

The Seriousness of Sin

In Acts Chapter 5, we witness God putting a stop to the early effects of sin by ending the lives of Ananias and Sapphira. Sin has a way of short circuiting the plan and purpose-driven mission that God has for our lives. Simply put, sin is a serious matter and, too many times, we tend to overlook its drastic effects. Isaiah 59:1 even states, “Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.” Fortunately, our separation from God has been restored through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, an over-emphasis on the prosperity and salvation gospel tends to blind us from the serious effects of sin. While we can live in joy of restored life found through Jesus, understanding the severity and God’s response to our sin is essential to understanding the beauty of God’s Only Son.

1. What is your initial response when you realize you’ve sinned? Do you immediately repent or view it as something that “just happens” because we’re “sinful people”?
2. Has your understanding of the drastic severity of sin been distorted through an over-emphasis on the salvation that occurs through Jesus?
3. In what ways can we begin to realize or understand the severity of sin and the effects that it has on our relationship with God?
4. When our eyes are opened to this truth, what beauties are revealed about Jesus’ death and resurrection and what it means to our lives today?

Sin Affects Community

A very common misconception of sin is that it only affects the individual who performs it. We must understand that God created us in His image to live in perfect community and relationship with Him and one-another and when we sin, the ripple effect occurs. In the case of Acts 5, God had big plans for the church - plans for the salvation and redemption to the ends of the earth. The sins of Ananias and Sapphira could have easily destroyed the power and momentum of the early believers. The same applies to our lives today. While we may believe that our sins are being performed in inwardly or privately, the effects will always find a way to impact others. Lusting, greed, deception, or any other sin have effects on those we love just as pornography, alcoholism, and abuse. Realizing the effects of our sin not just on ourselves, but on those around us is essential to understanding God’s view of sin the severity of our actions.

1. Are there any sins in your life that you believe only affect yourself without influencing others? Does this change the way you view this sin?
2. Have there ever been times when you’ve witnessed your sin cause the destruction of those around you? How has your sin affected your marriage, children, coworkers, and friendships?
3. Does your view on sin change when you begin to realize the terrible effects that it has on the community around you?
4. How can you turn to Jesus to forgive your sins, redeem your life, and create a new spirit in you?

Responding to Sin

Sin is a serious matter; so is the way we respond to it. Jesus stated, “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.” (Matthew 18:15-17) The truth is, our addressing of sin in another believer’s life is an equal matter of our heart as it is theirs. We must be “gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and filled with love” (Psalm 145:8) and “quick to forgive” (Colossians 3:13) Addressing sin in another’s life needs to be taken seriously and sternly, understanding the severe effects, but at the same time loving and compassionate, understanding we are all prone to sin, and are saved only through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

1. Have you ever confronted the sin of another believer? What was this process like? How did you approach and interact with them?
2. Concerning this topic, do you tend to be too stern when dealing with sin, or too willing to quickly forgive and show love to those who have rebelled against God?
3. In what ways can we mimic the examples of Jesus when it comes to addressing, teaching, and forgiving the sins of others?
4. How can your community group hold each other accountable to the sins of each other's lives? Typically, this can only be performed if the individual is willing to reveal personal sin.

Prayer Focus

- That we would understand the seriousness of sin in the eyes of God, while also understanding the beauty of Jesus' substitutionary death for our sins
- That we would realize the drastic effects that our "personal sin" has on our relationships around us, including that with our God and Savior
- That we would respond to sin as Jesus instructed, including aspects of severity, love, compassion, and forgiveness