

THE ROMANS ROAD FOR CHILDREN

Session 3: Truth About Man and His Sinful Condition

Do even very young children sin? Listen to this illustration and I believe that you will see that each of us are sinners from the youngest to the oldest. This is the property laws of a toddler, number one, if I like it, it's mine. 2. If it's in my hand, it's mine. 3. If I can take it from you, it's mine. 4. If I had it a little while ago, it's mine. 5. If it's mine, it must never appear to be yours in any way. 6. If I'm doing or building something, all the pieces are mine. 7. If it looks like mine, it's mine. 8. If I saw it first, it's mine. 9. If you were playing with something and you put it down, it automatically becomes mine. 10. If it's broken, it's yours.

Now we may laugh a little at this illustration because we have seen it acted out in our own children, or with those with whom we work. However this illustration serves to show us that even from a very young age children's lives show the evidence of sin. Charles Spurgeon once said, *"When a child is old enough to knowingly sin, he is old enough to savingly believe."* Charles Spurgeon. Therefore, it is vital that we begin teaching children from a very young age the message of salvation. In the last session we looked at what a child needs to know about God, in this session we want to think about the child's sinful condition.

The second stop in our trip on the Romans Road is Romans 5:12. Again marking your Bible will help you to quickly turn to the passage in order to let the children see what God says about their sin. You will also at this point use that flashcard, number 2 of your visual aids. When looking at Romans 5:12 you want to explain to the children that the reason sin is because they were born with a "want to" to sin. Romans 5:12 says, *"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."* (KJV)

Whenever reading Scripture to children remember to explain its meaning. This can be done very simply by reminding the children that ever since Adam chose to disobey God in the Garden of Eden, every person born on earth has been born with a "want to" to do things his own way. Children are born sinners and that's why they do sinful things. Sometimes children get the idea that the sinful things they do make them a sinner, but God's word tells us that we are born sinners and it's reflected in our actions. At times I explain this concept to children using a humorous illustration, I say something to them like, "Did your Teacher at school ever say to your class, 'boys and girls, I'm going to teach you how to cheat!' Of course she didn't. Or, did your parents ever say to you, 'Today I'm going to teach you how to hit your brother or sister'? They didn't do that, you already knew how to do those things. It's because you're born knowing how to do the wrong things, your parents and teachers have to help you learn how to do what is right."

This illustration will drive home the point in a simplistic way that the children can understand that they are sinners. Coupled with the teaching that we are born in sin, it is important to give specific examples of sin, things children think, say or do that break God's laws. Examples are given to help the children identify what sin looks like to God. These examples should be practical and specific rather than

saying things like, “sin is when you lie, cheat or disobey.” You want to give specific times when children do those types of things, think about the age group you’re working with. What are the sinful things preschoolers do, or what about the early or late elementary age child? What kinds of things did you do as a child that you knew were sinful? Giving specific examples of sin will help the child see the areas in his life that are sinful in God’s eyes. You see, if you keep in mind the definition of sin, the things you think, say and do that break God’s laws, you will be able to give different types of examples to the children. Sometimes sin is defined as the wrong things we do, but at times sin is not doing what we ought to do. Sometimes sin isn’t seen by our actions because it’s a wrong thought or attitude. Giving practical, specific examples of these types of sin will not give the children ideas of sinful things they ought to try; rather they will begin to think, “Oh, I’ve done that. I didn’t know it was so bad.” And then they will see the sin that they have done the way God does.

Children also need to know that God will punish sin. Because God is holy and just, He cannot let sin go unpunished; there are consequences for sin. Many children may not realize this truth, but Scripture tells us there’s a consequence for sin. You’ll want to read Romans 6:23 with the children to emphasize what God says. You also have a flashcard for this verse that you will be able to show the children. Romans 6:23 says, *“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* (KJV) Take time to explain the words “wages” and “death” simply. Wages are something we earn, or deserve for what we have done. Under the control of sin we have earned death or separation from a close, personal relationship with God. Death here doesn’t just mean that our bodies die, but it means that we can never be with God, it means that cannot have God helping us to live life the right way here and now, and that we will have to spend forever separated from Him in a place of punishment.

Be careful not to scare children as you share this principle, you don’t need to talk about Hell and the Lake of Fire, and so on. It is enough for them to understand that God is so serious about sin, He cannot let it be where He is; it has to be punished. The rest of Romans 6:23 will be explained in more detail as we talk about the person and work of Christ. Once you’ve taught the child about his problem of sin, you will want to use a link, a smooth phrase leading into Romans 5:8. You could use the following statement, “Because of God’s love for you, He made a way that your sins could be forgiven.” Carefully teaching a child about his sinful condition will cause him to recognize his sin and need for a Savior.

Think about how you will teach these truths on a child’s level, in a moment a demonstration will be done in order for you to hear how to teach these truths with simplicity and clarity. In the following demonstration you will hear the truths a child should be taught about sin, the order in which these truths are taught are not set in stone, but they should be shared in a logical and smooth way. Take a piece of paper and write down the following things that you hear. First, **what did the child learn about sin?** Second, **how was sin defined?** And third, **what specific examples of sin were used?** The demonstration will begin with the link from Romans 5:8a, and will end with a link leading to Romans 5:8. Now you need to listen with your child like ears, and write with your Teachers eye.

Demonstration:

“Because God is perfect his home Heaven is perfect too, He wants you to live with Him someday in His perfect home. God is different from you and me; let’s see how His word the Bible describes us. In romans 5:12, God calls us sinners. He says this, *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned.”*(KJV) Ever since the time Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden, every single person who is born on earth is born with a desire to do what is wrong.

Sometimes we call that desire a “want to” to sin, because you were born with that “want to” to have your own way, you do many sinful things. Well, what is sin? Sin is choosing your way instead of God’s way. Like when your mom tells you to begin on your homework as soon as you get home from school, and you choose to play outside with friends instead, you have disobeyed. God calls disobedience sin. When your friend gets a better grade than you and you think, “He thinks he’s so smart! I hope he gets chosen last for dodge ball in gym!” Even though you’ve only thought the unkind thing in your mind, God knows your sinful hateful thought, and He calls that sin. Perhaps you’ve called others mean names.

Each of these wrong things reminds me that you and I are sinners; we do many things that do not please our perfect God. The Bible tells us that you and I deserve to be punished for our sins. Romans 6:23 says, for the wages, or the payment, for sin is death, being separated from God. That separation begins now and someday you will be away from God forever in a place of punishment. On our flashcard you see a circle, this circle reminds us of God, that He is eternal; He has no beginning and no end. Do you see the dark line that separates the child from God? It’s a reminder that sin keeps you from having a friendship with God, but the end of that verse tells us something wonderful! It says, “But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Because of God’s love for you, He made a way that your sin could be forgiven.”

(This ends the demonstration.)

Observations:

Go back to those questions that were asked earlier, did you notice **what the child was taught about sin? What kinds of examples were used? And how was sin defined?** Including these truths will help the teaching about sin to be complete. From very early in life it is evident that boys and girls have been born with a sinful nature. We hear it as soon as they begin to talk, the first time we hear the word, “mine”. Because we recognize that their sin will have to be punished by God, we want to make sure that from an early age children understand what sin is and that they are sinners. Using principles learned in this session will help you to clearly communicate this truth to them. Once you’ve taught about the seriousness of sin, you’re ready to clearly teach God’s plan of redemption for sinful men, woman and children.