

## How to Deal with ‘Harmless’ Sins Before They Become Big Problems

Satan is called a liar, deceiver, and accuser. How does he work? How does sin deceive and ensnare us? A significant way is by starting small. No sin can be said to be harmless, for even “small sins” are symptoms of the true condition of our hearts. In this workshop, we will consider how to identify and confront small sins before they become big problems.

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### I. Introduction:

- A. Perhaps you have heard the familiar fable where a hunter came upon a leopard cub whose mother had died. It was so cute, soft and helpless! So he took it home as a pet for his children. As the story goes, the leopard, grew, becoming bigger and stronger until one day, it attacked and killed the hunter who had reared him.
- B. The lesson is obvious – sin is easier to deal with before it grows and becomes a habit ingrained, powerful, and destructive. But there is a deeper lesson that comes out of the parallel between a little harmless leopard cub and little harmless sins, and that is there is no stage of development at which sin can be said to be harmless. For even small sins are symptoms of the true condition of our hearts. In this workshop, we will consider how to identify and confront the sins that we tolerate; sins that we may deem harmless.

### II. The Disappearance of Sin

- A. Respectable Sins by Jerry Bridges
- B. C. S. Lewis quote: “The barrier I have met is the almost total absence from the minds of my audience of any sense of sin.”
- C. D.A. Carson quote: “They know how to sin will enough, but they have no idea of what constitutes sin.”
- D. What about Christians?

- E. Renaming sin
- III. Sermon on the Mount
- A. Jesus emphasized the seriousness of the sins of the mind not just outward sin.
  - B. “You have heard it said...but I say to you.”
    - 1. Murder versus anger
    - 2. Adultery versus looking lustfully
  - C. Thinking differently than the world means confronting sin
- IV. The five different Greek words for sin
- A. Anomia – lawlessness
  - B. Parabasis – to cross a line
  - C. Paraptoma – slipping across – fooling myself
  - D. Hamartia – to miss the mark
  - E. Opheilema – from the world of commerce – an unpaid debt
  - D. Examples from real life
  - E. Principle: Even believers wound the heart of God at the level of thoughts, motives, words, and actions.
  - F. Illustration: David as a toddler

- G. Application: Do you ever overestimate your goodness and underestimate your capacity to sin? Have you ever wondered why you don't recognize His presence with you, but don't attribute it to the possibility of unconfessed sin?
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- V. Dependence on God's Mercy
    - A. John Newton
  
    - B. Paul
  
    - C. Present tense "I am..." for all of us.
  
    - D. C.S. Lewis quote "...an essential symptom of the regenerate life is a permanent and permanently horrified, perception of one's natural and (it seems) unalterable corruption. The true Christian's nostril is to be continually attentive to the inner cesspool."
  
    - E. Relationship with Christ – example of Mandy
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- VI. Slow Slide into Sin
    - A. World renowned author, pastor, and speaker. The darkness that has come out of the revelation of his private life.
  
    - B. What happened?
  
    - C. Something small and insignificant
  
    - D. King David
  
    - E. Consider...in the workplace, on public transport, or in the gym...daily seeing the same people.

- H. Principle: A great sin starts with a small sin, a sin that seems harmless.
  - I. Quote: C.S. Lewis: “Indeed, the safest road to hell is the gradual one – the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.”
  - J. Illustration: Disqualifying sin
  - K. Application: How afraid are you of disqualifying sin? Enough to change your thought life?
- VII. How vigilant we must be against sin! Clinging to Christ.
- A. The decisive path
  - B. Luke 11:24-26
  - C. The appropriate response
  - D. Short accounts with God
  - E. Confession
  - F. Repentance
  - G. Principle: Only by clinging to Christ may the believer live a life of cleansing and fruitfulness.
  - H. Illustration: My experience
  - I. Application: When have you recognized sin in your life that did not feel like sin?
- VIII. Closing

