

# "Sin is Lawlessness"

What do we mean by this word, "sin"?

sin *n.* 1. the breaking of a religious or moral law, an act that does this. 2. a serious fault or offense. 3. something contrary to common sense, *it's a sin to stay indoors on this fine day.*<sup>1</sup>

"Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness." (1 John 3:4 NRSV)

What does "lawlessness" mean or suggest?

What are some synonyms for the idea of lawlessness that describe the effect or impact of sin?

What is the opposite of lawlessness?

Who benefits from lawlessness?

Who wants to hear about sin? Explain your answer.

In 1953 when proclaiming a national day of prayer President Eisenhower quoted Abraham Lincoln saying,

It is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to **confess their sins and transgressions** in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon.

According to *Theology Today*, since 1953 no President has mentioned "sin" as a national failing<sup>2</sup>.

The Bible offers many strong examples of what sin produces:

Read and discuss Gen. 18:20-19:38

Now consider Jer. 23:14

What does it mean to be like Sodom?

How had these people, chosen by God, become this way in his sight?

Consider also Ezek. 16:49-50

---

<sup>1</sup> Oxford American Dictionary, Oxford University Press, 1980

<sup>2</sup> Karl Menninger, Whatever Became of Sin?, p.14, Hawthorn Books, 1973.

s I n  
The great problem with sin is that "I" in the middle of it.

What were the sins God accused these people of?

What had happened to those who behaved this way before, and what would happen to them, and what will happen to those who behave this way today?

Why does God define or describe certain behaviors as "sin"?

What does sin do to us, our families, churches, communities and our world?

## *"Sin that clings so closely"*

Read Genesis 4:7

What is the context here, and what did God say about sin?

What can we understand about sin, and about human nature, from this scripture?

Read Hebrews 12:1

How is sin described here?

What do these verses (Gen. 4:7, Heb. 12:1) tell us about sin?

What do these verses tell us about the solution to the problem of sin?

What are some ways in which we are surrounded by sin, or that sin is at the door?

What does today's pop media generally say about morals? (Consider entertainment media, news, talk shows, commercials, etc.)

Marriage and divorce? Premarital sex? Extramarital sex? Violence? Crime? Alcohol and other drugs? Religion? Sadism? Mysticism and the occult? Human responsibility? Law? Lies? Greed? Selfishness? Profanity? Suicide? Government? Homosexuality? God? Abortion? Sexual satisfaction? Dress?

In how many of these areas is the message from the popular media at odds with the message of God?

What is a likely consequence of casually and consistently consuming that message?

In this context, consider and comment on each of these verses:

Prov 13:20

Prov 28:7

Prov 29:3

1 Cor. 15:33

Curiously, a factor in being surrounded by sin may include the American fascination with statistics. This is a variation on the concept of peer pressure, "everyone does it...," and is a part of a process of normalizing the abnormal.

Can you think of any ways that pop statistics and quickie polls may be abused or misrepresented or misunderstood to make sin more acceptable or desirable?

Is profanity sin? Explain why or why not.

What effect do you think profanity has on people? What scriptures would you use to confirm your thoughts?

(Passages to consider might include Eph 5:4, Matt 12:36-37, Jude 14-15, Eph 4:29, Col 3:8)

If profanity or crudity is normalized, becomes commonplace, is it still profane? Explain.

What effect do you think viewing nudity/pornography has on people, including married couples?

What is the affirmation, and the warning in Hebrews 13:4?

Considering Matthew 5:28, what do you think Jesus would say about pornographic materials?

*Note: "pornography" is a contraction of two Greek words; pornos=fornication and graphos=writing.*

Read Jeremiah 6:13-15, 8:11-12

What did God's people need to learn to do?

How are we to handle – and help our children handle – the commonplace sin (lawlessness) around us?

Recall Hebrews 12:1 and Gen. 4:7, what is our proper involvement with or response to sin?

Remembering John's description of sin as lawlessness, how can we discern sin before we are entangled in it? What tests should we apply?

Read 1 Cor. 14:33

What sort of God is God?

Knowing what sin is, and knowing who God is, what meeting ground is there between God and sin? Explain.

Read and discuss Hebrews 10:26-31.

What must we do in regard to God and in regard to sin? (James 4:7-10)

Since sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4), and God is a God of order and peace (1 Cor 14:33), sin is, no matter how attractive or seductive or normal seeming, rebellion against God, and destructive of ourselves and our fellow man. Mankind is not competent to define sin, being a race of sinners, and God's standards of right and wrong must be embraced by all who believe in Him and desire to know Him.