READ 1 John 3:4-10

KIDS What happens when we don’t talk about sin?

The story is told of Calvin Coolidge, president during the mid-late 1920’s, returning to the White House from Church one Sunday. Coolidge was known as a man of few words. Who an aid asked him what the preacher preached on, Coolidge simply replied, “Sin.”

“Well, what did he say about it?”

“He’s against it.”

That three letter word is not a popular topic to talk about, but it is vital to discuss, and with the ever-changing terms that our society loves to employ upon everyone, it is best to say more than “we are against it.”

A few months ago, I was helping out our state mission board with a golf tournament. I was riding around placing all of the hole sponsorships near each tee when I struck up a conversation with a threesome asking me what the tournament was for. When I told him it was for Free Will
Baptist International Missions, one of them said, “I grew up Free Will Baptist, and I hate them!”

Trying to maybe smooth over what someone had done wrong against him I asked why.

“They are against everything! I couldn’t do anything growing up. That’s why I go to (A Certain Other Denominational) Church now. They are OK with everything!”

There were signs to set, and I didn’t feel like he wanted to discuss the matter further when he wished me a…colorful…day so I let it be.

I could not sit down and give you a list, but for one reason or another, the Church has gotten away from talking about sin. I expect it from the world. Scripture says that as this world grows more evil, it will begin to call what is evil: right and what is right: evil.

We MUST talk about sin, then, for several reasons:

1. When we do not talk about sin, we are not being faithful to the Word.

   Our church Statement of Faith says this about man’s sin condition:

   We believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God; but that in Adam’s sin the human race fell, inherited a sinful nature, and became alienated from God. Man is totally depraved and, of himself, utterly unable to remedy his lost condition.

   It goes on to further define what the Bible details as sin for three pages, listing multiple Bible references after each. More than that Scripture talks a lot about sin—the word shows up just under
500 times in Scripture. However, many other words (abomination, transgression, evil, etc.) are used to describe that idea. So yes, the Bible talks A LOT about sin.

2. When we do not talk about sin, we are being cruel to the world.

Do you remember the last time you were looking for a doctor? What were some of the qualifications that you wanted in a medical professional? Qualifications, training, professionalism, bedside manner: all are important. But when it comes right down to it, I want someone who can tell me when something is wrong and do everything in their power to help fix that issue.

Yes, cancer hurts feelings, but worse than that, it kills.

Bedside manner is important, but not at the expense of glossing over the disease.

Spiritually, we have bought into this idea that by speaking about sin we are being cruel. There is nothing cruel about telling someone that they have an illness when you know the remedy.

3. When we do not talk about sin, we forget the Gospel.

The Gospel means GOOD NEWS. You cannot present a full explanation of what Christ has done on the cross without talking about sin. Without sin being an issue, Jesus came for nothing and died for nothing.

We must talk about sin because Jesus came for our sin.

4 Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.

5 And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.
When we do not talk about sin, we have no basis for our beliefs because we have diminished Scripture. When we do not talk about sin we are as purposeless as a doctor who refuses to talk about illness. When we do not talk about sin, we remove the very reason why Jesus died. In short, what you believe about sin directly affects what you believe about God.

With all that being said, What's so Bad about Sin? Let’s walk through 1 John 3:4-10 together:

1. Sin Defined: Lawlessness

   4 Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.

   Let me read a portion of the 1926 Minnesota Crime Commission:

   *Every baby starts life completely selfish and self-centered. He wants what he wants when he wants it; his bottle, his mother's attention, his playmate's toy, his uncle's watch. Deny these and he seethes with rage which would be murderous were he not so helpless. This means that all children, not just certain children, are born delinquent. If permitted to continue in the self-centered world of infancy, given free rein to his impulsive actions, every child will grow into some form of criminal.*

   Now, let this stand in stark contrast. I know that mental disorders are a real thing because of this fallen world, but I read recently that in 2013, the American Psychiatric Association
classified temper tantrums in children as a mental disorder worthy of counseling and not discipline.¹

The world has tried to reason away sin by applying new names to it. “Alternative Lifestyle,” “Lesser of Two Evils,” “Right to Choose,” “Genetic Predisposition.”

We can try to dress it up and name it something else, but sin remains lawlessness against God, Anarchy against the Lord, Treason against the King.

We are going to come back to verse 5 because I want us to tackle what I believe are some of the most difficult verses of Scripture in all of the Bible. I believe verse 6 serves as a heading and verses 7-9 expound upon that thought.

6 Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.

7 Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.

8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

9 Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

¹ World Magazine, May 18, 2013, p. 8
1 John is written to the Christian to encourage her in her faith, to make sure she knows that she is in Christ. Time after time, the Spirit has assured us through John that when we sin, He will forgive us:

1 John 1:9 — 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
1 John 2:1 — 1 My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

But here, in 1 John 3:6-9, John is severely black and white in his writing. How do we approach this passage? Let me give you a few views (by the way, when I do this I am not stringing you along. I hope to encourage you to give you tools for how you can study the Scripture by yourself).

1. Sinless Perfection— Great men of the faith like John and Charles Wesley held that this passage of Scripture was relaying the possibility of a Christian’s reaching sinless perfection in his faith—That you could reach a point in your Christian walk before Heaven when you did not sin (in thought, word or deed).

The Problem: The Apostle Paul wrote just 10 years before his death:

Romans 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. 19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. 20 Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.
Also, in your reading of Scripture, you have probably seen MULTIPLE occasions of pleas for Christians to cease their sinning. Those kind of exhortations would be pointless if we were sinless.

2. Repeated Regeneration— This is what Free Will Baptists are often accused of believing. The basic idea in this thought is that when you sin, you are no longer saved; therefore, you must continue to ask for salvation.

   The Problem: Your salvation is based upon the finished work of Christ on the cross not upon your works or lack thereof.

3. Sin Classification— This is the historic Roman Catholic teaching, that there are two kinds of sins: venial and mortal. Basically, venial sins are accidental sins committed. You have to confess these and then practice the mode of penance prescribed by the priest. Mortal sins are the sins from which there is no return—no forgiveness will be extended if one of these is committed. They would say that verses 6-9 speak of those mortal sins.

   The Problem: Nowhere, in all of the Bible—not Old Testament, not New Testament—is such a categorization or list of sins recorded or even implied.

4. The Scriptural View— The answer for how to read these verses is in the verb tense. John uses a present active participle.

   6 Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.
Essentially, John is writing of someone who continues in a lifestyle of sin. The rest of verses 7-9 should be viewed through that lens. John is not speaking of individual sins but a continuation of lawless living, unrepentant, uncaring about the consequences or depravity of one’s actions.

John describes two different people in verses 6-9. John is actually contrasting the difference between sinners (which we all are) and a lifestyle devoted to sinning.²

When I was about seven, I went to Lowe’s with my dad and brother. While my dad was looking at something on the hardware aisle, I saw a nut and bolt on the ground; so I picked it up and started fidgeting with it. When it came time to check out, I put it in my pocket.

When we got home I pulled it out and was playing with it again and my brother asked me where I got it. “Lowe’s.” “Corey, you stole that!” He was right. I sinned. I am a sinner.

I think we can see a huge difference in that offense (which brought MANY tears to the Minter household that afternoon) and Bonny and Clyde whose whole life was wrapped up in the next bank heist.

A Christian sins, feels the weight of his transgression, confesses and repents to Christ, and is forgiven. The lost enjoy their life of sinning.

Is there some sin in your life that has become such an integral part of you that you no longer give any thought to it once you’ve committed it? Envy, lust, gossip, etc…

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7 Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.

8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

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2. Gospel Applied: Forgiveness

5 And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.

Someone once wrote:

If mankind’s true need was education, God would have sent us a host of teachers;
If mankind’s greatest help was advancement in technology, He would have sent us engineers and inventors;
If mankind’s greatest ailment was sickness, He would have sent us medicine and a doctor;
If mankind’s greatest need was finances, He would have sent us a financial planners and economists;
But our greatest problem is sin . . . so He sent us a Savior.
What’s so bad about sin? It separates us from the Almighty, yet Christ came and joined us back with Him.