

Lesson 15

Sin

What is sin? Sin is an offense against God. When we sin, we damage our relationships with God and others. Sin is not just the bad things that we do. It is also those things that we should do but don't. It can include the thoughts that we think, the words that we utter and the attitudes that we have. Sin is essentially doing what we want to do when we want to do it rather than doing what God would have us do. It is important to understand that sin comes from the heart.

Where does sin come from? Genesis 3 is very clear that sin and death entered the world through Adam and Eve's choice to disobey God's command. The story in Genesis 3 tells how sin entered the world through disobedience and how the sin of Adam and Eve is passed down from generation to generation. This sin of Adam and Eve is known as Original Sin.

Original Sin is the sin inherited by all humankind from Adam in his disobedience of God's command not to eat from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. This event is often referred to as "the fall of man" since Adam's choice to disobey God's command is a fall from grace. God created Adam in His image and likeness and saw that he was good; therefore, Adam was created with an original grace and holiness.

Original Sin is not a committed sin, but rather a contracted sin. Unlike all other sins, which are acts of one's own personal sin, it is a state of the soul, representing the fallen nature that was handed on to us by Adam and Eve.



Sin not only has personal consequences on one's own soul, but collective consequences that damage all souls. Original Sin forever changed humanity by allowing sin to enter the world. Sin is rooted in our preference for ourselves over God. Through Original Sin humanity took on a fallen nature, one that is incomplete without Jesus' saving work on the cross.

Who sins? The Bible is clear that we all sin, with the exception of Jesus and his mother, Mary. Every human being sins and falls short of the glory of God. It is important to remember that we are sinners in need of a Savior; this is why we need to accept the Jesus' gift of the cross.

What are the consequences of sin? The Bible states that God hates sin. God is perfect and without sin. He has never sinned, and He is so pure that He cannot live with people and be in relationships with people who do sin. This is called God's Holiness. God wants us to be holy as He is Holy. God wants us to avoid sin and to seek His forgiveness when we fail. Our sin has consequences because it ruptures our relationship with God and others. Sin can separate us from God and others. Sin can destroy our reputations or the reputations of others. God has created a place for people who sin and continue in their sin. This place is called Hell and it is where the people who reject God will live forever without Him.

What is the solution for sin? There is a solution to our sin problem and it is the cross of Jesus Christ. God knew that we would sin, and He knew that someone would have to pay the price for that sin. God also loves us very much. So, He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to earth as a man to die in our place and pay the penalty we deserve for our sin. Hence, it is through the Paschal Mystery (*the Passion, Death, and Resurrection*) of Jesus that sin and death are destroyed and we are able to enter into Heaven.



The sins which we commit generally fall into one of two categories: Mortal or Venial. Mortal sin destroys our relationship with God because it displays a conscious and total rejection of God. Mortal sins are also called grave sins. Mortal sin is serious sin that destroys the divine power of love in our heart. Mortal sin cuts a person off from God. All mortal sins must be confessed in the Sacrament of Reconciliation to be forgiven.

When the rejection of God is not so total or serious, we commit what is known as a venial sin. Venial sins rupture (*but do not totally destroy*) our relationship with God. However, the more venial sins that we commit, the easier it is to fall into greater sin or to develop a pattern of sin. Continually committing venial sins gets us in the habit of saying “no” to God and this habit can quickly lead us to mortal sin.

Three conditions must be present for a mortal sin to occur. If all three of the conditions are not present in the particular case, then the sin is venial rather than mortal. For a sin to be mortal, **ALL THREE** of the following conditions must be met:

- 1. The object (or nature) of the sin must be of grave (or serious) matter.**
- 2. The person must have full knowledge of the sin.**
- 3. The person must deliberately and freely choose to consent to the sin.**

Sin is not a laundry list of dos and don'ts. Sin is the attitude and resultant action that separates us from God and each other; it is the epitome of selfishness and a state into which we all regularly fall.



There are several sins that are so dangerous that they are referred to as “the Seven Deadly Sins.” The deadly sins are also known as the “capital sins” or “cardinal sins.” The Seven Deadly Sins are the following: Lust, Gluttony, Greed, Sloth, Wrath, Envy, and Pride.

The Seven Deadly Sins are extremely dangerous because they lead to a behavior, pattern, or lifestyle of sin that roots itself within our spiritual lives. Once a deadly sin gets entangled in your life, it is very difficult to remove. In short, the deadly sins The Roman Catholic Church distinguishes between vice, which is a habit of sin, and the sin itself, which is an individual morally wrong act. Sin deprives one of God's sanctifying grace and renders one deserving of God's punishment.

Virtues can help us in the fight against sin. A virtue is an interior disposition, a positive habit, and a passion that has been placed at the service of the greater good. Virtues are like habits: they need to be practiced to be perfected.



The following information gives the definition of each deadly sin (*in red*) and the virtue which opposes it (*in blue*):

1. **Lust is an uncontrollable passion or longing, especially for sexual desires.**
Chastity or self-control cures lust by controlling passion and using that energy for the good of others.
2. **Gluttony is an excessive ongoing consumption of food or drink.**
Temperance cures gluttony by implanting the desire to be healthy, therefore making one fit to serve others.
3. **Greed is an excessive pursuit of material possessions.**
Charity cures greed by putting the desire to help others above storing up treasure for one's self.
4. **Sloth is an excessive laziness or the failure to act and utilize one's own talents.**
Diligence or zeal cures slothfulness by placing the interest of others above a life of ease and relaxation.
5. **Wrath is an uncontrollable anger and hate towards another person.**
Patience cures wrath by allowing one to first understanding the needs and desires of others before acting or speaking.
6. **Envy is the intense desire to have an item or experience that someone else possesses.**
Kindness cures envy by placing the desire to help others above the need to supersede them.
7. **Pride is an excessive view of one's self without regard for others.**
Humility cures pride by removing one's ego and boastfulness, therefore allowing the attitude of service.



The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments were given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai. They give us God's laws of love which free us from sin. God wrote them on two stone tablets. The First Tablet contains the first three commandments which teach us how to relate with God. The Second Tablet contains the other seven commandments which teach us how to relate with each other. When we violate love, we offend God since God is Love. Therefore, the Ten Commandments are a great tool in our spiritual lives since by following them we stay on the path to heaven.

There is more to the Ten Commandments than meets the eye. Each Commandment presents an overall theme which includes a multitude of sins. In other words, The Ten Commandments are like an umbrella that covers all sins. This is why the Ten Commandments are a great guide to use when making an examination of conscience. For when we live out the Ten commandments, we live in a true spirit of love.

The First Commandment: I am the Lord your God: you shall not have strange gods before me.

This Commandment requires us to adore, worship, and honor the Trinity (*God Himself*). It prohibits us from committing the following sins:

Idolatry (<i>the worship of other gods</i>)	Horoscopes
Sacrilege (<i>desecration of holy objects</i>)	Fortune-Telling
Atheism (<i>Do not believe in God</i>)	Sorcery
Agnosticism (<i>Do not know if there is a God</i>)	Satanic Cults
Lack of Faith, Hope, and Charity	Superstition
Simony (<i>buying and selling of spiritual powers or offices</i>)	

The Second Commandment: You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

This Commandment requires us to honor the Holy Name of God, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the saints. It also commands us to honor oaths we take invoking God's Name. This Commandment prohibits us from committing the following sins:

Blasphemy (*act of contempt or lack of reverence for God*)
Swearing
Cursing
False Oaths

The Third Commandment: Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.

This Commandment requires Catholics to attend Mass on Sundays and on Holy Days of Obligation. It also commands us to abstain from unnecessary work on Sundays. This Commandment prohibits us from committing the following sins:

Deliberately Missing Sunday Mass
Deliberately Missing Mass on Holy Days of Obligation
Performing Unnecessary Work on Sundays

The Fourth Commandment: Honor your father and mother.

This Commandment requires children to respect and obey their parents and those in legitimate positions of authority over them. It also commands all to respect, honor, and obey all Church and civil authorities, whose power originates in God. This Commandment prohibits us from committing the following sins:

Disobedience
Disrespect
Dishonoring Parents

The Fifth Commandment: You shall not kill.

This Commandment requires us to respect the lives of others and our own, honoring our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit. It prohibits us from committing the following sins:

Murder	Abortion
Suicide	Seeking Revenge
Sterilization	Mutilations
Kidnapping	Gluttony
Illegal Drug Use	Drunkenness
Anger	Hatred
War	Euthanasia (<i>Mercy Killing</i>)



The Sixth Commandment: You shall not commit adultery.

This Commandment requires us to use our sexual powers correctly according to our state in life. It prohibits us from committing the following sins:

Adultery	Fornication
Masturbation	Premarital Sex
Living Together	Contraception
Pornography	In Vitro Fertilization
Homosexual Acts	Prostitution
Rape	Incest
Child Molestation	Polygamy (<i>having more than one spouse at a time</i>)

The Seventh Commandment: You shall not steal.

This Commandment requires us to respect the belongings of others, to be good stewards of creation, and to have a special care and concern for the poor and needy. It prohibits us from committing the following sins:

Stealing	Robbery
Cheating	Breaking Contracts
Excessive Gambling	Keeping Borrowed Property
Charging Unfair Interest Rates	Fraud
Destruction of Property	Avoiding Payment of Debts
Bribes	

The Eighth Commandment: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

This Commandment requires us to speak the truth. It prohibits us from committing the following sins:

Lying	Gossip
Spreading Rumors	Perjury (<i>lie under oath</i>)
Rash Judgments	Bragging
Mockery	Bullying
Defamation of Character	
Detraction (<i>disclosing the faults or sins of another to a person who does not need to know them</i>)	
Calumny (<i>telling lies that will harm another person's reputation</i>)	
Duplicity (<i>practice of exhibiting different conduct at different times in relation to the same thing</i>)	
Dissimulation (<i>using false pretense with others</i>)	

The Ninth Commandment: You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

This Commandment requires us to purify our hearts, to control our eyes, and to dress modestly. It prohibits us from committing the following sins:

Lustful Desires	Lustful Thoughts	Immodest Dress
-----------------	------------------	----------------

The Tenth Commandment: You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

This Commandment requires us to respect the property of others, avoiding attachments to objects, and infatuations with material goods. It prohibits us from committing the following sins:

Envy
Materialism