

Theme: Sin separates!

Opening activity: Ask the students to pair up. Girls with girls and boys with boys. Make sure everyone has a partner. If not, pair up a small group leader with the extra student.

Once in pairs, have them stand back-to-back. While they are back-to-back, ask them to complete the following one at a time at a slow pace. [**The point of this activity is to point out how difficult it is to try to communicate and connect while standing back-to-back or while SEPERATED.** My hope is the room will be fairly noisy, and it won't work very well at all.]

1. You've been in school at least seven years now. Tell your partner who your favorite teacher of all times is and why. (give time for each to share)
2. Tell where you went on your favorite vacation or family trip, and why.
3. Tell each other about your favorite pet of all times. If you don't have one, tell about your favorite tv animal character.
4. Share with each other which of the four seasons is your favorite and why?

Once the activity is complete have students return to their seats and share the answer to their favorite of the four questions. Now share with them the theme for today, "sin separates."

One simple, yet accurate definition of sin is, "sin means we turn our backs on God and on each other."

Sin separates us from God: In the Garden of Eden after Adam and Eve sinned, they hid from each other and from God.

In Genesis Cain is jealous of his brother Abel and in his raging jealousy Cain kills Abel. When God asks where Abel is, Cain asked, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Basically, God says, "Yes." But Cain had turned his back on his brother and on God.

Ask: When might we turn our back on God?

Possible answers: When we don't want to do what God requires. When we want to do things our own way rather than God's way. When we are angry with God. When we are busy, stressed, hurting.

Ask: When might we turn our backs on others?

Possible answers: When we fear them. When they hurt us. When we feel superior to them. When they want something that we don't want to give. When we feel they are not walking with God.

Read: John 17:1-11 with the following inserts:

17After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, ²since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him [**to all who stand face-to-face with him**]. ³And this is eternal life, that they may know you, [**look you in the eye**] the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. ⁴I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. ⁵So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence [**as I stand face to face with you**] with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

6 I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7 Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; 8 for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. 9 I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, **[who stand face-to-face with me]** because they are yours. 10 All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. 11 And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, **so that they may be one, as we are one.**

The point of this reading: Sin separates; Love unifies! Before Jesus ascended into heaven, he gave the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's work is to help us to be unified with each other and with God, never to be separated from God who loves us perfectly.

Small Group Preparation: (with the paragraph below I'm trying to make connections for the small group leaders so you can emphasize the idea of sin as turning ones back on and the idea that we are saved for and saved from)

In small group time I would like to have you walk through the handout titled: "SAVED FROM AND SAVED FOR". The connection between the idea that sin separates and saved from and saved for is community. The word "church" in Greek is ekklesia (pronounced ek-clay-see-a) which mean – "a gathering of people called out into a public space." Jesus sets up the church as a body "called out of our hidden places into the light of Christ" to be the light of Christ for the world walking in darkness. In other words, the people who make up the church are people called out of self, in order to give themselves in love to and for the work of revealing Jesus. We are saved from sin, from ourselves, and saved for God's rescue mission. It's all about community!

Small group time:

Talk about what the students see in the picture on the front of the handout. No right or wrong answers.

Have the students look up all or some of the Bible verses listed under saved from and saved for. Talk about what is revealed in these verses. What is God saving us from and what is God saving us for?

Catechism Help: I will have small catechisms available for each student. Briefly touch on how each part helps us fight against sin and helps us walk face-to-face with God and our neighbor.

Back side: Law – Gospel – Sanctification

Talk briefly about the use of God's law –

Talk about the Gospel – the forgiveness of our sins given so the law does not crush us.

Talk about the Holy Spirit's work of helping us grow into a Christ-likeness! It can be two steps forward – and one step back because we still fight against sin within us. As time unfolds and through God's faithfulness we grow – never to perfection – but we grow in faith, love and obedience to God's will.

Compile a list of questions the students have about sin – specific or general. Bring them next week.

Share highs and lows; pray together; Finish by 6:25 to attend worship by 6:30.
