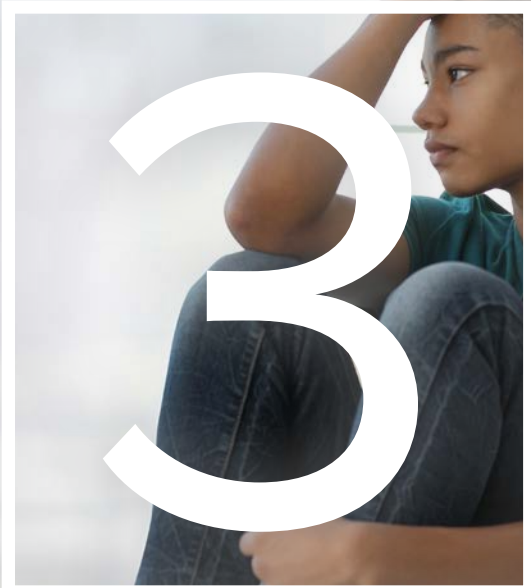




3

The Greatest Sin

?

WHEN HAVE YOU MESSED UP AND FELT LIKE THERE WAS NO WAY TO MAKE IT RIGHT?

The POINT >

The greatest sin is refusing to trust Jesus.

> MATTHEW 12:22-32

²² Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw. ²³ And all the people were amazed, and said, "Can this be the Son of David?" ²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, "It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons." ²⁵ Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. ²⁶ And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? ²⁷ And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. ²⁸ But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then

the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹ Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house. ³⁰ Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. ³¹ Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. ³² And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come."



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

FACT:

Christiaan Huygens, a Dutch scientist, made the first pendulum clock in 1656.¹



LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // SALVATION

Because of rebellion against God, all people have been cut off from a relationship with Him and deserve eternal death and hell, which is the punishment for sin.

Picture this: Your mom asks you to watch your little brother while she finishes work. You find a ball in the living room and start throwing it, but your brother tosses it over your head, and you hear a crash. You worry, “Please don’t let it be the clock Mom loves!” You quickly check and see it shattered on the floor. “This was our great grandma’s clock. Mom will never forgive us,” you think, realizing it’s irreplaceable.

All people have committed sins that separate them from God, and we can do nothing to make it right. However, through Jesus’s death and resurrection, God has made a way for us to experience forgiveness.

In today’s passage, Jesus was addressing an astounded crowd. They had just witnessed Him miraculously heal a demon-possessed man, but the Pharisees accused Jesus of working by the power of the devil. This dramatic event led to a broader conversation about sin and one particular sin that would spark theological debate for centuries to come. What sin could be so horrible that God would not forgive it?

MATTHEW 12:22-23

1 Why were the Pharisees so angry with Jesus?

2 Why were the crowds beginning to believe that Jesus might be the Messiah?

MATTHEW 12:24-29

3 Why were the Pharisees so greatly opposed to Jesus?

4 What has Jesus taken away from your life that was previously comfortable or pleasurable?

5 How did Jesus tear down the flawed logic of the Pharisees?

MATTHEW 12:30-32

6 Why is it impossible to remain neutral when it comes to following Jesus?

7 What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of God's people?

8 In your own words, what is blasphemy against the Spirit? Why is it such a big deal?

Satan's purpose is to keep people from seeing God, speaking of Him, and experiencing His blessings.
#BSFLTheGOAT



LIVE IT OUT



GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

CREATION

CHURCH

PEOPLE

FAMILY

COMMUNITY
& WORLD

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // SALVATION

Because of rebellion against God, all people have been cut off from a relationship with Him and deserve eternal death and hell, which is the punishment for sin.

Any sin is a terrible offense against God, and all sins are equal in the sense that even the smallest sin (from an earthly perspective) is enough to cut us off from God. However, in another sense, certain sins carry more weight than others. For instance, murder is a greater expression of brokenness than becoming angry when your text message autocorrects incorrectly. All sin deserves judgment, but there is forgiveness for every sin with one exception: pridefully and persistently refusing to believe the truth about Jesus.

> CHRIST

The greatest sin is refusing to trust Jesus. Everything else can be forgiven.

9 Have you confessed Jesus as your Lord and Savior and repented of your sin?

10 If not, talk to a trusted Christian friend or leader and ask that person to help you work through what it means to surrender your life to Jesus.

> COMMUNITY

It can be tempting for Christians to be critical of worldly people who live according to worldly values or even of Christians who are different from them. However, the church should never be characterized by a critical spirit, like the Pharisees. Instead, we're to reflect the love and grace of Jesus.

11 How are you sometimes more critical than compassionate?



12 How is God calling you to make changes in this area? Commit to making these changes.

> CULTURE

Satan's purpose is to keep people from seeing God and speaking of Him, but Jesus opens our eyes to see Him and gives us a message to proclaim to others.

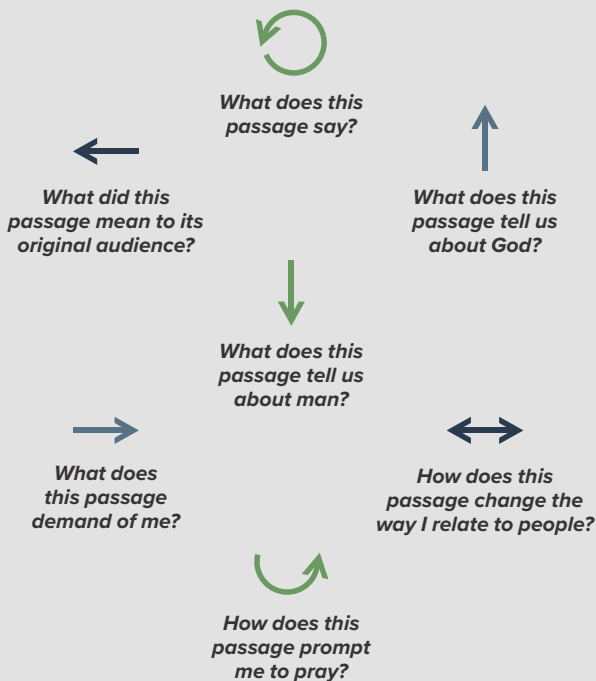
13 This week, how will you help a friend or classmate who doesn't have a relationship with God to see Jesus?

14 Commit to proclaiming the message of the gospel.

DAILY DEVOTIONS



The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



Day One

1 JOHN 5:16

We should see all sins as thoughts, words, and actions that don't please God. Before the fall, Adam and Eve lived in the garden with access to the tree of life, which represented the eternal life they had in their sinless state. But when they sinned, they were driven from the garden and cut off from the tree of life, and death was introduced into their (and our) reality. This death in a general sense is not what John is talking about. Because we've inherited a sin nature from Adam, we will all die. However, when addressing sin leading to death, John likely isn't talking about the fact that we'll all one day die or even the spiritual death that fallen people experience because of their sin nature. Instead, John is likely talking about immediate physical death because of patterns of unrepentant sin in God's people. Thankfully, because God is gracious and merciful, there is forgiveness for sin. When we place our trust in Jesus, we are forgiven for our sins and receive the gift of eternal life. But even after salvation, we will continue to struggle with sin until we go home to heaven. Still, God is patient and willing to provide relational forgiveness over and over when we confess and repent.

➤ **In your own words, what is sin that doesn't lead to death in the context of this passage?**

➤ **Why are confession and repentance so important?**

Day Two

1 JOHN 5:16



We are to pray for our fellow believers who, like us, struggle with sin. When we see others struggling, we might be tempted to criticize or gossip. But this is the exact opposite of what we're called to do in Scripture. When we see others sin or become caught in a pattern of sin, we should be moved to compassion that motivates us to action. First, we should pray. But beyond this, we should ask how we might be part of the answer when we pray. We could graciously and honestly challenge the fellow believer's sin, calling them to repentance. We could provide hope and encouragement toward a better way of living. One way or another, we should never condemn but instead provide legitimate and prayerful help in overcoming struggles with sin.

- **Why are some Christians tempted to gossip or criticize when others struggle?**
- **How can we help when we see fellow believers in sin?**

Day Three

1 JOHN 5:16

John has already referred to sin that doesn't lead to death, at least in an immediate sense. Here, John states directly that there is sin that does lead to death. Sin that leads to death is not a specific sin (like stealing or lying) but the final straw that crosses a point beyond the patience God is willing to extend. We don't know exactly where this line is, and further, we are called to righteousness. Therefore, we should pursue God with our lives. As mentioned previously, we are called to pray for our Christian brothers and sisters who struggle with sin. And we should always pray with hope, seeking God's mercy and grace in the lives of others.

- **How can we pursue God with our lives?**
- **How should we pray when we sin and see others struggling with sin?**

Day Four

1 JOHN 5:17

The word *righteous* is based on the root word “right,” which means straight or in-line with the standard of God’s law. At times, we might be tempted to think that there are big sins and little sins. (To be clear, murder is definitely worse than anger in an immediate sense.) When Jesus said we’ve already committed murder in our hearts if we’re angry (Matt. 5:21-22), He was saying that, categorically, anger and murder are the same. However, though related, murder has much heavier consequences compared to anger. At the same time, though, every sin—no matter how large or small we might think it is—is huge because it offends God and separates us from Him and His blessings. John wanted to be clear that any sin, no matter how “big” or “small,” is a terrible offense against God’s righteous standard. Even then, God is patient and doesn’t give us the punishment we rightly deserve when we are humble and seek His forgiveness in repentance.

➤ **In your own words, what is righteousness and unrighteousness?**

➤ **Why is all sin such a big deal?**

Day Five

1 JOHN 5:17



As God’s sons and daughters, we are called to follow Jesus in all the ways He lived. Jesus lived a perfectly righteous life, which made Him qualified to die on the cross in our place. As Jesus’s followers, we are called to follow His clear and perfect example. Any time we fail to do this, it’s sin. God’s purpose for our lives is that we would reflect the goodness and glory of Jesus to the people around us. With Jesus having ascended to heaven, we are the body of Christ on the earth. When people see us, they should see Him, and many will be drawn to God when they do. Let’s take the call to refuse unrighteous living seriously and reflect the righteousness of Jesus. When we do, God will use us to bring forgiveness to the people around us.

➤ **What does it mean to be followers of Jesus?**

➤ **How are you living as an example of Jesus’s righteousness?**