



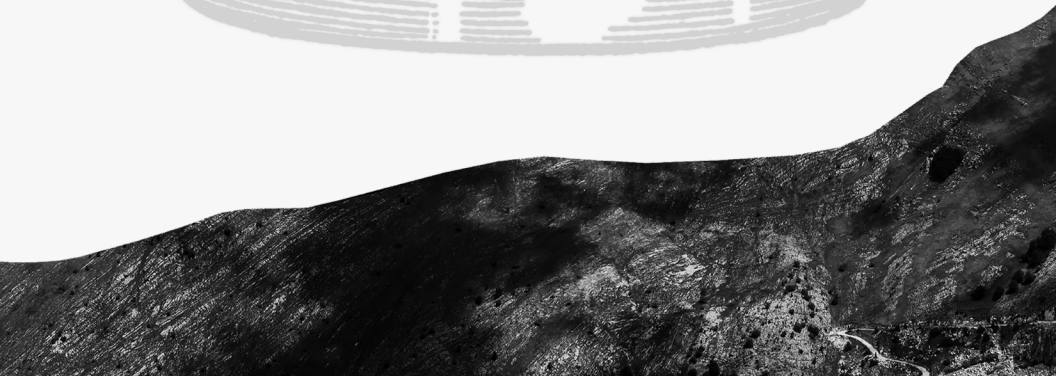
# KINGDOM CULTURE



Second Baytown Small Groups



# WEEK 2





## WEEK 2: INVITES NEW UNDERSTANDING

**Beginning the Journey:** Today is your first meeting in our “Best Sermon Ever” series, and we are excited that you have chosen to pause for a moment and focus on your spiritual growth and key relationships in your life. Each week we will take a few minutes to “look back” and discuss what you learned the week before through the daily devotionals. Then, we will “look up” at what God wants to teach us today in our study. Finally, we will “look forward” to how we will live out the principles that God has taught us today.

**Looking Back:** Take a minute to introduce yourselves to one another, and go over the group guidelines on page 7 as you begin your journey together.

**Looking Up:** Play the video and consider the discussion questions together.

1. What is a topic of conversation you would be comfortable with in any group setting?
2. Why do you think Jesus, who was being analyzed by everyone, brought up such heavy, uncomfortable topics when He taught?
3. Jesus wanted people to expand their understanding of sin. How can we know if we’re defining sin like God does, minimizing sin, or creating our own version of “truth”?

4. Read Luke 7:36-50. What seemed to be the woman's main concern in this passage? Simon's main concern? Jesus's main concern?
  
5. It's been said that the more we grow in our walk with Christ, the more we realize how sinful we are. Have you experienced this? How is such a realization vital to your spiritual growth?
  
6. Read John 8:2-11. What was the main concern of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees? What was Jesus's main concern?
  
7. What do we learn from this account about the way to respond to our own sin and the sin of others?
  
8. How do Jesus's words to the woman in John 8:11 help you understand His words in Matthew 5:48, "Be perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect"?

**Looking Forward:** How will you take what you learned today and apply it to your life this week? Take a few minutes to plan your next meeting and spend some time in prayer together.

## WEEK 2: LET'S TALK ABOUT SIN

### DAY 1—READ 1 JOHN 2:9-11

*Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.<sup>10</sup> Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.<sup>11</sup> But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.*

As far back as Leviticus 19:18, the people of Israel were commanded to love their neighbors. Hatred, then, should have been understood as sin. Still, the command to love others and the sin of hatred are understood more deeply given the demonstration of Jesus's love. We might excuse hatred or reason it away as justifiable. But Jesus didn't lay down His life for those who were worthy; He laid down His life for those who were unworthy.

When we love as Jesus did, we play an active role in revealing the light of Jesus to those around us. When our lives are wrapped up in love for Christ, our lives also become wrapped up in love for others. Hatred, disdain, indifference, and ridicule are opposed to life in Christ.

This is why John could speak so definitively about those who hate others. In 1 John 1:5, he expressed it this way: "God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all." So, the defining mark of the disciple of Jesus is light, and the light of Jesus is seen most clearly in love expressed in daily life. When we love each other, we are transferring what we have received—light—from the One who died to save us from sin and death. As we do, the darkness is continually pushed back in favor of the light.

How could John be so definite in his statement that if you hate your brother, you live in darkness?

How do these verses in 1 John 2 challenge your definition of sin?

In what situation do you struggle to demonstrate the love of Jesus? How does knowing Jesus is light help you know how to move forward in that situation?

Confess to God the relationships or situations in which you struggle to walk in the light of Christ. Ask Him to remove the blinders from your eyes and help you walk in the light so you can see where you're going.

**DAY 2—READ 1 JOHN 1:8-10**

*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.<sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.<sup>10</sup> If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

It's hard to admit honest mistakes. How much harder it is to admit we've willingly made sinful choices! Admitting sin is not easy for any of us. Some of us will avoid such admission at all costs. But the truth is that we are all sinners, and God forgives those who admit their sin. God loves us and invites us to walk with His Son in truth. Admitting sin is essential to relationship with Jesus and forgiveness, which we all need.

The false teachers John addressed didn't believe they had anything to admit. They didn't believe they needed Jesus or His forgiveness. That's because they didn't believe they had sinned. But anyone who claims to be without sin is deceived and the truth is not in them, meaning the truth of the gospel has not changed their lives. In reality, the closer we become to God and experience His holiness, the more we become aware of our sin problem.

Admitting, or confessing, our sins doesn't mean reciting a shallow history of our shortcomings. It involves owning up to our wrongdoing, feeling sorrow over it, and acknowledging before God our specific area of sin. Confession of sins involves more than a short prayer that says, "God, forgive me of my many sins." Confession calls for specifics. John said in verse 10 that if we claim to be without sin, "his word is not in us." Yet when we confess our sins, God is not only faithful to forgive but also to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.



**Why is it hard for us to admit our sins to God and other people?**

**How does confessing sin restore fellowship with God?**

**Do you confess your sins on a regular basis? If so, do you make it a habit as soon as you realize you've sinned, or do you wait until later? Why does it matter?**

**Pray that God would lead you into the habit of continual confession of sin. Thank Him for His promise to continually forgive and restore based on the finished work of Jesus. Pray for an awareness of current sin that you need to confess in your life. Ask for the power of the Spirit to genuinely confess and repent of that sin.**

## DAY 3—READ GALATIANS 5:16-18

*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup> For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. <sup>18</sup> But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

Knowing God never minimizes sin and views every sin as a serious matter might make us, who are prone to sin, feel hopeless to live the way He wants us to. But Galatians 5 gives us reason for joyful hope! Obedience to God's commands is a Spirit-empowered possibility every moment of every day. The Holy Spirit leads us to do what God wants, not what our sinful natures want.

The imperative "walk" is a Hebrew expression for "live," with the idea of conduct or lifestyle. Its tense conveys continuous action. The phrase "by the Spirit" can be rendered "in the Spirit"—in the sphere that the Spirit governs. To keep living in the Spirit is to continually live by His power, to go where He goes.

We live in a fallen world and remain in a battle against sin even after we become Christians. We will continue in this battle as long as we live on earth. Yet because we are in Christ, sin no longer dominates us—even here on earth. In Galatians 5:19-21, Paul presented "the works of the flesh" (v. 19) so we could be forewarned. The sins listed in these verses are the result of twisting God's gifts into ungodly behaviors and not following the Spirit. The Spirit's activity produces virtues that give evidence believers belong to Christ (see vv. 22-26).

**What characterizes a life guided by the sinful nature? By the Spirit?**

**Is there an area in your life where you feel you walk by the flesh rather than the Spirit?**

**What step can you take today to follow the direction of the Holy Spirit?**

**Thank God for His Spirit at work in your life to help you acknowledge your sin and walk in obedience.**

## DAY 4—READ JOHN 4:16-18,39

*Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.”<sup>17</sup> The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’;<sup>18</sup> for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.”*

*<sup>39</sup> Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.”*

Jesus’s words here may seem strange in our culture today. Jesus didn’t tiptoe around the issue of the woman’s sin, but went straight at it. Words we might consider “judgmental” were exactly what the woman, and the whole town, needed. It’s what we need too—we need to know Jesus doesn’t ignore or excuse sin because it might make us feel bad if He calls it like it is.

But He doesn’t do this to shame us; He draws our attention to it so we can receive forgiveness and walk in new life. That’s how it was with the woman at the well and the people in her hometown. She had many husbands in the past and was living with a man who was not her husband. Everyone in town knew it, and some of them were intimately involved.

They knew this woman; they knew the life she had led, and they could now see how Jesus had changed her. The woman was changed because she met a man who told her “all that [she] ever did.” Because Jesus called her sin like it was and her life became a testimony of His saving power, they also believed.

That’s what talking honestly about sin does. Your admission of sin invites Jesus to forgive you, and Jesus’s forgiveness of your sins serves as a testimony that invites others to trust Him.

How might Jesus's words in verses 16-18 have struck the woman (insensitive, abrasive, confrontational, kind, etc.)? What was His intention in saying this?

Why did the Samaritan woman tell other people about her experience with Jesus?

How has God changed your life, and what will you do with your changed life? Will you tell others or keep it to yourself? How could your changed life help others?

Praise God for the way He has confronted your sin with His grace and changed your life. Ask God to use your changed life to bear witness to Him with the hope that others will see and believe the gospel through you.

## DAY 5—READ LUKE 7:47-50

*Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.”<sup>48</sup> And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”<sup>49</sup> Then those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?”<sup>50</sup> And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”*

“Your sins are forgiven” probably wasn’t the response Simon expected or wanted from Jesus in this moment. It seems he wanted Jesus to scold the woman or cast her out. At the very least, he wanted her to know her actions were inappropriate (v. 39). Simon didn’t think he had much in his life that needed to be forgiven compared to her. Yet, Jesus’s response challenged Simon’s preconceived ideas about sin.

Unless we recognize our need for forgiveness, we will go on, like Simon, as if we don’t need Jesus much, if at all. Unless we believe Jesus’s, “your sins are forgiven,” then we will go on as if we are still identified as sinners. This woman had lived as a sinner, but in the presence of Jesus she found forgiveness and the hope for a different identity. Because of her faith in the One who could save, she could finally go in peace. She wouldn’t have to be identified by her sin any longer. This moment changed everything for her. Whether or not the people around her thought so, she left as a changed person.

When we are willing to offer our very lives at the feet of Jesus, we will also leave changed. No matter how we enter the presence of Jesus, marked with sin and shame, when we lay it all down, we hear the same truth: your sins have been forgiven. This woman was willing to offer not only herself but also what was likely her most valuable possession. In doing so, she received something of far greater value. Where others offer judgment and condemnation, Jesus offers grace and forgiveness for those who come to Him.

In your own words, what did Jesus mean by “he who is forgiven little, loves little”? Is anyone ever forgiven “little”? Explain.

When did you first hear the words of Jesus, “your sins are forgiven”? How have you lived in response??

What does it look like to “go in peace” with Jesus? Where are you continuing to walk as if you are identified as a sinner instead of one who has been forgiven?

Ask the Lord to help you remember your sins have been forgiven. Ask Him for the power and courage to walk in peace and not cling to your old ways of sin and shame.



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