

Chapter 12: The Essence of the Gospel

Four Key Theologies

1. _____

Key components:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

When desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

James 1:15

Sin is an _____. Sin is evil _____.



We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:5

2. _____

Forgiveness that's conditional isn't forgiveness at all; it's just _____.

I assure you, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life.

John 5:24

So we praise God for the wonderful kindness he has poured out on us because we belong to his dearly loved Son. He is so rich in kindness that he purchased our freedom through the blood of his Son, and our sins are forgiven.

Ephesians 1:6-7

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. For the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you through Christ Jesus from the power of sin that leads to death.

Romans 8:1-2

Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? Will God? No! He is the one who has given us right standing with himself.

Romans 8:33

For all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet now God in his gracious kindness declares us not guilty. He has done this through Christ Jesus, who has freed us by taking away our sins. For God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to satisfy God's anger against us. We are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed his blood, sacrificing his life for us...our acquittal is not based on our good deeds. It is based on our faith.

Romans 3:23-25,27b

3. _____

When I refused to confess my sin, I was weak and miserable, and I groaned all day long. Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat. Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide them. I said to myself, "I will confess my rebellion to the LORD." And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.

Psalms 32:3-5

To confess your sins to God is not to tell Him anything He doesn't already know. Until you confess your sins, however, they are the abyss between you. When you confess them, they become the bridge.

—Frederick Buechner

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

John 1:8-10

Confession is _____ with God about your sin and _____ His perspective of it.

"Lord, you are in the right; but our faces are covered with shame, just as you see us now. This is true of us all, including the people of Judah and Jerusalem and all Israel, scattered near and far, wherever you have driven us because of our disloyalty to you. O LORD, we and our kings, princes, and ancestors are covered with shame because we have sinned against you. But the Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him."

Daniel 9:7-9

4. _____

Consequences are what we live with in this world to remind us of _____.

And have you entirely forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you, his children? He said, "My child, don't ignore it when the Lord disciplines you, and don't be discouraged when he corrects you. For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes those he accepts as his children." As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Whoever heard of a child who was never disciplined? If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children after all.

Hebrews 12:5-8

Today's Equipping Point:

Build _____ around yourself.

Discussion Questions

1. Be honest: Where is the pattern of sin hardest to resist in your life?
2. What inescapable consequences do you still live with?
3. Starting today, what will you do to be more intentional about confession?

Teaching Script

As we come to Chapter 12 of *The Story*, we come to a well-known part of David's story—the sin between him and Bathsheba and its after-effects. It's at the same time one of the saddest AND one of the most illuminating stories in the Bible.

You're familiar with the details...

David was the last person on the battlefield you'd pick to play the hero's part, but David was the underdog who overcame. He was the last person you'd pick to become king, but he confronted lions, bears, and giants with bare hands and bold faith. At last, the man after God's own heart had become the man on Israel's throne.

But kings who stay home from battle are seldom at rest. David's eyes wandered and so did his heart. He summoned the very lovely and very married Bathsheba to his palace and then into his bed. When Bathsheba sent word she was pregnant, David concocted a twisted conspiracy.

He called Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, home from the battlefield to visit his wife, expecting a night together would position Uriah as the father-to-be. The plan failed, so David concocted a surefire Plan B. He sent Uriah back to the frontlines carrying his own death warrant. David ordered General Joab to engineer a battlefield "accident" and guarantee Uriah's death. The plan worked. David married Bathsheba and went back to the business of the kingdom.

Then Nathan, the prophet, came to the palace. Guilty kings never fare well when prophets arrive for a visit—it happened with Samuel and Saul, and now with David. Nathan told a parable and pointed the finger of blame squarely in David's face. He asserted, "You are the man!" and the jig was up. Not even a master rationalizer like Saul could've wormed his way out of this one. So, the man after God's own heart had become the man with blood on his hands; and what's more, the wedding feast turned quickly into mourning the death of their son. David repented of his sin, and God forgave him. But after that, things would never, ever be the same.

In this chapter, there are four key theological concepts bundled together that are very Biblical, but can be very confusing. There is perhaps no other place in Scripture where these four realities are so intertwined within one story, and so it seems appropriate that we laser in on these subjects, not just to illuminate the story of David, but to see our own lives very clearly. We have in this story a window into some pretty deep theology that often confuses and discourages people. And believe me, the enemy would like nothing more than for us to miss these lessons, so that we permanently despair over our sins, leave them unattended, and allow them to create distance between ourselves and God, and between each other.

I'm convinced that this story is the story of *every single man* in this room, in this church. Each one of us struggles with these four truths every day.

1. Sin

Whether your name is Adam or Brad, Eve or Cheryl, it's your biggest problem. God, through the prophet Nathan holds David alone accountable for the sin. I'm convinced men too often find themselves in a place they never intended to be because they fail to recognize the pattern of sin. By inching closer and closer, our defenses come down and our sin nature rises to the surface.

David's descent into sin (p. 131)

David's temptation followed a longstanding pattern.

- a. **He saw**. Perhaps he could not help but see her, but he could have stopped watching.
- b. **He desired**. His lust overtook his sense and his morality. At this point he didn't even keep his interest a secret. He inquired about her to others and found out she was married. Regardless of the fact that David was already married to Michal, he wanted another woman. Disregarding her husband, he wanted THIS woman. Disregarding the Law of God prohibiting adultery, which was punishable by the death penalty, he still wanted her more than he wanted to honor God.
- c. **He took**. Knowing full well that she was married, he took her for himself. He robbed the honorable Uriah of his wife (and later his life). He abused the power of his position, a position given to him by God. The text reads as though this was a one-night stand.

The Pattern of Sin

Eve had a similar descent into sin in the Garden. Look at that episode on page 5 of *The Story*. Pay special attention to the verbs.

- a. **She saw**. Eve saw that the fruit of the forbidden tree was good and pleasing to the eye.
- b. **She desired**. The fruit was desirable for gaining wisdom, or so she thought.
- c. **She took**. She *took* the fruit, she *took* the word of the serpent over the word of God, and she *took* her husband down with her.

It's not the seeing...it's not the wanting...it's the ingestion of evil that's the problem.

We talked about this two years ago when we studied Proverbs 5—remember “drinking from your own well?” Talked about desire, lust, where temptation leaves off and sin begins...

James 1 says this:

Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

James 1:15

That word translated “conceived” is actually more often translated “to take—to seize for oneself.” So perhaps another way to translate this verse would be, “When desire has been grasped, it gives birth to sin.”

So see what you think of this definition: where does temptation end and sin begin? I believe ***sin is an impulse indulged. Sin is evil ingested.*** If our new translation is true, that says, “When desire has been grasped, it gives birth to sin,” then sin is when you could let go of the thought, but you don’t. We decide to host and nourish impure thoughts.

Think of it this way: see those two buttons on your outline? Each of us has a choice: you can hit the “delete” key or you can hit the “refresh” key. But all too often, instead of releasing the thought or the image, we keep reloading it in our minds.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 10:

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:5

There it is. Taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ means “delete”, not “reload.” A thought held captive to Christ is a thought not entertained, not grasped, not seized. It’s a thought released.

We will all be tempted—even Jesus was tempted, which meant it had to be enticing—He had to want it, otherwise it wouldn’t be tempting! But sin is about the grasping, the ingestion, the swallowing of that temptation. Remember, when you’re tempted, it’s still not too late!

2. ***Forgiveness***

God stands willing to forgive our sins. If we are believers, our sins have already all been forgiven when we appropriated the blood of Jesus by faith. Our salvation is secure even when our hands are “dirty.” It’s really, really important to understand the nature of this forgiveness: it’s not conditional, it’s not dependent, and it’s not based on how well you keep your nose clean from now on. So many people feel like they need to keep on earning their salvation or they could somehow wake up one day without it. But we need to understand this:

Forgiveness that’s conditional isn’t forgiveness at all, it’s just *fair warning*. If I say “I’ll forgive you IF you say you’re sorry...” or “I’ll forgive you if you pay me back with interest...” that’s just fair warning.

I want you to hear the definitiveness, the completeness, the permanence of true forgiveness in these Scriptures:

I assure you, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life.

John 5:24

So we praise God for the wonderful kindness he has poured out on us because we belong to his dearly loved Son. He is so rich in kindness that he purchased our freedom through the blood of his Son, and our sins are forgiven.

Ephesians 1:6-7

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Romans 3:23-25,27b

God initiates the change in the sinner status in that He brings him from a position of alienation to a state of forgiveness and right relationship with Himself. This reconciliation, or atonement, is offered to all who believe.

Forgiveness of sins does not cancel consequences. Eve, David, you, and I live with the natural consequences and sometimes even the discipline and judgment of God for our choices (more on this in a minute). But for now, we need to remember that when you believe and trust in Christ alone for salvation, your forgiveness is complete, backward and forward, *retrospectively* and *prospectively*.

3. Confession

First, let's listen to David's confession in Psalm 32:3-5:

When I refused to confess my sin, I was weak and miserable, and I groaned all day long. Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat. Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide them. I said to myself, "I will confess my rebellion to the LORD." And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.

To confess your sins to God is not to tell Him anything He doesn't already know. Until you confess your sins, however, they are the abyss between you. When you confess them, they become the bridge.

—Frederick Buechner

And now the Apostle John:

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

John 1:8-10

We need to see the **context** of this verse. Confession of our sin **cleanses** us. John is not saying that we are required to confess every single sin before God will forgive us. The forgiveness has already been taken care of. It's done—finished—lock, stock, and barrel—hook, line, and sinker. The forgiveness always has been, and always will be there. With confession, we're talking about a recognition that we are sinners and always in need of cleansing and forgiveness. (Note John 1:8-10.)

Confession is agreeing with God about your sin and acknowledging His perspective of it.

Lord, you are in the right; but our faces are covered with shame, just as you see us now. This is true of us all, including the people of Judah and Jerusalem and all Israel, scattered near and far, wherever you have driven us because of our disloyalty to you. O LORD, we and our kings, princes, and ancestors are covered with shame because we have sinned against you. But the Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him.

Daniel 9:7-9

In other words, if you lose your temper and yell at your wife, you're no less married than you were yesterday. But confession of your sin is the bridge back to a harmonious relationship, just as confession to God of our sins brings us back to a walk and communion with him that would not be possible if we continued to hang on to our pride, remained stubborn, and refused to acknowledge our weakness. It doesn't change our standing, but it does change the nature of our relationship, and our intimacy.

STOP: It's one thing to think something—it's completely another to say something out loud. There is great power in speaking something aloud. Knees: speak your confession to God...

4. ***Consequences***

Sin always gives birth to more sin.

Consequences with Eve: Immediately she and her husband hid from God. Their relationship with God was fractured, their relationship with one another was fractured and their new sin nature was passed on to every human born since, Jesus excepted. Sin gives birth to more sin.

Consequences with David: After Bathsheba became pregnant, David tried to cover his sin by arranging an opportunity for Uriah to think the baby was his own. When Uriah proved more noble than the king, David arranged for his battlefield demise. Sin gives birth to more sin.

But it didn't stop there. David's sin was forgiven, but its aftermath was calamitous:

- The baby conceived between he and Bathsheba died.
- His son Amnon conspired along with his uncle to rape his half-sister Tamar.
- Another son, Absalom, allowed his hatred and bitterness toward Amnon to fester for two years until he had Amnon killed. This caused Absalom to go AWOL for three years.
- This same Absalom attempted to usurp the throne, and his rise to power resulted in a rebellion. David instructed his troops to be gentle with his proud son, perhaps

because he connected the dots between Absalom's behavior and his own failures as a father. But the clash between David's army and Absalom's rebels was brutal. When Absalom was found hanging from a tree limb, Joab seized the moment and killed the conspirator. King David mourned in anguish when he heard the news.

Up until David's sin with Bathsheba, everything was going well. But the house of David and all his family suffered enormous consequences because of David's lack of leadership as the father and spiritual leader of his family. Is there a greater object lesson in the Bible for us than the story of David, who was known as Israel's greatest king, but watched his family literally pick each other off one by one.

You can be a captain of industry, but a failure as the spiritual leader of your home. You can win the Chairman's Inner Circle award every year as the top salesperson in your company, while your family disintegrates around you. You can be a king after God's own heart, but watch as conspiracy, incest, and murder eat your family alive.

My daughter's favorite comeback when punished: "But I thought you were supposed to forgive me!"

Consequences are what we live with in this world to remind us of the results of sin. They are not the fallout of a lack of forgiveness, but they are an ongoing reminder of the gravity of sin and its ripple effects throughout our lives. Consequences serve as a deterrent against future opportunities where we will be tempted to see, then to desire, then to take.

And have you entirely forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you, his children? He said, "My child, don't ignore it when the Lord disciplines you, and don't be discouraged when he corrects you. For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes those he accepts as his children." As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Whoever heard of a child who was never disciplined? If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children after all.

Hebrews 12:5-8

Today's Equipping Point:

Build hedges around yourself.

- If you would have to hide it or lie about it, don't do it!
- Do nothing with someone from the opposite sex unless it's public.
 - Don't ride in a car with the opposite sex without a third party present.
 - Don't make personal phone calls to other employees of the opposite sex.
 - Don't lunch with the same people every day, unless it is as a group.
 - Keep emails strictly business.

Be careful about lingering eye contact.

If traveling, don't get adjoining hotel rooms. Ask for different floors.

Meet in the lobby, not in a room.

- Hedges at home

Eliminate TV temptation—get ride of premium movie channels.

Do not drive the opposite sex babysitter home alone.

Keep appropriate boundaries with neighbors.

Be especially careful with single parents who need helping hands.

- Hedges at church

Always serve together in groups on ministry projects.

Never counsel the opposite sex.

- Hedges for hobbies

Learn to share your spouse's hobby.

Give up a hobby that puts you in a vulnerable position.

Never enjoy a hobby alone with a person of the opposite sex.

We have many role models in our story today:

- Be like Uriah who had great personal integrity
- Be like Nathan, and have the courage to speak truth to power, or to a friend
- Be like David who, after he sinned, refused to run and hide from pride or embarrassment, but faced the music
- Be like David, who refused to let his past weigh him down. After the son conceived between he and Bathsheba died, he got up, cleaned up, worshipped, and made love to his wife. After he confessed his sin to God, and stopped trying to hide them, David proclaimed, "And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone."

The same is true of your guilt and your past: confess it, and rest assured your guilt is gone.