

Sin - cont.

Quotations

Even some people who say sin is real still steer by a compass of "moral pragmatics," not a bright line of absolute truth, Mohler says. "People say, 'I have high moral expectations of myself and others, but I know we are all human so I'm looking for a batting average.'

"We find a comfort zone of morality, a kind of middle-class middle level where we think we are doing well. We cut the grass. We don't double-park. But we ignore the larger issues of sin. "Instead of violating the law of the Creator, it becomes more a matter of etiquette. ... We want our kids to play well in the sandbox and know their place in line. We want people to do things decently and in order. But it's etiquette of morality without the ethics. The end result is that when we do things we wish people wouldn't do, there's no sense of guilt or shame."

My Response

Sin is not determined by a personal "comfort zone" (Judges 21:25), but by God's word. Sin is not determined by a matter of etiquette, but by God's word.

- Chris Reeves -

- Word of the Week -

- Christian -

"Christian" (Gr. *christianos*) means a follower or adherent of Jesus Christ (Acts 11:26). A real Christian is not just someone who professes a general religious belief, but rather someone who actually follows the words and deeds of Jesus each day. Let's be that real Christian this week!

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For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.
- 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 -

Note to the reader: The quotations in this series of bulletin articles were taken from the following online article: "Has the Notion of Sin Been Lost?" by Cathy Lynn Grossman, USA Today.com/news/religion, 3/19/08. Each set of quotations is followed by my response. – *Chris Reeves*

Quotations

A new survey by Ellison Research in Phoenix finds 87% of U.S. adults believe in the existence of sin, which is defined as "something that is almost always considered wrong, particularly from a religious or moral perspective." Topping the list are adultery (81%) and racism (74%). But other sins no longer draw majority condemnation. Premarital sex? Only 45% call it sin. Gambling? Just 30% say it's sinful. "A lot of this is relative. We tend to view sin not as God views it, but how we view it," says Ellison president Ron Sellers.

David Kinnaman, president of Barna Research, a company in Ventura, Calif., that tracks Christian trends, draws a similar conclusion: "People are quick to toe the line on traditional thinking" that there is sin "but interpret that reality in a very personal and self-congratulatory manner" — I have to

do what's best for me; I am not as sinful as most.

Indeed, 65% of U.S. adults say they will go to heaven, and only 0.05% believe they'll go to hell, according to a 2003 Barna telephone survey of 1,024 adults. "They give intellectual assent to the story about Jesus rising on Easter Sunday: 75% say they believe the biblical account of Jesus' death and resurrection is literally true, not a story meant to illustrate a principle. But they don't have any personal application of this Monday through Saturday," Kinnaman says.

My Response

According to the Bible, not society, sin is defined by God and his word (1 John 3:4; 5:17). Sin is "missing the mark" of (violating) God's word (Romans 3:32; Galatians 6:1; 2 John 9). Sin is also failing to do what is good (James 4:17). Sin is fixed, not relative; sin is objective, not subjective.

Quotations

Popular evangelist Joel Osteen, pastor of Lakewood Church in Houston, never mentions sin in his TV sermons or best sellers such as *Your Best Life Now*. "I never thought about (using the word 'sinners'), but I probably don't," Osteen told Larry King in an interview. "Most people already

know what they're doing wrong. When I get them to church, I want to tell them that you can change."

The Rev. Michael Horton, professor of theology at Westminster Seminary in Escondido, Calif., calls this "moral therapy." "It's changing your lifestyle to receive God's favor," Horton says. "It's not heaven in the hereafter but happiness here and now. But it is still up to you to make it happen." He finds sad truth in an old newspaper headline he once saw: "To ___ ___ with sin when being good is enough." That's the drift of American preaching today in a lot of churches. People know what sin is; they just don't believe in it anymore. We mix up happiness and holiness, and God is no longer the reference point." In other words, he asks, if you can solve your problems or sins yourself, what difference does it make that Christ was crucified?

My Response

Sinners need to be brought to guilt through the preaching of the gospel (Acts 2:37,41). Sin needs to be addressed in preaching and teaching and sinners need to be encouraged to repent (Matthew 23:28; James 4:8).

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