

Lesson 7: “The Sin I Avoid”

A Facilitator’s Guide for Mid-Elementary to Adult Bible Classes

I. Welcome & Prayer (5 mins)

II. Ice-Breaker (2-3 mins)

- Does anyone have a recent story about avoiding something that could have been disastrous?

III. Class Activity (2-3 mins to explain, complete throughout the class period)

- Give everyone a blank sheet of paper and have them draw a tree at one end of the page and a stick person on the other end. Then draw three lines evenly between the tree and the person. Have everyone decide what the tree symbolizes as the chief sin in life (e.g. lying, killing, etc.), then the three lines are boundaries/rules that can help a person avoid that sin (e.g. being honest, accountability partner, etc.). Then discuss at the end of class the similarities/differences between everyone’s sheets and what can be done to put this into action.

IV. Discussion & Application (30 mins) – write comments on the board to build momentum & reflection.

Try to get to all 3 of these questions (see recommended time limits). The discussion will be most useful if all three aspects of identifying sin, setting up boundaries, & repairing sin’s consequences have been discussed.

1. **The Out-of-Bounds Lines (10 mins):** If sin is “crossing the line,” what is “the line” that should not be crossed today—the one that leads to the most severe consequences with God and people (i.e. the equivalent of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil in the garden)? What does “the line” look like in different contexts—individual life, family, job/school, public, etc.?
2. **The Boundary Lines (10 mins):** What are some strategies that can help us and our families avoid crossing the Out-of-Bounds line with God and people (i.e. don’t touch the fruit)—rules/procedures, good habits/practices/behaviors, consequences/rewards/punishments, milestone celebrations, resources/advice. How do we discourage the bad while reinforcing the good?
3. **Getting Back In-Bounds (10 mins):** What are some strategies that can help us and our families respond, repair, and rebuild life after a line is crossed with God and people (i.e. restoring the original order)—initial response/follow-up, atoning/repairing the damage, forgiving/being forgiven, rebuilding trust, preventing continuation & escalation? How do we repair the damage and recalibrate the heart?

IV. Application (3-5 mins to explain):

Believe: Look up several verses on “sin” in the Bible. Write down a summary of how the Bible speaks about the various types, degrees, motivations behind, responses to, and effects of sin on humanity, the world, and God. (Next month we will look at God’s response to sin).

Act: Draw the picture described above in the “class activity.” What is the ultimate sin that you think all other sins in your life (or in your family’s life) stem from? How can your family avoid that sin by setting up good boundaries between where you are now and where the tree of good/evil is? How could you move closer to the tree of life?

Teach: Share your biblical summary of sin and your picture of boundaries with your friends, family, social media contacts, & all of us at [College Church](#) to help encourage and challenge us.

Lesson Outline for Bible Class (Birth to Mid-Elementary)

Believe: Choose biblical examples of individuals who were tempted to sin and either avoided it or did not avoid it and the outcomes in both situations (e.g. Joseph, Achan, Judas, Annanias and Saphira, Peter). Use pictures, songs, videos, or act this out to bring it to life.

Act: Share 1 of the biggest consequences of sin that you see in our world today and how it impacts all of you. Also, as it is appropriate, share 1 big temptation/sin that you see facing these kids now or in their future, and how they might prepare for that day. Challenge them to avoid 1 sin this week. Pray for one another.

Teach: See if each child can remember one character who avoided sin and what they did to avoid it. Have them remember 1 consequence of sin or future temptation and how they can avoid it. Have them share this wisdom with their family & come back next week to tell you if they avoided any sins.

Lesson Outline for Small Groups & Families

Believe: Have everyone (all ages) share their activity page of the major sin in the world today (the tree of the knowledge of Good/Evil) and the 3 boundary lines that they would set up to help avoid that sin. Share other insights from Gen 2-3 that came up in the sermon, Bible class, or from reading it again as a group.

Act: Create a small group or family version of the activity page with the major sin in the world today that the group agrees on (it could even be a particular challenge you have faced as a group). Agree on three boundaries to help discourage crossing the final line and benchmarks that can help lead to the tree of life.

Teach: Talk to other families/small groups to see what trees and lines they came up with. See if you can work together as families/groups to help one another share resources and reach your goals.

Lesson Outline for Individual Study

Believe: Spend some time in deeper reflection on your current temptations, sins, boundaries, and plans for restoration. Read additional scriptures, biblical resources, spend time in prayer and with wise people, choose a mentor, an accountability partner, or other resource that might assist you in making a plan that will work to help you avoid sin.

Act: Take 1 step toward reinforcing your boundaries, restoring your relationships, and walking toward the tree of life rather than the tree of knowledge of good and evil each day this week, and each week this month.

Teach: Share your plan and additional biblical reflection on sin with others and ask them to share their plan and reflection with you.

Additional Scriptures & Discussion Questions for Weeks 2-4 (Easter Sunday starts the next series) (Bible Class, Small Groups, Families, or Individual Study)

General Prompts

1. What is the world teaching us to believe or not believe about sin? How is the world teaching us this? What difference does it make if we believe or don't believe the world?
2. What makes the message of sin in the Bible different from the message of sin/wrong elsewhere—whether in movies, tv, books, social media, or told by other religious groups?
3. What *resources & people* have helped you come to better know, live, & share how to avoid sin? What *strategies* have you used to help others come to know, live, and share how to avoid sin?
4. Individuals who avoided or gave into sin, and their response: Joseph, Achan, Judas, Annanias/Saphira, Peter.

Week 2: How to Avoid the Sins that Lead to Death—Read Mark 3:22-30 and 1 John 5:13-21.

Prepare beforehand with a study Bible, commentary, or other resource(s) to determine what it means to “blaspheme against the Holy Spirit” and “to commit a sin leading to death” or “a sin not leading to death”. Discuss how not all sins are the same in the way that they are committed, treated in our court system, treated by God in the Bible, treated by parents at home, or treated by bosses at work. Discuss the importance of distinguishing these types and degrees of sin for our own lives and in how we respond to others. Talk about some specific sins committed in the world and in your own life and where they might fit on the scale of “sins leading to death” vs. “sins not leading to death”. What are some ways to avoid both of these sins, but especially the ones that lead to death. What are some next steps that everyone can commit to doing or not doing this week?

Week 3: No Temptation is Too Great—Read 1 Cor 10:1-14.

Discuss the situation for Israel and the early church in 1 Corinthians 10 that caused these verses to be written. Then, discuss the importance of verse 13 for us today. What does it mean that temptation “overtakes” us? What is the hope that comes in knowing that no temptation we have is “uncommon to mankind”? What does it mean for you and me to hear the words “God is faithful” in this context? How might God prevent temptations from being “beyond what you can bear”? What are some specific ways to escape some specific temptations so that you might be able to endure them? How can we identify our leading temptations, the boundaries we have setup to help avoid giving into those temptations, the backdoors put in place by God and us to flee? What other passages or practical advice can we share about overcoming temptation(s)?

Week 4: Helping One Another Through Sin — Read Gal 6:1-5.

Discuss the types of transgressions/sins that overtake everyone all the time. Talk about the role that “the spiritual ones” can play in one another’s lives so that we can help in times of sin and temptation. What does it look like to restore someone? How does one do this in “a spirit of gentleness”? How can we also keep a watch on ourselves so that we too are not tempted? What does it look like to “bear one another’s burdens” in the context of sin and restoration from sin? How can we remind ourselves that we are sinners too without being too discouraged or too proud? Why does Paul come back around to saying that we must bear our own load? Is there a specific situation you could share about how you helped someone overcome a sin (should we all have a story like this)? How can we help people find forgiveness from God and people?