

Church Wide Prayer – Next Generation:

- Passion for Jesus, memorization & find identity in Christ
- Memorization challenge – pray for our youth to enjoy memorization – for God’s Word to be WRITTEN all over their hearts, brains, minds, and LIVES!
- Pray for camp, staff, volunteers, campers – For Jesus to be glorified! Many “yes” given to Him!
- Pray for the GO-Love participants as they are currently in Winnipeg this week evangelizing and spreading God’s Love. Pray for protection and opportunity to reach many for Jesus!

Good morning church! **How many of us here this morning struggle to hear God’s voice?** Or feel distant from the Lord? I meet with a lot of people in my office one-on-one and a very common issue I hear is that people struggle to hear God’s voice, or they feel distant from God. There are a variety of reasons why this can happen but let me tell you the **#1 reason why this can happen, it’s compromise!** I regularly meet with people with addiction, relational issues, marriage issues, and the number 1 reason why people are either still stuck or feel distant from God is because they compromise with sin. I have found that **nothing quiets the voice of God faster in a believer’s life as compromise** does when we let sin deliberately into our lives. Just to clarify, I am not saying that when people who are actively trying, failing, trying again, and working on their sin issues is the problem here. I am talking about people who know that they have a sin issue, and they choose not to work on it. That’s when our sins have separated us from God!

I am surprised to see that many people do not see that sin is a problem for us today. Couples come in and say that they have trouble hearing God’s voice and upon meeting more realizing they are living together before they are married. The justification is simple, we are getting married, so why not simply live together already. OR for many others its unforgiveness where we hold unto grudges, and we refuse to forgive until the other party either says sorry or makes amends. OR others who have an **addiction to pornography, but they are not willing to get rid of what triggers them** or makes them fall again! They compromise and we see an example of this early on in scripture. **Genesis 4:6-7 Then the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? 7 If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.** What was Cain angry about? Cain and Able was called to bring offerings, but Cain compromised on his offering to the Lord. What he thought was an appropriate offering was ultimately not what God asked him to do. God made it clear to Cain what he wanted, but Cain did not listen and God warned Cain that he has a problem coming his way! The Sermon title for today is **The Problem with sin.** In the **original Greek sin is defined simply as missing the mark!**

A. Sin is Missing the Mark

I remember when I first heard sin explained in this way to me, it instantly brought me to a memory as a kid. When I was young, I really wanted to be an archer, because I saw Kevin Costner's **Robin Hood movie**. So I made myself a bow with a stick, string, and I got some dried long somewhat straight pieces of wood and made arrows with nails embedded in the front. I was proud of my creation but let's just say I could not hit anything, and my arrows did not go very far at all, because I was trying to copy what I saw on the Movie, I did not have someone teach me how to hit the mark, or even a bullseye!

If sin is indeed defined as missing the mark, **what's the mark we're supposed to hit?** The mark we are all trying to hit as believers **is to reflect the glory of God on earth...** Simple right, but what does that mean exactly? Matthew 22:36-40 **"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"** 37 Jesus replied: **"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."** 38 **This is the first and greatest commandment.** 39 **And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'** 40 **All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."** Love God & Love People. Pastor Stefan has preached on this many times before, you have heard this here before. Our aim is to Love God and Love People. **When we miss the mark, we have failed to love God and love His image bearers (people) and that is sin!** We see early on in scripture when God gave us the 10 Commandments and they are summed up in commands to either Love God (commands 1-4) and Love People (commands 5-10). The problem with sin is that we fail to love God and People because we either don't feel like it, we think it's not important, or we do not know how to do so, or we simply don't understand how sin affects us day in and day out. **In today's culture however we are taught that our opinions and feelings are correct,** regardless of what is going on around us. Let me just say this: **Our opinions and feelings on sin does not matter as much. Its NOT up to us to define what sin is. We have a Holy God that determines what sin is.** I feel though as today we can shoot arrows and then we go and paint a target around it and say, bullseye!! No it's OK, I know what is right and wrong... But that is not how it works!

My aim this morning is to use **some props** I have here and hopefully **demonstrate the effects of sin why we have a problem with sin.** Let's just pray it all works! Here I have a container and we are going to say that this is me. The other container here we have SIN!!! It's a special concentrate of all the deadly sins that we could think of and the Southland Scientists has perfected a way to put them in this bottle for us to use today, thank fully nobody was seriously injured during the liquidation process. I would like to show you 5 ways on how sin effects us today, this is not the only 5 ways, but my hope is that it will give you a picture of why sin is a problem.

B. The Effects of Sin

- C. Before we jump into these, just thinking of this vile of “sin” I am holding here. Many times, when I have thought about my sin, I have often thought to myself, **at least my sin is not as bad as this person’s sin.** Or I am doing OK with my sins, because they are minor sins. Anybody else thought of that before? It’s amazing how we think that certain sins are worse than other sins right. I mean, I do struggle with lying, but it’s not so mad as his affair. **James 4:17 If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.** Here is the interesting thing, **arguing over whose sin is worse only fuels our self-righteousness. And overlooking the differences between sins permits an ignorance of our sin. We need to be careful that we do not minimize any sin before a Holy God!**

1. Sin is like cancer

Cancer is bad whether its small or big RIGHT!? Cancer unchecked will continue to grow and eventually kill us and we cannot isolate it. Are we OK with a little cancer in our bodies? Or do we want to deal with it? Let me illustrate it for you... This is a cup full of wonderful Steinbach tap water. Now, let’s take a drop of liquid sin and add it to the water. When we sin, it’s not like I can quickly try and scoop it out, or try and isolate it to one side. **It will impact the entire cup.** Anyone thirsty!?? Don’t worry, this is mostly iodine and roundup, should be OK, it was just a drop after all...

The story I always reflect on in scripture is the one of Saul. You can read the story in 1 Samuel 10 but before he was made king, **Saul was unassuming**; he obeyed his father and respected the things of God, he was even a prophet, and when Samuel was looking to make him King, where was Saul, he was hiding! Unfortunately, Saul **gave into sin and gave into rebellion** gradually over time and if you had told him that one day he would kill 85 innocent priests, their wives and their children in a fit of rage, he would have told you that he could never do such a thing, but the sad truth is he did! **James 1:15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.** We cannot sit idly by and think that sin just affects one part of me and the rest is fine. Just like cancer, sin will multiply and as James says when fully grown, will give birth to death. **It’s like a freight train**, when it starts, it’s easy to stop, but when it gets going, it kills anything in its path and takes a long time with much effort to make it stop.

2. Sin hurts people (always)

I used to believe that if I kept my sins secret it will be OK. **I am not hurting anyone**, this is my junk, and I will simply keep my junk with me. The problem is that sin’s effects are far messier and far more uncontrollable than we could ever have imagined when we were first tempted. Sin, does not simply stay with you, sin will eventually pour out of you and I promise you that it will hurt others around you! It

might not be your intention, but when someone comes and pushes your buttons or shakes you a bit, when you are indeed full of sin, what do you suppose will come out? **Mark 7:20-23 He (Jesus) went on: "What comes out of a person is what defiles them. 21 For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, 22 adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. 23 All these evils come from inside and defile a person."** Sin will spill over to those around us and you cannot control it.

One more, consider the story of **Abraham's family**. Abraham deceived Pharaoh concerning Sarah, his wife **Genesis 12:11-13 As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I know what a beautiful woman you are. 12 When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me but will let you live. 13 Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you."** Interestingly, Isaac his son, wasn't even born yet when Abraham deceived Pharaoh, yet later his son Isaac committed the same sin in exact detail, deceiving Abimelek concerning his wife in **Genesis 26:7 When the men of that place asked him about his wife, he said, "She is my sister," because he was afraid to say, "She is my wife." He thought, "The men of this place might kill me on account of Rebekah, because she is beautiful."** We can trace the sin of deception as it passed on into the 3rd generation! In an elaborate scheme first conceived by his mother, Jacob deliberately deceived his father Isaac, pretending to be Esau in order to rob him of the first-born's blessing in Genesis 27. Finally, we see the sin of deception alive in the 4th generation as well when Jacob's sons deceived him, saying that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal in the end of Genesis 37. Your sin does not simply impact you, **it will hurt others around you and affect your kids** and your grandkids and your great grandkids. Do not miss the mark!! Do not let sin hurt those your love around you!

3. Sin blinds us

A prime **example of sin blinding us today is Pornography!** For both men and women this is such a trap, but let's take a look at a marriage where the husband is looking at pornography, he is doing this and is completely blinded on how much he is hurting her. In most cases they keep doing it, apologizes, and keep on doing it while the wife is destroyed from the inside in her self worth. On the flip side, some wives hold onto bitterness and she cannot forgive because of all the hurt he has caused. They are both blind to the sin in their lives going back and forth and the true victims are the children!

King Solomon is example in scripture for us. Early in his kingdom, he does fairly well. At the beginning of his reign 1 Kings 3 says that he **"loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father"**. Solomon prays for wisdom, and expresses genuine humility in doing so, but he **was blinded by wealth and fame he accumulated** and

this led to even the wisest person in scripture to fall to sin because he missed the mark! We cannot see clearly through our sin, the sin in our lives distort our view of God, other people in our lives and also, it blinds us to who God made us to be! Its funny, **culture says we should be our best selves**, we should be our true self, but it does so **with sin covering who God made us to be!** Why is it that we go to culture to complete us and tell us who we are, when we can just go to the one who made us and ask Him, Lord, who did you make me to be? Do not miss the mark on who God calls you to be!

4. Sin starves us

I think that one of the most deceitful lies of the enemy that is out there will say that **when we indulge in the flesh, we will be fulfilled!** The world says that sin is fun, sin is instant gratification, it fixes a felt need I have in this moment. Here is the problem, **sin cannot fulfill you!** You will feel a momentary release or a rush of endorphins in your brain, but you will always feel emptier or that there is something missing! This is very clear with people who struggle with addiction because it will never be enough, you will always want more, and in the case of pornography for example, you will always seek out more, it will never satisfy the flesh because sin will starve you.

There is a gentleman I met with years ago, avid hunter, loves hunting, and is always chasing that next big prize. It could be a white tail, or fish, or a bear, does not matter, but he was focused on that next big one. And let me just say this, he loves Jesus OK, but in his devo's he sensed God saying, that is enough, but it down. He did not listen, you know what happened next? 2 things, one he caught a monster fish and shot a trophy buck in the same summer! Answered prayer right!! To a point, do you think that those 2 accomplishments satisfied him? NO! It did not, he wanted bigger and better. Now, is hunting a sin? NO, but he was missing the mark, all he could aim at was hunting. So let me ask this question again, is hunting a sin for him? Yes, because hunting became God for him, hunting became is only aim in life, and he was missing the mark! No amount a trophy bucks or fish could satisfy the flesh and the idol it created in his life.

In scripture we see **King David also missed the mark** on this one. Fast forward a bit to where David was already a **king with multiple wives and concubines**. He sees Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, bathing on a rooftop and is captivated by her beauty. He then summons her to his palace and commits adultery with her. But wait, David already has multiple wives and concubines, should that not be enough? Should that not satisfy him? No sin will always starve us and make us want more!

Romans 6:12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. No matter how much sin you add, you will always feel wanting more.

5. Sin separates us from God

Ultimately, and the most serious problem with sin BY FAR, is that it separates us from God! **James 4:4 You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.** We cannot be friends with sin in our lives and think that we will hit the mark when it comes to a Holy God. The biggest problem with sin is that it separates us from God and that is the worst place we can possibly be. What is humanity's problem? **The problem is that we All have sinned!** Like an arrow missing its target, we fall short of God's plan for us. **All of us have done what we should not do and left undone what we should have done.** As a result, we have separation between us and God. Thankfully God has a plan, and His plan for our redemption and **our only hope of salvation is in Jesus!!** We have to hit the mark; we need to hit bullseyes!

D. Hitting bullseyes

How do we hit bullseyes? We looked how dangerous sin really is and how it effects us. We cannot afford to compromise like Cain did! So how do we rule over sin?

1. Aim at Jesus!

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Jesus is the answer! Part of the Good news is that Jesus did something incredible for all of us 2000 years ago, on a cross. You know what that was? **He became sin for us!**

Jesus who is fully God, became fully man and He willingly took on all of our sins. Look at **2 Corinthians 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.** Jesus, who did NOT SIN, who loved perfectly, took on our sins and failures! This is something we cannot earn, something we cannot buy, but this is something Jesus did for all of us because he loves us!!! **BUT how can someone love me, someone so full of sin and I am not worthy!!** Yeah your right, but Jesus says, come to me, just as you are, its OK to bring all your sin to me. Let me show you what I can do!

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. Nothing is too big for our God. It does not matter how much sin you think you have, if we confess our sins, when **we take responsibility for missing the mark**, Jesus will take away our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness! What a gift we have in Jesus amen!!

Jesus is our ONLY HOPE!! When we live in the hope that Jesus gives us:

- Instead of having a cancerous sin that brings death, **we have the life** through HIM!!
- now when someone presses my buttons, **I will spill over with of love**, not sin.
- no longer blinded by sin, but **I can see clearly now** the truth that I am a child of God
- **now the bread of life and living water will satisfy me**, no longer hungry for sin
- no longer am I separated from God, **but we can have communion together. AMEN!**

If we would take a look at our lives, **are we actually aiming for Jesus or if we are being honest, are we aiming at other things in our lives?** Maybe our aim is finishing that new series on Netflix, and that is my aim, or is your aim to get a certain amount of “likes” in the day on social media? Sometimes our targets are so big where we have many distractions and when we try and hit the mark, so many other things get in the way. We should make sure our target is Jesus, but I get that there is a fear in that. **What if I am a lousy shot and when I aim at Jesus I'll keep missing?** And yes, you probably will miss, but you know what, Jesus makes it really easy to not just hit the target, but to get bullseyes! Let me show you some bullseyes in scripture... **Matthew 10:42** And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.” Or **Hebrews 13:2** – “Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.” **Jesus' target is so easy to hit**, because he shows us and guides us how to do it. Sometimes its as simple as buying someone a coffee. Other times, as we grow in Jesus he tends to move the target back and asks more of us, maybe he is asking us to give him a “yes” in ministry or asking us to minister to a family member or friend as our “each one reach one”... And that is the cool part of it, Jesus gives us opportunities, the question is are we ready for it? Are we trained to hit bullseyes?

2. Trained to hit bullseyes

When me and Andrea **celebrated our 5-year anniversary**, we went to the Fort Gary, she went and spent 4 hours in the Ten-Spa and I went to the archery range! When I went, I did my normal routine till this one guy showed up and it was just me and him. I noticed that he was hitting bullseyes **CONSTANTLY**, and I noticed on his arm he had 5 circles and the words, Beijing 2008! This guy knew what he was doing, so I asked for some help. He was friendly enough to help me and after a couple of hours I started to hit bullseyes more consistently, but not just from his teaching, but from proper training since I had this encounter with him. This might be an overly simple statement. But **if I want to be a good archer, I have to practice good archery**. I have to practice the disciplines and styles involved and spend time doing so. If I want to be a disciple of Jesus I need to spend time in the word and prayer! This is extremely beneficial to our Christian walk but it comes with a bonus according to **Psalms 119:11** - **I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. – Read it twice!** These disciplines are very good, but they serve another purpose, they help us not to sin, because when I spend time in the Word and time in Prayer I have a better chance of not just hitting the mark, but hitting bullseyes!! Now, we can take it to another step, practice showing love to one another. Why? **1 Peter 4:8** - **Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins.**

When we practice showing love to others like Jesus did, that will help us to walk in repentance and not turn back to sin. When the aim is to practice love, then other distractions will start falling away. No my issues are not consuming me, but other people become my aim so that I may demonstrate Jesus love to them! **This is a lot easier when we do it in community, do not try and do it alone!**

E. I'm stuck; I can't hit the mark!

In closing, some of you feel stuck like no matter what you do you cannot hit the mark, **you are still flinching** when you try and hit the mark. **Let me say that this is a journey!** When we have years of bad habits it's not a quick thing to overcome or untrain. Not to worry though, I have some steps that you can take and I will show you in a moment, but for now **I want to encourage you to continue to fight the good fight.** If I can leave you with one verse and a couple of steps it would be this: **James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective**

- **Level 1 Set Free! Retreat – April 26-27** – Its coming up in a month, sign up! I'll be there, come learn what the bible teaches on sin, and what weapons we have to fight it and learn how to confess sin, forgive others and experience freedom in Jesus!
- **Level 2 Path to Freedom – September 23rd** – We are on the tail end of our current group. Path to Freedom is a program created to give a systematic approach to help people overcome various struggles that they encounter throughout life. These could be emotional struggles, addiction, life-controlling behaviors, sinful bondages, relational brokenness, and more, come talk to me or sign-up online.

I would like to close this morning in Prayer and lead you in a prayer on confession as we close. Don't worry, its simple, I am going to ask the Lord to reveal to you where we are missing the mark, is there sin that you need to confess where we missed the mark on loving God or loving His image bearers. **Let's Pray – Closing Song**

Thank you for joining us this morning, if you would like to receive some help please reach out to us at care@mysouthland.com or if you need prayer, at prayer@mysouthland.com.