

What is sin?

Sin is often defined by behavior that breaks a law like breaking a law in society (i.e. stealing from a store, driving over the speed limit, etc.). What does the Bible really say?

1. Carefully observe the last commandment of the Ten Commandments. What does “covet” mean? Consider using a Bible dictionary!

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s.” (Ex 20:17, NKJV)

2. When Jesus refers to the tenth commandment, what does He make a point of saying?

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (Matt 5:27-28, NKJV)

3. What do realize about sin? By what standard is sin determined by?

What is sin? Teacher Notes

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Inform the student: when in doubt of what a word means, use a Bible dictionary. There are many Bible dictionaries online such as the Holman Bible Dictionary. It’s worthwhile to be aware of other dictionary titles, because not all will have the word you’re looking for or provide a definition that is easy to understand.

Instruct the student: take out your phones and do the following:

Search: Studylight holman

Select: Browse by letter: 'A' - Holman Bible Dictionary

From alphabetical index: select “c”

Go to page 5 and select: Covet, Covetous

Ask the student: what does “covet” mean?

The inordinate desire to possess what belongs to another, usually tangible things.

Ask the student: what is God saying with the Tenth Commandment?

God is saying not to desire another person’s possessions or spouse. God does not simply command what not to do, but His negative imperative also commands one what not to wish, desire, nor long for. Thus, when God says, “you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deut 6:5), He is also informing what one should desire as, in this case, it reflects one’s true love of God or not.

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Ask the student: what does Jesus reveal about sin? Take some time to explore your observations.

Jesus explicitly states that desiring something against God’s law is the same as actually breaking the law. Sin is not simply based on evil behavior but the evil desire that motivated it.

3. Is it bad to have a desire? What makes a desire evil? By what standard is sin determined by?

Ask the student: is the desire for God evil? How do you know what is sinful or not?

God’s word teaches us what desires and behaviors make us holy before God. This is why constant Bible study is important. Be holy as God is holy (Lev 11:45; 1 Pet 1:14-16).