



Study Guide #4: A Man and His Demons

Have You Ever Sinned?

I know ... silly question. However, if we are going to live lives that glorify God, it is important for us to understand the depths of this issue and how it applies to us as men. I want to strongly encourage you to take the time to look up and read every passage of Scripture mentioned in this study - even if it isn't part of the actual question you have to answer.

You see, God's Word (every part of it) is "living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). It's God's Word - not mine or yours - that will truly impact your heart.

Read Romans 5:12 and Ecclesiastes 7:20.

The fact is, we battle with temptation to sin every day of our lives. And yes, I do mean battle. Just read Ephesians 6:10-18, Galatians 5:17 and Romans 7:15-25!

We read, "there is no one who does good, not even one" (Psalm 14:3 cp 14:1; 53:1, 3; and Romans 3:12). Scripture is declaring that there is no one who is capable of producing that which is excellent in God's eyes. Completely on our own, left to ourselves, we will sin - every time, all the time.

To be the man of God we long to be, and that God has called us to be, we must understand this issue of sin. Until we grasp what it is, why it is, and how to defeat it, we will not be able to fulfill our purpose in life and build a godly life on that solid foundation we talked about in Lesson #2.

So let's begin by asking a simple, yet very complex question.

QUESTION: What is sin (see 1 John 5:17; 3:4)?

Depending on which version or translation of the Bible you read, the word "sin" appears a lot (388 times in the KJV, 394 times in the NASB, 398 times in the ESV, and 430 times in the NIV). No matter how you slice it, God has a lot to say about sin.

We just read, "all wrongdoing is sin" (1 John 5:17). There are many different standards today of what is right and what is wrong. If all wrongdoing is sin, then we must ask, "wrongdoing according to whom?" Who sets the absolute, across-the-board standards

that everyone must follow? After all, it stands to reason that if we cannot identify the whom, we will never be able to identify the what. Who has the right standards and what are they?

Read the following passages: 1 Samuel 2:10; Psalm 9:7-8; 96:10, 13; 98:9; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Philippians 2:9-11 and 2 Corinthians 5:10.

In the grand scheme of things, it is more important to know what God says sin is than what you or I think sin is. In the end, I will not stand before you in the judgment, nor will you stand before me. Together we will stand before the Almighty, Most Holy God and answer to Him for all our wrongdoings (as well as our right-doings). Ultimately, then, what matters is the definition of right and wrong that God has given in His Word, and our obedience to it (Matthew 7:24-27).

What Then Is Sin?

In both the Hebrew and Greek languages, the word "sin" means a failure to hit the mark because of disobedience.

It's important to realize that this is not a passive thing. In other words, it's not simply "missing" a mark. Sin is not trying to please God but failing from time to time. Rather, it is not hitting a specific mark because you have intentionally chosen to aim at a different one. We sin when we choose to honor self instead of God.

We sin when we choose to do what we want to do instead of obeying God. We sin when we choose to put self on the throne instead of glorifying our Creator, Savior and Master in everything we think, say and do every moment of every day. We sin because we have decided to do what we want to do, be what we want to be, and live how we want to live.

QUESTION: Name at least 5 specific sins you can think of.

QUESTION: How do we know if something is a sin or not?

QUESTION: Now look at your list of 5 sins. Why is it a sin? (for example, if you wrote "lying," why is lying a sin? NOTE: "because God said so" is too shallow of an answer ... where in the Bible does God say so?)

Did you ever stop to consider that the central figure in sin is "I"? Just look at the word: "s ... I ...n!" Sin is sin because we have put self on the throne. Sin is sin because we have de-godded God (I know, not a word - but hopefully you get the point). We sin when we swing our puny little fist in the face of the Almighty and say "If you don't see things my way, if you don't do things the way I think they should be done, I'll forget you and become my own god!"

Now most of the time we don't literally shake our fist at God. In fact, we don't even openly defy Him. However, every time we put self first, that is exactly what we are doing.

QUESTION: Below are written out some very powerful verses. Read each one carefully and prayerfully. Under each verse, comment on what that verse is saying to you - make this personal; let each verse speak truth into your heart. How does it apply to you?

- *"For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice"* (James 3:16).

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- *"Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment" (Proverbs 18:1).*

- *"What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions" (James 4:1-3).*

- *"For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned" (Romans 12:3).*

- *"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).*

- *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:3-5 cp. Matthew 20:28).*

- *"In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in Heaven" (Matthew 5:16).*

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- *"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends"* (John 15:13).

- *"He must increase, but I must decrease"* (John 3:30).

Here are a few more verses I strongly encourage you to read and meditate upon: Psalm 119:36; Luke 16:13; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 13:1-13; Ephesians 4:29-32; 5:25 and Philippians 3:12-14.

QUESTION: Please take a moment and summarize what you have learned from studying these passages.

Unfortunately our world at large rejects the whole concept of sin (just watch TV for while and you'll see what I mean). Because they reject sin, they have no true understanding as to why they are the way they are. Everything today is considered to be a "lifestyle choice."

It's no wonder that we, as Christian men, struggle so much with living godly lives, when the world's wicked philosophy is all around us, permeating almost everything we see and hear, and thus influencing how we think and behave.

QUESTION: List some examples of how the world's philosophy is attempting to influence what you think and how you behave (include the methods as well as the message).

QUESTION: Think this next question through before answering - why do you give in to sin?

Read Hebrews 11:25.

Let's face it; sin is pleasurable, as well as easy, effortless, and even comfortable. For example, it can feel good to explode in anger. Two people have an adulterous relationship because it feels good. A person may gossip or backbite to feel better about self. We give in to sin simply because we enjoy it. It's all about King

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Me!

I remember being taught as a child the old adage, "What you feed grows!" It's just like scratching a mosquito bite. The more you scratch, the more it itches. The more you scratch, the bigger it gets. The more you scratch, the more irritated it becomes and eventually turns into an open, festering wound. The more we sin, the more our flesh wants that forbidden pleasure and the larger the problem becomes. The solution to not irritating that "mosquito bite" is to stop scratching - stop giving in.

This next question is really personal. So, if you're anything like me, you probably will be strongly tempted to just skip over it and move on. "I'm not about to write my answer down for the rest of the world to see!" May I strongly encourage you to pick up your pen and write out your answer? We need this to stare us in the face. We need to physically see the real issues we struggle with. Ready?

QUESTION: What sin(s) do you tend to give in to (be completely honest here)?

QUESTION: Now look at the list you just wrote down. For each item you listed, answer this: why is that a sin (remember - since sin is the transgression of God's law, give Scripture to support your answer)?

My Sin:	Why it's sin:	Scripture Support:

QUESTION: From the list of sins & verses you just wrote, select at least one Scripture verse to commit to memory. Share it with your accountability partner and ask him to hold you accountable to this.

QUESTION: Look again at the list above. For each item, answer this: understanding that this is sin, what am I going to do about it (note: not what should I do)? And, when am I going to do this?

My Sin:	What I'm going to do about it:	When I'm going to do it:

Show this to someone you respect and trust, and ask them to hold you accountable to this.

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QUESTION: According to James 1:14, what is the lure that draws you away toward sin?

QUESTION: Think again about the list of sins you wrote above. As you consider that list, what is it you like so much, or want so badly, that you are willing to sin to get it or keep it?

Take a close look at your answer to that question. If you answered honestly, you just identified your particular lure.

We are lured; we are drawn away by "our own evil desires." In other words, there is a particular lust or craving you have for sinful pleasure and you allow yourself to think about how to satisfy it. It begins as a tickle in the back of your mind. Your thought process considers it, weighing out the pros and cons, the risks vs. the pleasure it promises. Then, as that thought gains momentum (getting a stronghold), it creates within you a desire to put that thought into action. Like the fish, you cautiously play around with the lure. When nothing "bad" happens, you selfishly suck it in and try to speed off without getting caught. When you do ... **WHAM!**

QUESTION: Why do we tend to flirt around with sin?

QUESTION: Explain the role your mind plays in your specific sin struggle(s).

When we entertain wrong thoughts, those thoughts will eventually produce wrong actions. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7 KJV). "As water reflects the face, so one's life reflects the heart" (Proverbs 27:19). In other words, what we think will become what we do. James is telling us that we sin because we see the lure of some type of ungodly pleasure, it entices (appeals to) us, we think about it, and the result is that we commit a sinful act, which in turn separates us from God.

QUESTION: Too often we get bogged down in trying to figure out how to have victory over our issues of lust, pornography and masturbation. If we focused our attention and energy on growing in our relationship with God, what would be the result? Why is this true?

MOTIVATING ORDINARY MEN TOWARD THE ULTIMATE MISSION

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QUESTION: 1 Corinthians 10:31 says that in the midst of your battle against sin in your life, "God is faithful." How does God show His faithfulness to you when you are tempted?

QUESTION: Why does God even allow temptation?

QUESTION: Is temptation sin? If not, when does temptation become sin?

QUESTION: How should you respond to temptation (give Scripture to support your answer)?

QUESTION: Read Colossians 3:2. What steps are you going to take to keep your mind always focused on God? (share your response with your accountability partner)