



Getting Started

1. When you think of the word “sin,” what ideas form in your mind? What Bible passages do you think about? Merriam-Webster defines sin as: 1) an offense against religious or moral law; 2) an action that is or is felt to be highly reprehensible; 3) an often-serious shortcoming; 4) transgression of the law of God; 5) a vitiated (defiled) state of human nature in which the self is estranged from God.

2. Think back...when did you first come to realize that sin was a real thing? How did you respond to this truth?

3. In what way are sin and the image/behavior of a serpent (snake) similar? How are they different?

Going Deeper

1. Read John 3:14-15. What about this passage strikes you as important? Confusing? Interesting? Powerful? The key to understanding this passage is wrapped up in one word, and it's the smallest word in the text. It's the word “as.” It's the second word in verse 14. “As Moses...” What is Nicodemus being taught by the Lord? “As Moses, so Christ.” As Moses in the Old Testament, so Christ in the New Testament. Here is our Lord telling Nicodemus that what happened in Numbers 21:4-9 was a foreshadowing image of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. And just as we understand that in the Old Testament, we are to understand what Jesus did in the New Testament.

2. How are people “poisoned” by sin? In what way is it like a serpent's bite? From Numbers 21, the poison of the serpent's bite, which contaminates the entire system of its victim and from which the fatal effects of it there was no deliverance, exhibits the awful nature and the consequence of sin. Just as the serpent bit someone at a point in his flesh, and immediately the poison from that serpent filled the body of that person, the Bible teaches that, by virtue of our relationship to the old man, Adam, we have been infected with sin or the sickness of sin in every part of our body.

3. Before a saving relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, what were some methods you employed to try and get the poison of sin out of your heart? How do you see people working hard to get sin out of their lives today? **Throughout history people have rushed around in the fury of human religions, seeking a salve for sin. They perform all sorts of rites and works to overcome the desires of the flesh. They might undertake fasts and pilgrimages. Others use relationships to feel better about their sin. Still others might seek out healing in entertainment, work, fame, power, riches, strength, and a host of other options. All these are an effort to extinguish the darkness of sin in every human heart.**

4. Read Numbers 21:8 and John 3:15. Discuss how these two passages provide a unique and simple remedy for the problem. What was difficult or confusing about this requirement? What was simple?

5. In the same manner as the people who only needed to look at the serpent, think about the simplicity of the Gospel. In the most basic of language, what does the Gospel ask of us in order to take care of our sin problem? **Many people struggle to believe the Gospel because, like looking at the serpent in Numbers 21, it seems too simple. They think "There's got to be more to it. There's got to be something else we can do." And God says, "No, all you need to do is believe.**

Applying the Message

1. Reflect on the Gospel and the way you are living. Would you say that you are more inclined to live in the simplicity of it or do you tend to be more caught up in finding the solution for yourself?

2. How might you more faithfully believe that Jesus really made it this easy for you? In what way can you respond (or respond again) to the biblical remedy for sin? How can you live in the Gospel of Jesus Christ today?