

All In

When Jesus is your Plan "A"
you don't need Plan "B".



Magnolia Bible Church Men's Group

Thursday Nights at 6:30 PM | October 11 – November 15, 2018 (Lesson #2)

In this series we're talking about the "All In" concept. *All in* means totally committed, no turning back, reaching the point of no return, burning the boats, and leaving it all on the field (these are just a few of the phrases we use in today's world). To be brutally honest, as men very few of us are *All In* when it comes to our commitment to Jesus. Vying against our commitment to Jesus are a tremendous number of distractions and pressures that seem to pull us in every direction except the one that counts.

In this 6-week series we're going to take a real, hard look at what we need to do to **make Jesus Plan A**. Provided below are topics we'll be covering in this series. Each topic has been specifically selected to drive us towards building a life where we don't have to make any excuses.

1. October 11 Finding the "Why?" in your life.
2. October 18 What's Your "game"? Discovering God's specific plan for your life.
3. October 25 **Roadblocks: areas of sin and weakness that prevent success.**
4. November 1 It's all about TRUST: Making the leap of faith.
5. November 8 Developing God's *Game Plan* for your life.
6. November 15 Putting it all together and living with purpose for Jesus.

In tonight's lesson we're going to explore "Roadblocks: areas of sin and weakness that prevent success". Over the past two weeks we've discussed finding the "Why?" in your life and exploring "What's your Game?".

This week we're going to take a hard look at a **SIN**. Let's be honest – no one likes to talk about sin. It seems as if many preachers across the United States would rather talk about self-help topics and are more focused on making their congregations feel good about themselves. While I am all for pastors trying to motivate their congregations to follow Jesus, I don't think it should be at the expense of discussing the sin in our lives.



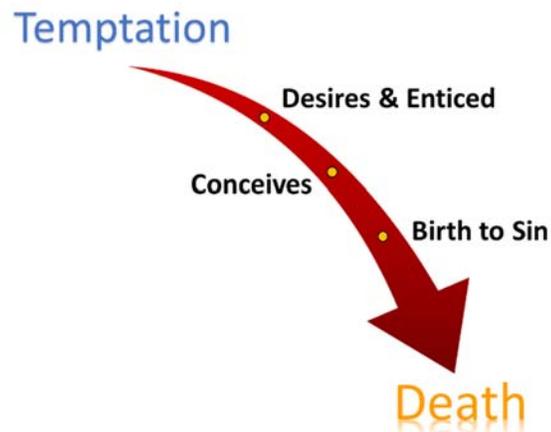
Here's the main problem with sin – it's fun *for a while*. All of us sin, so it's something we all have in common. However, what's not common is how as followers of Jesus we deal with sin. It's possible to put Christians into one of three groups:

- **Living by the Spirit**; although they sin, their lives are not characterized by sin (Galatians 5:24-25).
- **Luke warm Christians**; are neither on fire for Jesus or completely opposed to His work in their lives (Revelation 3:14-20).
- **Carnal Christians**; very little evidence that these people are even Christians, given enough time God might take these people out if they continue in sin (1 Corinthians 11:27-32).

The Bible is filled with stories of men and women who sinned and paid the consequences for it. The entire history of the nation of Israel is a warning to us on the consequence of sin and even a casual reading of the Major and Minor prophets (Isaiah through Malachi) is enough to convince us that God takes sin very seriously.

The first chapter of James probably does a better job helping us understand God's viewpoint on how sin *progresses* in our lives. The image to the right shows graphically how sin starts as **Temptation** and eventual leads to **Death**. I want to point out that for the Believer sin does not lead to loss of salvation (justification); however, when we enter into a period of time in our lives characterized by perpetual sin, one of two things will happen:

The Sin Progress (James 1:13-15)



1. We become extremely ineffective for the work of God. This is the “carnal” Christian discussed previously, who has little regard for God’s work in his life.
2. God will take them out – literally. Paul provides a stern warning in 1 Corinthians 11:27-32 regarding Believers who are flippant in taking the Lord’s Supper. In essence they have become unrepentant and have become destructive to themselves, those around them (including the Church), and the name of Jesus.

As Believers, we don’t have to sin. That sounds almost ridiculous to say, but through the power of the Holy Spirit Jesus was able to resist temptation. Far too often as Christians we seem to be the “victims” of our circumstances and allow sin to dominate our lives. **The goals in tonight’s lesson are two-fold.** First, develop a greater understanding on the real dangers of it and its impact on our lives. The second is learning to effectively battle sin and be cognizant of the “triggers” that cause temptation to progress to full-blown sin.

The Dangers of Sin

Like the Titanic that ventured into waters having icebergs, as Christians we causally dabble with temptations that can and will destroy us when left unchecked. So much of the Bible, especially Jesus’ message in the Gospel and the New Testament Epistle writers, warn us to not *flirt with temptation*. As Joseph did in running from the wife of Potiphar, we must flee from sin. Listed below are three dangers associated with allowing sin to take root in our lives.

- At its core, sin is woeful disregard for the Lord’s commands. Sin is characterized by self-gratification and getting what we want, when we want it. Sin also exhibits a lack of reverence for God and His Power. In Proverbs, Solomon wrote: *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction* (1:7). The best description I ever heard in terms of fearing God was reverence bordering on terror. As followers of Jesus we need to show respect to God by not sinning.
- Sin makes us calloused to the needs of others. The root of sin is selfishness and it doesn’t take long for the Believer in sin to become very focused on himself and uncaring towards others. In Philippians 2:1-4 we read that we are *to do nothing out of selfish ambition, but in humility consider others better than ourselves*. Sin makes us irritable because we know deep down we are not doing what we’re supposed to do. It’s hard to focus on others when we’re focused on ourselves.
- Sin makes us weak spiritually. In effect sin makes us ineffective to conduct the work He has called us to do. People who are effective in doing work for the Lord *to the degree He has called them* have learned to resist temptation. Although not perfect, after sinning they are quick to repent and ask God for forgiveness. To a large extent, the American church has become weak and anemic. We are ineffective in leading others to Jesus and what’s worse, we make excuses for it! We have tolerated sin and allowed it to become part of our everyday lives.

Sometimes we only appreciate danger when we understand its consequences. No one in their right mind would light a match next to a can of gasoline, yet you and I do the same thing when we sin and find ourselves participating in an “endless cycle” of sin. Men like King David would be quick to tell us to avoid sin at all costs in order to spare ourselves, our families, and those around us from the heartaches caused by sin. In the next section we’ll look at ways we can avoid sin.

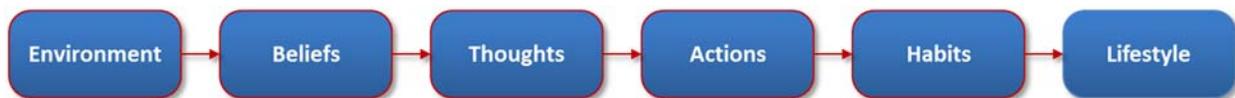
Learning to Effectively Battle Against Sin

Let’s be honest, life would be better with background music. Movie producers have learned the incredible power behind background music. Can you imagine epic movies like *Star Wars*, *Gladiator*, or *Lord of the Rings* without background music? I can’t. I think one of the problems we have as Christians we are shortsighted in understanding the tremendous implications that sin has on our lives; today, tomorrow, and forever. Can you imagine if every time you faced temptation the background music from *Gladiator* popped up and you envisioned yourself in a great battle with a sword at your side? I can and it’s awesome!

I don’t think Paul’s use of the Full Armor of God in Ephesians 6 was an accident. It was intentional because he understood that we are waging war against evil forces. Unfortunately, most of us are losing. I think it’s safe to say that sin operates based on predictable patterns in our lives. Even if Satan were bound we would still sin; however, because Satan and his demons have been watching mankind for more than 6,000 years he knows how and where we struggle. In many regards we are “easy prey”.

The **H A L T** acronym provides a framework for understanding temptation, as reflected in the following areas: **H**ungry, **A**ngry, **L**onely, and **T**ired. Think back to times when you have sinned. Was it possible that one of these elements was present? Just like bad patterns are prone to creep into our lives, we can develop good patterns that allow us to focus on living through the power of the Holy Spirit. In essence, we want to live our lives exhibiting what Paul talks about in Galatians 5:16-23, especially considering the message in verse 16: *So I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.*

Provided below is a graphic that helps us better understand how we can build a lifestyle centered around honoring Christ. Lifestyle Christianity starts with the right environment based on Biblical truths, but soon is driven by what we believe, what we think, how we act, and the habits we form in the process. Just as we can start bad habits, it is also possible to build into our lives habits that produce successful Christian living.



Small Group “Tabletop” Discussion Questions

1. When are you most vulnerable to temptation? When are you most successful in resisting temptation?
2. What steps have you taken to “guard your heart” and minimize the likelihood that temptation turns into full-blown sin?
3. How can you encourage brothers in Christ to “keep on keeping on” and resist patterns of sin?
4. Do you believe there have been times that sin has minimized your effectiveness for the Lord? If so, please provide an example.