

Eleventh Grade – Doctrine of Sin

In this session particularly, we want to focus on addressing our cultural understanding of “sin”, and then diving into Scripture to read and understand what God’s truth about sin is. Sin is a concept that can quickly become a catch-all term for anything that a given society doesn’t like. Many of our students think of sin more through the lens of what others approve of or don’t rather than what is in line with God’s will and what isn’t. We want to spend time today understanding what God says about sin, so that we may begin to see more clearly the beauty of the picture the Gospel paints.

Introducing the Topic

In this section of this session, we want to give students space to unpack freely what they already know and think about sin. Encourage as much sharing and vulnerability as possible during this time!

- If you had to define “sin” for someone, what would you say?
- What are some things that you would consider definitely “sin”?
- What are some things that you would consider sin sometimes but not all the time?
- What do you think makes something a sin?
- Why do you think “sin” matters so much to God?

Scripture Study

As you transition to the Scripture Study portion of this session, remind students that Scripture is where we turn for truth. We want to continually reiterate that we study Scripture not just for the “Christian take” on a matter, but God’s revealed word, given to us out of love for our good.

Since this is a pretty complex topic, we will tackle it bit by bit in question-and-answer format. We will ask a question, look to Scripture, and then find our answer.

- I. What is the definition of sin?
 - Read Exodus 20:2-17 together.
 - What kinds of things does this passage address?
 - What does this passage call sin?
 - Read Matthew 5: 21-22, 27-29, 31-37 together.

-What stands out in this passage?

-What behaviors does Jesus address in this passage?

-What does Jesus say in response to the common saying about those behaviors?

-What theme do you see in Jesus' response?

-Looking at these passages, how would you define "sin"?

-Sin is any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature. In simpler language, sin is missing the mark. We see throughout all of Scripture, that God doesn't just care about actions, He cares about our heart behind them, our attitude. And even more than that, He cares about our very nature.

II. What is the origin of sin?

-Read Genesis 18:25, Deuteronomy 32: 4 and Job 34:10 together.

-What do these three verses affirm? Point students to the truth that God is perfect in all His ways, God does not sin, nor is the sin in our world God's fault.

-Read Genesis 3: 1-7, and Romans 5:12 together.

-What brings sin into the world according to the Scriptures?

-Why did Adam and Eve eat the fruit? (Allow students to process the different motivations they see in Adam and Eve, and then point them back to this question, "Why could they act on that motivation?". We want students to understand that sin was the consequence of free will exercised.

-Read Ephesians 1:11 and Daniel 4:35 together.

-What truth do both these passages assert?

-Many other worldviews hold that just as there is an eternal, morally good force in the universe, there is likewise an opposing, eternal, morally evil force. This is the concept of Dualism. What does this passage say to that idea? (Help students see that, though sin exists and God does not delight in it, sin is still submitted to His perfect will and He will accomplish His perfect will through the sin that he ordained to come about through the voluntary choices of the creatures He made. Allow students some time to discuss and process this, as it is a very complex and challenging idea!)

-Where does Scripture say sin comes from?

-Sin is the result of man and angel's free will, and even though God does not desire sin, He has ordained it through our free will, and is using it towards His perfect purposes.

III. Where does *our* sin come from? (*In this question, we are addressing the doctrine of inherited sin.*)

-Earlier, when we defined sin, part of the definition was a failure of our natures to conform to God's moral law. So let's look at what Scripture says about our natures.

-Read Romans 5: 12-22 together.

-What stands out to you in this passage?

-What do you think verse 14 means? What do you think it means that "death reigned"?

-What do you think verse 19 means? What does it mean that "the many were made sinners"? What do you think it means that by Adam's sin we were "made sinners"?

-Read Romans 7:14-20 together.

-What stands out to you in this passage?

-How does Paul describe his nature?

-Where does his sin come from? How does his sin affect him?

-Where does our sin come from?

-All of mankind inherited sin through Adam, and we are not just sinful through our actions, our very nature has been corrupted by the fall.

-If your group wants to dig deeper into our personal responsibility for sin, check out this article which talks more about the specifics of what sin is. This article is a quick explanation of inherited sin, imputed sin, and personal sin!

Practical Application

In this section of the session, we want to give students to process what they learned and compare their presuppositions about the topic to what God's word proclaims. This is a time

where we want to ask questions to help students apply these seemingly abstract doctrines to their personal walks with the Lord.

-Have you ever experienced what Paul was describing in Romans 7:14-20? What was that like for you?

-Jesus defines sin as the attitude of our heart, not merely our actions. If we are just as accountable for our attitude as our actions, in what areas of your life are you struggling with sin (even if no one can tell)?

-With this definition of sin in mind, what does it look like to turn away from sin? Does this expanded definition change the way you think about addressing sin?

-How can a healthy understanding of sin inform the way we treat it? What about the way we treat it in others?