



Christian Foundations

Session #1 – What in the world is wrong?

Creation and Fall

The Bible confirms two truths about our lived experience: 1. there is much in our world that is **beautiful, good and true**; 2. something is also very wrong. According to the Bible, there is an evil power at work in the universe, seeking to frustrate God’s purposes for **creation**, humanity and history. The Bible portrays this power as personal and intentional and gives it names such as **Evil**, the powers of darkness, and the devil or Satan (titles that mean ‘the Adversary,’ ‘Accuser’ and ‘Slanderer’). This power, it seems, has no other agenda than to corrupt, vandalize and destroy what God has created – by dragging it down towards Death.

Q. How do you feel about the possibility of there being a devil or evil? Does it seem primitive and superstitious? Or does it offer a plausible account for the problems of the world?

Sin is the Christian belief that humanity has fallen prey to the Evil outlined above. As the Bible describes it, (especially in its first three chapters, Genesis 1-3), this evil power has driven a wedge between humanity and God by convincing us that life would be a lot better if only we could move God out of the picture and manage things ourselves. In other words, we should take God’s place in the grand scheme of things and become the masters of our own destiny. This pride, self-centeredness and desire for self-mastery is the very core of Sin. We have not given God His rightful place in the world, nor have we followed His ways.

Therefore Sin is not, in the first place, the bad things we do. Rather, it is a power over us that shows itself in the actual sins we commit. To use a medical image, Sin is a deep wound or sickness that manifests itself in various symptoms.

Although we were created and hardwired for intimacy with God, we have swallowed the terrible lie that if only we could distance ourselves from God we would discover the joys of true freedom. This has led to a state of alienation between ourselves and God, so that the very centre of life is out of whack. Because of this alienation, the whole world is bent out of shape, and we are powerless to fix it ourselves.

Q. How have you thought of Sin in the past? What images or words does ‘Sin’ conjure up?
How does this view of Sin differ from how you thought of it before?

Q. What in today’s society separates us from God?



- Q. For personal reflection: Is there a bad habit in your life that you have struggled with?
What effect does it have on your life?
- Q. For personal reflection: On what or whom do you base your identity and purpose in life?

Baptism is our immersion into God's great act to renew the world, wash away the mess of Evil and cleanse us from Sin. In our baptismal vows, we renounce (that is, 'turn away from,' 'give up' or 'abandon'):

1. 'Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God'
(or 'the devil and all his works')
2. 'the evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God'
(or, 'the vain pomp and glory of the world with all covetous desires of the same')
3. 'all sinful desires that draw you from the love of God'
(or, 'the sinful desires of the flesh')

Quotations

'The line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties; but right through every human heart and through all human hearts.'

Alexander Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008)
Russian novelist and winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature

'There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.'

C.S. Lewis (1898-1963)
English literary scholar and Christian apologist