

# Sinfulness

By John Taylor

## Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, students will take the following assignments.

### Assignment One

Read the comments related to Genesis 2: 16–17 in the section **It's in the Book**. Also read Genesis 3:1–8. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: Why did Eve and Adam sin, according to the passages? What does that mean for us?

### Assignment Two

Read the comments related to Genesis 6:5–8 in the section **It's in the Book**. Also read Genesis 6:9–13. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: Why is God so grieved by our sin?

### Assignment Three

Read Ephesians 4:17–5:1. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: Is Paul talking to believers or unbelievers here? What should believers do about sin in their own lives?

### Scripture to Memorize

*“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Romans 6:23

### Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will better understand the nature of sin and its consequences for God and for people.

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## It's in the Book

30 minutes

### Real-Life Scenario

A Christian friend confides in you. He is feeling frustrated and confined by the expectations of the church, wanting to break out and live an authentic life free from rules. He wants to follow his own heart and passions.

How would you pray for him? What can you say that would give a proper biblical perspective?

**Read** Genesis 2:16–17 out loud.

### Studying the Passage, vv. 16–17

**Verse 16. The LORD God commanded.** One of the first principles of the God-human relationship is that God is in charge and has the right to command. **any tree.** God put Adam in a situation of freedom, choice, and abundance—and not a tight, micro-managed environment. **you may eat freely.** This may also be translated, “You may surely eat.”

**Verse 17. you shall not eat.** God appointed the man to work and preserve the garden, but this was the first and only negative commandment. **you will surely die.** Adam could eat freely of every other tree in the garden. Eating of the one tree God forbade would lead to death.

This was a protective warning, not a miserly restriction on human freedom. God was saying, “Danger, go back.” When we sin—when we break God’s commands—we are not breaking out of a dark, restrictive cage into the daylight of independent freedom. Instead, we are recklessly abandoning the abundant and free life God created, ignoring His warnings, and taking the cold road to death.

### Assignment One Feedback

The student who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now report on why the Scriptures say Adam and Eve sinned.

### Discussion Question

Why do we feel sometimes that obeying God is a burden? How does human sinfulness warp our view of things?

**Read** Genesis 6:5–8 out loud.

### Studying the Passage, vv. 5–8

**Verse 5. the LORD saw.** God sees our whole lives and every interior thought and plan. **every intent of the thoughts of his heart.** Sin involves the whole person, body and soul, and is a matter of heart and motive as much as speech and action.

**Verse 6. He was grieved in His heart.** The first reaction of God to human sin is grief for what has been lost. We mean so much to God that our rebellion and corruption cause Him intense sorrow. And notice how God’s heart and the human heart are contrasted.

**Verse 7. I will blot out.** God’s grief leads to a decision to judge. Human sinfulness corrupts not only the human heart and life, and grieves the heart of God, but it even affects the rest of creation (see also Genesis 3:17).

**Verse 8. But Noah found favor.** The phrase also could be translated, “Noah found grace.” God’s plans to deal with human sin and return the world to the original design always involve judgment and grace. And in the cross of Jesus, we see both judgment and grace fully expressed.

### **Assignment Two Feedback**

The student who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now report on what the Scripture says is the unique role and importance God gave humans in His creation.

**Read** Ephesians 2:1–3 out loud.

### **Studying the Passage, vv. 1–3**

**Verse 1. you were dead.** Not sick but dead. Paul is referring to spiritual death. Right from the beginning, sin led to death, both physical and spiritual. You can’t be healed of sin and death. It won’t be overcome through self-improvement. Death can only be overcome by life, by a resurrection.

**Verse 2. according to the course of this world.** The Ephesians, before they believed the gospel, were not any more evil than people in other places. They were living out the pattern the whole world lived by. They were not even as evil as they could be. But they were still dead in their trespasses and sin.

**Verse 2. the prince of the power of the air.** The whole world follows the devil in disobedience to God. **sons of disobedience.** The phrase *sons of disobedience* here means “characterized by disobedience” or “disobedient by nature.”

**Verse 3. we too.** Gentile Ephesians, Jewish believers, and even Paul were all alike, following the way of the world. **lusts of our flesh . . . desires of the flesh and of the mind.** Sin is about following our self-centered desires. Ephesus was large, prosperous, the capital of the region, and a center for business and religion. The city had an exalted sense of its own importance. But Paul sees through to the heart. **children of wrath.** Condemned and destined to God’s judgment. **as the rest.** Like the rest of the world.

### **Assignment Three Feedback**

The student who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now discuss what Ephesians 4:17–5:1 says about how believers should respond to their own sin.

### **Discussion Question**

What are the results of our sin for God, for others, and for ourselves?

### **On Your Own**

Consider the effects of your own sin on those who are closest to you. In the space below, write three effects of your sin on others. Then write a brief prayer of repentance.

## **Heart and Hands**

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven.

Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart (the real you) for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something in your life for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit says to you below, and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

### **Since Last Week**

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to. . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

### **Grace-Filled Accountability**

5 minutes

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights, and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

### **Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service**

5 minutes

Groups of disciples always are making preparations for evangelism, missions, and service. Use these minutes to work on the next plan.

### **Prayer**

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to King Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

## At Home: Nail It Down

Genesis 2:16–17; 6:5–8; and Ephesians 2:1–3 present some of the most important truths about human sinfulness and God’s response to it. Sin is not a disease that can be overcome by medicine or simply a problem behavior that can be dealt with by therapy or just trying harder. The problem of sin goes right to the core of who we are, involving the heart, the mind, the will, our passions, and our desires. Every part of our lives has been corrupted. Paul described this corrupted, twisted human life as the *flesh*.

God’s commands are not a burden, and His punishment for sin is not unjust. The boundaries He set on our lives are for our good and for our protection. He made us to live an abundant and meaningful life in the world He created. The way of the Lord is not a harsh path but the path to life.

Our sin affects God, others, and ourselves. Sin has led to death and corruption in the world, both physical and spiritual. No one is exempt. Every human being (with the exception of Jesus Christ), has sinned and is subject to death. God’s response to sin has three elements: grief, wrath (leading to judgment), and mercy. In the cross of Jesus Christ, the righteous judgment of God and the loving mercy of God meet. Here we find the divine solution for the problem of sin.

### Parent Question

*What does it mean to sin against God?*

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