

Sin in our Lives:

Turning Away from God

Lesson # 11 of 27

Scripture/Memory Verse

"I am writing this to you so that you may not sin; but if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous; and, He is the expiation for our sins, and not for our only but also for the sins of the whole world." 1 John 2: 1-2

Lesson Goal & Objectives

Goal

- The students will understand that sin has two aspects: it means a breaking of the commandments

Objectives

- The students will write a short (one side of one page) essay describing how our relationship with God is damaged or broken by sin. They will indicate in their essays that they grasp that sin is not just a breaking of rules, but also represents turning away from God and His Love.

Introduction and Background for the Teacher

In the previous lesson we examined the relationship between free choice and sin. That is, God did not create evil, but He allows us the freedom to make choices which have caused the chain of evil consequences to come into our world. Sooner or later, everyone ratifies the original choice to sin by choosing to sin as an individual. Sin is turning away from God's goodness and love. To repeat: It is very important to emphasize that God did not create something called "Evil" in the way that He created all the good objects in His good universe. Evil is a negative force, not a positive creation of the good and loving God. **Evil is the result of free choices which go against God – rejecting His Love and hurting others and ourselves.** When we sin, we set off our own chain of evil consequences. When we come to realize this, we begin to feel guilt.

Our feelings of guilt are warnings to us that we have done wrong. We feel bad because deep in our hearts we know that sin is harmful. Pain warns us when we have an injury. In the same way, guilt warns us that we need to make different, better choices. We need to learn not to feel guilty about things that are not genuinely wrong, like striking out in a baseball game; or, about events which are not truly our fault such as when a real accident happens. However, we do need to feel guilty when we *choose* to do things that are really wrong. This kind of guilt is good because it helps us to avoid or repent of doing evil. God's response to our guilt is to invite us to come to Him to ask for forgiveness. God will ***always*** forgive us when we admit we have done wrong and turn to Him

for mercy, healing and restoration. When we try to hide our guilt and cling to it, it can become a very destructive force in our lives.

How do we know that a particular choice in our lives really is sinful? God has given us His commandments to let us know which choices are harmful to ourselves and others. The commandments are not arbitrary rules. That is, these behaviors are not forbidden simply because someone does not like them, or because God wants to keep us under control. Because He is our Creator and loving Father, God wants to warn us about those things which will cause us harm and sorrow. The commandments tell us how to live in harmony with God, other people and ourselves. When we ignore or go against these warnings, the chain of evil consequences begins to dominate our lives. The commandments show us how to make good choices that will give us joy, love and peace instead of sorrow and harm.

If I choose to steal and want to go unpunished, then I will begin to realize that others will steal from me, and I will have to spend time protecting my property. If I tell lies, I lose my ability to trust that others are telling me the truth.

If I want to kill someone else, I must realize that my own life will also be in danger. When there is no faithfulness in marriage, families fall apart and everyone suffers. Keeping the commandments prevents us from experiencing the consequences of evil choices. Breaking the commandments causes pain, fear and anger in ourselves and others. If everyone observed the commandments, evil would diminish in our world and there would be peace and harmony instead. God will give us the Grace to keep the commandments if we ask Him to give us the strength to make the good choices that the commandments teach us. God loves us and wants to have a loving relationship with us. He wants to help us to choose to live in His love. We are always free to choose to turn away from Him by committing sin, but His Will for us is that we should turn to Him and enjoy a loving relationship with Him.

God's greatest desire is to have loving relationship with us, His special creation. **Sin is a turning away from God and His Love; it breaks our relationship with Him and with other people.** The problem of sin is less concerned with breaking the commandments, as such, than it is about breaking relationships by choosing evil and harm instead of love and goodness.

Also as in the previous lesson, please remember: This class is difficult and requires that the teacher be sensitive to the students' struggles and feelings. No student should be pressured to disclose more about his life than he or she feels comfortable in doing. Remind the students that the things that others share about their own lives must, "stay in the room."

Materials Needed for Lesson

- Bibles
- BCP
- Tape, chalk, or string
- Paper and pens for everyone

Opening Prayer (5 min.)

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord.
Amen. (BCP page 355)

Give the students some time to pray for their own needs and concerns for family and friends. Close the prayer with the Our Father.

Review of the Previous Lesson (5min.)

- Were you tempted to do something wrong last week?
- What choice did you have to make?
- Did you turn to God?

Intro Activity (5-10 min.)

*(These ideas are intended to ensure a lively and exciting atmosphere for the beginning of this lesson. It is fine for each parish to approach this differently if you wish to make use of your own games or other materials. It is best **not** to eliminate doing any activity at all.)*

Using tape, chalk or string (as necessary to take good care of your floor) draw or make a line on the floor. While you stand behind them, ask the students to face the line and see how close they can get to the line without falling over. Let them see if they can sneak a toe (or a whole foot) over the line without getting caught. Then have them turn around and walk toward you instead. Tell them: There are two ways to think about sin. You can ask yourself, "How far can I go before I 'cross the line' of breaking a commandment?" Or you can ask yourself, "How close can I come into a relationship with God?"

Lesson (20-25 min.)

1) God has given us the commandments so that we can clearly understand what things, when we do them, will cause hurt to ourselves and other people and will break our relationship with God.

Discuss:

- What are some of the commandments we are not supposed to break?
- Why?

2) Parents give their children rules to keep them safe and to allow their families to have harmony in their houses.

Discuss:

- What are some of your house rules?
- When you break these, or when your parents ask you not to do something, and you do it anyway, how do you feel?
- How do you think they feel?

3) God's rules are not "arbitrary." The word "arbitrary" means that they were just made up by people who had some strange or eccentric ideas, or that they could be changed by simple whims. The commandments are *not* arbitrary rules. God's rules describe how to become loving and caring people who do not hurt one another. God wants us to understand His love and to love also. His commandments help us do this.

Discuss:

- Have you ever lost a friend because of an argument or because one of you hurt the other?
- Were you able to do anything to repair the relationship?

4) Sin is turning away from God – to "cross the line" of breaking our relationship with Him. **Discuss:**

- How do you think God "feels" when we sin?
- What means does God give us to repair our friendship with Him after we have turned away from Him in sin?

It is important to emphasize that God will never abandon us when we sin, but that He always offers us mercy, forgiveness and restoration to His friendship. If we turn to Him, He will always forgive us.

Reflection (10-15 min.)

The students will write a short letter to God asking Him to help them to turn to Him for forgiveness and to build a better relationship with Him. These will be sealed in an envelope and burned later in the program at an appropriate time – such as on a pre-confirmation retreat, or at the end of lesson 12, "The Cross and Redemption." Reassure them that no one will open or read their letters.

Take Home Activity (5 min.)

*(It is recommended that you make use of this take-home activity to re-enforce the learning experience. You **may** eliminate this exercise if **necessary**. You may also substitute another activity if you find that to be more helpful. You should briefly review this lesson and review the take-home activity at the beginning of the next learning session).*

The students will write a short (one side of one page) essay describing how our relationship with God is damaged or broken by sin. They will indicate in their essays that they grasp that sin is not just a breaking of rules, but also represents turning away from God's love.

Closing Prayer (5 min.)

The Decalogue: Contemporary (BCP page 350)

Then.....

Confession of Sins on page 352

Teacher.....Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. *Amen.*

Scripture References

- Deuteronomy 6
- Matthew 22: 34 – 40
- John 13: 34 – 35

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