed	• Adultery	• Cheating
• Ego	• Impatience	• Stealing	• Lack of humility
• Fear / Worry	• Unforgiveness	• Selfishness	• Ungodly character
• Unloving	• Inappropriate anger	• Unfaithfulness	• A hidden agenda
• Anxiousness	• Sexual addiction	• Dishonesty	• Controlling

Sin always hurts someone. Harold McWhorter’s song “Sin Will Take You Farther” says it like this:

*“Sin will take you farther than you want to go
Slowly but wholly taking control
Sin will leave you longer than you want to stay
Sin will cost you far more than you want to pay”*

It separates us from God and others. It can feel like fun in the midst of the moment, but sin has consequences in your life—consequences that are usually more intense and less fun than what you experienced in the midst of the moment of sin. Sin pulls you away from God and from all He has designed for you, including the people you love. Sin gradually creeps into your life. You slowly unplug from God and from your godly friendships. Sin creeps in the back door, draws you away from God, and pushes you into the hands of Satan.

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Here’s another way I once heard it said:

“A rationalized lie is where you stretch or twist the truth, to support your hidden agenda.”

If you know something you're doing is wrong but you continue doing it anyway, you are on the wrong path. You are on the path that will lead to destruction. You are free to sin, but be aware of the consequences. Once the sin has been committed, you no longer have the freedom of choice. The consequence is inevitable and is part of God's discipline. You reap what you sow and that is a universal principle. You're free to sin or not to sin, but you're not free to choose the consequences of your sin.

Are you reacting with a "yes, but"? That's called rationalizing your sins.

Freewill and Poor Choices... What's That All About?

Do you ever wonder if God just puts up with you, just tolerates your selfishness, your pride, your anger and other inappropriate behavior? God wants us to do what is right; but most of us usually don't. We continue in a reactive mode: reacting to other people's behavior, including our own. Yet, when we genuinely love, we become *proactive* and don't need to react. Many times, when we react, it is out of anger. We tend to continue to make the same poor decisions and stay in an unhealthy and reactive mode. We may have done this for year and possibly learned it from our parents or others in our past. Many times we are just existing, just getting by in life, day by day, week by week...without love.

You might have had periods during which you tried to change a major character flaw on your own. This could be a New Year's resolution or a personal challenge to try and stop lashing out in anger or whatever. The sad fact is that most of the time you've failed in fulfilling the positive change. Why do you keep on failing at this? In Romans 7, Paul talks about this: *"I know I am rotten through and through so far as my old sinful nature is concerned. No matter which way I turn, I can't make myself do right. I want to, but I can't. [19] When I want to do good, I don't. And when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway. [20] But if I am doing what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing it; the sin within me is doing it."* Romans 7:18-20 (NLT)

God gives us the freewill to sin, even the freewill to rationalize the sin and say "Oh it's not my fault" or "I did it because... it's someone else's fault." Be aware that God hates the sin, hates the poor choices we make. He hates the poor decisions we make in the heat of an argument. Yet, He still loves us in spite of our character flaws, in spite of our poor choices and in spite of our sin. Freewill is why you are here on earth; it is what it is all about. You have freewill to choose a better path, to make a better decision to obey God. You also have freewill to humbly accept God's ways; humbly admit that you don't have all the answers and that you need God's help to make better permanent choices.

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Freewill is a gift from God to every man and woman. He gives you the opportunity to choose between right and wrong. If you choose right, you choose his path and receive his wisdom. If you chose wrong, you will fall out of fellowship with God and separate from his perfect will for your life. That's probably where you are, right now. I encourage you to seek God's help today, reconnect with him, and receive his perfect will, while it is still called "today." Ask for God's help in your daily problems and correcting your character flaws. Pray that it will be God's power in the situation and God's wisdom in your life that helps you change for a better outcome.

Talking Points

Freewill is a gift from God to every man and woman, so that God permits you to choose between right and wrong.

I heard Rick Warren explain the relationship between our thinking and behaving as a process in a very logical and effective way:

- 1. All behavior is based on a belief.**
- 2. Behind every sin is a lie I'm believe.** --- (When you sin, at that moment you may think that it is the best thing to do, but you've been deceived.)
- 3. Change always starts in the mind.** --- (You've got to see the lie you are believing)
- 4. To Change we must change our beliefs first.** ---- (It's not hard to obey Jesus when your mind is renewed. But it's impossible to obey when your mind is not renewed.)
- 5. Trying to change your behavior without changing your belief is a waste of time.**
- 6. The bible term for "changing your mind" is repentance.** --- (God is in the paradigm shifting business, in the mind and heart changing business.)
- 7. You can't really change your mind on your own; the applied word of God does it.**
- 8. Changing the way you act is the result, or fruit, of repentance.** --- (Behavioral change is the fruit, the evidence and the result of repentance.)

Questions to ponder:

1) What sins do you struggle with often? _____

2) How might you be rationalizing your sins? _____

3) Can blaming others be the same as rationalizing your sin? Explain _____

4) What situation can you own your part today and ask God's help to change your heart? _____

