

Aim of lesson

That the young people should understand the origin and nature of sin and how this affects their lives

Bible background

Genesis 1, 2, 3; Romans 5, 6

Preparation required

Read the relevant Bible passages.

Chapter 2 of *'The Christadelphians - What they Believe and Preach'* (Harry Tennant) is also useful. Familiarise yourself with the Students' Notes.

Suggested outline of lesson

The young people should fill in their notes one section at a time, either in order to lead in to a discussion of that section or to follow it up.

Creation of Man

Genesis 1:25, 31. God created a beautiful world. It was all good.

Genesis 2:7. He then created man. Formula: dust + breath of life = living soul or body + spirit = living soul.

Genesis 2:19, 7:21-22. In physical substance animals were identical to man but there was an important difference. Man was created in God's image and given dominance over the animal creation. He was given the powers of speech and reasoning and the ability to worship and communicate with God. (Genesis 1:27,28).

The Origin of Sin

Adam and Eve had to prove whether they would obey God or not. They were given a simple test. If they disobeyed they would die - Genesis 2:16,17. God gave them freedom to obey or disobey. He had not made them like puppets; he wanted them to choose his way because they loved and respected him. They chose to eat the fruit.

The Nature of Sin

1 John 3:4 - Sin is the breaking of God's law.

Genesis 3:6 - Eve thought the fruit looked good, would taste good and would give her wisdom. This is picked up in 1 John 2:16 (NIV) "For everything in the world - the cravings of sinful man, the lust of the eyes and the boasting of what he has and does - comes not from the Father but from the world". Mark 7:20-23; James 1:13-15 tell us that sin comes from within not from outside. The internal temptation may be stimulated by an external source as with the serpent in Eve's case. Adam and Eve were proud. They thought they knew better than God and they sinned.

Ask the students if they think some sins are worse than others? e.g. murder, as opposed to stealing a sweet from a shop. Try to draw out that all sins separate us from God and are therefore disastrous for us. However, the immediate effects on people of some sins are worse than others; compare the effects of the murder as opposed to the effects of stealing the sweet. Some sins also separate us from God (Isaiah 59:2) to a greater extent than others; look at Psalm 32:3-5 and think about the effect David's adultery had on his relationship with God. Some sins, like a marriage to someone who has no faith in God, will have a lasting effect.

Ask the students if they think any sins cannot be forgiven? Matthew 12:31 - speaking against the Holy Spirit. Why? - because the sinner does not acknowledge his sin, he lacks repentance and does not acknowledge God's power to forgive but God will forgive our sins if we acknowledge and confess them, 1 John 1:9.

The Consequences

The immediate consequences were that they knew they were naked, they had lost their innocence. They avoided meeting God, fellowship was broken and they felt fear and shame for the first time. The ultimate consequences were that they became dying creatures who would become sick, grow old and die.

Romans 6:23 - the wages of sin is death

God had to carry out his promise of death as the punishment for disobedience. It would be unthinkable to have immortal sinners. God did not leave them without the hope of a saviour, however (Genesis 3:15).

Relevance to our lives

Romans 5:12. We have inherited Adam's nature and the punishment of death. What is death? The formula for life in reverse. The living soul without the breath of life becomes dust. When Adam died, part of him did not go on living in heaven. His death was God's punishment for sin and so is ours. There is no such thing as an 'immortal soul' There is nothing that carries on living after a person dies. Soul in the Bible means life, person, creature or being. Ezekiel 18:4,20 - souls die!

Look at Ephesians 2:1-3, and note that there are two reasons for our condemnation. As well as being dead in trespasses and sins (plural) we are 'by nature' children of wrath. It is our basic nature, as well as our actions, which separates us from God. It is worth considering that the Lord Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin (singular) of the world.

The main impact on us is the recognition that we start our relationship with God from a long way off, as the prodigal son literally did. We should come to him in humility; but that's another lesson.

Prayer

No sin is unforgivable as long as we acknowledge, confess and repent, 1 John 1:9. Encourage students - either in a few moments silent meditation or at home during the week - to unburden themselves of the sins they thought could not be forgiven or that keep recurring. The "calm of sin forgiven" brings a peace unique to true believers.

Other suggestions for activities

1. Look at Matthew 5 - the Sermon on the Mount, and consider the practical advice on how to curb sins at the thinking stage before they get to the planning and acting stages
2. Look at the life of David as an example to us. In his early life he asked God before taking action. In the incident of Bathsheba he did not and brought many difficulties on himself as a result.
3. Discuss further the point raised in Section 3 about different sorts of sin, disobedience, sins of omission or weakness and whether they feel some sins are unforgivable.

Postscript

Next week's topic is about Hinduism. It may be worthwhile at the end of this lesson to ask the young people what they know about the subject, and what they have been taught at school. This will help you prepare for next week; you may also be able to ask one or two of the young people to introduce next week's topic by bringing in material they have been given at school.