

*The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, **forgiving** iniquity and transgression and **sin**, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.*” Exodus 34:6-7

OPEN

- What is the scariest animal you’ve encountered (not in a zoo, but in a place you felt some danger)?

DISCOVER

Read Exodus 34:6-7.

Iniquity refers to behavior that is crooked. *Transgression* refers to breaking trust. The Hebrew word **khata**, translated “sin,” means to fail or to miss the goal.

Read Judges 20:16ⁱ and Proverbs 19:2.ⁱⁱ

- What do these uses of **khata** add to your understanding of sin?ⁱⁱⁱ

Read Genesis 4:6-7.

- What does this description add to your understanding of sin?
- How might seeing sin as a wild hungry animal affect how you view temptation?

The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17) divide into two groups – the first three^{iv} commandments address our relationship with God, the last seven our relationship with one another.

- Is it possible to break one of the last seven commandments without breaking one of the first three commandments? Consider Genesis 39:6b-9 and Psalm 51:4 (note the text before the psalm).

DEEPEN

The Greek word for sin, **hamartia**, means a power or force that rules humans.

Read Romans 7:7-13

- What actions is sin described as taking?

Read Romans 7:14-20.

- Why is it so difficult to obey God, even when you want to obey?
- Why are we responsible for sin when Paul says “I’m not the one sinning, it’s sin that did it!”
- If “sin” is a failure to reach the goal, what does the Bible say is the goal?^v
- Read Genesis 1:26-28 and Matthew 22:36-40. What might you add to your description of the goal?

Read 1 Peter 2:22-24 and Romans 6:6.

- What effect does Christ death have on our relationship to sin?

SO WHAT?^{vi}

Read Romans 8:1-4.

- What hope do we have when we are struggling with sin?

Read Hebrews 4:14-16.

- What difference does it make to know Jesus endured every temptation?

- What role does discipline play in ruling over sin (Genesis 4:7)?^{vii}
- A friend says he's struggling with sin. What wisdom would you share from today's lesson?

PRAY

- Give thanks to Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 7:25) for being your great high priest who carried your sins to the cross so that there is now no condemnation for all who are in Christ (Romans 8:1)!
- Where would you like to see more freedom from sin in your life?^{viii}

Prayer Requests

ⁱ **khata** = miss (ESV)

ⁱⁱ **khata** = misses the way (ESV)

ⁱⁱⁱ Close only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades. You can miss by a hair or by a country mile, it's still sin. Sin can grow into a way of life, or rather a wayward life.

^{iv} Assuming you number like a Lutheran or Catholic. For other ways to number and why the Jews are right, see [Numbering the Ten Commandments](#).

^v The LORD has plans for humans that are far greater than not sinning or sinning less.

^{vi} SO WHAT questions remind us that the goal of studying the Bible is not more information, but life. Jesus says he comes to give us life, abundant life (John 10:10). The Word calls for a response. We can respond to the Word many ways. We can repent, believe, trust, pray, give thanks, share, meditate, forgive. What is the LORD calling you to do to live an abundant life with him?

^{vii} Discipline alone is not enough – we're overmatched! Trying harder to not sin will end in sin. Yet discipline plays a role in taking time to hear the Word, in running to the throne of grace and mercy at the right time (not just after we've blown it!), be willing to be completely honest with a trust friend, not just mostly honest.

^{viii} You're really asking me to admit my sins in front of others?!? Only if you want to. You've met for nine sessions. Hopefully you've realized as a sinner you fit right into this group. When sin remains buried and in darkness, it rots and stinks. Just admitting you struggle begins to break the power of sin in your life. Again, up to you, share what you want. But many have found great power and encouragement from letting others in on their struggles.