

SINarios

What are SINarios? It's a word that came to me describing scenarios where we come into contact with sin. I believe that God is calling us to develop a clear theology of restoration. One of the challenges in the Body of Christ today is that many of us don't know what to do with sin when we come into contact with it, in ourselves and in others. In this message I will explore specific scenarios or SINarios where we interface with the sin of another. We will also examine Jesus as He role modelled this. How did He deal with it? Did He deal with sin differently, case by case, or is there a pattern we see? What instructions are we given in scripture with regards to our response to the sin of another and what are the guidelines for the restoration process? As we encourage the church to grow in both evangelism and pastoral care, it is crucial for us to have a clear theology and philosophy of ministry with regards to how we deal with the sin of others. *John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. Everything Jesus said and did was underpinned by Grace and Truth.* The two are not mutually exclusive. As we examine the following SINarios, let us keep this in mind.

John 8:1-11 (NLT) Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives, 2 but early the next morning he was back again at the Temple. A crowd soon gathered, and he sat down and taught them. 3 As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd.

This passage highlights the contrast between the Pharisaic approach to SINarios and Jesus' approach.

The Pharisaic goal is often to shame the one who has sinned.

4 "Teacher," they said to Jesus, "this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 5 The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?" 6 They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. 7 They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, "All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!" 8 Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust.

We are called to first reflect on our own depravity before we consider passing judgment on another.

9 When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. 10 Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, "Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?" 11 "No, Lord," she said. And Jesus said, "Neither do I. Go and sin no more."

When mercy and grace are extended, the goal is always restoration to wholeness.

Often sin is a choice for which one must take personal responsibility.

Jesus appears to be very confident about her ability to choose the right way. He seems to know that there was power in the mercy shown to her that will carry her through. Her life was literally saved by Him. He didn't immediately say to her that He needed to dig deep to find out the root cause of her infidelity. He just commanded her to stop doing it. **Sometimes that's all that is needed; demonstration of God's extravagant love and acceptance followed by the instruction to stop sinning.** It is important to note: **Jesus' demonstration of mercy did not stop Him from acknowledging her sin. People can only truly experience forgiveness when they have first admitted there is something for which they need to be forgiven.** This is why one of the starting points in ministering salvation is getting the person to acknowledge *Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

In essence, this is what Jesus was doing in this SINario. The principle demonstrated in the passage we read earlier is taught clearly by Jesus in these verses. *Matthew 7:3-5 Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in*

your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

The emphasis is the order in which we do things. Jesus is not saying we must avoid removing the speck from our brother's eyes. Rather He is emphasising that we must first reflect on ourselves before doing so. Usually, one says things more tenderly after one has recognised one's own frailties. The tone is now less condemning.

Someone who attempts to correct and instruct others without first dealing with himself on the matter, is described by Jesus as a hypocrite. We also learn from this passage that as long as we have that plank in our own eye our vision will be impaired. Could it be that the reason why our attempts to restore others often fail is because we have not paid attention to the planks in our own eyes? Could it be that some of our narrative is muddled because mixed in it is our own guilty conscience for the unresolved wickedness that plagues our souls?

Gal 6:1 (NLT) Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself.

None of these scriptures talk about ignoring sin. In addition, the qualification for restoration is not closeness in relationship but rather godliness, gentleness and humility. It doesn't say you have to be best friends first.

The moment you position yourself to instruct with regards to a particular area of sin, you may potentially open yourself up to temptation in that very same area. You are declaring war against the enemy in that area. Sometimes you are dealing with a demonic stronghold in that person.

James 3:1 Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

There are times I hesitate to release certain people to teach prematurely because I am aware of the spiritual backlash they can experience. Often after teaching on a specific subject, I find myself being tested in that very same area afterwards. I want to outline a few SINarios for us to examine:

1. When people sin in OUR space.

A good example of this is Jesus in the temple: *John 2:13-17 13 When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. 15 So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. 16 To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" 17 His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."*

The desecration and misuse of the temple definitely triggered Jesus. How does this compare with what we allow into our house or church or business? Should we have the same passion Jesus had? What about our bodies, if ever they are misused? If our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, how do you think Jesus deals with us when they are used for illicit purposes? You could see that Jesus was jealous over the temple; Godly jealousy. I believe that He is the same concerning us because we belong to Him. He can't be so passionate about the temple but indifferent towards us.

1 Cor 6: 19-20 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your bodies.

2. When people sin in our church family

Jesus gives us clear guidelines for dealing with sin in the church. As we go through this passage reflect on yourself and your church culture to see where you are not functioning like this.

Mt 18:15-17 "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. 16 But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' 17 If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

- The first instruction is that we are to confront them about it privately. Here Jesus is endorsing the idea of pointing out a fault. The goal is winning them over, restoration. What are the alternatives to this? Gossip, denial, assumptions, abandonment etc. Please note that Jesus was not limiting this instruction to church leaders. There is mutual accountability in the church. We are accountable to each other. **How many more people would still be in church today if their brothers and sisters in the Lord had confronted them?**

Imagine we had a church where people were challenged by their fellow brothers and sisters for being continuously late for church, or for unsavoury behaviour towards the opposite sex.

- We don't need to give up prematurely. We can take a couple more people to help to address the matter.
- If someone rejects the counsel of a number of people, it is biblical to make it known to the church after which further refusal to listen results in excommunication. This passage of scripture shows us how highly Jesus regards the church. It doesn't need to get to this stage if there is already a teachable heart in the first place.

3. When people sin against you

Matthew 18:21-22 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

Forgiveness should be our default and it is not limited to people at church or at home. I have discovered that many people are plagued by work-place wounds. They have become like the battered wife who remains in her situation because of financial support. A lot of procrastination and even fraudulent behaviour at work stems from resentment due to workplace wounds. It has been found that there is a positive correlation between forgiveness and productivity. **Forgiving from the heart does not mean that justice is not served when necessary.**

4. When people sin against your loved ones

In 2 Sam 13 we see the account of Tamar being raped by Amnon. Amnon was Absalom's brother from another mother. Tamar was Absalom's sister. They were sons of David. Amnon was apparently in love with Tamar and tricked her into coming to his room after pretending to be ill saying he needing to be fed. Sadly he forced himself onto her, after which he hated her more than he had ever loved her. This is despite that fact that she even gave him the option of asking for her hand in marriage. Absalom kept this in his heart and orchestrated Amnon's murder a couple of years later. A family was divided as a result of this and the consequences were severe. In fact, a rumour broke out that Absalom had killed all of David's sons yet it was only Amnon. 2 Sam 13:32 *"No, don't believe that all the king's sons have been killed! It was only Amnon! Absalom has been plotting this ever since Amnon raped his sister Tamar."* Do you have loved ones who have been sinned against? How do you feel towards those who have betrayed your parents or abused your wife? In cases like this we tend to become bitter and our bitterness defiles us. We feel justified to do something

to these people. I have sometimes justified thoughts of violence when it comes to the potential abuse of a loved one. Somehow, we feel that forgiveness is only warranted when it is sin against ourselves. It is at these times we must remember what scripture says:

Heb 12:15 See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

Romans 12:19 Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

5. When those under your authority sin

Each of us have default behaviours. Some of us are more prone to mercy than justice whilst others prefer justice. Some of us in our parenting style will focus on counselling or praying for our children whilst others focus on training and disciplining. It is important to look at scripture systematically with regards to this. With parenting I have come to realise that we must teach our children that their actions have consequences even if they have rationalised their behaviour. It is no excuse for sin. At the same time the discipleship process includes both discipline and counsel. What is causing the anger? Where is the pain coming from? As a parent, what is my responsibility? There are many faces of discipline. Discipline comes from the same root word as "to train". Sometimes we need to exercise space boundaries when those under our authority defile or disturb our space. This might mean that an unruly child finds himself excused from family game time until he changes his attitude. Recently I was conducting a corporate workshop and four members of the team arrived about two hours late, distracting us with booming loud music from their BMW. Their leader told them they were not welcome to join us. He was right to do so. Sometimes rewarding non-performers is the biggest demotivator for the performers. I know leaders who have had breakthroughs in their business immediately after releasing "bad apples" that were not aligned with their values and were poisoning the team. As a father I have had to take accountability for what I allow in my household (words, behaviour and attitudes).

Proverbs 23:13-14 Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death.

Please note that it speaks of a rod, not fists or hands.

Deut 11:19 19 Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

We can't discipline our children for things we have not taught them. We need to communicate the standard. **Instruction, counsel and discipline go hand in hand.**

Col 3:21 Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

We must not discipline from a place of anger but from hearts full of firm unconditional love.

6. When those in the world sin

1 Cor 5:11-13 (Berean Study Bible) But now I am writing you not to associate with anyone who claims to be a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a verbal abuser, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. 12 What business of mine is it to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? 13 God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you."

Remember that sinners sin. Sometimes we focus so much on behaviour modification instead of preaching the Gospel to people. The Gospel is ultimately the only solution to the sin problem mankind faces. It is a bit like taking your dog to the parlour and then disciplining it for rolling in the mud afterwards. That's what dogs do. Now I am not saying that people are dogs, but an unsaved person's spirit has not yet been regenerated.

Therefore, sometimes one needs to appeal to their conscience and general morality to protect the moral innocence of others that they may be harming.

Engaging with the world might include an ungodly boss or even extended family members that are respected and feared. There are various ways of dealing with the world and here are some:

- **Focus on being an example of Kingdom living.**

Phil 2:14-15 Do everything without grumbling or arguing, 15 so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation." Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky

- **Communicate to elders with gentleness and respect.**

1 Tim 5:1 Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers

I believe this scripture can be applied not only to a church setting but also an extended family scenario.

- **Create space boundaries and emotional boundaries where necessary.**

For example, there is a lady who shared with me how she is not comfortable going to her parent's home until she becomes stronger spiritually. This is because they say she has a calling to be a sangoma/witchdoctor and have applied pressure on her. Recently I read a biography of a well-known pastor, who shared how his parents were witchdoctors who would get excited when he would have supernatural experiences at home as they believed he also had a similar calling. God led him away from that environment at a young age. If staying in a particular environment causes you to sin, I always say, "maybe it's time to move on."

Mt 18:9 And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.

1 Cor 15:33 Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."

When the world around us is sinning, our proximity to them must result in us influencing them. If you are not influencing them but rather being influenced, then perhaps you need to downgrade some friends to the status of acquaintance. It's great to be in those "In-between" places, but we must remember to be the influencers. Can you say, "The influence and impact I have on the world around me is greater than it has on me."?

May God help us to go into the world full of grace and truth like Jesus. May He give us wisdom as we navigate various SINarios: When people sin in YOUR space; when people sin in the church family; when people sin against you; when people sin against your loved ones; when those under your authority sin; and when those in the world sin. In all these cases, remember to always apply the principle of grace and truth.