

# Victory over Sin

## Lesson 1: Introduction

What is sin? Sin is an action or thought that hurts God, people, or ourselves. Sin is the opposite of love. God is love (1 John 4:16). There is no sin in God, and everything he does is out of love for us. Love reflects the heart of God. 1 Corinthians 13 says that love is patient and kind. Love doesn't compare people to each other but sees tremendous value in each person. Love isn't proud, boastful, or rude. It never tries to be better than someone else. Love isn't selfish, but considers what is best for another person and works toward their good. Love isn't easily angered and doesn't focus on the wrongs and faults of others. Love rejects evil but also rejoices when a person is honest and walking in the truth. Love speaks truth and points others toward truth. Love helps and protects others. Love trusts the hearts of others. Love hopes for the best and acts out of that hope. Love never gives up, closes the door, or ignores people. Love is hard, but it never leads to failure, even if that love is never returned (13:1-8).

For this reason, we might be afraid to love; we might be afraid of rejection. But perfect love pushes away fear because this fear keeps us from knowing God, who is love, and from being like him in this world (1 John 4:16-18). So, how can we love like this? We can only love this way when we know how much God loves us. Out of his great love for us, God sent his Son to die on a cross so that we might receive forgiveness for our sins. This is why Proverbs 10:12 says "...love overlooks all wrongs" (ERV). Through Jesus, God overlooks all that we have done that is wrong and offers us his love instead. In this, we realize how much God truly loves us. He accepts us as his children when we believe in Jesus as God's Son, as our Lord and Savior, and receive his sacrifice as payment for our sins (John 1:12-13; 1 John 4:9-10). John reminds us that when we believe in Jesus as the Son of God, God begins to live in us through his Holy Spirit. In this way, the Spirit that now lives in us causes us to love. John says that "whoever lives in love, lives in God, and God in him" (4:16, NIV). This love that is from God completes us and makes us confident on the Day of Judgment, as we see this love growing and reigning in our hearts. Without this love in our lives and in our hearts, we do not truly know God (4:7-21). But this love that we share with others is evidence that God is in us. Because God is love, love is the most important quality we can possess and nurture in our lives (1 Corinthians 13:13). The two greatest commands of God are to love others and to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength (Mark 12:30-31). And this is possible when we realize how much our heavenly Father dearly loves us.

When we understand love, we can begin to understand that we cannot love and sin at the same time. If we want to know whether an action or thought is sin, then we can ask ourselves, "Does this thought or action show love to God, others, and myself the way God defines love? Is anyone hurt by this action or thought in a way that may push them away from God, instead of toward him?" We can also study the words of Jesus and obey him so that we can know more about how to love the way God defines love (1 John 2:5). We must then choose to love or to sin. If we choose to love, we will not sin.

In this section, you are given a list of sins found in the Bible and asked to look up the definitions of these words so that you understand what the Lord says is sin and not love. The next step is seeing these sins in your life so that you can understand in a personal way how God wants to change your heart and help you to choose love. Through this study, we will see how our hearts are so different from God's heart. But this is also why Jesus came! He said, "Healthy people don't need a doctor. It is the sick people that need a doctor" (Luke 5:31). Jesus is here today to help us, not condemn us (John 12:47). Yet to receive his help, we must first see our deep need for him in our lives. We must know that we need his grace and forgiveness for our sins, and acknowledge how much we need his love.

Why is forgiveness important? Forgiveness for sins is important because sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:2, Habakkuk 1:13). God cannot bring us into heaven if we are clothed in sin (Revelation 21:22-27). And all of us have sinned (Romans 3:23). All of us have hurt God, other people, and ourselves. We all need our sins to be washed away so that we can be made clean and pure for God. Through faith in Jesus, we are made pure, even though we are sinners (Colossians 2:13-14). Through this purity that only God can provide through his Son, not of our own righteousness, God is then able to live in us and continue to transform us to be more like him in love.

Jesus not only allows us to be forgiven for our sins, but he also sets us free from sin in heaven and on earth (Romans 8:1-2). Because he lives in us through his Spirit, we can fight against sin here on earth. Romans 6:11 says, "...you should see yourselves as being dead to the power of sin. And see yourselves as being alive for God through Christ Jesus" (ERV). For this reason, we turn away from sin and follow the Spirit of Christ: "But don't let sin control you in your life here on earth. You must not be ruled by the things your sinful self makes you want to do" (6:12). Many people think they cannot change. And sometimes, we think other people can't change. But through Christ, everyone can change, and there is true hope for all mankind.

These questions and verses will help you to see sin in your life, understand the importance of confessing sin, learn how to receive forgiveness, and start a new life of love through Jesus:

**Personal Sharing:**

1. God's plan for healing involves the support of a healthy, confessing community. Read I John 1:5-10. Why is an open and confessing community of Christ followers important for our ability to overcome sin? (vs. 5-7) Talk about what this type of community could look like.
2. Read verses 8-10 again. Why is confessing our sins important? (v. 8, 10)
3. What does Jesus promise us if we confess our sins? (vs. 7, 9) How should we respond when others confess sins to us?
4. What are the dangers of being in a Christian community where people do not confess openly and regularly?
5. How can confessing our sins and helping others to confess show love?
6. Read Psalm 32:5. Who is the first person we confess to and why?
7. Read James 5:16. Who else should we confess to and why? What should we do when someone confesses sin to us?
8. Read Romans 3:22-26. Even if we confess our sins and choose to love, how are we made righteous? (v. 22) Why is this true? (v. 23-24) How does confessing our sins express our faith in Jesus? (Reread I John 1:8-10)
9. Read Acts 22:16 and I Peter 3:21-22. What is baptism? Talk about what these verses mean.
10. Read Acts 8:38 and Matthew 3:16. What does baptism look like?
11. Read Romans 6:1-10. What do we do with our sin at baptism? (v. 2) Why? (v. 4) In baptism, what does going down into water and coming up out of water symbolize? (4, 10)
12. Read John 3:19-22. How is confessing our sins an important part of dying to our sins? Why are we tempted not to confess sin? How does confessing our sin and telling our story bring glory to Jesus? (v. 21) How could your story help others?
13. Read Colossians 1:19-23 How does Jesus's sacrifice for us free us from the shame and guilt of sin?
14. How does ongoing faith, confession, and obedience play a role in Jesus's promise to save us? (v. 23, see also John 15:4).
15. Read I John 5:1-5. How do we show God that we love him? How does confessing our sins to one another help us to love God and each other? How can we show God that we love him through biblical baptism? In turn, how does he show us love at baptism?
16. For further study, read Colossians 2:9-15, Acts 2:38, Mark 16:16.

To begin walking in Jesus's plan to turn away from sin and choose love, we must first understand what God calls sin in the Bible. The next step is to be able to see sin in our own lives, confess our sins to God, and confess to a mature Christian who understands the value of confession and is will to share his or her sins with you. These are some of the most important tools Jesus has given us to be set free and continue to be set free from sin! We will never get help in the dark, but freedom is ours when we come into the loving and forgiving light of our Savior and the compassion and love of one another.

### This Week:

1. Our ability to turn away from sin and love others begins when we understand God's deep love for us. Take some time to read a few verses from two handouts: The Promises of God and My Identity in Christ. These handouts are found at <https://www.connectthenations.com/transform>.
2. Find a trustworthy and mature Christian friend who can walk through this study with you. Ask them to complete the study as well so you can share openly one to another.
3. Prepare for Lesson 2.