

Sin: That Dirty Little Word

The Bible will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from the Bible. – Dwight L. Moody

Do you have trouble talking about “sin?” Our worldly friends get offended when we call something sin, but our Christian friends often squirm uncomfortably as well. At best it seems quaint to call something a sin, and at worst it’s intolerant, unloving, and judgmental.

Part of our problem is that when we call something “sin,” we don’t always really know what we mean. Some sin is easy to define: lying, stealing and murdering are pretty easy to agree on. Why? Because they’re in the Bible.

And there’s the key. Sin is actually a biblical concept. Recently I read a great blog post from Julian Freeman on the uneasiness we feel when the term “sin” is used. Julian shares:

“I’m convinced that a lot of time when we lack clarity in our conversations and prayers regarding sin, it is because we are not laboring to think in biblical categories. Several years ago, someone challenged me to try to keep my conversations about sin tied to biblical words. That way we can speak of sin as sin. ... and if something is not sin, then we must deal with it in the realm of *preference* or simply *freedom*.”

He goes on to give a list of Scriptures that define sin specifically. Next, he went through them to create a “chart” of sins separated into three categories: heart, mouth and body. You can see the chart at the link above. (Guess which has the most sins listed in the Bible? Heart!)

This can be helpful in several ways. First of all, I need to examine my own life regularly and prayerfully to root out sin and idolatry. It was Socrates who opined, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” I want to live a life of integrity,

where my behavior is consistent with my beliefs and with Scripture.

This also gives us an objective framework to discuss sin with those we lead—at home, work and church. In Lamentations 3:40 Jeremiah exhorts us, *“Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD.”* Testing means you need to know what the standard is. For Christians, that standard is defined clearly in the Bible.

Finally, let’s not call something sin that isn’t defined that way in the Bible. It actually is judgmental to decide something is a sin based on my opinion rather than Scripture. When I put my opinion over Scripture, that would be, well, a sin!

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