

Name:

This I Believe

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE APOSTLE'S CREED

Week 9: I believe in the
forgiveness of sins

Day One

In the first two chapters of the Bible, we see the world as God intends. Beauty, communion, truth, love, happiness, and work mark the first few pages of our Bible in a way that's utterly stunning. However, by Genesis 3 sin begins its destructive path into the world, leaving all creation fractured and broken.

READ GENESIS 3

Below, identify key points in this text (the key points are already listed) and write down the general principles behind them. The first one is done for you as an example:

God's Law: *The command not to eat from the tree revealed God's wisdom and goodness. He desires what's best for us. We can trust Him even if we don't understand.*

Temptation & sin:

Judgment:

Grace:

What effects of Adam and Eve's sin extend beyond their own personal consequences? What do these effects reveal about the nature of sin?

What do you learn about God's forgiveness in this account of the first sin?

All who are Adam's children (all humanity) have been diagnosed with the disease of sin. All of us are rotten branches because we were born from a rotten root. Theologically, this concept is known as the doctrine of original sin (see Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:21-22). For many people, this doctrine is scandalous because they think they shouldn't be held responsible for Adam's sin.

Why are we responsible for Adam's sin? In what way were we in the garden with him?

READ ROMANS 3:10-18

How does the description of humanity's sinful condition differ from the world's perspective on humanity and on what's acceptable or excusable?

READ HEBREWS 8:12

It can be tempting for us to believe the lie that we're so stained by sin that we can't be made clean. Despite the seriousness of our sin, God's mercy triumphs, and He doesn't even recall our sins He has forgiven.

Do you struggle to believe every sin of every kind can be forgiven? What makes any sin unique and less forgivable in your mind?

READ LUKE 7:36-50

This is the story of all who believe. Meditate on Jesus' declaration in verse 48. Consider the way Jesus handled sin in every encounter during His public ministry on earth. You won't find any exclusion from God's forgiveness.

Prayer

Read this prayer aloud: "Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done. and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of Your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in Your will, and walk in Your ways, to the glory of Your Name. Amen."

Day Two

Too often we make sin an abstract idea instead of a deadly reality. Other times we limit sin to heinous acts of immorality. After all, nobody's perfect, right?

What are some words people use to soften the severity of sin?

J. I. Packer helpfully summarized the scope of our sin when he said, "It is lawlessness in relation to God as lawgiver, rebellion in relation to God as rightful ruler, missing the mark in relation to God as our designer, guilt in relation to God as judge, and uncleanness in relation to God as the Holy One. Sin is a perversity touching each one of us at every point in our lives."

Which one of Packer's descriptions is most helpful to you in understanding the nature of sin?

What's the danger of not taking sin seriously?

Thomas Watson, an English Puritan, once said, "Till sin be bitter, Christ will not be sweet." For some of us, sin isn't bitter—it has actually become common, trivial, or even a matter of preference. We like it. But we can't fully appreciate the depths of God's forgiveness until we feel the depth of our sin.

READ ROMANS 1:18-25

Describe the severe nature of sin, according to this passage.

READ PSALM 130

When was the last time you cried out for God’s mercy, recognizing the severity of sin in your life?

READ 1 JOHN 1:5-9

Bringing sin into the light is painful and scary, but it’s also restorative and freeing.

To what truth about God are we testifying when we confess our sins not only to God but also to one another?

At the heart of what God is doing in the world through the person and work of Christ is providing forgiveness for our sins. All other aspects of salvation (reconciliation, justification, sanctification, and redemption) find their hope in the simple idea of forgiveness.

Prayer

Lord, I confess that You’re faithful even when I’m faithless. I acknowledge that You found me when I was dead in my trespasses and sins. Thank You for not giving up on me. Like the psalmist, “I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight” (Ps. 51:3-4). I have broken Your law; I was born a rebel who rejected Your love. But thanks be to God, You don’t count my iniquities: “With you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared” (Ps. 130:4). You’re the God who forgives sinners. Praise be the name of my great God! Amen.

Day Three

Describing his own sin, St. Augustine said, “My sin was that I looked for pleasure, beauty, and truth not in [God] but in myself and his other creatures. That search led me instead to pain, confusion, and error.”

Do you tend to think of sin this way: looking for good things in the wrong places?

**In what ways do you look for good things in the wrong places?
What’s the result?**

READ 1 JOHN 1:5–10

God’s people are the stage on which His forgiveness is made visible. The people of God are never more authentic than when they ask for forgiveness and forgive others.

1. SYMMETRY

To experience freedom from your sin, you must admit your sin and believe you can be forgiven.

Do you struggle with admitting your sin, even to yourself?

Identify at least one sin that you continually struggle with.

Identify a sin that has recently surprised you, perhaps something that you hadn’t struggled with in a long time or have never dealt with before.

2. CLARITY

There's no iniquity, transgression, or sin that's more powerful than the forgiveness of God in Christ. God can- and will-forgive any confessed sin of which you repent. Sin can do real damage, particularly when we fall into the trap of thinking that It isn't that big of a deal or Isn't worth dealing with. First John makes clear that knowingly walking in sin isn't compatible with following Jesus. It destroys fellowship with God and the church.

3. COMMUNITY

If you want to walk in the communion of the saints, confession of sins is an ongoing ethic you must constantly practice.

Identify someone to whom you'll confess specific sin, asking for accountability to walk in forgiveness and holiness.

Whom do you need to ask for forgiveness? If you've sinned against someone else or if your sins have affected other people, confess your sins to those people and ask for their forgiveness.

4. COUNSEL

READ MATTHEW 6:14-15 AND 1 JOHN 4:19

Whom do you need to forgive?

What will you do to keep God's forgiveness of you in the forefront of your mind so that you can offer forgiveness to others?

Prayer

Thank God that He first loved you, making forgiveness and freedom in Christ possible. Confess your sins to Him and ask for humility and courage to confess sins to others and to ask for the forgiveness of people you've sinned against. Pray that you'll trust the goodness of God's Word, believing confession brings forgiveness and healing.

NOTES FROM THE LESSON

NOVEMBER 5, 2017

What passage are we in?

What blessings do we receive from God?

1. He _____
2. He predestines us to be _____
3. He _____
4. He _____ our sins
5. He reveals to us the _____ of the Gospel
6. He seals us with the _____

What is the purpose of the church?

To proclaim the _____ of Jesus

What am I supposed to do if I'm a part of the church?

1. Tell people _____
2. Live a life that _____
3. Be a part of _____