

## **JACK'S CORNER:**

**QUESTION:** What ever happened to sin?

**ANSWER:** In lieu of my regular format, I want to address a disturbing shift I have noticed in talking to parents. The shift away from “sin” to “mistakes.”

The other night on the evening news, I heard of a college sports figure that was caught shoplifting. When he was interviewed (no doubt couched by his lawyer), he spoke of “making a mistake.” There was no talk of “doing something wrong”, no talk of committing a crime, no talk of making a choice to steal...he had “made a mistake.” The transformation did not stop there. A few minute later, the reporter referred to the act as “an unfortunate mistake.” Follow the implication? This young man’s CHOICE to STEAL somehow just “happened” to him...a matter of “chance” or “fortune.” The act was somehow beyond his control or responsibility. He was a “victim” of bad fortune and circumstance.

Follow the implication further...how can this “unfortunate” man, the “victim” of circumstance, be held accountable? Don’t we all make “mistakes”?” Don’t we all experience bad “fortune”?

The next morning on *The Today Show*, a former Neo-Nazis was being interviewed. The interviewer asked: “During the time you were involved with this hate group, were you sick? Crazy?” Follow the implication? Hate is now a mental illness...a disease. Hate isn’t even a mistake; it’s an illness. I fear the A.P.A. (American Psychiatric Association) will soon develop criteria to help professionals diagnose S.H.D. (Severe Hatred Disorder). Sound too outrageous? Practically every other behavior is categorized in the D.S. M. (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders).

It is my deep concern that this “shift” from sin to mistakes has begun to infect many in the church. Our youth especially are susceptible to this shift in thinking. Sins become “mistakes”. After all, we don’t want to offend anyone, or damage someone’s self-esteem. Things like hatred, lust, lying, greed, stealing, abuse, divorce, idolatry, sexual immorality, etc...just “sort of” happen to us...they aren’t really our fault. They might just be mistakes, or a mental illness, or just bad luck.

I’m convinced that many of us don’t have a deep appreciation for the Cross of Christ because we don’t think we are “that bad”. With this mindset, how do we understand, experience, and live for Christ? God sent his Son to die for our “mistakes”? God so loved the world that he gave his Son to help us through our “unfortunate” circumstances? Doesn’t sound terribly moving or transformational to me. It might sound “nice”, but not wonderful, or overwhelming, or life changing, or humbling, or awesome. How much devotion, appreciation, surrender, commitment or inspiration do you suppose we will have for a God who gave up his Son to pay the price for our “mistakes”? How excited will we be to share the incredible Good News when we might not see it as that “good”? How much awe and gratitude will we have for a God who gave everything to forgive us when we don’t feel we are really to blame?

When sins are no longer sins, forgiveness loses its wonder, its richness and its incalculable cost. In his great sacrificial love, God gave, and continues to give, that which we most desperately need—priceless, cleansing forgiveness. Without a deep and personal awareness of our “choice” to repeatedly sin, we will have little use for God’s greatest gift, and little love for him.

Parents, don’t be afraid to call sin, sin. Our children already live in a morally confused world. The home and the church are the last fortress against this confusion.

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