

# discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living  
Leader's Guide

## UNDERSTANDING SALVATION

### LESSON 4: WHAT IS SIN ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE?

#### INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Discipleship Essentials module entitled *Understanding Salvation*. This series of lessons examines the very foundational idea of salvation, and what occurs in the life of a person who becomes a Christian. These lessons are critical for every believer to understand before they can effectively share the Gospel with others. Each lesson examines a concept from a Biblical perspective and includes time for discussion of these principles as well as how to effectively apply them to your life. This set of lessons is ideal for use with discipling new believers to ensure they fully understand these ideas.

#### INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for these lessons is new Christians or those who would like a refresher on the basics of Christian salvation. Those who are preparing for evangelism and discipleship may benefit from discussion of these ideas. These lessons assume the participant has made a decision to follow Jesus and wants to explore Christianity further.

The Leader's Guide is intended to help the leader prepare for the lessons and can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials found on [www.discipleshipessentials.org](http://www.discipleshipessentials.org).

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# UNDERSTANDING SALVATION

## LESSON 4: WHAT IS SIN ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE?

### PURPOSE

To understand what sin really means. Participants will understand the problem of sin, how it came into the world, its results, and what God has done to resolve the problem of sin in the world.

### LEADER'S NOTE

This lesson has a lot of content. Gauge your participants' knowledge of the Biblical position on sin, and focus on what may need to be corrected in their understanding. This may be more difficult in a large group. If you have more mature experienced Christians in your group, you may choose to have them explain to one another the concept of sin from a Biblical perspective, as well as the concepts of forgiveness and repentance. This will be good practise for them, and a way the whole class can learn the concepts. Ensure the main points outlined in this lesson are covered. The story of sin should never be told without the story of redemption. Although we are born into this great burden of sin, we are not bound by it! Praise the Lord!

## INTRODUCTION

*(Select two or three of the following questions)*

- ❖ When you were young, did your parents have different punishments for different rule violations? What were some of the rules in your household? What were some of the punishments?
- ❖ How would you define the word SIN?
- ❖ Do you think most people you know have an idea that they are sinful? Why or why not? In your opinion, what makes a person good? What makes a person bad?
- ❖ Have you ever felt burdened with the weight of guilt for something you had done? What did you do about this guilt feeling? What should a believer in Jesus do with guilt?



# STUDY

## TEACH

- ❖ **What the Bible Teaches About Sin:** There are many perspectives in the world about how to define sin. Some people may try to excuse sin depending on the nature of the sin. Some people will excuse small lies or something that no one sees. Some even say that what is wrong for one group of people may be right for another. The Bible, however, is very clear on our sin.
  - The Bible describes sin as going our own way ([Isaiah 53:6](#)), and breaking God's law and rebelling against God ([1 John 3:4](#)). Many things we do — from the smallest selfish thought to large crimes — are sins. A sin is anything that falls short of God's standards. From this perspective, no one can live up to these standards.
  - In [1 John 3:4](#) sin is described as lawlessness. It is going against moral law. God is our standard for perfect holiness and thus the creator of moral law. *Refer to or explain the following verses:*
    - [Psalm 51:5](#)
    - [James 4:17](#)
    - [James 1:5](#)
    - [Romans 3:23](#)
    - [Romans 7:18](#)
    - [Psalm 90:8](#)
    - [Romans 6:23](#)
  - These verses leave us with a bleak picture. We are all sinful from birth and the ultimate result of our sin will be spiritual death. We cannot hide our sin from God as He knows even what is in our hearts. So what are we to do? Read on to find out why sin exists and how we can escape the eternal consequences.
- ❖ **The Origin of Sin:** Why do we sin? As we have already discovered, sin is inescapable. We were born with a sinful nature.
  - [Isaiah 14:12-14](#) and [Ezekiel 28:15-17](#) tell the story of Lucifer who out of pride thought he could be more important and more powerful than God.
  - The pride of Satan was the first sin.
  - God banished Satan from heaven and forced him to roam the earth.
  - [Genesis 3](#) tells the story of how Satan passed sin on to humanity through Adam and Eve, using pride to tempt them into eating from the tree of knowledge.
  - Because of their sin, they were banished from the Garden of Eden and separated from God. This was their spiritual death.
- Since that time when sin was introduced to humanity by Satan, we have not been able to escape it or its consequences.

**TASK**

- Take some time now to discuss sins that seem inescapable with participants. Have them name some sins people they know struggle with. How do you deal with these sins? How does the above information make you feel?

**❖ GOD LOVES AND FORGIVES SINNERS**

- You may feel pretty hopeless by now, but you need to understand this lesson is not complete until you also understand that God loves sinners and has provided a way to redeem us from our sins.
- Sin requires a sacrifice or a wage that must be paid. Because we are sinners by our human nature, there is no wage we could pay to cancel the number of sins we commit. God needed a perfect sacrifice and He loves us so much that He provided one for us in his son Jesus Christ. Take the time to look up the following verses and take turns reading them out loud.
  - Romans 6:23
  - 1 John 4:10
  - Romans 5:8
  - John 3:16
  - Ephesians 1:7
- How does it make you feel now that you know there is a free gift of redemption made available to you?

**❖ Repentance:** If someone offered you a great gift would you refuse it? Probably not. Receiving this gift of redemption from God, through the death of His perfect son Jesus, requires repentance on our part. What is repentance?

- 2 Corinthians 7:9-10 says "As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death."

**❖ Repentance is true sorrow leading to genuine change.**

- Repentance wipes out our sin before God (Acts 3:19).
- Without repentance we will not be able to live in the presence of God (Luke 13:3).
- Repentance is for anyone who wants it (Isaiah 55:7).
- God will convict us of our sins through the Holy Spirit with the desire that we repent, or agree with God that our sin is unacceptable (John 16:8-9).



## DISCUSSION

- ❖ Is it hard to think about every selfish thought and small action in your life that falls short of God's standard as a sin? How has your concept of sin changed throughout your life?
- ❖ What do you do when you sin? Are you weighed down with guilt, or do you turn to God?
- ❖ How would you explain to a friend the concept of sin as revealed to us from God's Word?
- ❖ What are some areas of sin you struggle with? What can you do to overcome this sin in your life?

## PRAYER

*Close the lesson in prayer. Thank God for this gift of redemption and acknowledge that without it you would be lost. Pray that all of you would continue to listen daily for the conviction of the Holy Spirit to let you know if you drift away from God due to sin. Thank God that the, "Son of Man came to seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10). Pray that participants would feel a burden for those still lost in sin, and would reach out to them with the love of God.*

## HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

*If you are meeting regularly with a group or individual, give participants this assignment to complete before the next meeting. For non-literate participants, they can set aside time in prayer rather than write out their confessions.*

### ASSIGNMENT:

- Spend some time privately writing out any sins that come to mind on a piece of paper.
- Ask God, through the Holy Spirit, to convict you of any sin in your life that you may not be aware of.
- Pray and ask God for forgiveness for the sins you have written out.
- Think about how these sins have hurt you, others around you, or separated you from the presence of God.
- Remember that you are forgiven! Tear up the paper and throw it away, and remember that you no longer need to bring to mind sins that are forgiven.