



## WHAT IF IT'S TRUE . . . THAT YOU ARE A SINNER

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In preparation for the online Bible study on Feb. 20, you may wish to read through the following questions and Bible passages. We will consider these and other topics during our live discussion as well. Preparation is not required.

### **STATEMENT: ALL SIN IS THE SAME**

**Consider:** Is this a helpful statement or not? How can it be used in a helpful way? How can it be used in a hurtful way?

### **NOTES**

### **STATEMENT: GOD HATES THE SIN BUT LOVES THE SINNER**

**Consider:** React to this statement. If you would like, use the Bible passages listed below to help guide your thoughts.

### **READ: THE FOLLOWING BIBLE PASSAGES**

**Consider:** What truths about sin and sinners can be found in the following passages?

Psalms 5:5—

Genesis 3:1-7—

Romans 7:14-25—

Matthew 23:27,28—

Matthew 5:21,22—

Matthew 5:27-30—

Matthew 7:3-5—

Matthew 15:19—

## NOTES

### **STATEMENT: SIN CAN BE UNDERSTOOD IN TWO DIFFERENT WAYS: ACTUAL SIN AND ORIGINAL SIN**

**Consider:** We know this statement to be true. Review the references to the book *Grace Abounds* in the “What if it’s true” article for February (p. 32).

How do you understand the difference between actual sin and original sin? Which are we more inclined to focus on? Why?

### **STATEMENT: IF SINFUL ACTIONS ARE OUR ONLY UNDERSTANDING OF SIN, THEN WE HAVE BUT ONE SOLUTION FOR OUR SIN PROBLEM: STOP DOING THE SIN.**

**Consider:** How do you react to this statement? How might thinking of sin as just an action lead us to “ignore the plank in our own eye,” as Matthew says in Matthew chapter 7?

### **READ: MARTIN LUTHER’S WRITINGS ABOUT MORTAL AND VENIAL SINS**

**Consider:** Read on the following page about the idea of mortal and venial sins. How is the distinction helpful? How is it less than helpful? How is Luther distinguishing between the two? How might this distinction help us talk more clearly about big sins vs. little sins?

\*See the excerpt from *Luther’s Works* on the next page.

### EXCERPT FROM LUTHER'S WORKS

“Sin is really sin, regardless of whether you commit it before or after you have come to know Christ. And God hates the sin; in fact, so far as the substance of the deed is concerned, every sin is mortal. It is not mortal for the believer; but this is on account of Christ the Propitiator, who expiated it by His death. As for the person who does not believe in Christ, not only are all his sins mortal, but even his good works are sins, in accordance with the statement (Rom. 14:23): “Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.” Therefore it is a pernicious error when the sophists distinguish among sins on the basis of the substance of the deed rather than on the basis of the persons. A believer’s sin is the same sin and sin just as great as that of the unbeliever. To the believer, however, it is forgiven and not imputed, while to the unbeliever it is retained and imputed. To the former it is venial; to the latter it is mortal. This is not because of a difference between the sins, as though the believer’s sin were smaller and the unbeliever’s larger, but because of a difference between the persons. For the believer knows that his sin is forgiven him on account of Christ, who has expiated it by His death. Even though he has sin and commits sin, he remains godly. On the other hand, when the unbeliever commits sin, he remains ungodly. This is the wisdom and the comfort of those who are truly godly, that even if they have sins and commit sins, they know that because of their faith in Christ these are not imputed to them” (*Luther’s Works*, AE, Vol. 27, p. 76).

### NOTES