

S E R I E S   C O M P A N I O N

# L I F E

BEYOND THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

# L I F E



SAMPLE

# LIFE BEYOND SIN

*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me – Galatians 2:20*

The gospel is the good news of salvation in Jesus. We're saved from our sins by the death of Jesus in our place. It's wonderful news! Central to the gospel is the idea of GRACE – that we're saved by God's free gift to us in Jesus, not on our own merit or the goodness of our works.

However, if we're honest, there are times after someone becomes a Christian when it feels like there's a bit of a disconnect between that gospel of grace and the New Testament's strong call to live a different life. How does that fit with God's 'free gift'? Why do I find it so hard to change and what happens if I don't change enough? Often we end up believing in two opposite things at once: God's grace to us; and the need to be good enough. We can settle back into a belief that God's grace saved us, but now we need to be good enough to stay saved. We can end up slogging away fearfully or feeling comfortably proud of ourselves.

The problem comes from seeing salvation as just being saved from being punished for sin. Actually, Jesus died for more than that – he died to save us out of the life of sin itself. The Bible reveals sin as something ugly and destructive, and dishonouring to God. It's poison, its own punishment. Grace saves us from God's judgement, but also from the poison of a sinful life. In Galatians 2:20 we read that when we trust in Jesus our old sinful natures are actually counted as having been put to death on the cross of Jesus. That's how we're forgiven. But we're then given new life, the life of God's Spirit who transforms us. Although we're going to be looking at sin this term, seven of them specifically, we want to focus not just on our sin, but on how the gospel of Jesus moves us beyond them to a new life with God.

A key image we're using in this series is that of a growing, fruit-bearing plant. More specifically, that our old sinful natures are like a dead, diseased plant which has been uprooted and replaced with the healthy plant of God's Spirit who is the life in us.

# THE UGLY AND THE BEAUTIFUL

Thomas Chalmers, a Scottish preacher who lived in the 18th and 19th centuries, wrote about 'the expulsive power of a new affection'. He said:

*Christians overcome the world by seeing the beauty and excellence of Christ. They overcome the world by seeing something more attractive than the world: Christ.*

A key idea we're looking at in this series is that transformation never comes simply through dutifully slogging at rules. Instead it comes when, by God's Spirit, we see both the ugliness, destructiveness, and pain of the life of sin, and the beauty of Jesus and his self-giving love, as something attractive that we're drawn to. Ultimately it isn't morality that will change us, but delighting in the gospel of Jesus as the best thing there is. The good news of the gospel is that we're forgiven for the ugly ways of life we lived in rebellion to God. But beyond not being punished for them, part of being forgiven is God's pulling us out of that ugly, destructive life, and his gift of something wonderful to be a part of, and the power to be a part of it, all by his grace.

# WHY THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS?

In thinking about life beyond sin, this term we're focusing on seven sins in particular, and what life beyond them looks like. The seven sins are what have long been called the 'seven deadly sins': pride, anger, envy, lust, gluttony, sloth (also called laziness), and greed.

Why these seven? Categorising these sins together as the 'Deadly Sins' has been a way of thinking about them from early in church history. Regardless of how different parts of the church have thought about these sins at different times, we're not singling these sins out as being worse than any others, or suggesting they're the only ones that are deadly. The reason the early church grouped these seven together is because they're sins in a person's heart that stand behind all the other sins which we commit in action. These are the driving sins of our hearts that the gospel confronts.

Although there is a neat list of seven sins here, in reality these sins don't separate into seven distinct boxes. They tend to bleed into each other. Sometimes one is the cause of another, sometimes they intertwine with each other or overlap. None of them ever stand completely alone. However, when we keep that in mind, it's also helpful to look at each in turn to clarify what's going on in our hearts, and begin to work on them.

# SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

After talking about change as not coming through morality or rule keeping, it might seem a bit contradictory to talk about discipline as an important part of the Christian life. Spiritual disciplines are practices that the church has historically seen as useful in personal transformation. They've been treated suspiciously by a number of Christians for a long time, precisely because they so often have become a set of rules that are kept dutifully, and because at times the church has listed a set number as if these practices themselves had some power to change our hearts.

To understand the usefulness of spiritual disciplines it's important to understand the place of habits in our lives. Often when we experience a recurring sin in our life we don't realise that there's a reason for it... we've made a habit of it! Our hearts, rebelling against God's rule, lead us to rebel against God so continually that rebellion becomes a habit. We develop habits in the way we think, believe, and feel, and habits of actions. The new life of the Spirit involves undoing those habits we've learnt and developing new habits through disciplines of living like Jesus until they become natural. We develop habits of thinking and habits of actions, and these feed into, and strengthen, each other. What makes a discipline 'spiritual' isn't anything special about the action itself – any discipline of action is a spiritual discipline if it is both fed by, and feeding, a belief and delight in Jesus. That only comes from the power of God's Spirit in us. As such these studies don't prescribe disciplines, but give some examples to prod some thought on what disciplines might be helpful for you.

Finally, disciplines tend to be misunderstood as individual things we do alone. They should rather be understood as habits we develop together in community with each other.

# HOW TO USE THESE STUDIES

The studies are fairly short and simple. The point of this isn't to lead to short discussions – just the opposite! Hopefully they provide space for discussion beyond the scope of the questions themselves. The studies follow the movement of salvation in Galatians 2:20:

Firstly, they look at the 'old' way of life of sin from a particular passage. Secondly, the way Jesus' self-giving love at the cross shows us and calls us into a different way of life. Finally, a couple of questions discuss what the new life of the Spirit might look like. These 'New' questions are broad and the same each week. They're intended to generate discussion about what old habits might be driving your actions, and what new habits you could develop, but without being prescriptive. To help this discussion, the 'new' section begins with some thoughts about the deadly sin in question and some suggestions for ways forward. It's hoped these will be helpful and will give direction without limiting discussion.

## SERIES OBJECTIVES

1. To understand that God has moved us from the old life to the new by putting our sin to death on the cross, and giving his Spirit; it isn't something we achieve ourselves.
2. To understand that the Spirit grows this new life in us as we make a habit of walking in step with him.
3. To grow an appreciation of the ugliness of sin and the beauty and attractiveness of Jesus.
4. To begin, in community, to identify old habits and begin to develop new habits of life that foster the new life of the Spirit in us.



1

DYING &amp; RISING WITH

**JESUS**

2

WALKING WITH

**JESUS**

3

LIFE BEYOND

**PRIDE**

4

LIFE BEYOND

**ANGER**

5

LIFE BEYOND

**ENVY**

6

LIFE BEYOND

**LUST**

7

LIFE BEYOND

**GLUTTONY**

8

LIFE BEYOND

**SLOTH**

9

LIFE BEYOND

**GREED****BIG IDEA**

Real life is about growing the loving character of Jesus, the sinful life is ugly and selfish. In Jesus' death and resurrection we die to selfishness and rise to new life in Jesus' Spirit.

**BIBLE PASSAGE**

Galatians 2:20  
and 5:13-26

**KEY VERSE**

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

*Galatians 2:20*



SAMPLE

# OLD + NEW

## Read Galatians 5:16-6:10

1. How does Paul describe 'indulging in the flesh' in these verses?
2. How do you see these ways of living and relating to others play out in our world today?
3. How does Paul describe the new way of life of the Christian in these verses?
4. If God has forgiven a Christian, why do you think it matters how we live?

# DYING + RISING

## Read Galatians 2:20-3:1-6

5. What place does the cross have in bringing us from the old way of life to the new?
6. What place does the *Spirit* have in bringing us from the old way of life to the new?

7. What place does obeying religious laws have in bringing us from the old way of life to the new?

## THE NEW

What's driving the decisions you make in life? Do you simply make choices, or is something shaping them below the surface?

Christian ethicist Stanley Hauerwas suggests that who we are is shaped by pictures, metaphors, and symbols we carry in our hearts; images that depict who we think we are and what the world is like. Therefore changing our lives won't happen through sheer willpower but through carrying the right story, the right pictures and images of our lives, in our hearts. The pictures we (often unconsciously) carry in our hearts of our world and our lives shape who we become and how we live. Our world is constantly telling us a story about what the world is really like, and who we really are, and it gives us pictures of that through things like the media. We take these ideas into ourselves often without thinking about it and are shaped by them.

However the Bible is full of alternative pictures of who we are because of the cross of Jesus. The main one we're drawing on in this series is that of the dead plant of our old natures, uprooted and replaced with the new, healthy, fruit producing plant of God's Spirit – but there are many more as well. As we take this kind of story image of ourselves into our heart it'll shape our outlook on ourselves, our world, and our lives.

8. Can you think of what story and images have been shaping your life so far? More importantly, discuss some ways together you can develop new, biblical pictures of yourself in your heart.

PRAYER

PRAY FOR  
YOUR CROSS  
CULTURAL  
CONNECT  
PARTNER

SAMPLE

## BIG IDEA

Because of sin we are like dead trees growing rotten fruit. Jesus makes us living trees which begin to grow good fruit.

## ACTIVITY

Go to your fridge, your garden (or even your bin or school bag). What is lurking in the vegetable crisper, or in the containers at the back of the fridge? What is in your garden under a rock? Look for something rotten.



Smell it.

How does that make you feel? Disgusting? Gross, icky, yuck? Get it away from me!

Now find something good to eat, like a crunchy fresh apple, or a soft ripe banana, or a fresh glass of milk. How much better is it? It is so much better when it doesn't make your stomach turn over.

## READ THE BIBLE

Galatians 5:19-26

## DISCUSSION

Jesus does the impossible. He takes something that is rotten, and makes it fresh. Remember the rotten thing you smelled? Imagine if you could make it fresh and good to eat? Sounds crazy – but that's what the Bible says Jesus does with us. He loved us so much that he wanted to make us new and fresh. He died to make this happen.

In Galatians it says that Jesus lives in us. When we believe in Jesus, his spirit lives within us. Like a friend that is always there. Helping us to bear the good fruit of the Spirit in our lives, not the rotten fruit of sin.

## PRAYER IDEA

Thank God for sending his son Jesus to die and help us become new and fresh. Pray that we can show God's love through our actions and words this week.

At Creek Road we love Jesus. We want to reach the city and reach the world with the good news about who Jesus is. We'd love to help you meet Jesus as we explore the Bible together at our Sunday Services.

We want every person to have a chance to connect with Jesus, to grow to be more like Jesus and to serve Jesus. So we try to make everything we do clear and easy to understand.

If you've got any questions, we'd love to answer them. If there is anything you need, we'd love to help.

You don't need to be good, religious, or have it all together to join us on a Sunday. Jesus is for everyone — people of all stages, ages, and places. So is our church.

Everyone is welcome. Seriously.

#### **SERIES COMPANION TEAM**

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#### **Life Beyond the Seven Deadly Sins**

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**MEDIA**

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