

BIG IDEA SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

Small groups that focus on the Big Idea for the week can use this guide to apply the message to life and take action. Feel free to use whatever parts of this guide best fit your group personality and time frame. All verses, unless otherwise noted, are from the New International Version (NIV).

1.31/2.1.09 // THE STORY OF EVERYTHING - CHAPTER II: SIN

BiG iDEA: Repentance leads to reconciliation.

// Ice Breaker _____

Option 1: Who is one of your favorite movie or TV villains?

Option 2: What makes a "great" villain?

// Questions for Discussion _____

The **STORY OF EVERYTHING** starts with God living in perfect community with humankind. All is good. Then something goes wrong. A conflict arises--sin has entered the scene.

What are some euphemisms people use today for sin (for example: "white lies")? Why do you think people use them? Do you ever hear the word "sin" used outside of church?

The Bible describes sin as a fracturing of relationship—the relationship between God and people, the relationship between creation and people, and the relationships of one person to another. Peace is broken and harmony disappears when sin arrives.

Physics teaches that entropy leads to chaos. Politics tells us that the wrong government structure brings disorder. Medicine says it is disease or chemical imbalance. Psychopathology explains evil in terms of poor parenting, faulty genes or damaged self-esteem. All of these are reasonable theories, but we believe that ultimately sin is the issue.

When human beings sin they don't just break their relationship with God. Romans 8:21 speaks of creation being in bondage to decay. What is wrong at an atomic, molecular level in our universe can be attributed to what went wrong in the garden when sin entered the world. (described in Genesis 3)

Sin is directional. Sin leads us away from God and each other and towards destruction. We attempt to live our lives in the absence of God's influence in our lives.

Do you agree with this statement by Simone Weil? "*All sins are attempts to fill voids. Because we cannot stand the God-shaped hole inside of us, we try stuffing it full of all sorts of things, but only God may fill it.*" Why or why not?

How have you seen the effects of sin in your own life or in your family history? Read 1 John 3:12

Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous.

What thoughts/ideas/images first come to mind when you hear the word "repent"?

Read Matthew 11:20

Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent.

Read Luke 3:3

He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Read Luke 5:31-33

31..."It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 32I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Read Luke 13:5

"...But unless you repent, you too will all perish."

Read Luke 15:7

I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

Repentance is the word we use for turning around the direction our life is headed in. When we repent we are turning our back on sin and renewing our relationship with God. The noun used for repentance in the Old Testament refers to the idea of going back to where you started. In the New Testament, it communicates the idea of doing a 180° turn.

Share a time in your life when you remember making a conscious decision to turn away from something you knew was wrong and you chose the right way instead.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

Read James 1:13-15

13When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. 15Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Read Romans 4:8

Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.

When we understand sin in this way, we're given new responsibilities. There are many decisions we have to make that are not necessarily "right" or "wrong". When our primary focus is on loving God and loving people then our decisions become based on how our relationships will be changed by our choices.

Read the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:2-17. If we do not break these in actual deeds, how do we break them in "heart"?

Do you think it is easier or harder to make decisions when there is no rulebook? Why?

Read Mark 12:30-31

30Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'31The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself. 'There is no commandment greater than these.'

Read Romans 7:18

I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

As Christ-followers we are called to be obedient to God's word. However the obedience talked about in the Bible implies a relationship based on love and respect rather than on reward and punishment.

Few of us find "guilt" or "fear of punishment" to be very good motivators. What could be a different motivation for us to stop making choices that lead to sin?

Read Romans 7:24-25

24What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Read Romans 5:8

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

// Application_____

Read and commit to memory 1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Hopefully our understanding of sin is changing from being just about broken rules to ultimately being about broken relationships. This week, think about what difference a new understanding of sin means to you. Is there something in your life *right now* that God is calling you to confess and seek forgiveness for? If so, start by confessing it to God (today!) and thanking Him for His forgiveness (see 1 John 1:9 above). Then, if the sin led to a damaged or broken relationship, confess to the person who was hurt.

// Prayer _____

Pray asking God to examine your heart and reveal your sins.

Pray that you no longer “sugar coat” your sins and that you truly confess your sins and repent.