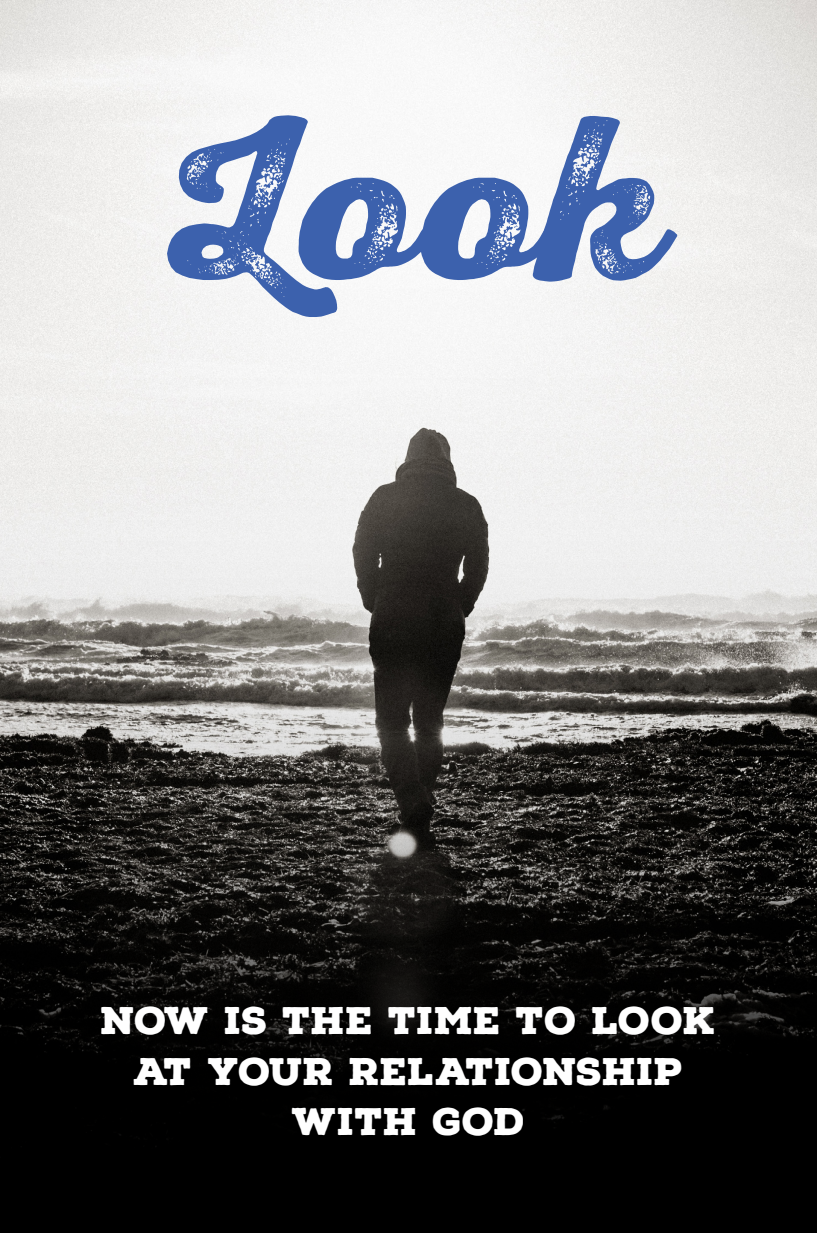


Look

A person wearing a dark hoodie and pants is walking away from the camera on a dark, pebbly beach. The ocean is in the background with waves breaking. The sky is bright and hazy. The word "Look" is written in a large, blue, cursive font at the top of the image.

**NOW IS THE TIME TO LOOK
AT YOUR RELATIONSHIP
WITH GOD**

#2

Look at your biggest problem

All of us face problems, every day. Our car breaks down, or we get sick, we forget an important assignment for school, or have a misunderstanding with friends. Some problems are trivial, others very serious. But sometimes there are very serious problems that we are unaware of.

Let's say that today you decide to seek God. You want to know him personally, to have a relationship with him. Immediately you will run into a very serious problem.

You are a sinner.

Sin is falling short of God's standard. Have you ever:

- Lied
- Acted selfishly
- Taken something that wasn't yours
- Been prideful
- Been jealous
- Responded in anger
- Tried to hurt someone else
- Etc...

One of the problems with sin is that it often controls us even when we don't want it to. We would like to change our behavior, but it is more difficult than we think. As Jesus said...

"Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family."

John 8:34-35

Sometimes we compare ourselves to others and start feeling pretty good about ourselves. “I’ve never committed murder like that guy”, we think, “and I’m a whole lot nicer than that girl”. Actually, sin is such a strong poison that it doesn’t take much. Even a very small amount of sin can have devastating consequences.

THERE ARE THREE KEY THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR BIGGEST PROBLEM

1. Sin separates you from God

“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Romans 3:23

“...your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”

Isaiah 59:2

?

Why would sin cause separation from God? Does this seem fair to you?

God is LOVE – he cares deeply about you. But he is also

- **HOLY** – separated from anything unclean or impure
- **JUST** – always fair and right in his judgment

That means that he can't allow sin in his presence. It also means that he is required by his character to judge us for things we have done wrong. That is why sin has such devastating consequences.

"For the wages of sin is death..."

Romans 6:23

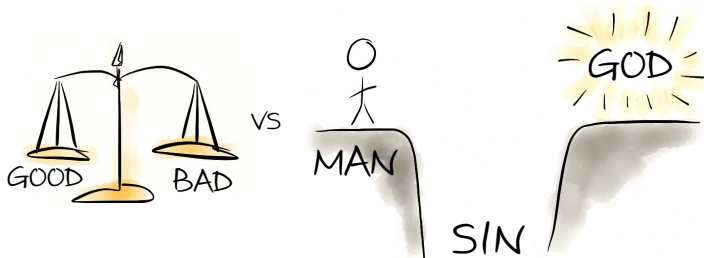
?

What do you think this verse means?

How do you think we experience this "death" or separation from God?

2. *Good works are not enough*

It seems logical to try and balance out things we have done wrong by doing other things right. We think if our good deeds outweigh the bad, then our account is even. Unfortunately, the standard for good works is 100% perfection – and all of us fall short.



“For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.’ Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God...”

Galatians 3:10-11

?

Why do you think the Bible says that one who relies on doing good works is under a curse?

Does this mean that we shouldn't try to do what is right?

2. Religion is not enough

Back in the gospel of John a man named Nicodemus came to visit Jesus. He was a member of the Jewish ruling council, and also a Pharisee, which means he was very faithful at keeping the standards of the Jewish religion. Here is what John says about the conversation.

“Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, ‘Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.’”...

(continued on the next page)

... „Jesus replied, ‘Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.’ How can someone be born when they are old?’ Nicodemus asked. ‘Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!’ Jesus answered, ‘Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.’”

John 3:1-6

?

Why do you think he came to Jesus at night?

What kind of attitude did he have toward Jesus?

It seems that Jesus should have commended him, but instead he warns him that he might miss the kingdom of God. What do you think he meant when he told him he needed to be “born again”?

Nicodemus thinks he is talking about physical birth (born of water), but Jesus is talking about spiritual birth (born of the Spirit). How do you think being “born of the spirit” is different from being religious?

In the next lesson we will talk about God’s solution to your biggest problem.

A deeper Look

WHY ARE THERE SO MANY RELIGIONS?

There is no culture on earth without some form of religion. It seems to be a basic instinct of man to reach out for spiritual answers, for connection with the unseen world. This actually is one of the evidences for God's existence. Why would we have a universal longing, unless there existed something that could fulfill it?

Some religions are monotheistic, meaning that they worship one God. Others are polytheistic, believing in a multitude of Gods. Still others believe in some kind of impersonal "force" that people find inside of themselves or in nature.

What they all have in common, however, is that each promotes a system of religious adherences, or a particular set of good works that will give you favor in God's eyes, or gain you help from a supernatural power.

All have this in common – except Christianity. The Bible teaches that neither religion nor good works are enough, that we can't reach God by our own efforts or merit. The only way to God is through his effort and his merit – something we will learn about more in the next lesson.