

The Conflict

What is one of your favorite movies? In that story, what are the conflicts to overcome?
For example: Star Wars - the Dark Side (sinful nature); Darth Vader (greed, selfish ambition)
Lord of the Rings - the Ring (power, selfishness); The Dark Knight - the Joker (vengeance, breaking one's own rule).

Stories include conflict. How a character faces and resolves conflict determines his story.
In God's story there is only 1 major conflict. Not mankind. Not you. Not me. Not them. But SIN.
In the book of Genesis, the Bible starts off with God's Creation of everything and then describes the conflict - Man's Fall from paradise. The rest of the Bible and human history has continued that story which is now about Restoration, God's offer of resolution and reconciliation in order to provide redemption to you and me.

restoration - the act or process of returning something to its original condition by repairing it, cleaning it, etc.

resolution - the act of finding an answer or solution to a conflict.

reconciliation - the act of causing two people or groups to become friendly again after an argument or disagreement.

redemption - the act of saving people from sin and evil.

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What do you believe sin does to our story? What does sin do to our relationship with God?
Isaiah 59:1-2



Is sin God's conflict or ours? The verse reads "our iniquities." No matter what form of sin or who it involves the ultimate end result is the same: we separate ourselves from God & others.
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Do you know anyone who has no sin in their story?
Romans 3:23 - sin is the conflict in everybody's story.
Has everyone committed the same sins or the same amount of sins or the same degree of sins?
Does it matter? What is the ultimate result of all sin?

Two General Categories of Sin:

- *Sins of omission* - omitting God's commands. **James 4:17** "Anyone then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins."
- *Sins of commission* - committing sinful acts **Galatians 5:19,21** "All acts of the sinful nature are obvious...those who live like this will not inherit the Kingdom of God."

We are about to read two lists of sins. As we read these terms we want to emphasize not merely what sin is but also its ramifications on your story and others. The purpose of looking at sin in such a specific way is not to evoke shame but instead to create awareness and promote personal responsibility in our story. We cannot receive redemption for a conflict we are not aware of.

| Galatians 5:19-21 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious... | Mark 7:20-22 From within, out of men's hearts come... |
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| sexual immorality: sex outside of a marriage; fornication; adultery; same sex sexual acts, etc. | evil thoughts: all sin starts in our minds "...if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things" Philippians 4:8b |
| impurity: choosing to entertain unclean thoughts; lusting; pornography; etc. | sexual immorality: sex outside of marriage relationship. This includes adultery; fornication; sexual acts with people of the same sex, etc. |
| debauchery: eagerness for lustful pleasure; gluttonous living; general immoral living | theft: stealing, cheating, dishonest acquisition |
| idolatry: worshiping and/or prioritizing things and people more than God. | murder: taking the life of another. This includes abortion - taking the life of an unborn child. |
| witchcraft: sorcery; contacting spirits outside of God. | adultery: sexual relations outside of one's marriage. |
| hatred: lack of love; lack of forgiveness; bitterness; strong dislike; racism | greed: selfish living; materialism, not giving to meet others needs - especially needs of the poor and needy. |
| discord: quarreling; strife; anger in the heart; allowing conflicts to go unresolved; slow to forgive. | malice: the spiteful desire to want others to suffer. |
| jealousy: sinful competition and rivalry towards others. | deceit: misleading people; lying; lack of full integrity. |
| fits of rage: having outbursts of anger; not controlling one's emotions. | lewdness: obscene, indecent, inappropriate sexual content, speech and/or behavior. |
| selfish ambition: promoting self and living selfishly rather than living for God and others. | envy: discontentment when one notices the blessings of others; coveting. |
| dissensions: promoting sinful divisions rather than unity. | slander: spreading false and/or harmful statements to others about others. |
| factions: separatists groups that promote false doctrines and divisions instead of seeking unity. | arrogance: overweening pride, which makes people think they are "almost always right." |
| envy: discontentment when one notices the blessings of others; coveting | folly: foolish decision making and living. |
| drunkenness: being intoxicated; getting high; illegal drug use. | ...all these evils come from inside and make a man "unclean." |
| orgies: attending and/or participating in group sexual activity; sexual parties or gatherings. | |
| ...and the like, I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. | |

Do you have the strength or ability to overcome all of the sins that have been in your story so far? Is your conscience enough to help fight the inner conflict of your sinful nature?

Galatians 5:16-18

The Holy Spirit is the director of God’s work on earth. That same Spirit works in men to accomplish the will of God. We require supernatural strength to fight a supernatural battle. We need an eternal power in order to fight an eternal battle.

Based on the descriptions of sin reviewed above, consider how either of the following definitions could be applied to specific sins:

- sin - taking control of something that belongs to God.
- sin - harms our relationship with God, with others, and with ourselves.
- hamartia* (original Greek) - to miss the mark.

If sin is “missing the mark” then it is essential to consider what the opposite (i.e. “hitting the mark”) would entail when reviewing the nature and consequences of any sin in our story.

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Exercise before our next talk:

Take an inventory of your life by writing a “sin list” or “life journal” so that you can see specifically what separates you from God. As we shared with you some of the sins from our life story, next time you will have the opportunity to share with us what you recall from your story, so please bring your list with you. Use the definitions from **Galatians 5:19-21** & **Mark 7:20-22** to assist you. More examples of sins are found in **2 Timothy 3:1-5**. One option is to go through the lists sin by sin or another approach is to write out a sin chronology going as far back as you can. This exercise is not intended to shame you but inform you. It is difficult to value the gift of forgiveness when you are not clear what is being forgiven. Or in terms of story, it’s difficult to move towards a new chapter if you are not clear about where your story is now. Also to consider: examples of how you have been effected by the sins of someone else. What were the consequences? For example, being abused, lied to, cheated on, taken advantage of, etc.

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Today’s conversation about sin was a heavy topic, but there is an incredible hope in what God offers us in our conflict of sin. The verse we are about to read reveals a clear turning point in a person’s life: one’s story before Jesus and then with Jesus.

1 Peter 2:9-10

| <u>before Jesus</u> | <u>after Jesus</u> |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| not a people | a people of God |
| no mercy | mercy |
| darkness | light |

What is God offering to His chosen people?

At this point in your story, do you want to learn more about God’s people and His wonderful light? Over the next few conversations, we will look at God’s plan to bring us into His light.