

Are Some Sins Worse Than Others?

It's hard to get a straight answer to a sensitive question. It seems in today's culture, people would rather continue to do things that are harmful, than to face reality. In politics, we would rather continue to spend ourselves into financial ruin, like Greece is currently experiencing, than to accept the tough choices of less State and Federal spending. We have become a culture of tolerance and acceptance, and we are losing our ability to deal with difficult matters.

Rather than admit our need, we give new names to anything we deem as unpleasant. The garbage man is "Sanitary engineer." Now there is nothing wrong with being a garbage man. I'm sure glad that someone gets paid to haul my trash and sort my recyclables. These workers are a vital part of our society. Although someone might feel a greater sense of significance with a snappy title, garbage still stinks, and it's an unpleasant job that someone thankfully has chosen.

Much in the same way, the cleaning lady is an "environmental associate." We could go on and on with other humorous titles.

More serious, however, is the way in which we have re-titled sin.

We call DRUNKENNESS a new name. .. *Alcoholism*

We call FORNICATION a new name ... *Domestic partners*

We call SODOMY a new name ... *Gay Americans*

We call PERVERSION a new name... *Sexual Addiction*

The church today needs clear teaching about SIN because it effects us all.

We have been studying the theme **LIVING in HARMONY**. It is important to understand sin because sin destroys our harmony. Specifically, we need to examine when it is necessary for us to **overlook an offense**, and when it is necessary to **confront someone with their sin**. To do this biblically, we must study what the Bible teaches about sin.

The key verse that began our series on harmony is found in Romans 15:5–6 "*May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

By way of review, we studied the following principles, taken largely from Ken Sande's book, "The Peacemaker:"

1- "Harmonious Living in the Church"

- (Five requirements from Romans 15:1-13)
- 2- “God’s Glory - the Goal of Christian Harmony”
(Romans 15:5-13)
 - 3- “4 G’s of a Peacemaker”
Glorify God, Get the Log Out of your Eye, Gently Restore, Go and Be Reconciled
 - 4- “7 A’s of Confession”
(2 Cor 7:8-11 - Worldly sorrow vs. Godly sorrow)

Well, if we are going to follow these principles, we learned that we should not be so confrontation that we approach our neighbor every time they sin. Were we to do this, we would spend most of our time in confrontation because we all sin!

We learned that we are to **overlook minor offenses**.

Proverbs 19:11 *“A man’s wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.”*

Proverbs 12:16 *“A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult.”*

Ephesians 4:2 *“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”*

But when do you OVERLOOK, and when do you CONFRONT?

Here are some important principles to help us in this task.

Every Sin is a Violation Against God.

Before we begin to discuss the consequences and seriousness of sin in certain situations, we must recognize that all sin is an offense to God. 1 John 3:4 teaches that all sin breaks God’s law. *“Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.”*

Sin is any violation of God’s law, either in word, action or thought. Being guilty of one sin makes you a lawbreaker, and guilty of breaking ALL of the Law. *“For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.”* (James 2:10).

We will ALL give account for our sin. The one who has accepted Christ will give account for our actions done while alive on earth. This accounting is at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The sin of the believer was judged by God when Christ died on the cross. There is no “double indemnity” for the Christian. Our sin cannot be born by us AND placed on Christ. Once we accept Christ, He becomes the *vicar* for us. Our sin is regarded by the Father as having already been judged when Christ suffered for us.

However, when we do sin, we lose fellowship with the Father, and we lose potential reward for serving Him. Paul recognizes the seriousness of this loss and describes it as

the “fear of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:11). This should give us a serious attitude toward sin. Writing to believers, the author of Hebrews writes, “*Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account*” (Hebrews 4:13). Paul writes in Romans 14:12 “*So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.*” This accounting is a serious matter and should create within our hearts a desire to live holy and pure lives.

But for the unbeliever, the judgment of sin is a severe thing. Notice verse 5 of 1 Peter 4:1–5. “*Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. 2 As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. 3 For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. 4 They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. 5 **But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.***”

The unbeliever will stand before God and personally give account for his or her sin. This will take place at the fearful Great White Throne judgment. O, what a horror that will be for all who are judged there!

We have recognized the seriousness of sin, and that God will judge sin. But what about us? When we obey the Lord and confront someone concerning their sin, we do so as sinners! How are we to know when to confront, and when to overlook sin?

We are to be patient with some sins because we are all growing

Alfred Poirier writes the following:

“Overlooking or tolerating sin in another requires ... the judgment of forbearance - the judgment that at this time I will bear with, endure, and be long suffering toward another person’s particular sinful attitude or action. We make this judgment recognizing that sanctification is incremental change, and thus we wait upon the Lord to change the person in his own perfect timing.” (Alfred Poirier, “The Peacemaking Pastor,” 134-5)

Overlooking an offense is not the same as saying “it is not sin.” It is simply saying that I am not called on to bring correction to this person. The LORD will do it.

As we express patience toward others, we ought never to overlook our own sins.

1. This is true concerning the sin your own life. “*A wise man fears the LORD and shuns evil, but a fool is hotheaded and reckless*” (Proverbs 14:16). “*Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord* (Hebrews 12:14).

Notice that Job took sin very seriously. *“In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.”* Job 1:1

Proverbs 3:7 *“Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.”*

2. We should also take seriously the matter of sin within our family. Eli was judged for overlooking sin in his family. His sons fattened themselves from God’s offering. They used their God given position for their own gain. 1 Sam 2:29-31
3. Sin in the Church is also a matter of utmost concern. 1 Corinthians 5:12–13 *What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? 13 God will judge those outside. “Expel the wicked man from among you.”*

If then, we know that sin is serious, and we should take it seriously in our lives, family and church, which sins are the ones that we should confront?

While we are all SINNERS, some sins are more serious than others

The following points are revised from “The Peacemaking Pastor” (Poirier,135-8)

1. There is a higher accountability for **willful sins**
 - a. Luke 12:46–47 *The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers. 47 “That servant who knows his master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows.*
 - b. Matthew 11:21–22 *“Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you.*
 - c. BE CAREFUL not to use this as an excuse for any behavior. YES, we are all sinners, but even though sinners, we are to CONFRONT SIN in a biblical manner.

The NATURAL response of someone caught in sin is to say, YOU’RE a sinner too, so you cannot condemn me.

2. When sin is committed by someone who was **entrusted with authority**
 - a. When KING DAVID sinned, his son died. 2 Samuel 12:13-14
 - b. When TEACHERS SIN, they are judged more strictly. James 3:1 *“Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know*

- that we who teach will be judged more strictly”*
- c. When FATHERS sin, their children suffer. Ephesians 6:4 *Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*
3. When the sinner takes advantage of someone who is **WEAK**
 - a. Orphans, widows. Isa 1:15-17
 - b. Children. Mat 18:6-9
 - c. A weaker brother.
 - i. Romans 14:19–21 *Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. 20 Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. 21 It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.*
 - ii. Romans 15:1 *We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.*
 4. When the sin itself carries **serious consequence**
 - a. Was it done maliciously?
 - b. Was it pre-meditated?
 - c. Was it in thought or in deeds? *Lust is evil. Acting on that temptation involves someone else.*
 - d. The nature of SEXUAL SIN bears greater consequence.
 - i. 1 Corinthians 6:18 *Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.*
 - ii. Proverbs 6:30–32 *Men do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his hunger when he is starving. 31 Yet if he is caught, he must pay sevenfold, though it costs him all the wealth of his house. 32 But a man who commits adultery lacks judgment; whoever does so destroys himself.*
 - iii. REASONS?
 - (1) Created in the image of God.
 - (2) We corrupt the very act by which we procreate children who are *image bearers*
 - (3) Marriage is intended to be a picture of Christ’s love for the Church! Eph 5
 - e. Did you know that it was wrong?
 - f. Did it dishonor God?

- i. Nadab and Abihu. Leviticus 10:3 *Moses then said to Aaron, “This is what the LORD spoke of when he said: “ ‘Among those who approach me I will show myself holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honored.’ ” Aaron remained silent.*
- ii. MOSES! Numbers 20:12 *But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them.”*

Have YOU sinned? All of us recognize that we have. The only way to be forgiven is to accept by faith that the suffering of Jesus Christ is the substitute and payment for your sin. Those who fail to take this humble step of faith will receive the judgment spoken of in Revelation 20:12: *And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.*