

# discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living  
Study Guide

## UNDERSTANDING SALVATION

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

#### INTRODUCTION

This Study Guide is part of a Discipleship Essentials module titled *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 discussing these principles as well as how to effectively apply them to your life. This module is ideal to use when discipling new believers to ensure they fully understand these concepts.

The Study Guide is intended for an individual to look deeper into a specific lesson on their own. The lessons can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials, such as the video and audio productions found on [www.discipleshipessentials.org](http://www.discipleshipessentials.org).

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# UNDERSTANDING SALVATION

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

### WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

The essence of salvation is that God provides a way for us to have an everlasting relationship with Him through the forgiveness of our sins. But each of us must turn from our sin in order to receive forgiveness. What is sin? Who sins? What happens when a Christian sins after receiving salvation? This lesson explores what sin is according to the Bible.

### JUST SO YOU KNOW...

The Bible is clear that every person is born in sin. Each of us lives apart from God's design for us by disobeying Him and not honouring Him with our actions. In our world today, sin is made 'soft', and from childhood people are taught to excuse their behaviour, and in some cases blame it on their circumstances. It might seem strange to call a new born baby sinful. It also might be hard to think of actions that seem harmless as sinful. This lesson will show you the scope of the word 'sin', and hopefully allow you to confess sin to God in order to receive forgiveness.

## GETTING STARTED

1. How would you define the word 'sin'?

2. Do most people you know think that they are sinful? Why or why not?



# STUDY

❖ **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 it. Some people will excuse small lies or things that people don't see. Some even say that what is wrong for one group of people may be right for another. The Bible, however, is very clear about sin.

➤ How does God describe sin in the Bible?

Isaiah 53:6	
1 John 3:4	
James 4:17	
Romans 3:23	

Many things we do are sins, from the smallest selfish thought to deadly crimes. A sin is anything that falls short of God's standards (or His desire for us). No one can live up to these standards on their own.

In the above verse 1 John 3:4, sin is described as lawlessness. It is going against moral law, or the law that God has written in all of our hearts. God, the creator of moral law, is our standard for perfect holiness.

➤ Read the following verses on the nature of our sin, and write what you find out about sin in our lives and how it affects our relationship with God: Psalm 51:5, Psalm 90:8, Romans 7:18, Titus 3:3, John 8:34, Romans 6:23.

These verses seem bleak. How can sinful people ever escape their slavery to sin? To be a slave means we are in captivity and cannot escape on our own! We have no choice but to sin! Not only that – but sin leads to death. We will suffer the consequences of sin in our lifetime, and after we die we will be punished in hell for our wrongdoings. So what are we to do about our sinful nature? Read on to find out why sin exists and how through God we can be freed from sin and the eternal punishment we deserve.



❖ **THE ORIGIN OF SIN:** Why do we sin? As we have already discovered, sin is inescapable. We were born with a sinful nature. Sin came into the world through Satan, a fallen angel who out of pride thought he could be more powerful than God.

- Read Genesis 3. How does Satan pass sin on to humanity through Adam and Eve?

- What were the consequences given to Adam and Eve because of their disobedience?

- Read the following verses and write down some of the sins listed in the Bible. Galatians 5:19-21, 1 John 3:8-15, Hebrews 12:14-15, 1 Timothy 1:8-10, Proverbs 6:16-19, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. This is not an exhaustive list, just some.

- What sins can you think of that you or someone you know struggles with? How do you know if something is a sin?

You might be wondering how we can know if our actions are sinful, or if we are sinning. The Bible addresses this too. There are three ways that we can identify sin.

- **The Conviction of the Holy Spirit:** God has given us His Holy Spirit Who convicts us (or makes us feel guilty) of our wrongdoing. (John 16:8-11)
- **It impedes holiness:** If something prevents us from knowing God, following Jesus or fulfilling God's desires for us, it is sin. If we are prompted to do good and don't do it, that also is sin. (Romans 14:23, 1 Corinthians 10:31, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20)



- **It Harms Me and/or Others:** If what we do causes others to sin, it is also sin. A lie may not be exposed, but it affects a relationship. (Colossians 3:9-10, Proverbs 6:32-33, Romans 13:10, Proverbs 6:16-19)

**GOD'S LOVE AND FORGIVENESS:** After reading all that, you might feel hopeless! But it isn't the end of the story! The Bible tells us that God loves sinners and has provided a way to rescue us from our sins and bring us back into a relationship with Him.

Forgiveness from sin requires a blood sacrifice (Hebrews 9:22). There is no price we could pay to cancel the number and weight of our sins. God needed a perfect sacrifice to pay the price for us. God loved us so much that He provided that payment through His son, Jesus Christ.

- What do these verses tell us about God's plan of salvation? 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 Jesus Christ requires repentance on our part. What is repentance? Repentance is true sorrow leading to genuine change. It is agreeing with God that our sin is wrong, and earnestly desiring to live a new way. It is regretting our actions and choosing to not act that way again.

- Repentance wipes out our sin before God. (Act 3:19)
- Without repentance we will not be able to live in the presence of God. (Luke 13:3)



## IN SUMMARY

- ❖ Sin is serious to God. Sin is going our own way instead of God's.
- ❖ Sin is lawlessness, or going against the moral law God has put inside us.
- ❖ Sin first entered the world through Satan deceiving Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.
- ❖ Every person sins and the result of sin is always separation from God, which ultimately ends in death.
- ❖ We deserve death and separation from God (the punishment for our sins). But God has made a way for us to come back to Him by providing a sacrifice that will cover our sins.
- ❖ We can identify sins because of the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and through the guidance of the Word of God.
- ❖ God loves us and forgives us from our sins when we come to Him.
- ❖ We must repent of our sins.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Is it hard to think of every selfish thought and small action that falls short of God's standard as a sin? How has your concept of sin changed throughout your life?

2. How would you explain to a friend the concept of sin as revealed to us from God's Word?