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The Hearts of Man

Key Themes

- God judges sin.
- God provides salvation from sin through Jesus.

Key Passages

- Romans 3:6, 5:12, 4:8, 6:5, 8:21; Jeremiah 17:9;
Romans 3:10–11, 3:23; John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5:17, 5:21

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Recognize that all men are sinners through the sin of Adam.
- Recognize that Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sins.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Write on the board, “Is it wise to follow your heart?”

Assign each of the following 10 verses to students to look up and mark with bookmarks: Genesis 3:6, Romans 5:12, Genesis 4:8, Genesis 6:5, Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 3:10–11, Romans 3:23, John 3:16, 2 Corinthians 5:17, and 2 Corinthians 5:21.



Studying God’s Word

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Since the very first sin of Adam in the garden, all people are born into sin. We inherited this sin nature from Adam, whom God accounted as the representative of the human race. Our sin deserves death and eternal separation from God. But in His grace and mercy God has provided forgiveness through Jesus Christ—the perfect sacrifice.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.

- Print one Man’s Wickedness/God’s Mercy answer key for your use.



Activity: What Would You REALLY Like to Do?

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Students discuss mankind’s inclination toward sin by deciding how their peers would really want to respond to several real-life situations.

- Print one copy of the What Would You REALLY Like to Do? situation cards from the Resource DVD-ROM. Cut the cards apart. Students will read and discuss them during class.



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

To prepare your heart and mind for this week's lesson, read Genesis 4:16–26; Jeremiah 17:7–10; Psalm 51:1–6; John 3:16–21.

We saw the effects of sin begin to ravage the world and its culture in the children of Adam and Eve. The first murder occurred when Cain killed his brother Abel out of greed, jealousy, selfishness, and hatred. The Bible tells us that evil company corrupts good habits (1 Corinthians 15:33), and it appears Cain was quick to influence those around him with the evil in his heart.

The Bible tells us of Lamech—the fifth generation from Cain. His heart was corrupted and we know that he took two wives (Genesis 4:19) in rebellion to God's ordinance of marriage (Genesis 2:24). We read how he speaks with seeming pride of another murder—this one he committed (Genesis 4:23). As the moral fiber decayed from generation to generation we can only imagine what the Lord saw as He looked upon the earth. For He was grieved in His heart that He had made people and knew that He must destroy them (Genesis 6:5–7).

And what does the Lord see today? More sin, evil, and corruption. Since Adam and Eve disobeyed God and were sent from the garden, their sin nature has been passed on to all humans. The Bible states that death spread to all men through the sin of Adam (Romans 5:12). In Adam all die—because of sin. But in Christ all shall be made alive (1 Corinthians 15:22).

As descendants of Adam and Eve, we have all inherited a sin nature. David knew that he was conceived in sin—an inheritance from Adam (Psalm 51:5). And Jeremiah reminds us that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). Our sin demands judgment by a holy God. Jesus tells us that judgment is coming. Speaking of the final judgment, He warns that just like it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man (Luke 17:26). He is coming to judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with His truth (Psalm 96:13).

So what are we to do? We know that our God—

our holy, jealous God—is a consuming fire who will not tolerate our loyalty, love, honor, and respect being placed anywhere else (Deuteronomy 4:23–24). He is intolerant of sin, and we are all sinners (Romans 3:23).

“But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57). For God had always known that He would send “His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Through Him alone are we brought from darkness into light and from the power of Satan to God. Through Jesus our Savior we receive forgiveness of our sins and the inheritance of eternity with Him (Acts 26:18).

APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

Man has always suffered from a self-centered arrogance that bristles at the very thought of being sinful at heart. Many truly believe that humans are inherently good and that it is unthinkable that we are born into sin. Couple this thinking with the self-esteem rhetoric that maintains we are great—we better know it, believe it, and be very impressed by it. We can see that we are raising a generation that can't fathom they are deceitful and wicked—that their hearts desire only to rebel against God (Jeremiah 17:9).

We tell our children to follow their hearts. Whatever they imagine they can do, they can. Their dreams are theirs if they only wish for them. Whatever they feel in their heart is OK, and they must pursue their heart's desire. However, this is not what God's Word tells us. We are leading our children astray with this type of teaching. Our feelings cannot lead our decisions. Our hearts are fickle and wicked. Our lives should be directed by Scripture alone. The Word of God will direct us in all righteousness. The righteousness of His testimonies is everlasting—with understanding in these, we shall live (Psalm 119:144).

Without a proper understanding of the depth of the sin in our hearts, how can we properly rejoice at the forgiveness that is ours through Christ? If our sin

is minor or inconsequential in our eyes, what would make us turn from it and accept the free gift of forgiveness and salvation from God? If we long for the pleasures of our heart and pursue those desires without considering God's Word, how would we make Him the Lord and King of our lives? With our own needs and comforts so much in view, how would we ever be able to properly humble ourselves before God to plead His mercy and forgiveness? Do you see? The very gospel is at stake when we consider the self-esteem-building philosophy so many are buying into.

The Apostle Paul sums it up well this way: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells" (Romans 7:18). We are sinners. Our righteousness is like filthy rags before the Lord (Isaiah 64:6). And it is only through humble repentance and belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ (Mark 1:15) that we will escape the judgment and condemnation for our sins.

But the good news is that God promises a new heart for those who trust in Christ and thereby become partakers of the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:33–34; Hebrews 8:6–12). We become new creations in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), and can walk in newness of life, no longer living as slaves to sin (Romans 6:1–7).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

It wasn't long after creation that sin entered the world. Adam and Eve coveted what they could not have and in direct disobedience to God went after it. God's judgment came upon them in the form of a curse, and they were expelled from the garden (Genesis 3:24). Their fellowship with God was broken. Now sin would be a part of the human race.

We know that "those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:8) and that in our sin we are lawless, insubordinate, ungodly, unholy, profane, murderers, manslayers, fornicators, sodomites, kidnapers, liars, and perjurers (1 Timothy 1:9–10). With this in mind, it is not surprising that, just 1,600 years after Adam and Eve were sent from the presence of God, He once again had to judge the sin of the world. This time it

was a worldwide Flood that would destroy all but Noah and his family (Genesis 6:13, 6:18). Sin continued to pervade the lives of the people.

It was just more than 100 years after God destroyed the world that His judgment fell at Babel. The people were disobedient to God's direct commands and desired to build themselves a city and a tower to the heavens. They longed to make a great name for themselves (Genesis 11:4). These plans angered the holy God and He judged them by confusing their language and scattering the people across the face of all the earth (Genesis 11:7–8).

And man continues to sin. God is now withholding His full judgment on the unjust—but it will come (2 Peter 2:9–11). He is coming to judge the earth in righteousness (Psalm 98:9). His judgment is real and eternal, and will come by fire. "But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (2 Peter 3:7). But thanks be to God that we can escape God's wrath and judgment through faith in Christ (Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:9).

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

My Redeemer and Savior, I give you praise today as I remember how you have washed my wicked and deceitful heart clean and made me a new creation. You alone are worthy of praise. May you be glorified as I teach this concept to my class this week. Please help these students realize the truth that they are sinners and wicked by nature but you are gracious and merciful and have provided a way of forgiveness and eternal life through Jesus Christ.

► **Pace your lesson!** You can use the provided clocks to indicate the time each section should be completed to keep the lesson on schedule. While teaching, you can compare your anticipated times with the actual time and shorten or drop sections as necessary.



Review

- ? Last week we looked at the first murder in the world. Cain murdered his brother Abel out of jealousy and despite a direct warning from God to master his sin.
- ? What did we learn about the sacrifices of Cain and Abel and how that applies to our lives? *Abel's sacrifice was from his firstfruits and offered in faith, making it acceptable to God. God is pleased with our offerings made in humility, recognizing that we are simply giving back to Him what He has already provided for us.*
- ? Today will be our last lesson focusing on the Corruption that entered the world as

Adam rebelled against God. We have seen how Satan deceived Eve and how Adam willfully disobeyed to God. We know that the corruption has spread to the entire creation and that someday that curse will be removed as God restores the fallen world to its original perfect state.

- ? In this lesson, we will be turning the focus to mankind in general and to a closer look at how sin impacts each one of us.



➤ Write on the board, "Is it wise to follow your heart?"

➤ Assign each of the following 10 verses to a student to look up and mark with a bookmark: Genesis 3:6, Romans 5:12, Genesis 4:8, Genesis 6:5, Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 3:10–11, Romans 3:23, John 3:16, 2 Corinthians 5:17, and 2 Corinthians 5:21.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

Today we are going to read and study using your Student Guides. *Be sure each student has a pencil. If you haven't already done so, assign students to read each Scripture as the class progresses. Students will fill in the blanks as the lesson progresses. You can use the answer key from the Resource DVD-ROM to help facilitate the class more efficiently.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

We are going to be talking about sin—how sin came into the world, how it affects our hearts, and what God has done for us.

Observe the Text

Today we will be looking at quite a few verses. I have already assigned readers for each verse. As we read through all of these verses, we are going to ask questions about them and then fill in the blanks in our Student Guides. What we are doing here is observing the text by asking questions about it. Then, when we fill in the blanks, we are repeating what the Scripture says in our own words. This helps us to get a better understanding of what each Scripture says. All of these verses relate to the same topic—sin. And they are found all through the Bible. *Refer to the Bible Study poster to review the principles of proper Bible study.*

Would my first volunteer read Genesis 3:6? *Student reads.*

- ? Who is this verse taking about? *Adam and Eve.*

Genesis 3:6

Right, this is about Adam and Eve in the very beginning. This is the very first sin—they disobeyed God by eating the fruit God had commanded them not to eat. *Have students fill in the words “sin” and “disobeyed” under Genesis 3:6.*

Next reader, please read Romans 5:12. *Student reads.*

Romans 5:12

- ? What type of literature is the book of Romans? *It is an epistle—a letter of instruction from Paul to the Christians in Rome.*
- ? How did sin enter the world? *Through one man’s sin.*
- ? Who was that man? Look at number 1 for a hint. *Adam.*
- ? What was the result of that sin? *Death to all men. All men sin. Have students fill in the words “One,” “Adam,” “all,” and “all.”*

Let’s move on to Genesis 4:8—number 3 in your workbook. *Student reads.*

Genesis 4:8

- ? Who is this verse about? *Cain and Abel.*
- ? Whose children were Cain and Abel? We’ve talked about that in previous lessons. *Adam and Eve’s children.*
- ? What is this verse telling us about? *The first murder. Cain killed Abel. Have students fill in the words “murder,” “anger,” “greed,” “jealousy,” and “sinful.”*

Now onto number 4—Genesis 6:5. *Volunteer reads.*

Genesis 6:5

- ? What does this verse tell us about the people on earth? *The wickedness was great; their thoughts were evil. Have students fill in the words “wicked,” “heart,” “evil,” and “sinful” for Genesis 6:5.*

Discover the Truth

- ? So what is God making clear to us in all of these verses so far? *Man is sinful.*
- ? And when did sin enter the world? *In the beginning—with Adam and Eve.*

All of this is the basis for the inherited sin nature that we refer to as original sin. Some people misunderstand that term to refer to Adam’s first sin, but what is actually meant by that term is that every person is born with a sin nature that causes us to rebel against God—even from birth.

Sin entered the world through Adam and Eve, and since then all men are born sinners. *Refer to the Seven C’s Timeline as you discuss when the first sin entered the world—it was the very beginning.*



Original Sin:

Every individual is born with a sinful nature through Adam’s sin

READ THE WORD

But some people don’t like that message at all! They don’t want to hear that they are sinners. They think they are good—and that their hearts will always direct them to what they should be doing. That is not what the Bible says. Let’s see what God has to say about our hearts.

EXAMINE THE WORD

We are going to go on to number five in your workbooks.

Next reader, please read Jeremiah 17:9. *Volunteer reads.*

Jeremiah 17:9

Observe the Text

? What is this saying about our hearts? *They are deceitful and wicked.*

Yes. Our natural hearts are deceitful. That means we can't be trusted to do the right thing on our own. And we are wicked—we want to sin; we don't want to do what is right. Left to ourselves, we would rather do what is wrong. *Have students fill in the words "wicked," "deceitful," and "sinful."*

Romans 3:10–11

Let's read Romans 3:10–11. *Volunteer reads.*

? Who is righteous or good? *No one.*

? Who understands and seeks after God? *No one.*

That's right. Because our hearts are wicked, we cannot seek after God, understand Him, or do good. *Have students fill in the words "righteous," "good," "seeks," and "sinful."*

Romans 3:23

OK. Let's move on to number 7. *Volunteer reads.*

? So, who can tell me what this means in your own words? *Everyone sins. Have students fill in the words "all" and "sinners."*

Discover the Truth

? What is the message here? It is pretty clear. *Man is sinful. We are all sinners.*

That's right. We are all sinners. This is not good news!

? What does God think of sin? *He hates it.*

? And why does He hate it? Look at our Attributes of God poster and tell me what it is about God that makes Him hate sin. *He is holy and just. Refer to the poster. Have students read the definitions off of the poster.*

? Now look back in your workbook to number 2. What did sin bring to all men? *Death.*

That's right. And that doesn't just mean that we all die one day—although that is part of it. But it means that because of sin, we cannot get to God. We are separated from God by our sin; and our sin demands God's judgment—eternal life without Him in hell. God must judge every sin we commit. And that judgment is death.



HOLY
JUST



What Would You REALLY Like to Do?

MATERIALS

- What Would You REALLY Like to Do? situation cards, cut apart

INSTRUCTIONS

Pass out the What Would You REALLY Like to Do? situation cards. Have the students read each real-life situation and the two possible responses. Have the class discuss what the likely response would be—what the people in the situations would REALLY like to do. The point is that unbelievers would all really like to do the thing that pleases them the most.

I have six real-life situations here that many of you may have faced. I need six volunteers to read the cards. Each card has two different responses to the situation. I want you to read the entire card and we'll discuss how the person would REALLY like to respond. *Assign six students to read the cards, and discuss each one briefly.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Do you see? If we are really honest, we have to admit that in all of these situations, the first response of the people would be to do what they really want to do—what would be the most fun.

? What does this tell us about our natural hearts and behavior? *Allow for answers.*

It tells us that people will usually respond in a way that suits them. We would all naturally rather do what we want to do—not what we know we should do. That's because we are all born with a sin nature. It is very difficult for people to do the right thing. Unbelievers want to have fun and often that means sinning against God.

Our hearts are naturally wicked, just like the Bible says.



READ THE WORD

It seems like things just keep getting worse, doesn't it? Sin entered the world at the very beginning and we are still sinners. We don't want to do what we know we should do and we want to do what we know we should not do! And we know that God must punish every sin we commit! He hates our sin. So, where does that leave us? It doesn't look good—but let's find out.

EXAMINE THE WORD

Back to the workbook and on to number 8.

I need my next volunteer to read John 3:16. *Volunteer reads.*

John 3:16

Observe the Text

- ? Who is this verse about? There are three different answers. *God, Jesus, believers.*
- ? What did God do? *Gave His only Son, Jesus.*
- ? Why did He do that? *He loves His children. Refer to the Attributes of God poster.*

LOVE

? What did the Son, Jesus, do for the believers? *Provided a way for eternal life so they would not perish.*

? Why would we perish? Think about what we have been talking about all morning. Look at your workbook. *We are all sinners.*

God gave His Son, Jesus, so that those who believe in Him would have everlasting life and not perish because of their sins. *Have students fill in the words "Jesus, believe, Him, everlasting."*

2 Corinthians 5:17

Please read 2 Corinthians 5:17—number 9 in the workbook. *Volunteer reads.*

? First of all, someone tell me what it is we all do? It was passed on to us from Adam. *Sin.*

? That's right. We all sin. But what does this verse say about "old things"—our sin nature? *It will pass away.*

? How does it pass away? *Through Christ.*

? And what happens when we are in Christ? *We become a new creation.*

Yes—a Christian is a new creation. And as a new creation, what he wants begins to change. God gives us new hearts, and with His power we can begin to have victory over sin. We don't really want to sin against God anymore. We want to do what God wants us to do. But we can't begin to change without Jesus Christ, because we are sinners and not able to do good on our own.

Through Jesus Christ our hearts can be made new. *Have students fill in the words "Jesus Christ" and "new."*

2 Corinthians 5:21

Let's read 2 Corinthians 5:21—number 10 in your workbook. *Volunteer reads.*

? Who is this verse talking about? *Allow for answers.*

Let's see. It says "He made Him" doesn't it? That refers to God (He) made Jesus (Him). So this verse is saying that God made Jesus to be sin for us so that we might be made righteous before God.

? Who knows what it means that we might be made righteous? *Allow for answers.*

It means that Jesus, even though He never sinned, was punished for all the sins of His people. In other words, in order to show His love for us, God treated Jesus as though He were a sinner—but He never sinned!

Jesus died in the place of His people to pay the penalty of the sins of believers. When He did that, He was offering forgiveness to all who would repent of their sins, believe in Him, and trust Him. There are no works we can do to get this forgiveness. But we must understand that our sins anger God, and we must trust in Jesus. The forgiveness God offers through Jesus is given completely because of what Jesus did when He died on the Cross. *Have students fill in the words "Jesus Christ," "punishment," "forgiven," and "saved."*

Discover the Truth

- ? Do you see the same message coming clear in these verses like before?
What is it? *Allow for answers.*

Even though we are wicked sinners and God hates sin, He showed amazing love and mercy to us by sending Jesus Christ to earth. Jesus never sinned—not ever. Jesus came to suffer and die so that whoever would repent and believe in Him would have everlasting life. We can be saved through Jesus Christ alone.

- ? Through Jesus, God shows amazing mercy and love. Will someone read from the Attributes of God poster what we mean when we say God is merciful? *Kindness to those in misery; withholds deserved punishment.*

- ? And someone read what we mean when we say that God is love. *Always wants what is best for His children.*

God is merciful in that He shows kindness to us as sinners. As sinners we are in misery. We may not know it, but we are because sin keeps us from God. And sin will finally lead to punishment in hell unless we repent and accept the free gift of forgiveness that God offers in Jesus Christ, who took our punishment on the Cross.

God shows so much love in Jesus Christ. He wants what is best for His children. And the very best thing God can give a person is to make him a child of God. Because of Jesus's suffering and because of our faith in Him, our sins are forgiven and we will one day live in heaven forever with Him!



MERCIFUL
LOVE



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

Well, we started off with some pretty bad news today. Sin entered the world at the very beginning—in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. This sin nature passed to all people through Adam. All men sin and are disobedient to God. This is just the way our hearts naturally are—deceitful and wicked. The Bible confirms that truth in many places.

I'd like to read from your Student Guides to review what we've learned. *Assign students to read the explanation or main idea statements for numbers 1–7 in their Student Guides.*

The fact that we are all sinners seems like very bad news, doesn't it? Yet, there is really good news. God sent His only Son, Jesus, into the world, so that whoever believes in Him can have a relationship with God. Jesus's

sacrifice on the Cross paid the penalty of death for everyone who will repent and believe in Him. Without Jesus, we would all be separated from God. But through true repentance and faith in Jesus, we can have everlasting fellowship with God and eternal life.

To review what God has done for us, let's read the main point statements from your Student Guides. *Assign students to read the main point statements for 8, 9, and 10 in the Student Guides.*

I'd like you to share the information we discussed today with your family. It is bad news about our sinful natures . . . but great news about God's love and mercy in Jesus Christ!

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

I said earlier that people just don't want to hear that their hearts are wicked. The world teaches us something completely different. When it comes to our hearts, we sure hear a different message.

We often hear that it is OK to just follow our hearts wherever they lead. We are told that we can do anything our hearts desire and we must do that in order to be really happy! But this is not what the Bible teaches.

The Bible teaches that if we are left to ourselves we will always sin against God. We must not let our hearts lead us but we must let the Word of God lead us. The Bible tells us that it is only through Jesus Christ that our hearts can be made new and right. If we follow our hearts where we want to go, without the guidance of God's Word, we will get into trouble. So we must stand on God's Word and live according to His Word—knowing that without Jesus Christ, our hearts can never lead us in the right direction.



MEMORY VERSE

Genesis 2:15–17 Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Praise God for providing salvation from sin through Jesus.
- Recognize that we all sin because by nature our hearts are wicked.
- Pray that God would bring an understanding of our sin and His holiness—an understanding that will bring true repentance to our hearts.