

B Q&A

A Bible Question you may be afraid to ask:

What Is “Sin”?—
Anything That
Is Fun?

Biblical Quotations

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What is “Sin”?—Anything that is fun?

God—the Ultimate Spoil-Sport?

“Our Ice Cream is sinfully delicious!”

Have you ever seen an ad worded this way? The idea expressed in such ads is quite common. If something is fun, exciting, luxurious, or extremely desirable, it is often implied that it must be a “sin.” Yet the ads also imply that, even if it is a sin, you ought to “indulge” yourself—you deserve it!

Have you considered what this implies about God? It says He must be the biggest spoil-sport in the world!

Is that true? Is God out to take all the pleasure out of life for anyone who wants to be a Christian? Did God sit down one day and make a list of everything humans enjoy and then arbitrarily say, “I’m going to label all these things *sin* because they’re too much fun for people. I want them to be bored and miserable”?

Just what is *sin* according to the Bible?

Looking for Answers in All the Wrong Places

One reason there is so much confusion about what is sin, is that most people, including most folks who consider themselves Christians, did not get their ideas about sin from the Bible. Most people have a conscience about what is “right” and “wrong” from a combination of sources:

- If your parents praised you for it, it must be right.
If they punished you for it, it must be wrong.
- If your society accepts it, it must be right.
If your society frowns on it, it must be wrong.
- If your church accepts it, it must be right.
If your church condemns it, it must be wrong.

At first glance, this may all seem like the proper way to learn about right and wrong. But wait!

- Parents have a wide variety of opinions of what is right and wrong. If a child is picked on or hit by another child, some parents would praise the child for running away or trying to make peace. Yet other parents will praise a child for “standing up” for themselves and hitting back. Some parents will even punish a child for being a “sissy” and refusing to fight back!
- Societies have a wide variety of standards. In some Eskimo societies at one time, it would have been considered “good manners” to offer your wife as a sexual companion for a male overnight visitor. For most modern Americans, that would be unthinkable. And the standards for one society vary over time. Fifty years ago, American society standards condemned abortion, homosexuality, and premarital sex. These practices are now publicly accepted by a large segment of our society.
- Even churches have a wide variety of standards. Some churches condemn gambling, while others sponsor bingo and other forms of gambling to raise money for church activities! Some churches condemn homosexuality, while others ordain homosexuals as ministers. Some churches condemn the use of make-up for women, while in other churches the minister’s wives are made-up like Hollywood actresses.

So is a *sin* anything that your parents, your society, or your church thinks is wrong? No—

A *sin* is what GOD says is wrong!

And the only way to be sure what God says is to go to the Bible for yourself. You aren’t going to be held accountable before God for what your parents, your society, or your church thinks. They can all be in error. You are going to be held accountable to God for what you do about what **you** know.

How Does God Decide What Is a Sin?

I have a hair dryer with a big tag on the cord. The tag says,

“Do NOT use while bathing. Do NOT use near or place in water. If dryer falls in water unplug immediately. Do NOT reach into water.”

What if I said to myself one day, “I *need* to use this dryer while bathing. It is *convenient* to use this dryer while bathing—I’m in a hurry. It doesn’t seem to me that it could really hurt anything to use it while bathing. What business is it of the manufacturer if I use it while bathing? Who gave them the right to tell me what to do anyway?!”

With such a *practical* matter, it's easy to see how foolish I am being. For, if I would turn the tag over, I would see the reason behind all these warnings: The manufacturer was not trying to spoil my day, or take away my freedom to do as I please. He was simply telling me the reality of how electricity and water mix to create danger.

Yes, in day-to-day practical matters it is easy to see that “following the instructions” leads to wise choices.

In the same way, you need to understand that God is **not** just a giant spoil-sport, making rules to spoil your fun. The Bible contains His instructions about life, the reality of how He created things to work. If He labels something a sin, commanding you to not do it, it is for **your good**, because to do it will in some way harm you or others. If He commands you to **do** something positive, it is not just for His convenience, but because it is also for **your good** to do it.

Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever! (Deuteronomy. 5:29)

Your statutes are wonderful;
therefore I obey them.
The unfolding of your words gives light;
it gives understanding to the simple.
I open my mouth and pant,
longing for your commands.
Turn to me and have mercy on me,
as you always do to those who love your name.
Direct my footsteps according to your word;
let no sin rule over me.
(Psalm 19:128-133)

This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome. (1 John 5:3)

If this principle is so simple, why does **everyone** continue to sin at times?

- Some sin because they don't **know** what God commands—they haven't read the Bible for themselves.
- Some sin because they don't **believe** God knows what is best for them.
- Some sin because they don't like the fact God doesn't always explain **why** something is harmful.

- Some sin because they don't really believe there will be a **penalty** for the sin.
- Some sin because the **temporary pleasure** seems more real than a penalty that seems far away.
- And some sin just because the **temptation** to sin is stronger than their common sense, their will-power, and their good intentions.

God does not **want** us to sin. He wants us to obey Him for our own good. But Mankind has been sinning ever since Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden. Those six reasons above are not “modern”—they are as old as Mankind.

The *mess* the world is in is a result of the collective sins of Mankind. The *mess* your life may be in is a result of the collective sins you, and those around you, have committed throughout your life.

The Bible is a record of how God has dealt with Mankind throughout history, and His plan to rescue the whole world from this problem of sin. If you'd like to understand more about this plan, begin reading the Bible for yourself.