

# 45-Minute Small Group Bible Study

## SIN

The Christian Faith, pages 16-18

**Purpose:** To understand sin at its deepest level as unbelief and rebellion against God, to see how Adam's fall brought original sin, bondage, wrath, corruption, and death to all humanity, and to recognize why we cannot repair our relationship with God by our own effort.

**Main Truth:** Sin begins with distrust of God's Word and goodness and becomes the human attempt to define good and evil apart from God. Through Adam, sin and death spread to all humanity. We are born corrupted, spiritually dead and hostile to God, and we commit actual sins in thought, word, and action. The wages of sin are death, and we cannot save or restore ourselves.

### 1. Opening Prayer - 2 minutes

Holy God, your Word tells the truth about us more deeply than we can tell it about ourselves. Give us courage to hear your Law without excuses or despair. Expose our unbelief, self-centeredness, and sin, and prepare us to receive the salvation that can come only from you. Amen.

### 2. Opening Discussion - 3 minutes

Begin with one or two questions:

1. When people use the word "sin," do they usually mean isolated bad actions, a broken relationship with God, a condition of the heart, or something else?
2. Why are people often more comfortable admitting mistakes than admitting sin?
3. What changes if our deepest problem is not merely bad behavior but spiritual death and bondage?

### 3. Read the Doctrinal Statement - 2 minutes

Have one person read the doctrinal statement for "Sin" on page 16. Listen for the progression: distrust of God, the fall of Adam and Eve, original sin, actual sins, wrath and death, and our inability to restore ourselves.

### 4. The Essence of Sin Is Distrust of God's Word and Goodness - 5 minutes

**Read: Genesis 2:17**

God's command is clear: eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil will bring death.

Discuss:

1. What does the command ask Adam and Eve to trust about God?
2. Why is obedience here inseparable from faith in God's goodness?

### Read: Genesis 3:1, 4-8

The serpent begins with “Has God really said?” then directly contradicts God’s warning and promises that humans can become like God, knowing good and evil for themselves.

Discuss:

1. What does the serpent attack first - behavior, or trust in God’s Word?
2. How is the desire to define good and evil for ourselves still at the heart of sin?
3. What immediate fruits of sin appear after Adam and Eve eat - shame, hiding, alienation?

**Key Insight:** Biblically, sin is deeper than rule-breaking. The sinful act grows from unbelief: refusing to receive God as God, distrusting his Word and goodness, and grasping the right to determine good and evil on our own terms.

## 5. Through Adam, Sin and Death Spread to All - 4 minutes

### Read: Romans 5:12

Paul says that sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, and death spread to all people.

Discuss:

1. How does Paul connect Adam’s sin with the human condition that follows?
2. Why does this challenge the idea that each person begins spiritually neutral?

### Read: Psalm 51:5; John 3:6

David confesses sin from conception, and Jesus says, “Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh.”

Discuss:

1. What do these passages say about sin as a condition present before conscious acts of wrongdoing?
2. Why is “original sin” not merely imitation of bad examples?

## 6. Sin Places Humanity Under Wrath and the Powers of Darkness - 4 minutes

### Read: Ephesians 5:6

Paul warns that God’s wrath comes on the sons of disobedience.

Discuss:

1. Why is divine wrath not an embarrassing side issue if God is truly holy and evil is truly evil?
2. How is God’s wrath different from sinful human temper?

### Read: Ephesians 2:1-3

Paul describes fallen humanity as dead in trespasses and sins, following the world and the ruler of the air, living in sinful desires, and being by nature objects of wrath.

Discuss:

1. What different dimensions of bondage appear here - world, devil, sinful flesh, wrath?
2. What can a spiritually dead person contribute to making himself spiritually alive?

## **7. The Sinful Mind Is Hostile to God and Cannot Submit to Him - 4 minutes**

**Read: Romans 8:7-8**

The mindset of the sinful flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law and "in fact, it cannot."

Discuss:

1. How strong is Paul's description of human spiritual ability apart from grace?
2. Why does this matter for any theology that makes salvation finally depend on an unaided or partly independent human decision?

**Read: Colossians 1:21**

Paul says that people were alienated from God and hostile in their thinking, expressed through evil deeds.

Discuss:

1. How are inner alienation and outward actions connected?
2. Why is changing behavior alone insufficient to heal the underlying relationship with God?

## **8. Sin Is Universal and Reaches Thoughts, Words, and Actions - 4 minutes**

**Read: Romans 3:10, 23**

Paul concludes that no one is righteous and that all have sinned and fall short of God's glory.

Discuss:

1. What room does this leave for spiritual boasting or comparison with other sinners?
2. How does "fall short of the glory of God" describe sin as more than isolated rule violations?

**Read: Psalm 5:4**

God does not take pleasure in evil, and wickedness cannot dwell with him.

Discuss:

1. What does this teach about the incompatibility between God's holiness and evil?
2. Why can reconciliation not mean that God simply stops caring about sin?

## **9. The Wages of Sin Are Death - 4 minutes**

**Read: Romans 6:23**

Paul states with stark simplicity: "The wages of sin is death."

Discuss:

1. Why is death presented not merely as a natural biological event but as the wage of sin?
2. How does this help explain why death feels like an enemy rather than simply a normal part of life?

### Read: Matthew 10:28

Jesus distinguishes physical death from the final destruction of body and soul in hell.

Discuss:

1. What does Jesus teach about the seriousness of eternal death?
2. How does this passage prevent us from reducing salvation to improving our present earthly circumstances?

## 10. We Cannot Restore Ourselves - 4 minutes

The doctrinal statement ends by saying, “We are unable to restore our relationship with God by our own efforts or deeds.” That conclusion follows from the passages we have read: the sinner is not merely wounded but dead, not merely uninformed but hostile, not merely imperfect but under judgment.

### Read: Ephesians 2:1-3; Romans 3:10, 23

Return briefly to these passages and notice the words “dead,” “by nature,” “no one righteous,” and “all have sinned.”

Discuss:

1. What kinds of religious self-help are ruled out by these descriptions?
2. Why is recognizing our inability not meant to produce hopelessness but to prepare us for a salvation that must come entirely from outside us?
3. How does the doctrine of sin make the Gospel genuinely good news rather than advice for self-improvement?

**Key Insight:** A shallow doctrine of sin produces a shallow doctrine of grace. If our problem were merely ignorance, God could educate us. If it were only bad habits, he could coach us. Scripture describes bondage, guilt, wrath, and death; therefore salvation must be rescue, forgiveness, reconciliation, and new life from God.

## 11. Bringing It Together - 2 minutes

Sin begins in unbelief and distrust of God, corrupts the whole person, enslaves humanity under evil powers, produces actual sins, places us under God’s righteous judgment, and ends in death. Scripture removes every basis for self-salvation. We need God himself to act for us and in us.

## 12. Application Questions - 5 minutes

Choose two or three:

1. How does defining sin as unbelief deepen the way you think about particular sinful actions?
2. Where are you most tempted to decide for yourself what is good and evil rather than receive God’s Word?
3. How does the doctrine of original sin cultivate humility and compassion rather than superiority?

4. Why is spiritual inability difficult for modern people to accept?
5. How does a serious doctrine of sin make you more ready to hear the Gospel as gift rather than advice?

### **13. Closing Prayer - 2 minutes**

Holy and merciful God, we confess that sin reaches deeper in us than we can see. We have doubted your Word, trusted ourselves, desired what is evil, and failed to love you and our neighbors. We cannot repair ourselves or make ourselves alive. Have mercy on us. Strip away our excuses and false confidence, and prepare us to receive with empty hands the salvation you give in Jesus Christ. Amen.