



What to Do about Sin

When a person becomes a Christian, lots of things change (2 Corinthians 5:17). Unfortunately, one thing remains the same: believers still sin. They may not sin in the same ways, but they do sin. *Even mature believers still struggle with sin. No one reaches a level of perfection where they no longer sin or yield to temptation occasionally.*

This lesson will look at what a believer should do when he sins.

1. Confess your sin to God. Prov 28:13; 1 John 1:8-10

Note that the texts imply that believers still sin. In fact, if someone thinks he is sinless, he is wrong.

The word “confess” means to admit, acknowledge, or agree with. The Greek word literally means “to say the same thing.” When you confess your sin, you admit to God that you have sinned, acknowledge that you are guilty and ask for forgiveness.

Confession is not to other people, like a priest, but to God. It’s not wrong to talk to someone else about your sin, but it’s not necessary unless someone else is affected by your sin.

When one has sinned, he will normally feel guilty or sorry for his sin. Don’t ignore this feeling. Your conscience is a very important voice telling you right from wrong. However, you shouldn’t wait until you feel guilty to confess your sin to God. You should ask God to forgive you as soon as possible after you sin.

The fact that God forgives sin should not produce within us a presumptuous attitude regarding sin, as if we can freely sin because God always forgives anyway. God’s willingness to forgive us should lead us to live holy, righteous lives (Titus 2:11-12).



Question: What do you think about this statement: “I can sin all I want to because God is always going to forgive me anyway.”



Question: What has God promised to those believers who refuse to repent of and forsake sin? (*Hebrews 12:5-7*)



Question: Why do Christians need to confess their sins and ask for forgiveness if God has already forgiven all sins at the point of salvation?

(From the Westminster Confession: “God continues to forgive the sins of those that are justified; and, although they can never fall from the state of justification, yet they may, by their sins, fall under God’s fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of his countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance.”)

Note: Sometimes we say that sin in the believer’s life hinders his fellowship with God. This is probably not the most accurate language to use. In the NT, the idea of fellowship with God roughly corresponds with salvation (1 Cor 1:9; 1 John

1:3-6). Hence, if one is saved, he has fellowship with God and cannot be out of fellowship with Him. A believer may, however, “fall under God’s fatherly displeasure” through sin, which does hinder one’s day-to-day relationship with God.

2. Forsake your sin. Proverbs 28:13

“Renounce” or “forsake” means to leave behind or to turn your back on. After confessing your sin, you must determine not to sin in that way again. This doesn’t guarantee that you won’t, but this should be your attitude.

Does God forgive the person who has no intention of forsaking that sin?

3. Make amends for your sin.

Your sin often affects others. Therefore, you must make things right with those touched by your sin. Don’t pretend the sin never happened. Deal with it.

☐ Ask others to forgive you if necessary.

☐ Repair, replace, or repay for what you did. Make restitution.



Question: What should you do when someone thinks you have wronged him or her, but you don’t believe you did?

4. Be sensitive about sin. Psalm 19:12, 139:23-24

It ought to bother you when you sin. You ought to be concerned about it. Ask God to show you your sins and your shortcomings. It’s good to do this at the end of each day. Keep “short accounts” with God. Don’t let sin pile up.

Ephesians 5:11 says, “Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.” Those who are sensitive to sin are concerned about sin in the lives of others. They don’t talk or joke about sinful behavior or enjoy it when others sin. Christians should obviously not tell or listen to dirty stories or off-color jokes and the like. Neither should they listen to “juicy” gossip regarding the sins of others. The corrupt and wicked ways of media stars should have no attraction for us. Don’t watch TV shows that promote and wallow in the “dirty laundry” of wicked people. Sin grieves God; it should grieve us, too.

What About when Others Sin against You?

Christians are not perfect people. Just like anyone else, they are prone to mistakes, errors in judgment, and sinful behavior. So we should not be surprised when a fellow believer sins against us. What should be our response?

☐ Pray – Probably the first thing we should do when sinned against is pray for the offender. Pray that he or she would admit their sin, repent of it and make restitution.

☐ Confront – It is a Christian’s duty to confront a brother or sister in Christ about his or her sin (Mt 18:15-17; Gal 6:1). Go to the person privately and discuss the issue. In some instances, this will solve the problem. At times, other individuals may need to be brought in to help. There may be occasions when church discipline is appropriate. Don’t just ignore the problem; deal with it.

- ☐ Forgive – Whether or not the offending individual apologizes, the Christian response to sin against himself is to forgive. One must not allow himself to become bitter, resentful or hateful against those who sin against him. *If you're not careful, a failure to forgive will develop bitterness in your heart. Learn to forgive people even if they don't ask for it or don't deserve it. Really, none of us deserve to be forgiven. Think of how much God has forgiven you.*
- ☐ Rest – Once you've done your biblical duty, trust God to work out the situation. You can't force anyone to repent. The only thing within your control is how you respond to the situation. Put it behind you and move on.

Conclusion: What should Christians do when they sin? They should confess it, forsake it, and make amends for it. They should always be sensitive about sin.

Discussion:

1. What does the word “confess” mean?
2. Why do saved people need to continue to ask forgiveness for sin?
3. What does “forsake” mean?
4. Why is it inappropriate for Christians to enjoy listening to Hollywood gossip shows or talk shows that air someone’s “dirty laundry”?
5. Does a Christian have to forgive someone if he or she doesn’t apologize?
6. Does a Christian have to apologize if he or she is not guilty of sin?
7. How can lack of forgiveness develop a bitter attitude?

