

New City Catechism

Question 16: What is sin?

Answer: *Sin is rejecting or ignoring God in the word he created, not being or doing what he requires in his law.*

1 John 3:4

Before you read the question and answer, discuss the following questions?

- If you asked your peers what sin was, what kind of answers do you think you would get?
- If one of your friends asked you what sin was, how would you answer?

Now share the question and answer—practice the answer so that it “sticks” in your memory.

- According to our answer today, sin shows up in 1 of 2 ways. What are they?
 1. Rejecting or ignoring God and his word.
 2. Not being or doing what he requires in his law.

Read 1 John 3:4

- What does it say sin is?
- According to this verse, who sins?
- How is rejecting or ignoring God’s word lawlessness?
- How is not being or doing what God requires of us lawlessness?

Set up and play some kind of target game where you are trying to shoot or throw something at a target. Then explain:

One of the common words for “sin” in the Bible literally means “to miss the mark.” It comes from the world of archery or anything where you shoot, throw or sling something at a target. For example, read Judges 20:16—the word at the end for “not miss” is literally “not sin.”

- With regard to sinning against God, what is the “mark” we are missing when we sin?

This meaning of sin suggests that sometimes we are trying to obey God and fail because of our weakness, as is often the case.

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- With regard to sinning against God, what is the “mark” we are missing when we sin?

This meaning of sin suggests that sometimes we are trying to obey God and fail because of our weakness, as is often the case.

But do we always “miss the mark” (or sin) because we are trying to obey God and fail? *(No, sometimes we sin because we are not “aiming” at obeying God’s law at all, but aiming at something else. In other words, we reject or ignore God’s law and aim at doing whatever we want, and when we do we sin).*

How can we pray for one another about specific ways where we “miss the mark” of obeying God or struggle with desires to aim at some other mark. Share and pray for one another!

Watch the video on the New City Catechism app or website for more examples of how we sin. Make use of the other materials on the app or website as you see fit.

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