

TRUTH FOR THE WORLD
Bible Question and Answer Booklet

SIN

QUESTION: What is sin?

ANSWER: Sin is a transgression (breaking or violation) of the law (I John 3:4). All unrighteousness is sin (I John 5:17). To know to do good and not do it is sin (James 4:17). When one conducts himself so that he violates the Word of God, he sins. It may be a deed done, or it may be something left undone.

Sin causes spiritual death (Ephesians 2:1), which is separation from God (Isaiah 59:1-2). It must be removed in order for the sinner to be (saved) reconciled to God (II Corinthians 5:20). Christ shed His blood in order that our sins might be (removed) washed away (Revelation 1:5). Many passages tell us what we must do in order to be washed in His blood! See Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; I Peter 3:21.

QUESTION: Can someone who is born again still sin?

ANSWER: Yes! In writing to Christians, the apostle John wrote, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (I John 1:8). There are those who have interpreted I John 3:9 to contradict what was said in the first chapter. This passage in the King James Version says, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." This passage with consideration to the original language reads, "Whosoever is born of God doth not (keep on) commit(ing) sin, for his seed (God's Word - Luke 8:11) remaineth in him: and he cannot (continue to live in) sin, because he is born of God." Thus, we see the harmony and agreement between the first and third chapters of 1st John!

QUESTION: Does God forgive the worst type of sin - child molesting?

ANSWER: God can and will forgive any sin of which one truly repents! Jesus said in Matthew 12:31, "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men . . ." He has even forgiven those who murdered His only begotten Son (Acts 2:36-41). Beyond this, He has made a covenant with the penitent obedient, "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 19:16-22).

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QUESTION: The Bible teaches that a child does not inherit the sin of its parents (Ezekiel 18: 20). In other places it seems like the Bible teaches that God does punish a child for the sin of the parents. Which is right?

ANSWER: In Ezekiel 18:20, it is clear that a person dies spiritually (is separated from God - Isaiah 59:1-2) for their own sins. This means that the son will not die spiritually because of the father's sin; nor will the father die spiritually because of the son's sin. This, however, does not mean that the son will not experience the effect of his father's sin. Often this is the case. For example, a father may spend all of his living on alcoholic beverages rather than buying food for his children. The father is guilty of sin! Though the children are not guilty of the father's sin, they certainly suffer as a result of his sin. It is, therefore, the father of the children (not God) who causes the suffering, because he has violated God's laws by using alcohol and by not providing for his family. The suffering of the children then is a natural result of the father's sin. This is the meaning of such phrases as "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children" found in Exodus 20:5 and 34:7.

QUESTION: Is masturbation sin?

ANSWER: Masturbation is a stimulation of the sexual organs. Such stimulation, whether personal or reciprocal, as a prelude to sexual intercourse between a husband and his wife would not be considered sin. However, such stimulation for the purposes of self-gratification invariably stems from, and includes, immoral thoughts. This would, indeed, be sinful! The following passages of scripture are violated in this activity: Proverbs 4:23, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life;" Proverbs 23:7, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he;" Matthew 5:28, "But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart;" Matthew 15:19, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies;" Philippians 4:7-8, "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just; whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." The temptation to engage in the subject activity can be thwarted by obedience to this scripture!

Remember too, I Corinthians 10:13, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not permit you to be tempted above that ye are able to bear; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it." God has clearly provided a way of escape from this sinful activity: I Corinthians 7:2, "Nevertheless to avoid fornications, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." There is also an applicable principle in I Corinthians 7:9, "But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn."

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QUESTION: In light of Genesis 1:27; 9:7 (Be ye fruitful and multiply), is it right to use contraceptives and family planning?

ANSWER: We ought not to read more into these passages than was intended. Given the fact that at the time these words were spoken to the first couple and to Noah and his sons, there were two people and eight people, respectively, in the whole earth. God is simply commanding them to populate the earth. Certainly, He is not commanding all couples everywhere for all time to produce the maximum number of children within their physical capabilities, as some Catholics have been led to believe. There is no prohibition in these passages, or anywhere else in the Bible, against birth control. Conversely, in I Timothy 5:8, it is clearly implied that our families should be no larger than the number for which we are capable of providing. If one unwisely permits his family to become so large that he cannot make proper provisions "for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." Surely, then, included in this implication we can see and understand the principle of family planning. Nonetheless, that family planning is not to include abstinence, at least for extended periods, is made clear by the reason given in I Corinthians 7:1-5, i.e., to avoid fornication! Exclusive of abstinence, the remaining alternatives to having more children than those for which we can provide are: sexual relations only during the female's non-fertile period, withdrawal by the male, or the use of contraceptives. Some (the Catholic Church) would hold that the first of these remaining alternatives is scriptural; the others are not. However, there is no basis for such theology, since it can be logically and sensibly concluded that each of these alternatives is indicative of birth control and family planning. It can also be correctly noted that none of them are legislated against in the Word of God! We must conclude then, since we are not permitted to have more children than the number for which we can provide and we are not permitted long periods of abstention, that one of the remaining alternatives must be selected. There is no other choice! That selection is not to be mandated by any, but is to be made by each married couple!

QUESTION: Is it sinful to drink alcohol and use tobacco?

ANSWER: Yes! Please read Proverbs 23:29-35; Isaiah 5:11; Habakkuk 4:2; I Corinthians 6:9-11; and Galatians 5:19-21. In addition to the clear teaching of these passages, also consider the fact that the partaking of alcoholic beverages (in any amount) lowers one's resistance to temptation and, further, that those who do so, very often yield to all sorts of ungodly sins. How can one who drinks alcohol pray (as all have been commanded to do) that they will not be led into temptation (Matthew 6:13)? To do so would be to make a mockery of God and His word! The apostle Paul in I Corinthians 6:19 states that, as Christians, we are not our own; that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, belonging to Him! It follows then that to introduce any substance of harm (such as drugs, alcohol or tobacco) into that which houses the Holy Spirit would be inappropriate. As well, such activity in one's body certainly does not glorify God and would, therefore, be a violation of I Corinthians 6:20.

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QUESTION: Is it good to stay with sinners? I stay with my brothers who use abusive language and go to prostitutes. What can I do? Can I stay with them?

ANSWER: It is very important that we always try to convert those with whom we have to do in this life. However, this failing, we need to be acutely aware that any situation in which we find ourselves, which would cause us to compromise our Christianity in any way is wrong and must be avoided. Paul said, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial (Satan)? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore, come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Corinthians 6:14-18).

QUESTION: Why do we fall into temptation?

ANSWER: John tells us that "all that is in this world, is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." So, as long as we are in this world, we will be tempted by these things. This does not mean, however, that we must fall into sin as a result of these temptations. James says (1:12-15), "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man: But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Jesus Himself "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15), but when tempted by the devil in Matthew, chapter four, Jesus overcame it by use of the Word of God. You and I can do the same today as we live according to the Bible, looking for the fulfillment of it's precious promises!

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QUESTION: Is it sinful to be cremated?

ANSWER: There is nothing in the Bible that teaches that cremation is wrong or sinful. Clearly, after death we will return to dust (Genesis 3:19). Whether we return to dust under normal conditions or through the chosen accelerated process of cremation matters not at all. Many have not chosen to be cremated, but have been nonetheless consumed by fire! Some have died at sea and been devoured by fish and other creatures! Some have been devoured by wild land animals! No matter how our bodies are disposed of at death, God will reunite the elements that now make up our bodies with our spirits at the resurrection on the day of judgment (John 5:28-29; I Corinthians 15; II Corinthians 5:1-4).

QUESTION: Where will those who mock Jesus be in eternity?

ANSWER: Those who mock Jesus obviously reject Him through their mockery. All who reject Christ in disobedience to His gospel will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power (II Thessalonians 1:7-9).

QUESTION: Should a Christian dance socially?

ANSWER: No! In Galatians 5:19-21, we find listed the "works of the flesh." Those who engage in any of these will not inherit the kingdom of God (vs.21). One of the "works of the flesh" is described as "lasciviousness" (vs.19). This word is defined as: an expression of lust; tending to excite lustful desires; unchaste handling of males and females; and indecent bodily movements. Surely, these definitions are vividly descriptive of the "social" dance. Those who engage in such cannot inherit the kingdom of God!

QUESTION: Should a Christian play music like "disco" and "blues?"

ANSWER: Music is not wrong of itself. However, if that music is so composed (whether through the "beat" or the "words") to cause one to have impure thoughts and feelings, then it is sinful and must be avoided (Galatians 5:19-21; Philipians 4:8)!

QUESTION: I owe people money, but I am not able to pay it back. What should I do?

ANSWER: Certainly, the Bible is clear that we are to pay our debts (Romans 13:8). When we do not, the result is sin, of which we must repent, if we would be right with God. The situation that causes you to say you are "not able to pay it back" needs to be discussed with those whom you owe to work out possible arrangements whereby the debt could be satisfied. If you do not have the money to give your creditors as agreed, perhaps you could make arrangements to do so over an extended period. Possibly the payback could come through the surrendering of personal belongings, or physical labor in exchange for the debt.

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All avenues for satisfying your debts must be pursued, because true repentance will always involve restoration when restoration is possible. There are cases in which restoration following repentance cannot be made. For example, in the taking of life, one may be truly penitent, but certainly life cannot be restored. However, such instances are extremely rare.

QUESTION: When a person is diseased does it mean he has sinned?

ANSWER: No! Please study Luke 13: 1-5. Here, Jesus said, that these particular Galileans did not suffer persecution because of their sins. In John 9:1-3, the man was born blind, but not because he or his parents had sinned. Disease may come as a consequence of sin (cancer from the use of tobacco; venereal disease from illicit sex), but not as a penalty of sin. The penalty for sin is separation from God and eternal loss, a penalty that can only be avoided through obedience to God. The consequences of sin cannot be avoided, but will remain to be experienced!

QUESTION: (A) Is it true that God has put aside certain people who no longer trust Him? (B) If so, does God direct these people to speak certain things about His kingdom?

ANSWER: (A) Yes! It is true. Read carefully Romans 1:18-32. Here we read about some who completely abandoned God. They refused to glorify Him, becoming vain in their imaginations (vs.21). They turned from Him to idols (vs.23) and became unclean through the lusts of their own hearts (vs.24). They changed His truth into a lie (vs.25). They engaged in unlawful and disgusting sexual activities (vss. 26-27). They refused to retain Him in their knowledge (vs.28). They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness (vss.29-32). Upon their total abandonment of God, we learn that He gave them up (vss.24-26). In verse twenty-eight, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, i.e., a mind void of judgment!

(B) God does not direct those He has given up to speak things about His kingdom. In fact, God does not directly tell anyone what to do or say today! All directions from God today come only through His Word, the Bible. In Hebrews 1:2, we learn that God "hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." This excludes everyone else, since only the words of Christ, as contained in the Bible, will judge us in the last day (John 12:48). The Gospel is His power unto salvation (Romans 1:16)! It alone can make one perfect or complete (II Timothy 3:16). No man can add to it, neither can any take away from it (Revelation 22:18-19). Any man today claiming that God (or any heavenly being) talks to him directly is either untruthful or experiencing mental problems.

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QUESTION: What do you understand about the division of sins?

ANSWER: I am uncertain as to the thrust of the question. Sin, however, is a transgression of the law (I John 3:4) and if one fails to repent (Acts 17:30-31) of one sin, he is guilty of all (James 2:8-13). Man seemingly always attempts to make one sin worse than another. Although this may be true as we consider the consequences of sin in this life, the sin of taking a brother to law (I Corinthians 6:1-8) is just as eternally damning as murder (Galatians 5:19-21), unless the sinner repents. As well, the sin of murder is just as forgivable by God (II Samuel 12:13) as the sin of willfully forsaking the assembly of the saints! Until haughty man, himself a sinner, learns to forgive others as does God, neither can he be forgiven (Ephesians 4:32).

QUESTION: How will people be able to support their families if, when becoming Christians, they must leave sinful businesses, such as, beer brewing, dealing in stolen goods, prostitution, etc.?

ANSWER: It is clear from God's Word that any who would become a Christian must first repent of all sin in which they have been engaged (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30-31). This means they must get out of the sin. No matter what it is, they must leave it behind! Certainly, at times, there are difficulties involved, but each individual must deal as best he can with his own situation, while putting his trust in God that He will do what He says! Speaking of the necessities of this life (food and clothing), Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all of these things will be added unto you." David, by inspiration, said in Psalms 37:25, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor His seed begging bread." There is no doubt that if we do our part (II Thessalonians 3:10), God will do His! We can stand on His promises, because His promises never fail (Titus 1:2; I Peter 1:3-4)!

QUESTION: What does the Bible teach about destructive devices that we are truly ashamed of, but can't seem to give up? (Smoking, drinking, cussing, etc.)

ANSWER: Friend, you need to realize that you have already taken a giant step in overcoming these vices! You have come to know that these things are against the will of God; that they are destructive to both body and soul. In fact you state that you are ashamed of being involved with them. Many people never recover from these things simply because they refuse to accept what you have already come to realize!

These things are often very hard to give up, because of the pleasure that can be experienced by doing them. The Bible tells us that there is pleasure in sin. In Hebrews 11:24-26, the writer says this about Moses: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures

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of Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of reward." What Moses did sets a great example for us today! He considered and compared the pleasures of sin in this life with the reward that would be is, if he would only be faithful to his God. The same must have been true of Abraham, because it is said of him in verse ten, that "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." What really helps us then to overcome these things is to compare the long-term value of spiritual matters with the short-term value of physical matters! Are cigarettes, booze, and cursing to be chosen above an eternity in that city whose builder and maker is God? The choice becomes even more significant when we consider eternity if we make the wrong choice! Now the choice becomes an eternity in a beautiful place called heaven versus cigarettes, booze, cursing, poor health, and an eternity of punishment!

As you continue to study God's Word; as you accept His will, your faith will deepen (Romans 10:17) and your resolve to overcome these things will be strengthened. Let me encourage you to fight with all of your being! James said in chapter four, verse eight, "resist the devil and he will flee from you." Listen to what the apostle Paul to the children of God in Corinth: "There hath no temptation taken you but such is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not permit you to be tempted above that ye are able to bear, but will with the temptation make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Corinthians 10:13). Many faithful people have fought and won the battle that you face! You can do it, too! You have our prayers!

QUESTION: Is it wrong to play pool?

ANSWER: Pool playing of itself is not sinful. Many times, however, pool tables are located in places where a person could not go without compromising his or her Christianity (II Corinthians 6:14-18). This, of course, would be sinful. As well, to use this or any other game as a means of gambling would be wrong. All gambling is sin (including lotteries, raffles, and religiously sponsored bingo games)! It is addictive and has often destroyed loving relationships and homes (I Timothy 5:8). It is also indicative of one without Christian character and principles, whose covetous intent it is to get something for which he has not labored at the expense of others (Genesis 3:19; Acts 20:34-35; Ephesians 4:28; Ephesians 5:3).

QUESTION: Is it a sin for a seventeen-year-old boy to have a girl friend?

ANSWER: As long as the boy and the girl conduct themselves as Christians at all times, both in public and private places, it is not sinful. Both should understand, however, that "petting" or any other illicit activity designed to incite or satisfy unlawful lusts is wrong (Galatians 5:19-23; Philippians 4:8)! Christians are to at all times to be found "pure in heart" (Matthew 5:8)!

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QUESTION: If a brother is disfellowshipped should he be allowed to place membership in other congregations without repentance? What should the attitude of other congregations be toward him?

ANSWER: If a person has been scripturally disfellowshipped, the action and attitude of all Christians everywhere toward this one should be identical. The action described in Romans 16:17; I Corinthians 5:9-11; II Thessalonians 3:6-14; and Titus 3:10 is applicable to, and binding upon all! The attitude described in I Corinthians 5:5-8 and II Thessalonians 3:15 is applicable to, and binding upon all!

Those whose actions and attitudes differ from those defined in the above passages (no matter the congregation) need to be called to repentance. Upon refusal to do so, they too become subjects for scriptural church discipline!

QUESTION: Is it right for a Christian to watch television or listen to the radio?

ANSWER: It is not sinful to watch television and listen to the radio provided that the time spent is not excessive and what is watched and heard is not sinful. Does it cause you to have evil thoughts; to focus on evil things rather than that which is good? If so, it is wrong and should not be engaged in (Philippians 4:8). As well, faithful Christians will be careful how they use their time (Ephesians 5:15-16).