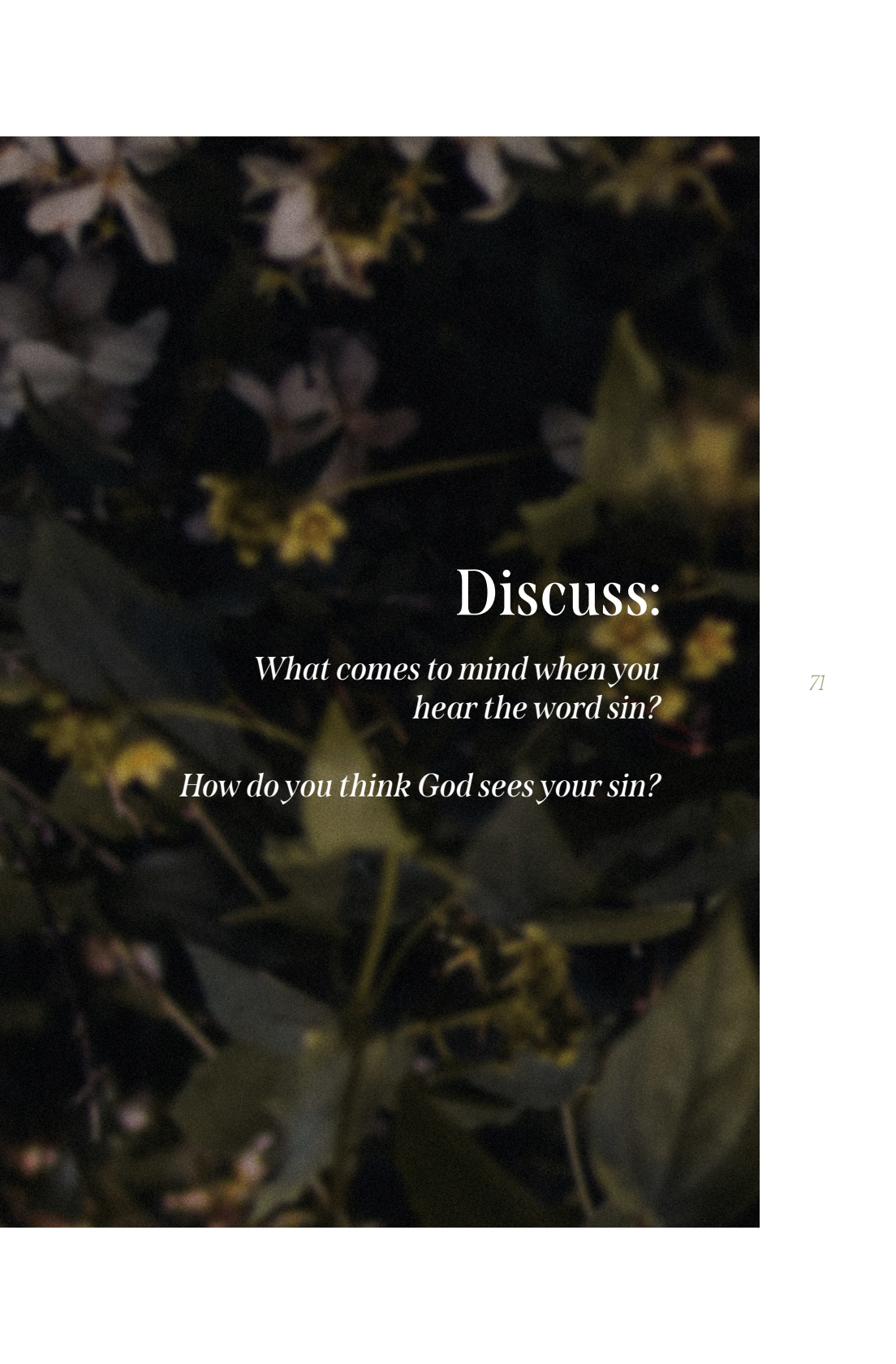


09

Sin

*If I'm a new person in Christ, why do I
still struggle with my old junk?*



Discuss:

*What comes to mind when you
hear the word sin?*

How do you think God sees your sin?

As we learn to walk with God, we need to be reminded of a few things. When Christ died for us, He took our sins upon Himself and made us clean in God's sight. We were made a new creation and moved from death to life, darkness to light. Despite this reality, we still struggle with sin. Though we have been brought to the light, we live in a world covered by darkness and that can make daily life difficult. Your old way of life will draw and entice you. Even though you are a new creature, opportunities to sin will still abound. Sadly, there will be times where you give into that sin. In light of this, there are a few more truths we need to grasp.

When we received Christ, sin lost its power over us. Once enslaved to it, we have now been set free. Yet, despite our freedom, our old life still strangely allures us. Paul describes this disturbing reality in Romans 7:15-25.

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Romans 7:15-25

¹⁵ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸ For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

²¹ So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³ but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

As Christians, Christ lives in us, but so do our old desires. The Spirit indwells us enabling us to kill our old self and walk in our new reality. However, the old you does not want to die and will fight your attempts to kill it. This is the struggle Paul laments. By choosing Christ, you are waging war against your former self and the kingdom of darkness you used to call home. While this battle will at times be difficult, we are fighting a war that has already been won. We are Christ's and He has conquered sin and death. No longer enslaved, these battles are now merely a part of the process of us becoming more like Christ and our joining His mission to reach our world.

74 In light of this overarching victory, we try to diminish the gravity of the sin in our lives. In the end, you make the choice to sin – no matter how you try to rationalize it or cover it up. Sin is a big deal: you are betraying the God who bought you with His blood. When you choose sin, it grieves God's Spirit inside of you for sin deeply matters to God. God hates sin. To sin is to run back to the chains that He died to set you free from. It is you choosing another—the god of self, security, approval, pleasure—over your loving Father who wants what is best for His child. Sometimes the choice to do things God's way entails pushing away seemingly “better” or more desirable things. However, God knows you and knows that those other things you desire are not beneficial to you. In fact, your pursuit of those sinful desires is akin to you dabbling with things that reek of death. You have been given life; playing with dead things at this point is gross and kind of disturbing.

In another picture, there's a phenomenon that happens on beaches that causes over 100 drownings every year in the United States. Under certain conditions, a powerful rip current is created near the shore that is able to pull people under a wave and carry them into deep water. One minute you're wading along peacefully in the surf, the next you're being dragged out to sea. Since the surface of the water often has a calmer appearance, you probably won't even notice a rip current until you're right in the middle of it. Like these currents, sin can seem innocent and harmless on the surface. God, however, knows the ultimate outcome of these sinful desires: the sin that at first seems harmless will eventually overtake you. Before you know it, you are dangerously miles away from where you want to be.

If we pursue sin, the Holy Spirit will convict us. In that moment, we can choose to ignore Him or submit to Him. If we choose to ignore Him, we hinder our relationship with Him. Remember, this doesn't affect our salvation. We were bought by the blood of Christ. Sin, however, does affect our walk with God. If you are continually choosing to live apart from what God desires for you, your relationship with Him will become distanced. As sin numbs you, your purpose and focus will change. You'll begin to care less and less about the things of God, and self will once again take the center stage.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:13

Fortunately, God knows our struggles. Hebrews says that Christ was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. When Christ gave us new life, He infused us with the power to defeat the temptations of our former nature. This verse in 1 Corinthians promises that God will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able to handle. Temptations will still come, but we no longer have to yield to them. The Holy Spirit now lives inside of us – giving us strength to resist temptation when it rears its ugly head. Next time you are tempted, ask God for strength. He promised to provide a way of escape. Defeat does not have to be our fate. That being said, if we choose not to take the way out, all is not lost. Even in our biggest sins, God's grace remains. If anything, our failure reminds us of our need for the gospel.

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Read 1 John 1:5- 2:2, Proverbs 28:13

In 1 John, we see the promise that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us of them. His grace is limitless and His love is never ending. However, in order to experience this forgiveness, we have to bring our sins to Him. When we sin, returning to God might be the last thing we want to do. We might instead feel the desire to distance ourselves from God until we clean up our act. Alternatively, we might try to pretend nothing is wrong in order to cover up our sin. We sin and then try to hide and conceal our disobedience.

Adam and Eve did this when they committed the first sin ever. We do this today. The problem with this is that it fixes nothing. Until we face our sin, our relationship with God cannot move forward. God knows when we sin and He has already given us grace.

Christ died for the sins you committed in the past, are committing currently, and will commit in the future. However, we can't experience this grace until we confront our sins and return to our relationship with Him. God desires us to bring our sin into the light, own where we failed, and return to His love. If you confess your sins, know that you are forgiven and that your sins have been removed "as far from us as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12)." Through Christ, they are remembered no more.

ACTION STEPS:

Read Genesis 3:1-13 and Genesis 4:1-10

These two passages give the stories of some of the first sins ever committed. As you read them, pay attention to two things:

- 1. How does God react and relate to the humans following their sin?
- 2. What is the human's initial response to God following their sin

Now ask yourself, how do you relate to Adam and Eve and Cain in how you respond to God when you sin?

Write out how you are most prone to sin. Where are you most tempted?

Reflect on situations where you were tempted: Where did God provide a way out?

Answer for yourself, “Why is sin a bad thing?”

Sometimes we feel trapped by sin and debilitated by shame. What does the gospel say about this?



Write out your sins on a separate piece of paper. Allow this to be a time of confession to God. Now, look up 1 John 1:9 and write this verse over your sins; Reflect over the forgiveness the verse offers and then tear up the piece of paper. Know that your sins are remembered no more and God is working to change your heart and your desires.

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