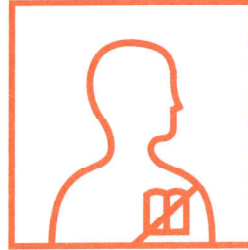


## Question 16

# What is sin?



## Answer

Sin is rejecting or ignoring God in the world he created, not being or doing what he requires in his law.

### Big Idea

Sin is rejecting or ignoring God's moral law and rebelling against him.

### Aim

To help the children understand what sin is and how it affects their relationship with God.

### Bible Passage

1 John 3:4–10

### Memory Verse

“Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.” (1 John 3:4)

### Virtue

Forgiveness



**Notes****Leader's Notes**

The concept of sin is increasingly foreign in today's world. God is consistently erased from society, and life now seems to happen without any reference to his existence. The Western world generally buys into the belief that children are inherently good and are gradually corrupted by external influences. Original sin is an alien doctrine to those both inside and outside the church.

This question will encourage the children to investigate the doctrine of sin and to more fully understand the devastating effects of sin on God's creation. The children will more fully appreciate the fact that everything in the world is tainted by sin and deepen their understanding of the significance and beauty of the sacrificial, atoning death of Jesus on the cross.

Things to remember when planning and teaching:

- The children may be familiar with the concept of sin and mistakenly believe that they have nothing more to learn.
- Some children may feel heavily burdened by their personal sin; leaders must therefore communicate with wisdom, gentleness, and grace.
- The children will need encouragement to grasp the fact that humanity can never deal with the problem of sin without God's intervention.
- Remember to mix and match the activities in the lesson to fit your time frame (see p. 12 for some sample outlines). You won't have time to do them all. Feel free to adapt each activity based on your class's strengths and weaknesses.

**Leader's Prayer**

Gracious God, please forgive me for sinning against you. Thank you that you sent Jesus to deal with my lawlessness. Please help me to put to death my sinful desires and live a life that is glorifying to you. Please grant

understanding to the children who hear this lesson. May they be acutely aware of their need for forgiveness and rejoice in the forgiveness that Jesus alone offers through his death on the cross. In Jesus's name. Amen.

**Leader's Tool Kit**

- Q16 Catechism Recap (DL)
- Newspapers suitable for children to look at
- Duct tape
- Permanent marker
- Markers or pens
- Paper
- Scissors
- Either a guest to share a testimony or a video testimony



## 10 Catechism Recap

*Print out every question and answer from one to fifteen (Q16 Catechism Recap [DL]). Print the question on one sheet of paper and the answer on another. Print out one full set of the questions and answers for each group of children.*

Divide the children into two groups. Place a pile of mixed-up questions and answers for each team at one side of the room—there

should be thirty sheets of paper for each team. Each team should stand opposite their pile of paper on the other side of the room. The team members should take turns running up to collect a piece of paper and bringing it back to their team. The team that collects all the pieces of paper and correctly matches each question and answer is the winner. Make it a race! Keep the task lighthearted and fun for all.

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## 8 Introduction to Question 16

*Have plenty of newspapers available to give the children.*

Divide the children into groups and give each group a newspaper. Ask the children to identify something from the news that they might describe as lawless (you may need to ascertain if they understand what *lawlessness* is).

Introduce Question 16 to the children: “What is sin?” Explain to the children that sin is described in today’s Bible passage as lawlessness. Most people think of bad criminals when they think of lawless people, people who break laws established by the governments. Highlight for the children that Question 16 will facilitate a big examination of the doctrine of sin.

## 10 Activity

*Set up a jumping game by placing two lines of tape on the floor. Make sure the lines are a good distance apart. The idea is that the children will not be able to reach the mark. Write Romans 3:23 on the tape that the children are trying to jump to.*

Have the children stand along one line; make sure the line is long enough to accommodate all the children in the group or else divide the children into smaller groups.

Invite the children to jump from one line to the other. Give the leaders a chance after the children try.

The jump should be just beyond the reach of the children. Explain to them that when Scripture describes sin as lawlessness, it is referring to the keeping of God’s law. Tell them that Romans 3:23 (which is written on the tape) declares that everybody has sinned. Everyone has fallen short of God’s



standards. Every single person fails to make the grade. So when we consider what sin is, we must realize that it affects each and

every person who has lived, is living, or will live on earth.

### 15 Teaching Outline

Begin the teaching time by asking for God's help. Ask that the lesson would be taught faithfully and that the children might listen well.

Ask the children if they can see ways that the world tries to push God out of the picture and live as if he doesn't exist. Do they ever live without giving God a thought?

Explain to the children that God is deeply saddened when people ignore him as the Creator and sustainer of the world. God hates when people rebel against his law, and he calls it sin. People sin when they break God's law. God's law can be broken actively by doing something or even by thinking something. The first sin occurred in the world in the garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. Since that time all people have been born with a sinful nature. We are all prone to sin. That is why Paul says in Romans 3:23 that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We are never able to keep God's law fully because we all fail to meet the mark. When we fail to live in the way that God intended us to, we break his law and our sin separates us from God. Breaking God's loving law leads to death and destruction, for God clearly states in his Word that he will punish sin.

Ask the children to name the kinds of sins that they might be guilty of committing.

**Read 1 John 3:4–10.** Provide Bibles for the children to read along with you.

Introduce the children to John and his first letter to the churches in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). John is writing to the people of God in order to help them live in a way that glorifies God.

John reminds those he's writing to that every time they sin, they are breaking God's law.

Sin is a conscious decision to choose to do things our own way instead of God's way. It says "I know best" rather than "God knows best."

John does, however, highlight the solution to sin! Remind the children that we do not always have to be separated from God by sin or face death and destruction because of sin.

Have the children read verse 5 and identify who John is writing about.

It's Jesus! Jesus is the only one who can deal once and for all with sin. Humans can try to live better lives, they can try to keep God's law, but even the best efforts will be unsatisfactory. But Jesus, the only sinless man ever to live, can deal with our sin. Jesus never broke any of God's laws, he never pushed God out of the picture, he never thought, "I'll do this my way instead



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of God’s way.” He submitted to God and was perfect in every way—in how he acted and in what he thought. Because of his perfection, he was the only one that could restore our relationship with God and bear our punishment, death, and destruction. The perfect Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment that was due for our sins.

Explain to the children that when Jesus died on the cross, he made the way for the forgiveness of sins and for a relationship with God. When we ask Jesus for forgiveness, a great exchange happens. Our sins are taken by Jesus, and his perfection comes to us (sometimes it’s described as the righteousness of Christ). We are made right with God when we trust in Jesus.

Help the children to understand that if we are “in him,” as John says, if we are forgiven and righteous because of Christ, surely our love for sin, for living our own way, must be

banished. Out of great love and gratitude to God for our forgiveness in Christ, we will try to live like Jesus. We won’t stop sinning, but we will stop loving sin.

Explain that it is like when sports players change teams. They leave behind the old team’s uniform, songs, cheers, and behavior and move to the new team. They put on the new team’s uniform and learn the new team’s way of doing things. Sometimes they may slip back into their old ways, but they’ll try to act successfully as members of the new team.

**Finish the teaching time by helping the children commit Question 16 and the answer to memory.**

*(These notes are just for guidance. Please expand or amend to suit your own children and context. Write out your talk in your own words and include illustrations and applications that you know will connect with your children).*

10

**Activity**

Invite a guest to come and share his or her testimony with the group or show a video of an appropriate Christian testimony.

Encourage the focus to be on the devastating effects of sin and the salvation and restoration that can be found in Jesus alone.

5

**Discussion and Question Time**

Some of the questions that might arise include:

**? Aren’t some sins worse than others?**

No! Tell the children God declares that all sins are offensive to him.

**? What about those who don’t ask Jesus for forgiveness?**

Explain to the children that the only way to be made right with God is to ask Jesus for forgiveness. Those who



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don't repent of their sins and seek God's forgiveness will be separated from him forever.

Also use this opportunity to help the children to think about their own lives and how this question and answer affects them personally.

- Have they personally repented of their sin and sought forgiveness in Jesus?
- Are they striving to live in a God-glorifying way?
- Are there particular ways that they sin or are tempted to sin?

**Virtue Vision****Forgiveness**

Ask the children to consider what being forgiven means to them. Begin by focusing initially on their personal experience of forgiveness in their home or school setting. Then ask them to consider the enormity of the forgiveness that Christians have because of Jesus's death on the cross. Remind the children of God's incredible mercy and grace.

Conclude by asking them to consider how being forgiven might affect their relationships with other people, friends, siblings, and even enemies. Having experienced such monumental forgiveness

in Jesus, could they possibly have a right to withhold forgiveness from anyone?

Invite the children to spread around the room. They are going to be statues portraying three different postures related to forgiveness. Read out each pose, give students a couple of minutes to think about it, then say "go" when they are meant to change poses. The three statue poses should represent someone:

- In need of forgiveness
- Receiving forgiveness
- Forgiving others

**Memory Activity**

*Bring back the newspapers that were used earlier.*

Read the memory verse or catechism answer with the children a couple of times.

Then give them the newspapers, and ask them to cut out the words of the memory verse or catechism answer from the newspapers and

put them in the right order. If they can't find exactly the right words, they can join letters or words together. Once the children have created a memory verse montage, ask them to say the memory verse together a number of times. Gradually remove words from the verse to help the children commit the verse or catechism answer to memory.



## Closing Prayer Time

*Provide pens and paper for the children.*

Encourage the children to write down a prayer of repentance, telling God that they are sorry for their personal sin.

Encourage the children to take their written prayers home.

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