

**Growing Deeper**  
*Can I Ask That?*

**Week Four - Why Does God Hate on Some Behaviors and Not Others?**  
**Genesis 4:1-16**

**Spend FIFTEEN - Day One**

1. If your child asked you what sin is, how would you answer him or her? How easy or difficult would it be for you to explain sin in a clear way?
2. How would you answer if a friend or coworker asked you what sin is?
3. Read Genesis 4:3-7. How does God's description of sin compare to yours?
4. What difference does it make to think of sin as having agency? How does it matter if sin is not just a concept, but something that actually "crouches at your door" and "desires to control you"?
5. If you look at your own life, and the sins with which you have long struggled, how would you describe their impact on you?
6. Are there things (thoughts, desires, addictions, habit patterns) that control you? What are they? Would you like to turn the tables on those sins? Wresting control away from sin starts with a simple but intimidating act: confession. If there is a sin that is currently mastering you, find someone you trust - a spouse, a friend, or a pastor - and confess this sin to them.
7. But first, pray. Start by confessing your sin to God. Ask him to forgive you for this thing that you have let take control over your life. Resolve to seek a person to declare God's forgiveness over you, who will also stand by you in your journey to master sin in your life.

**Spend FIFTEEN - Day Two**

8. Do you have a favorite dramatic TV show that you currently watch? What series are you sure to see? What is it that makes that show so compelling for you?
9. By and large, the best, most compelling dramas tend to be the ones with the best sins. Right? Sunday school characters who do nothing worse than jaywalking might make for good friends, but they make for terrible television! With that filter in mind, think again about some of your favorite shows. What are the mistakes that your favorite characters tend to make?

10. Now, to be fair, most people wouldn't describe the actions in their favorite shows as sins. They'd call them flaws, or quirks, or intrigues. Frank Underwood isn't a sinner; he's simply a ruthless politician. But compare the things that go on in our TV shows to what the Bible describes as sinful acts in Galatians 5:19-21.
11. Now, to shift gears for a moment, read Romans 5:12-19, focusing especially on the last two verses.
12. Does it feel fair that Adam's sin "brings condemnation" for all human beings? Does it make sense to you that "because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners?" Why or why not?
13. The reason I think we like these TV shows is because they mirror reality. We see characters' choices and motivations similar to ones that we have felt or they show injustices like ones that we have personally experienced. Sin continues to abound today. Does it make it better or worse for you, personally, to blame it all on Adam? How might it help to understand the biblical reason behind the sin we see around us?
14. Close your FIFTEEN in prayer by reading verses 18 and 19 again. It might be unfair that one man caused all the troubles we see around us, but it's also unfair that one man, Jesus Christ, can make us righteous again. Thank God for the work he did through one man to save us from the brokenness all around us and inside us.

### **Spend FIFTEEN - Day Three**

15. We often find ourselves "ranking" the sins of others, whether we should or not. What sin do you think is the worst of all? And why?
16. What do you think are the factors that go into deciding how bad a sin is?
17. One theologian suggested that the worst sin is... worrying, because worrying means that you don't trust God, which violates the very *first* commandment. Murder only violates the fifth commandment, so that's clearly less a big deal. What do you think of this ranking system?
18. When He was asked, how did Jesus rank the sins? Turn to Matthew 22:34-40. Why do you think Jesus highlighted these two?
19. Take a moment and think of the sins that go on around you that make you the angriest. Jot them down. Now make a two-column chart. Title one column, "Not Loving God" and the other column, "Not Loving Neighbor." Now try to sort the sins you wrote down into the two columns. How easy or hard is that to do? Why?

20. As Christians engage (or abstain from) the morality wars raging in our culture, it's important to remember that a specific sin is not, in and of itself, the problem. The problem is what it does to the relationships between us and God and between us and others. How can Christians engage with sin issues in our culture in a way that prioritizes relationships?
21. Ask God to give you wisdom through his Spirit to help you compassionately remember the true problem behind sin: it separates us from God and from each other. Ask Him to help you bridge the gap between God and a broken world.

**Spend FIFTEEN - Day Four**

22. How would you describe your relationship with God? What specific words would you use? Why do you think it is that you have this kind of relationship with God?
23. Take some time to look up some laws that the Bible gave us: Leviticus 19:19 and Deuteronomy 22:6-8. Do you follow these laws? If you don't, how does your breaking of these laws create an obstacle in your relationship with God?
24. Now look up a list of some other laws: 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. Do you know people who break any of these laws? Have you, yourself, broken any of these? What effect does breaking these laws have on your relationship with God?
25. Why is there a difference between the two sets of laws?
26. Some of the laws in the Bible are cultural - they applied to a specific time and place. Others are universal - they will always matter in our relationship with God. We always need to be careful not to mistake a cultural law as being more important than trusting God.
27. Now let's look at what sins God specifically said would keep us from Him: Exodus 20:1-11.
28. In your own words, can you explain why these things matter in our relationship to God? How well or poorly do you follow these laws?
29. Pray for God to draw you closer in your relationship with Him. Ask Him to help you avoid anything which might be an obstacle in your fear, love and trust for Him.

**Spend FIFTEEN - Day Five**

30. Pop quiz: Is drinking alcohol a sin? How about watching R-rated movies? Using curse words? Praying with people of other religions? Moving the Rams to L.A.?

31. Faithful Christians will have different answers to all of those questions. (Except the Rams one; *of course* it's a sin to move them to L.A.!!) Why do you think it's hard to agree on these questions?
32. Read Romans 14:20-23. What is Paul saying about these gray areas of sin?
33. What should be the overarching principle for us when we try to decide whether a behavior is okay or not?
34. For help with that question, read 1 Corinthians 8:9-13. This is pretty specific. What is our number one reason not to do something which may or may not be a sin?
35. How have you seen this play out in your own relationships? Are there times where you've used your freedom at the expense of someone else? What was a time where you were caused to stumble because another Christian did something in a gray area that seemed inappropriate to you?
36. Close with prayer. Ask God to give you His discernment about some of these ambiguous areas of sin. Ask for help to see the *person* in a troublesome situation more than the behavior itself.