



What Is Sin?

Part 1

“Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.” (1 John 3:4, NIV)

Before you were saved, you might say “sin is what you were.” You had a heart of sin passed on to you from Adam. Your very nature was sin. Sinning didn’t make you a sinner; you sinned because you were a sinner! You were born with a darkened heart deserving God’s judgment. You were helpless and hopeless! Nothing in you pleased God. That’s the bad news.

Thank God, there is fantastic good news! God came to the rescue! Only he could take care of that sinful heart. He gave the life of his Son to take away the sin of the world. When you believed, God took away your heart of sin and gave you a heart transplant (born again). Is there any better news when your heart is dying? That heart transplant put you into a new royal family and made you a new royal person. Sin is no longer the power force of your life. You are now operating under new power – Holy Spirit power! You can still choose to sin – those old sin habits die hard, and your enemy Satan will use every opportunity to tempt you. However, God wants you to learn to live as a free person under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The definition of sin

As a free person, you need to know what sin is and how easily it can entangle you. In the Old Testament there are three Hebrew words used to define sin: (Impress your friends!)

Hata’ – to miss the mark or fall short of God’s standard.

Pesa’ – to rebel, to go astray or to revolt against the standard.

’Awon – to do evil, a twisting of the standard or deviation from it.

The New Testament also gives descriptive verses to help you better understand.

It is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it. (James 4:17, NLT)

Every wrong is sin. (1 John 5:17, NLT) If you do anything you think you believe is not right, you are sinning. (Romans 14:23, NLT)

You can sum up all these definitions in one simple sentence: **Sin is anything you think, say or do that displeases God or is contrary to the will or laws of God.** Memorize that one. It is calling your own shots; doing your own thing; or acting as if there are no laws!

The beginning of sin

How did sin get into the perfect world God created? (See “Who Messed up the Perfect World?”) More importantly, how can sin entangle you? **Sin begins in the mind with your attitudes and thoughts.** King David learned the hard way.

The temptation

It happened when King David sent his army off to fight, but he decided to stay home. One night when he couldn't sleep, he took a stroll on the roof of his palace. As he looked around, he spotted a beautiful woman taking her evening bath. Instead of running back into the palace and confessing the lust in his heart to the Lord, he sent a messenger to find out the identity of the woman. Guess what? She was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, one of his most dedicated soldiers. That should have stopped him cold, but no, he sent for her. Now when the King sends for you, you come or it could mean death.

The sin of adultery

Bathsheba came. His look turned into intense desire, and David slept with her. Soon Bathsheba sent word that she was pregnant! What was King David to do? He would be disgraced if the people found out

The cover-up

King David thought of a clever cover-up. He sent a note to General Joab instructing him to send Uriah home. When Uriah arrived, King David eagerly encouraged him to go home and spend the night with his wife. Loyal soldier that he was, Uriah said, “How can I go home to wine and dine and sleep with my wife when my army buddies are camping out in open fields?” King David then got him drunk, but Uriah still refused to go home.

The murder

King David panicked. He thought of another devilish scheme. He would have Uriah killed in battle! Then no one would know that Uriah was not the father. He sent Uriah back to camp, carrying his own death warrant to General Joab. “Put Uriah at the front of the hottest part of the battle – then pull back and leave him there to die.” King David waited. A messenger soon arrived at the palace. “Uriah was killed, too.” Can you believe this all began with a “look”? Be careful where you look!

Confrontation and repentance

Did the great King get away with it? No, God saw it all and was deeply displeased. He sent Nathan the prophet to confront David with a story of two men; one rich with many flocks of sheep; one poor with only a little pet lamb. A guest arrived at the rich man's house. The rich man took the poor man's pet lamb and killed it instead of killing one of his many lambs.

When King David heard the story, he became furious. He had become so insensitive to his own sins that he didn't recognize he was the villain in the story. Nathan had to tell him, "You are that rich man!" The enormity of what he had done hit him. He cried out: "I have sinned against the Lord." Nathan quickly assured him that God forgave him, but his sins would bring terrible irreversible consequences. (Read 2 Samuel 11, 12) You reap what you sow.

A way of escape

David didn't have to sin. Did you know that God always provides a way of escape from temptation? "*And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it.*" (1 Corinthians 10:13, NLT) Read David's story again. How many times did God provide avenues of escape for King David when he was tempted? What different choices should he have made? The next time you are tempted to sin, how will you apply the lessons learned from King David?

Attitude Check:

- When has your attitude been so hardened toward something you are doing that you refuse to recognize it as sin?

Explore:

- Read "Turn from Your Sins" (in the front of *Student New Testament*) and "Beware of the Sins of the Heart." (Matthew 5:27-30)
- Read David's story in 2 Samuel, chapters 11 and 12 and Psalm 51.
- Write in your journal lessons you learned from King David and one new characteristic you learned about God.

Talking with God:

- Father, reveal anything in my thoughts, words or actions that displease you. Remind me to look for ways of escape when I am tempted.