

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Spiritual Leadership
Leader's Guide

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE LESSON 5: SIN AND SALVATION

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Discipleship Essentials module titled Christian Doctrine. This series of lessons examines doctrines which are foundational to our faith, with an emphasis on how incorrect doctrine can negatively impact true faith. Doctrine is the set of beliefs that determine how we practise our faith. It is critical that Christians understand correct doctrine about the nature of God and salvation, especially if they are engaged in teaching and discipling. This module examines scriptures related to a number of core doctrines of the Christian Church, and also some of the areas of confusion and error associated with each doctrine.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for these lessons is Christians who are maturing in their faith and desiring to serve God sincerely. The lessons will also benefit church leaders who wish to encourage people in their Christian service, and identify spiritual gifts in those they are discipling.

The Leader's Guide is intended to help you as a leader in your preparation. These lesson outlines may be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials found online at www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

LESSON 5: SIN AND SALVATION

PURPOSE

This lesson looks at the doctrine of sin and salvation, specifically how salvation is achieved and to whom it is available.

LEADER'S NOTE

We see the effects of sin in our world every day where war, terrorism, hatred and greed ravage countries and families. As Christians, we have the Holy Spirit to help us in our struggle against sin. Everyone has sinned and needs to be saved. When we are permissive of sin and think little of the salvation that has been offered to us through faith in Jesus Christ, we offend God. In contrast to worldly beliefs which say there is no moral standard for behaviour and that we should do as we feel, Christian doctrine holds that what is right and wrong (or good and bad), is clearly defined in God's Word. Help your participants understand the importance of these doctrines.

INTRODUCTION

Select two or three of the following questions to ask the group.

- ❖ How does a person get 'saved'? What are they saved from and how is it accomplished? Can you put this into a single sentence?
- ❖ How did sin come into the world? What are some evidences of sin in the world?
- ❖ Do people you know disagree about what sin is? Are there specific actions or attitudes that cause disagreement in this regard?
- ❖ How do you view humanity? Basically good but sometimes bad? Or basically bad but capable of some good?



STUDY

Instruct the group on the following points.

TEACH

- ❖ **Sin and Salvation:** During a Gospel presentation or listening to an evangelist, you may have heard them say, "You must be saved". But non-Christians might wonder why Christians think they need to be saved? What is it exactly that we need to be saved from?
 - The answer is 'sin'. Christians believe we all need to be saved from the penalty we deserve (the wrath of God) because of our sin, and from the power of sin in our life.
 - Salvation and sin are related, and a right understanding of them is necessary for every Christian. These beliefs set us apart from other religions, faiths and worldviews. The Christian view of salvation is unique.
 - Seeking to become one with the universe, or maintaining or trying to maintain perfect obedience to the law and religious duties, can never make amends for our sin. We need someone to act on our behalf. This is the Gospel: we are all sinners and there is salvation only through Jesus Christ.

- ❖ **What is Sin?** The Bible is clear that God's creation was good, and then sin entered the world. Since the original sin of Adam and Eve, every person born into this world is a sinner. Because of sin, we are not morally good, but sinful.
 - God's Word is very clear about sin. The definition of sin is "lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). It is disobeying God's law.
 - The doctrine of sin can be stated this way: **Sin is the act of violating God's will and missing the mark of living our lives as He originally created us to live.**
 - Lawlessness and violation of God's will come in many forms. From Biblical lists of transgressions, sins and laws, we can clearly see it is not only our actions that are sinful, but also our attitudes, thoughts, and the very nature of who we are. This is evident in the Ten Commandments and the sermons of Jesus.
 - o **Sin by our Action:** Exodus 20:13, Colossians 3:9, Galatians 5:19-21
 - o **Sin by our Attitude:** Philippians 2:14-15, Exodus 20:17, Matthew 5:27-28
 - o **Sin by our Nature:** Romans 5:8, Romans 7:14, 23, Ephesians 2:3
 - We can sin both intentionally and unintentionally, by our actions as well as our inaction. God's moral standard is too high for us to attain without His help. Consider these verses:
 - o Matthew 5:48
 - o Mark 12:30
 - o James 3:2
 - o James 1:25

o James 4:17**ASK:**

Have the participants read the previous verses out loud, and then discuss these questions as a group:

What does it mean that we must be perfect? By whose standard must we be perfect?

What are some ways in which we might fail to love God with our whole heart, soul, and mind?

From these verses, what is it called when we know what we should do but fail to do it? Can you give some examples?

TEACH:

- ❖ **The Origins of Sin:** God said that everything He created was very good (Genesis 1:31). How did it come to be that we are now sinners? The answer to this question can be found in Genesis 3. The sins of Adam and Eve were the first sins of humanity, but not the last.
 - God created people who were capable of choice. They could choose to obey His law and will, or to sin. All human beings are sinners and have 'fallen' short of God's image in which they were created (Romans 3:23). They have sinned and have a sinful nature.
 - Even before the sins of Adam and Eve and the accompanying curse that fell on all humankind, some of God's angels (heavenly beings He had also created) sinned and were separated from God (Jude 1:6).
 - God does not sin, He did not create sin, and He does not cause anyone to sin (James 1:13, Job 34:10).
 - The Apostle Paul writes about the effects of the sinful choice Adam and Eve made by trusting the serpent instead of God in the Garden of Eden. Paul writes, "Therefore just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned" (Romans 5:12).
- ❖ **All Have Sinned:** Because of Adam, all of us have inherited a sinful nature. We are not good people who sometimes sin, but rather, we are 'sinners' and enemies of God (Romans 5:18-21). The Bible is clear that when our lives are held up against God's perfect pattern, we fall short and miss the mark.
 - Consider the following verses. No one is perfect.
 - o Romans 3:23
 - o 1 John 1:8
 - o Romans 3:10
 - o Mark 10:18
 - o Psalms 14:1-3
 - o Ecclesiastes 7:20
 - We live in a world where sin has corrupted the original design. It has often been said that we aren't sinners because we sin, but rather, we sin because we are sinners. It is part of what it means to be a fallen human being, but God desires so much more for us!



- ❖ **Wages and Gifts:** The Apostle Paul writes in Romans 6:23 that “*the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” In this chapter, we see Paul comparing two different masters – Sin and God.
 - **The Wages of Sin:** God's Word, as we have read in the verse above, clearly states that sinners deserve death. That's what we have all earned. Just as working for a master may earn us our daily pay with which we can buy food, our sin earns us death.
 - We are slaves to sin. Sin is our master and we are bound by it. The only payment we are given for our sin is death.
 - While sin may seem to offer us freedom, fulfillment, pleasure, or the illusion of being able to do as we wish, it diminishes and empties us instead.
 - Just as we hope that a day's wages will compensate us in order to provide for our needs, Satan wants us to believe that serving sin will eventually fulfill us. However, sin only takes from us and its rewards prove empty.
 - Death is the final payment for serving sin.
 - **The Gift of God:** Romans 6:22 tells us that we who are saved have been set free from sin (our previous master), and have instead become slaves of God. God is undoubtedly the better master!
 - While sin promises only death, which we deserve, God gives us undeserved gifts that we do not earn. *The gift of God is eternal life (Romans 6:23)!*
 - This new master is more powerful than the old. We previously earned the wage of death under our old master, but God's gift of eternal life overcomes that wage.
 - In Romans 7 Paul describes what it is like to struggle against sin. His heart and mind want to serve God, his new and better master, even while his body habitually desires to serve his old master. He identifies the law of God as the means to freedom, conquering the law of sin and death.
 - The gifts of God are the law, which leads us to seek righteousness, and the ability to find righteousness through Jesus Christ, which leads to eternal life.
- ❖ **Saved from Sin:** When Christians speak of being saved, they mean that they are rescued from being a slave to sin, and have been set free to serve God. The Greek word for salvation is “soteria”, which also means deliverance, rescue from danger, preservation, wholeness, and peace. There is only one way we can be set free from bondage to sin and be saved. Here are three results of being saved:
 - **Free from the Penalty of Sin:** When we place our faith in Jesus Christ and repent of our sin, we are freed from the penalty of our sins. No longer are we deserving of its wages (death). We will no longer face the punishment we deserve for our rebellion against God, because Jesus Christ has taken our punishment for us. He paid the penalty we deserved.
 - This is also known as “justification”. We are no longer guilty in God's sight. This is what happens when we believe in the Lord, Jesus Christ.
 - Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 5:1-2



- **Free from the Power of Sin:** We live in a world where we wrestle with the power of sin daily. It is a strong master, and it does not give up its hold on us easily! Sin wants to keep us as slaves. While we will ultimately die at the end of our life, God has the power to annul (or cancel) the wages we have earned, and give us instead a gift we have not earned. God is daily rescuing us from the destructive, deceitful power of sin, freeing us by His Holy Spirit to not sin, but to choose God's way and live a life increasing in holiness, resisting sin and walking in God's power.
 - This is known as "sanctification". We are being made holy in God's sight. This is the ongoing work of salvation in a Christian's life through exposure to the truth of God's Word.
 - John 17:17, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 1 Corinthians 1:18, 2 Corinthians 2:15
- **Free from the Presence of Sin:** God promises us a final deliverance from the presence of sin through the promise of eternal life with Him in a perfected world where there will be no more sin, death or suffering. We will no longer have a sinful nature, and will be fully freed from our slavery to sin. We will, in our glorified state, reign with Christ and share in His glory.
 - This is known as "glorification". We will be made perfect and share in the glory of Christ. This future gift is promised to us in Christ.
 - 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, Hebrews 9:28, Romans 8:16-18
- ❖ **Errors in the Doctrine of Sin and Salvation:** We believe we are all born sinners, but God provided salvation for us through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, as with all our doctrines, we must be careful not to fall into errors that come from worldly perspectives. The following are some common misunderstandings of sin that are contrary to what the Bible teaches and what the Church has upheld as truth:
 - **Error #1: The belief that we are not sinners:** It is a falsehood to believe that we are all essentially good, and only the very worst criminals are sinners. This is a lie that prevents us from seeking forgiveness. If we were not sinners, then we would not need God's forgiveness. We are deceived if we believe we are without sin, or that because we are not as bad as others we are 'good' (Romans 3:23, 1 John 1:8, Ecclesiastes 7:20).
 - **Error #2: The belief that sin is natural and okay:** It is a falsehood to believe that we should excuse the sin in our lives and the lives of others because it is only 'natural' for us to sin, and we should anticipate, accept and permit it. The error in this is that sin is a serious offence against the living, almighty God! There are consequences for sin, and it separates us from God. It brings death and destruction and will never produce the good things it promises. We must believe that sin cannot be tolerated, and hold one another to a higher standard than what is 'natural'. We must encourage one another to resist temptation and flee from sin through the power of the Holy Spirit (James 1:14-15, 1 John 3:4-10, Hebrews 3:12-13).
 - **Error #3: The belief that Satan is equal with God in power:** It is a falsehood to believe that the universe is comprised of two equal and eternal powers – God and Satan, or



Good and Evil. We are certainly part of a spiritual battle between sin and God, but our adversary is by no means equal with God. Satan was a created spiritual being and had a beginning. He will also have an end and ultimately be defeated by God. In God we have the power to resist evil, and God can never be overcome or overpowered by evil (1 John 3:8, 1 John 4:4, Romans 16:20, James 4:7, Revelation 20:10).

- **Error #4: The Belief that Christians never sin:** It is a falsehood to believe that once we become a Christian we will never again sin, or that we will lose our salvation if we do. When we become a Christian we receive power from God to resist temptation and not to sin. While we are set free from the penalty of sin, it is an ongoing process. The Apostle Paul wrestled with his own sin. As Christians we should never allow for, remain in, or encourage sin. We must be repentant of sin, but we never in this life will be free from sinning (Romans 7:14-25, 1 John 1:9).
- **Error # 5: The belief that Christians can do anything:** It is a falsehood to believe that because we are Christians, sin is permissible because we have already been forgiven. It would be a lie to treat sin lightly and thereby disregard God. While there is forgiveness for sin that we repent of, we must not willfully sin and disrespect the grace of God (Jude 1:4, Romans 6:1-2).
- ❖ **Conclusion:** The doctrine of sin and salvation helps us to see who we are before God, and what God has accomplished for us through Jesus Christ. It is of utmost importance for the Christian to understand their former identity as a slave to sin, and accept the free gift of salvation from their new Master.



DISCUSSION

- ❖ How is the Christian view of sin different from other religions or worldviews?
- ❖ Is it a comfort to you that Satan and evil have only limited power, and that God, who is far greater, can rescue you? How does this impact the way you face sin on a daily basis?
- ❖ What are the evidences of God working in you to overcome the power of sin today?
- ❖ Where do you see false beliefs about sin and salvation in the Church today? Sometimes these beliefs show up in our behaviour (such as not acting as though sin were a serious offense against God, or at the other extreme, acting as though our struggle against sin disqualifies us from God's grace).
- ❖ How does guilt relate to what we have studied today about sin and salvation? How can guilt be a good tool used by God? How can it be misused by Satan?

PRAYER

Close the lesson in prayer. Pray that your participants would understand the freedom available to them in Christ Jesus, and know that they have moved from death to life (no longer slaves to sin). Pray that this good news would change who they are, the way they act, live, love and serve others. Pray that they would see the salvation that is offered to them, as they teach the truth of these doctrines to others.