

DISCOVERING CHRIST

Lesson 3 — Why Do I Need Jesus?

The Big Question: What is sin, and why does it separate us from God?

Purpose of This Study

In our first study, we asked: **Who is Jesus?**

We discovered that Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah, Lord, and Creator.

In our second study, we asked: **Why did Jesus come?**

We discovered that He came **to seek and save the lost**, because God loves us and Jesus was willing to give His life for our sins.

That naturally leads to the next question: **Why do I need to be saved?**

What does it mean to be “lost”? Why do we need saving?

The Bible's answer is only a three letter word, yet such a big word: **sin**

We want to understand what sin is, what it does to our relationship with God, and why we cannot solve the problem simply by trying harder to be good.

1. DISCUSSION STARTER

“The Line”

Imagine that you're playing a game with a group of people. There is one rule that everyone understands before the game begins. At some point, someone crosses the line. Maybe they didn't think it was a big deal. Maybe they say, “Everybody else was doing it.” Maybe they say, “I didn't mean to.” But the line was clearly there.

What makes crossing the line wrong—the fact that someone got caught, or the fact that the rule was broken?

What if everyone in the group crossed the line? Would that make crossing the line right?

Do you believe the standard doesn't change simply because everyone violates it?

Transition: That's an important principle when we talk about sin.

We often measure ourselves against other people: *“I'm not as bad as he is.”*

“I've never done anything really terrible.” “At least I'm a good person.”

But the Bible doesn't ultimately measure us against one another.

It measures us against God's standard.

So let's ask: **What does God call sin, and what has sin done to us?**

2. EVERYONE HAS SINNED

As you read this passage, listen for Paul's description of humanity. Notice especially where he takes us in verses 19–23.

Read: Romans 3:9–23

Discussion Questions

1. What words does Paul use to describe humanity in verses 10–18?
2. Does Paul present sin as merely something a few unusually bad people do?
3. Look at verse 19. What does Paul say the law does to those under it?
4. What does verse 20 say about our ability to become righteous through keeping the law?
5. According to verse 21, how is God's righteousness made known?
6. What does verse 22 say about how God's righteousness comes?
7. Now look carefully at verse 23. Who has sinned?
8. What does Paul mean by **“fall short of the glory of God”**?

Important Observation

This is one of the most important verses in our study: **“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”**

According to Paul, is the problem “some people have sinned,” or is sin a universal human problem?

Personal Question: Why do you think it is sometimes easier to see someone else's sin than to recognize our own?

3. WHAT IS SIN?

Read: 1 John 3:4

Discussion Questions

1. What word does John use to describe sin?
2. What does “lawlessness” suggest about our relationship with God?
3. If God is the Creator and Lord, who has the right to determine what is right and wrong?
4. Why is sin ultimately more serious than simply “breaking a rule”?

Digging Deeper

Let try to understand - Sin is not merely making a mistake. Sin is not merely failing to live up to our own expectations. **Sin is rebellion against God's will.** It is choosing our will over God's will. This distinction will become important later when we study **repentance**.

4. SIN SEPARATES US FROM GOD

We've established that everyone has sinned. But what does sin actually do?

Read: Isaiah 59:1–2

Discussion Questions

1. What does Isaiah say God's hand is able to do?
2. Is God unable to hear His people?
3. According to verse 2, what has created the separation?
4. What does sin do to our relationship with God?
5. Notice the words “**your iniquities**” and “**your sins.**” What does this suggest about personal responsibility?

Key Thought

The problem isn't that God has moved away from us. Sin creates the separation.

This gives us an important picture: **God is holy. We have sinned. Sin separates us from God. We need reconciliation.**

5. SIN BEGINS IN THE HEART

Ever been tempted? Sure, we all have. Where does temptation come from? James helps us understand.

Read: James 1:13–16

Discussion Questions

1. What does James say God is not responsible for?
2. Where does James say temptation comes from?
3. What does verse 14 say about our own desires?
4. What happens when desire conceives?
5. What does sin ultimately produce?
6. Why is it important to recognize that sin isn't simply something that “happens to us”?
7. How does James describe the progression from temptation to sin to death?

DESIRE

↓

TEMPTATION

↓

SIN

↓

DEATH

Is Temptation the same as sin? How do I know? Jesus Himself was tempted (Matthew 4:1–11), yet (Hebrews 4:15, 1 Peter 2:22; John 8:46). So, is temptation a sin? Keep in mind as James helps us see the progression that occurs when a person allows sinful desire to take hold and chooses to act upon it.

Discussion Question

Why is recognizing that progression important if we want to overcome sin?

6. “I’M A GOOD PERSON”

James 2:8–10

Discussion Questions

1. What does James call the command to love your neighbor?
2. What happens if someone keeps the whole law but stumbles at one point?
3. Why does James use such a strong example?
4. What does this teach us about comparing our lives with other people?
5. Does being better than someone else make us sinless?
6. What does this passage teach us about the seriousness of breaking God's law?

Illustration

Suppose you are standing on one side of a canyon. One person jumps and makes it ten feet. Another jumps twenty feet. Another jumps thirty feet. Who reached the other side?

The difference between ten feet and thirty feet may be significant among the jumpers, but it doesn't change the fundamental problem: **The Jumpers did not and cannot make it across.**

Likewise, comparing ourselves to other people doesn't solve our problem with sin. We may be “better” than someone else in some areas. But the question isn't: **“Am I better than someone else?”**

The question is: **“Am I right with God?”**

7. WHAT DOES SIN COST?

Read: Romans 6:23

Discussion Questions

1. What does the word **“wages”** normally mean?
2. Why is that an appropriate word for what sin produces?
3. What does sin earn?
4. What is contrasted with the wages of sin?
5. Is eternal life described as something we earn or something God gives?
6. Through whom does God give eternal life?

7. How does this verse connect back to our previous study about why Jesus came?

Key Observation

There are two very different words in this verse: **WAGES** and **GIFT**

Sin produces a wage. God provides a gift. And the gift comes: **“in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** This takes us back to Jesus.

8. WHY CAN'T I JUST TRY HARDER?

If a person realizes he has sinned, why can't he simply decide to become a better person from now on?

Read: Romans 3:20–24

Questions

1. What does Paul say the law cannot accomplish?
2. What does verse 21 say God has now made known?
3. According to verse 22, how is God's righteousness received?
4. What does verse 23 say about everyone?
5. What is offered freely in verse 24?
6. Through whom does redemption come?

Important Thought

The gospel does **not** say: “You have sinned. Try harder.”

The gospel says: **“You have sinned. You need a Savior.”**

And that Savior is Jesus.

This is why our first two lessons matter.

Who is Jesus? The Son of God.

Why did Jesus come? To seek and save the lost.

Why do I need Jesus? Because sin has separated me from God, and I cannot fix that problem by myself.

9. WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED ABOUT SIN?

As group let's try to fill in this blank from what we know so far:

Sin is... _____

Romans 3:23 → universal: **everyone has sinned**

1 John 3:4 → rebellion against God's law

Isaiah 59:2 → something that **separates us from God**

James 1:14–15 → something that begins with sinful desire and produces death

James 2:10 → serious even when we compare ourselves favorably with others

Romans 6:23 → something that produces death

If this is our condition, what do we need? We need Jesus.

10. THE GOOD NEWS

Read: Romans 5:6–8

Ask:

1. When did Christ die for us?
2. Were we already righteous?
3. What does verse 8 say about God's love?
4. How does this passage change the way we think about our sin?

Emphasis:

The purpose of studying sin is **not to leave us feeling hopeless**. It is to help us understand why the cross is such good news. If we weren't lost, we wouldn't need a Savior. If sin didn't matter, Jesus didn't need to die. But because God loves us, **Jesus came for us while we were still sinners**.

11. PERSONAL REFLECTION (Use this section at home to review this study)

Thinking About It

1. What does the Bible say is the biggest problem facing humanity?
2. Why isn't comparing ourselves with other people enough?
3. What does sin do to our relationship with God?
4. What do you think it means personally to say, "I need a Savior"?
5. How does understanding our sin change the way we look at Jesus and the cross?

A Deeper Question

If you knew that you could not make yourself right with God simply by trying harder, how would that make you view God's offer of salvation?

12. CLOSING THOUGHT

This lesson may be the hardest one we've studied so far because nobody enjoys talking about sin. But the Bible tells us the truth about our condition because God loves us enough to tell us the truth.

We have all sinned.

Sin separates us from God.

Sin produces death.

And none of us can make ourselves righteous simply by comparing ourselves with someone else or by trying harder.

But remember where our study began.

Jesus came to seek and save the lost. That means the word “lost” isn't the end of the story. **It is the reason Jesus came.**

The next question, then, becomes very personal:

If I am lost, and Jesus came to save me, what does He want me to do?

Before we answer that question, we need to understand what Jesus asks of someone who wants to follow Him.

The Progression So Far

Lesson 1 — Who Is Jesus?

Jesus is the Son of God, Messiah, Creator and Lord.

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Lesson 2 — Why Did Jesus Come?

Jesus came to seek and save the lost.

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Lesson 3 — Why Do I Need Jesus?

I have sinned, sin separates me from God, and I cannot save myself.

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Lesson 4 — What Does Jesus Ask of Me?

Next we will be moving into **discipleship, surrender, obedience, and counting the cost**

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