

## Week Three — Redefining Sin

*“All these years I have been slaving for you.”*

Is the way we think about sin the same way God thinks about it? Actually, it’s a topic most of us don’t like to think much about! Perhaps we know we’re *saved* and we’re not too concerned because we’re living *under grace*. Or perhaps thinking about sin just reminds us how disappointed God must be in us.

However, allowing the Holy Spirit to transform our thinking about sin will free us to grow towards spiritual maturity. Maybe we’ll be able to stop trying to be “good enough.” Perhaps we won’t need to look to self-discovery, our career, achievements, entertainment, or pleasing others for fulfillment.

*God, help me understand what sin is and how it keeps me away from You. Help me stop trying to be my own Savior and Lord. May my thinking align with Your kingdom thinking. Amen.*

### Memory Verse:

***“ . . . for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”***

Romans 3:23

## Definitions and Translations from the Greek

### **My share (meros)**—

- 1) a part due or assigned to me
- 2) my lot, destiny
- 3) one of the component parts of a whole

### **I’ve been slaving (douleuō)**--

- 1) been a slave, serving, doing service
- 2) metaphor: obeying, submitting to
- 3) a) in a good sense, to yield obedience  
b) in a bad sense, becoming slaves to some base power, giving one's self up to

### **Sin (hamartanō)**--

- 1) to miss the mark
- 2) to err (especially morally), be mistaken
- 3) to miss or wander from the path of uprightness and honor, to do or go wrong
- 4) to wander from the law of God, violate God's law

*From Webster’s 1828 Dictionary: Sin is either a positive act in which a known divine law is violated, or it is the voluntary neglect to obey a positive divine command, or a rule of duty clearly implied in such command. Sin comprehends not actions only, but neglect of known duty, all evil thoughts purposes, words and desires, whatever is contrary to God’s command or law.*

**Read Chapter Three** of *The Prodigal God*.  
Highlight thoughts that stand out to you and ideas you'd like to discuss.

**From your reading:**

1. What is one insight you had about the *Parable of the Lost Sons* through this chapter of the book?

2. In PG page 29, Keller says that like the elder and younger brothers, people try to find happiness and fulfillment through **moral conformity and self-discovery**.

a) Do you agree? If so, can you think of examples of each?

b) Are you aware of ways these traits have acted as a “lens coloring how you see all of life” (see PG page 29)? In what ways?

c) Why are “both of these approaches to living wrong” (PG page 33)?

3. As we look at the *Parable of the Lost Sons*, the sin of the younger brother is obvious. Yet the more subtle sin of the elder brother seems to be a bigger barrier to receiving the love of the father ( PG pages 35-36).

a) What is the elder brother’s sin?

b) Ask God if this sin has created a barrier between  
--God and you

--others and you

If so, repent, asking forgiveness for this attitude. Now ask the Holy Spirit to renew your mind with new thinking—thinking that lines up with God’s character and His kingdom.

4. In PG page 36, Keller suggests that ultimately both sons wanted the same thing. They “wanted the father’s goods rather than the father himself.” They wanted his wealth and the life it would give them. He goes on to say, “However, while the younger brother went far away, the elder brother stayed close and ‘never disobeyed’. That was his way to get control.”

**Ask the Holy Spirit** if you have set up a system with God (perhaps something like, “If I do this, then You do this, God.”) in hopes of being in control. Take time to listen. Allow Him to search your heart. The investment of time here is well worth it.

Read the *Parable of the Lost Sons*, Luke 15: 1-3, 11-32, on SG page 4 or in your Bible.

**Digging into the Scripture:**

5. a) From the definition page, insights from PG Chapter 3, and the Scriptures you know, write a definition of sin in your own words.

b) Go through the parable and write down verse numbers that show sinful actions or attitudes as well as what they are.

6. a) In the parable (SG page 3), mark (1) **“give me my share”** and (2) **“I’ve been slaving for you”**.

b) From the context of these phrases in the parable, along with insight from the definition page, mark a (1) and/or (2) after any of the characteristics you think these phrases portray.

Entitlement \_\_\_\_\_ Diligence \_\_\_\_\_ Rebellion \_\_\_\_\_

Respect \_\_\_\_\_ Self-Seeking \_\_\_\_\_ Ungratefulness \_\_\_\_\_

c) Looking at all the attitudes listed above, ask the Holy Spirit which ones you bring into your relationship with Him. Repent if they separate you from relationship with Him. Give Him thanks if they bring you closer.

7. a) In the parable mark the words **“never disobeyed your orders.”**

b) Write out the following verses:

**Romans 13:8**

**Joshua 22:5**

**Ephesians 6:1,2**

c) Even though the elder brother did what he was supposed to do, how did he miss the mark on fulfilling the law?

d) What is the difference between obedience and honor?

e) What was the elder brother missing out on?

8. **Read Romans 14:9-10**. How does being the Lord of both the dead and the living envelope the two brothers?

9. **“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery (Galatians 5:1).” (DIG DEEPER with verses 5:2-6)**

a) How can the judgment talked about in Romans 14:10 (question #8) be considered a “yoke of slavery”?

b) If this is a yoke you are carrying, are you willing to ask the Lord to take it off of you? In prayer, ask Him what it has cost you to carry it and what you will gain by being free of it. Write down what you hear in your spirit. Are you willing to stand firm in that place?

10.

*But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness,  
and all these things will be given to you as well.*  
Matthew 6:33

How does this verse offer a new way of thinking concerning our desire to find happiness and self-fulfillment through moral conformity and self-discovery?

Write a prayer thanking God for this gift.