

This Is How We Know: Sin
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Lynn Haven UMC

Introduction

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us. My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 1:8-2:2 NIV)

There are so many ways we can get trapped in the tragedy of a life filled with sin. We may have even become so accustomed to our behavior that we are living in ignorance of its sinfulness. And why would this be a surprise when everywhere we look our society seems to be shouting, “Everything is okay as long as you’re happy!” This mentality must certainly please the devil who wants us to live an easy, carefree existence so we never have to rely on God at all. This week we will talk about how we know these things are sin and what we (with God’s help) can do about it.

Digging Deeper

The Problem: Self-DECEPTION

- “We human beings have an almost limitless capacity to deceive ourselves...Sin may not be our biggest problem. I’m beginning to think our biggest problem is the way we deceive ourselves about sin.” (J.D. Walt, *This Is How We Know*; page 5) As flawed and broken people, we can justify a lot of things if we don’t want to stop doing them, can’t we? Think about your daily life and the things you say and do (or don’t say and do!) on a regular basis. Is there anything that might constitute sinful behavior, but because you have become habitually numb to it, you don’t recognize it as sinful at all? This is how we know sin – it hides itself through self-deception.

The Proper Response: Self-AWARENESS

- Read Romans 6:23. What do you think he means when Paul says, “For the wages of sin is death?” Sin can kill us in many ways. Don’t allow yourself to be deceived, it is dangerous and destructive; it kills us relationally, and sometimes physically, and always spiritually. How have you been damaged as a result of a recognized sin? We all know that sin separates us from God. To right that wrong, Jesus paid the ultimate price for our restored relationship with our Heavenly Father. As we marvel in the magnitude of this truth, we can only give thanks and constantly strive to sin no more. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9 NIV)
- No matter how far we’ve wandered away from God, one simple act restores us into fellowship: confession. It’s a simple step, but one that many are hesitant to take. Do you find confessing wrong-doing to be cathartic or catastrophic? With whom do you feel most comfortable sharing your “not so shiny” side? When we release those things that are dragging us down, we are freeing ourselves up for a closer relationship and dependency on God. So if there are things in your life that are preventing a closeness with God, lay them at the feet of Jesus, for He is mighty to save.

The Prevention: Self-CONTROL

- Have you ever called upon the power of the Holy Spirit to help you avoid doing something you knew was wrong? If we do this consistently, we discover that He is empowering us to overcome the desire to do or say whatever conflicts with what we know to be true of God's Word. We might use a simple example of laziness. We know we should make time every day to be in His Word. But we are too busy, too tired, too...whatever. As one of our pastors likes to jokingly say, "I'm sure glad Jesus wasn't too busy that day He died for us on the cross!" Point being, we make time for what is important to us. Exercising self-control develops a spiritual muscle that we can use to fight off the temptations that the evil one will surely throw in our path. In this way, self-control becomes Spirit-control and enables us to "live as Jesus did." (see 1 John 2:6)

Conclusion

We sometimes lie to ourselves about our sin because it feels good or it helps us stay in our comfortable boxes. We recognize the need to call ourselves onto the carpet by confessing them in order to live a life with, and for, Jesus Christ. We must rely on the powerful gift of the Holy Spirit that resides in each of us to resist the worldly temptations that serve as barriers to such a life. And when we accomplish these things, this is how we will know we are His.