

If you can cast your mind back to your high school days when you had a school assembly, you probably sang a song and repeated the 'Lord's prayer'. When you come to the phrase 'forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us, have you ever taken note of that order? Surely most of us want to pray for those who sin against us, but the Lord clearly states we must pray first about our own sins!

When God created the heavens and the earth it was a perfect place. Sin only entered the world when people rebelled against God and their relationship with God was broken. Since then, it has been handed down from one generation to the next.

- G K Chesterton was an English writer and philosopher. The story goes that a newspaper editor asked several writers, 'What is wrong with the world today?' Chesterton responded with this brief letter. 'The problem with the world is me.' Yours sincerely, G. K. Chesterton - He understood the truth of Scripture that we are all sinners.
- In some cultures, pointing is considered rude. It also reminds us that when we point a finger at someone else's sin, three fingers point back at us.

What does the word "sin" mean? It means missing the mark. In archery, an arrow that fails to hit its target misses the mark. The Bible uses this idea to describe how people fall short of God's standard. We are all sinners, fallen short. (Romans 3:23). And the result of sin is that we are cut off from God (Romans 6:23).

A genuine mistake is not the same as sin. For example, if a pot boils dry and the potatoes burn, that is a mistake, not a sin. Although mistakes can sometimes feel like wrongdoing, the guilt they create may be false rather than justified. It is important to recognise the difference.

How do we deal with the sin problem so that our sins are forgiven?

1. Jesus, who is God, loved you so much that he came to deal with the sin problem by dying on the cross. As he was spotless, He took the punishment of our sin upon himself so that we may know forgiveness and get to know God personally (Isaiah 53).
2. When we confess to God our sin He will forgive and cleanse us from it (1 John 1:9). If we have harmed anyone we need to ask them for their forgiveness.
3. Sometimes the hardest person to forgive is ourselves because of some serious sin we have committed. Certainly, we should show regret for our wrong doing but we must not live under condemnation. God looks upon us as if we were a (bride Eph 5:31,32) bridegroom (Is 61:10).

'Father forgive us our sins as we forgive others.'

- Years ago, as our church was growing, the leadership team met to decide how best to manage that growth. We developed an excellent plan, and everyone present supported it, so we put it into action. However, one key leader could not attend the meeting, and I failed to immediately tell him about our decision. I could see later that he was offended, but I did nothing. I tried once to contact him about 8 years ago without success, yet God continued to prompt me to apologise and ask for his forgiveness. When I finally reached him this year I apologised, he forgave me, and our friendship was restored. Is God asking you to attempt to make things right with someone? Do it.

'O Lord, you are so good, so ready to forgive, so full of unfailing love for all who ask for your help' (Psalm 86:5).

The Lord's prayer, '(Father) forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us'.