

LIFE CONCEPTS



REAL SOLUTIONS



STEPPING
FROM
FEELINGS OF

UNWORTHINESS TO FORGIVENESS

LEADER'S GUIDE



BIG IDEA

This week's Life Concept explores the issue of God's love and forgiveness. You want the new believer to move from the struggle of feeling unworthy in a new relationship with God to an experience of forgiveness.

THE FIVE ELEMENTS OF THE TEMPLATE

The goal of your interaction is to effectively and relationally communicate key biblical concepts, and so each interaction contains the following elements: Comparing Our Stories; Considering Our Struggles; Exploring the Solution; Examining the Sketch; and Taking Steps.

STEPPING FROM FEELINGS OF UNWORTHINESS TO FORGIVENESS



COMPARING OUR STORIES

Share your struggle with sin and failure in your early Christian life. Focus on the feelings of unworthiness the failure produced. Don't share all the unnecessary details about your sin or about how the struggles were resolved. You want the new believer to identify with what you have experienced and the feelings of guilt that resulted. Share your story in two minutes or less.

SINCE RECEIVING CHRIST, TO WHAT DEGREE HAVE YOU BEEN AWARE OF SIMILAR STRUGGLES?

A good follow-up question to ask is: "Have you had any sense of falling short of what God desires for your life?" If your friend has been aware of this, affirm that this feeling is natural. If your friend hasn't yet experienced this, assure that this will probably happen with time.

CONSIDERING OUR STRUGGLES

How do we feel when we know we have failed another person who is very important to us? Guilty, unworthy, like a failure.

HOW DO THESE FEELINGS AFFECT OUR ACTIONS AND RESPONSES IN THE RELATIONSHIP?

We can withdraw and feel uncomfortable in the other person's presence.

HOW DOES IT IMPACT US IF WE AREN'T AWARE THE OTHER PERSON HAS FORGIVEN US?

We worry about it, which creates anxiety.

WHAT IF WE DO KNOW WE HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN? We feel free.

COULD SIN HAVE A SIMILAR IMPACT IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST? HOW? Yes. Sin can cause us to withdraw in shame and lose the experience of intimacy in our relationship.

Time permitting, read through the "Think about it" notepad with your friend.

EXPLORING THE SOLUTION

Together read the whole passage aloud.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT GOD IS LIGHT? In the Bible, the term light can be used figuratively for both truth and righteousness. Likewise, darkness can mean falsehood and unrighteousness. John is writing about what it means to live in relationship with God who is both righteous and true.

WHAT DOES LIGHT DO IN EVERYDAY LIFE? It makes things visible, removes darkness and the inability to perceive, and exposes things.

HOW WOULD GOD'S CHARACTER DO A SIMILAR THING? For those who have established a relationship with God, His righteousness makes all things visible and exposes the truth about all things, including our sin.

1. FALSE CLAIM

Today, this claim might sound more like, "My sin doesn't matter. Because I've been forgiven, I can live however I want and still experience a good relationship with God. "Notice what John says about this claim? It's a lie; it isn't possible. Why? Because God is light—that is, righteous and true. He will expose our sin.

As we live in a right relationship with God, what is happening to our sin? It is cleansed because of the blood of Christ. This does not mean we have no sin, just that our sin is cleansed.

2. FALSE CLAIM

We could put this claim in our own words as, "There is nothing wrong with me." As a believer, we cannot claim to be without sin. We know better.

WHAT ARE WE TO DO ABOUT OUR SINS? Confess them.

WHAT DOES CONFESS MEAN? To admit that you did it. The basic idea is to openly agree with God about your sin. Call it sin; call it forgiven; and call on God to change you.

WHAT DOES GOD DO AS WE CONFESS OUR SINS? He forgives and purifies us.

Special Insight: "Confessions of sin are of various classes: (1) To God alone. Wherever there is true repentance for sin, the penitent freely confesses his guilt to Him against who he has sinned. This is described in Psalm 32:3-6; cf. 1 John 1:9; Proverbs 28:13. Such confession may be made either silently or, as in Daniel 9:19, orally; it may be general, as in Psalm 51, or particular, as when some special sin is recognized; it may even extend to that which has not been discovered, but is believed to exist because of recognized inner depravity (Psalm 19:12), and thus include the state as well as the acts of sin (Romans 7:18)." [H. E. Jacobs, The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), vol. 1, p. 759.]

3. FALSE CLAIM

We could summarize this claim by saying, "I've done nothing wrong!"

WHAT SHOULD WE TRY TO DO ABOUT SIN? Seek to avoid it.

WHAT IS THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION TO OUR SIN? When we do sin, we should realize it has already been paid for by Christ's death.

Briefly review the summary section before moving on.

EXAMINING THE SKETCH

Illustrate these concepts with the following sketch and apply it to your life.

THE ISSUE: HOW DO I RESPOND TO SIN?

A. When I first came to Christ, how many areas of my life were perfect? None. Circle 0% perfect. If you examined my life in college, you would have found that none of the areas of my life were really perfect or problem free. I struggled with things like studies, dating, my attitude at my job, relationships with family and friends, and my responses to difficulties.

HOW MANY OF MY SINS WERE FORGIVEN WHEN I CAME TO CHRIST? 100%. Circle 100% forgiven.

ACCORDING TO 1 JOHN 1:7, HOW DOES GOD DEAL WITH THE SINS AND SHORTCOMINGS OF WHICH I'M NOT AWARE? Refer back to the verse on the opposite page. He cleanses them by the blood of Christ. Circle 1 John 1:7 in the sketch.

B. ACCORDING TO 1 JOHN 1:9, WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN I DELIBERATELY DISOBEY GOD AND MY LIFE PASSES OUTSIDE THE LINES? I should confess my sin to God; call it sin, call it forgiven and call on Him to help me change. Circle 1 John 1:9.

Read the three-part explanation of confession.

C. THE LONGER I WALK WITH GOD, WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO MY AWARENESS OF SIN? WHY? I will become more and more sensitive to what sin is; my lines of conviction will narrow. As I live in light of who God is, I will become more and more like Him.

ACCORDING TO 1 JOHN 2:1-2, WHAT SHOULD MY ATTITUDE BE TOWARD SIN? WHY? I should try to avoid it. It's not simply a matter of doing what is right and wrong. Christians don't live by a list of rules. We do it because of our love relationship with a holy God, who is light.

After reading the summary, make sure the person understands the meaning of the sketch and how to apply its principles in real life.

TAKING STEPS

There are three appropriate responses to this study, three things you should encourage the person to begin to do today or tomorrow.

1. Claim Christ's cleansing.
2. Confess specific sins.
3. Choose to avoid sin.

NEXT CONCEPT

As believers, we genuinely desire to do what is right. But it seems no matter how hard we try, we lack the power to do so. The next concept is critical because we will learn how to experience the power we need to live the Christian life.

How would you change your lifestyle and behavior if Jesus were always physically present with you? Would you have to quit doing certain things so that you would not offend Him? What attitudes would you try to change? Your sins and struggles will affect how you experience your relationship with Christ, for He is with you always. (Hebrews 13:5).



LIFE CONCEPTS

STEPPING
FROM

FEELINGS OF

UNWORTHINESS

TO

FORGIVENESS

I. COMPARING OUR STORIES

Though Christians are forgiven, we all still struggle with sin and failure.

MY EXPERIENCE ...

YOUR EXPERIENCE ...

Since receiving Christ, to what degree have you been aware of similar struggles?

2. CONSIDERING OUR STRUGGLES

HOW would you feel if you knew you had failed another person who was very important to you?

HOW would these feelings affect your actions and responses in the relationship?

HOW would it impact you if you didn't know that the other person had forgiven you?

WHAT difference does forgiveness make in a relationship?

Sin has a similar impact in our relationship with Christ.
HOW?

I JOHN 1:5–2:2

⁵This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. ⁷But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. ⁸If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. ²My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ²He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

STEPPING FROM FEELINGS OF UNWORTHINESS TO FORGIVENESS

3. EXPLORING THE SOLUTION

John is writing to a group of believers who have become unsettled by false teachers. In this section, he is dealing with the wrong attitudes about sin in the teaching of these individuals. All of his responses are based on the truth about who God is and what it is like to live in a relationship with Him.

THE FOUNDATION (1:5)

What does it mean that God is light?

What does light do in everyday life?

How would God's character do a similar thing?

1. FALSE CLAIM (1:6)

RIGHT RESPONSE (1:7)

As we live in a right relationship with God, what is happening to our sin?

2. FALSE CLAIM (1:8)

RIGHT RESPONSE (1:9)

What are we to do about our sin?

What does confess mean?

What does God do as we confess our sins?

3. FALSE CLAIM (1:10)

RIGHT RESPONSE (2:1-2)

What should we try to do about sin?

What is the ultimate solution to our sin?

SUMMARY

THE THREE WRONG APPROACHES:

My sin doesn't matter.

There is nothing wrong with me.

I've done nothing wrong.

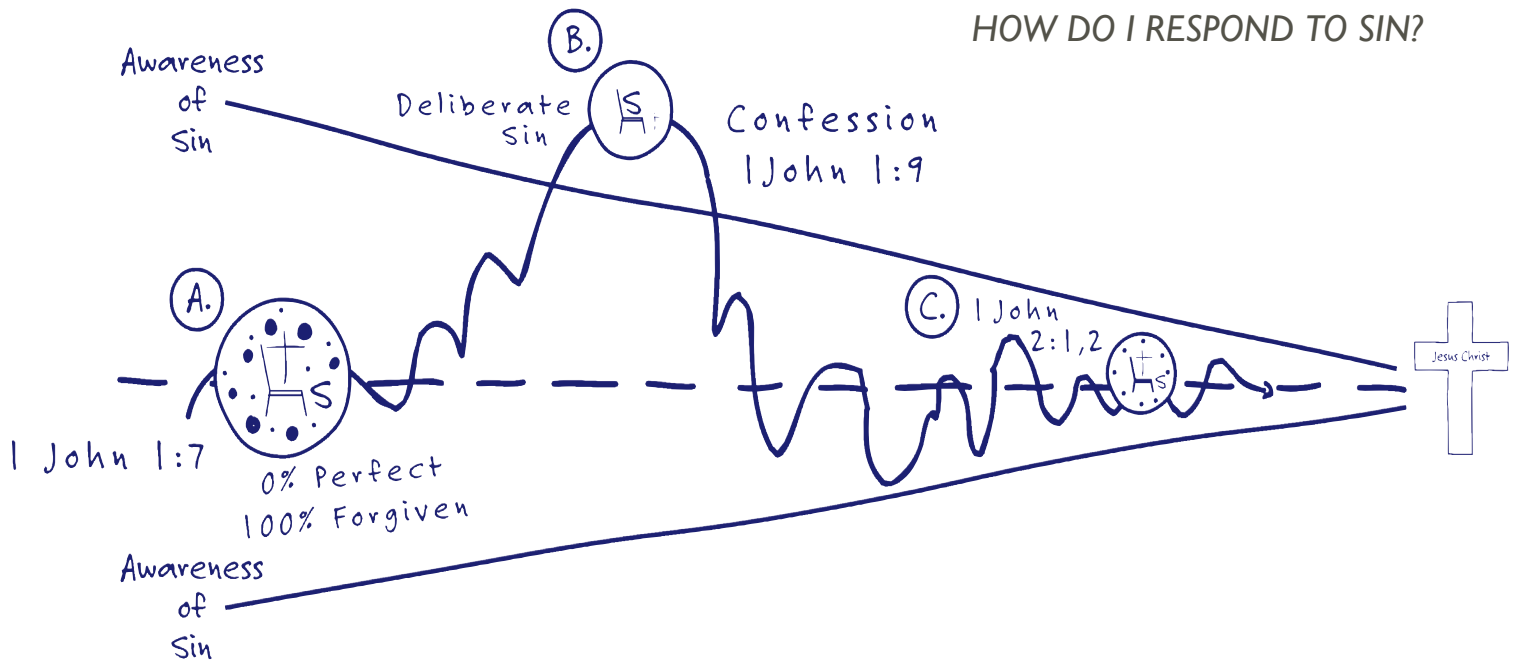
THE THREE RIGHT RESPONSES:

Walk with God in light of who He is.

Openly agree with God about your sin.

Seek to avoid sin.

THE ISSUE:
HOW DO I RESPOND TO SIN?



4. EXAMINING THE SKETCH

A. When I first trusted Christ as my Savior, how many areas of my life were perfect? How many of my sins were forgiven when I came to Christ?

According to I John 1:7, how does God deal with the sins and shortcomings of which I'm not aware?

B. According to I John 1:9, what should I do when I deliberately disobey God and my life passes outside of the lines?

Confession involves agreeing with God.

1. Agree that we have sinned.
2. Agree that he has forgiven it.
3. Turn away from the sin.

C. The longer I walk with God, what will happen to my awareness of sin? Why?

According to I John 2:1-2, what should my attitude be toward sin? Why?

SUMMARY

To walk in the light is...

to live in a love relationship with God in light of His character.

to openly agree with God about my sin.

to seek to avoid sin as I become more conscious of what is displeasing to God.

5. TAKING STEPS

Three steps will help you live these truths.

1. CLAIM CHRIST'S CLEANSING.

In prayer, thank God for continuing to cleanse you from all sin.

2. CONFESS SPECIFIC SINS.

On your own, make a list on paper of any sin of which you are currently aware. Confess it to God, writing 1 John 1:9 across the page. Tear up the list. This is a visual reminder that Jesus Christ has cleansed you from your sins by His death.

3. CHOOSE TO AVOID SIN.

Be aware that by ourselves, we lack the ability to change or avoid sin. We must rely on God's power.

NEXT CONCEPT

FROM UNCERTAINTY TO CONFIDENCE

FROM FEELINGS OF UNWORTHINESS TO FORGIVENESS

FROM BEING UNABLE TO EMPOWERED

FROM BEING UNPREPARED TO EQUIPPED

FROM BEING UNDEVELOPED TO MATURITY