

Problem

Chapter Summary

Weekly Win

The win for week two is for participants to realize they are more than "mistakers," that they are, in fact, "sinners" according to the biblical definition; that sin is the "problem" that must be resolved if we are to have the relationship with God we were intended to have.

Bottom Lines

- Jesus raised the behavioral standard so high that no one could make a passing grade.
- God is on an endless pursuit to restore his relationship with sinners.
- Jesus never minimized the seriousness of sin, but he did not condemn sinners.

Before The Meeting

Pray

Reflect on the individuals in your group and what they shared the first week. Pray something specific for each one. Pray that there will be cohesion and a spirit of authenticity during your group meeting.

Communicate with co-leader(s)

- Be sure to evaluate the first meeting with your co-leaders soon after it's over. Talk about what went well and what needs to be adjusted for the next meeting.
- Decide who will facilitate which parts of the discussion for the upcoming week.
- Determine the logistics for the social gathering outside the group meeting where the majority of the group will share their stories. The sooner you can schedule this the better; it will help in bonding the group. Be ready to present several options if you haven't already.

Contact group members

Contact group members individually by email. Affirm their participation and the specific insights they bring to the group. By sending individual emails, the participants recognize that you were listening and that their voices matter. You can also point them to the website for additional resources.

We've created this [email template](#) to use as you contact your group members each week. We recommend sending an email a few days before your group to serve as a reminder.

Prepare the environment

The physical space is not the most important part of the environment; valuing the participants' time is. Set a tone for starting and ending the group on time. One of the things participants value most is predictability, and we can help with that by making sure we start and end on time.

Discuss Section One

It's A Mistake

Section Win

The win is for participants to begin to see how calling their bad behaviors "mistakes" is inadequate.

Section Summary

The word "sin" and the label "sinner" are uncomfortable terms we all tend to resist and avoid. It is much easier to admit we periodically make mistakes, but there are many things we do that the word "mistake" does not adequately describe.

Expanded Leader Notes

Questions for Reflection

1. Where have you experienced or observed the inadequacy of labeling something a mistake?
2. What do you associate with the word "sin"?
3. How do you respond to the consequences of having done something wrong?

Leading the Discussion

Question 1: This question allows the participants to engage this concept without feeling the need to reveal anything personal. It is much easier to see the sin of others, so beginning the discussion at a place where they can articulate examples from their own experiences makes the discussion to become more personal (as in Question 3).

Question 2: This question may give you some insight into what type of religious framework your participants grew up with. Pay special attention to answers that reveal a legalistic upbringing. Also, be prepared to share the biblical view of sin. Consider showing the [60 Seconds on Sin video](#).

Question 3: This question takes the discussion to a more personal level. When we personally experience the consequences of our behavior or see them in the lives of others, we are tempted to minimize them (call them mistakes). The leaders need to lead by modeling authenticity and

transparency. Since this is only the second week, people may still need to feel safe to share at this level. When the leaders go first, it gives the rest of the group permission.

Potential Follow-Up Questions

- Is using the word "sin" uncomfortable for you? Why or why not? *The materials assume that sin is an uncomfortable word for people, but it may not be. You may consider leading with this question to find out where the group stands in relation to the assumption we have made.*

Discuss Section Two

Repeat Offenders

Section Win

The win is for group members to embrace their status as “sinners” as a necessary step for being restored to the God of the Bible.

Section Summary

Sin separates us from God. Embracing our status as sinners allows us to recognize our need for the forgiveness and restoration God offers through Jesus. Saying “I am a sinner” opens the door to an authentic relationship with God.

Expanded Leader Notes

Questions for Reflection

1. What does the fact that Jesus was attracted to sinners say about him?
2. What does it cost a person to acknowledge that he or she is a sinner?
3. Do you resist the idea of being called a sinner? Why or why not?

Leading the Discussion

Question 1: Many participants wonder if God can really like them—much less *love* them—knowing what they have done in life. Likewise, many participants have little

exposure to the biblical accounts of Jesus' life. The reality that Jesus was both *liked by* and *attracted to* those that society considered the worst sinners could be very encouraging to many participants.

Question 2: For most of us, the biggest personal barrier to a relationship with God is our pride. This question is meant to reveal that embracing our status as sinners is going to cost us our pride. If you as a leader have a story about how your personal pride was a barrier to your relationship with God, this would be a good place to share it.

Question 3: This question takes the discussion to a more personal level. The participants will know that the expected answer is no, so you may need to prime the discussion as a facilitator by saying, "I have a hard time." Our pride is not erased when we trust Jesus, so it might be helpful to go first if you want the discussion to reach a more authentic level.

Potential Follow-Up Questions

- Why is accepting the label of sinner so important? If you want to see if the group got the main point of this section, you may want to follow up with this question. Even if they do not agree, hearing that they understood that only sinners need the forgiveness of a Savior can help everyone get on the same page before moving the discussion forward.

Scripture

Matthew 5 - Sermon on the Mount

In the fifth paragraph of Section Two, the guide references Jesus' words from the Sermon on the Mount. You may want to take some time and have your group read this passage, especially the sections where Jesus equates anger with murder (Matthew 5:21-26) and lust with adultery (Matthew 5:27-30). For most people this is an eye-opening passage regarding the difference between the way we view sin and the way God views sin.

Discuss Section Three

Only One Person

Section Win

The win is for participants to experience Jesus' treatment of sinners.

Section Summary

In this section we examine how the person with the greatest authority to condemn sin was the

person who consistently responded to sin with forgiveness.

Expanded Leader Notes

Questions for Reflection

1. What, if anything, stands out to you about Jesus' interactions with the woman or the criminal?
2. Do you think Jesus' response to the criminal next to him was fair? Why or why not?

Leading the Discussion

Question 1: This question highlights the contrast between the words Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount and his behavior towards actual sinners. You may need to highlight this tension to help create the foundation for the discussion. You may also want to highlight what an unusual time it was for the criminal to believe in Jesus. There had been no resurrection at this point and Jesus had never appeared more weak and powerless. What was it about the way Jesus was suffering that caused this criminal to believe?

Question 2: This question is designed to foreshadow the "scandal of grace". God's forgiveness is not fair and it is not earned. It is freely given no matter the background of the person seeking it. The forgiveness of this criminal is a source of hope for many participants who believe that their past are beyond God's forgiveness.

Potential Follow-Up Questions

- How does Jesus' behavior in these two accounts contrast with your experience? You may want to use a question like this if you perceive that many of the participants have been burned by previous church experiences.
- How does Jesus' behavior in these two accounts contrast with his own words on the Sermon on the Mount? This question could help identify the tension between what was said at the Sermon on the Mount and how Jesus actually responded to people whose sin was beyond question.
- What if the criminal on the cross next to Jesus had murdered your loved one? How would that impact your view of fairness? It is not that hard to be fine with Jesus forgiving someone who has not hurt us personally. What if the person being forgiven has caused us personal harm? How does that affect our view of fairness?
- Have you ever wondered if you are somehow beyond God's ability to forgive? How do Jesus' actions toward the criminal impact that view? Encourage participants by reminding them that there is nothing they have done or will do that is beyond God's forgiveness. A question like this can open the door to that discussion.

Wrap-Up

Review Bottom Lines

- Jesus raised the behavioral standard so high that no one could make a passing grade.
- God is on an endless pursuit to restore his relationship with sinners.
- Jesus never minimized the seriousness of sin, but he did not condemn sinners.

Resources Reminder and Preparation for Next Week

Wrap up by reminding the group of the additional resources on the website to go deeper on what was discussed. They can prepare for next week by answering the questions in the guide and listening to the message for Chapter 3: "Trust."

Stories

If your group members will be sharing their stories at the social gathering, encourage them to begin making preparations. If you are going to share stories in your group time each week, make sure one or two people will be ready to share next week.

If you have time, the 60-second video [Sharing Your Story in Starting Point](#) can help set the expectations for sharing stories within the group. Encourage group members to use the Appendix: *What's Your Story?* section at the end of the guide to help organize their thoughts for sharing their story.

Social Planning

Confirm the details of your social gathering: date, time, location, food, and most importantly, who will share their stories. The social is one of the best places to cover the majority of stories in the group. Telling stories at the social helps to free up group time for discussion.

Prayer

Every time you pray in your group, you model the nature of prayer and your relationship with God. So, keep it short and simple. Don't use fancy religious words. Be authentic.

Also, don't ask for prayer requests in the group setting until you sense that people are comfortable sharing personal matters.