

Teen Devotion

Year A – Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

The Savior's Sermon



One truth shared: Jesus exposes the monster of sin in us that he might kill it and transform us.

"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell."

Matthew 5:21-24; 27-30

Kill the Monsters

Everyone has a sinful nature. There is a deep-seated monster that lives inside us. It's like incurable cancer in a human body. Our spiritual genetics are so flawed, we won't survive. It's why every human being in the world dies. Sin is a monster that kills us.

In Jesus' sermon on the mount, he shines a bright spotlight on the monster. People thought that as long as they did not murder, then they were obeying the Fifth Commandment. As long as they didn't commit adultery, they were keeping the Sixth Commandment. Jesus explained that sin isn't just *doing* the outward act of murder. Like cancer cells, sin is already there inside us. It might begin with a feeling of anger or a lustful desire that decides to look. If our hearts were pure, we wouldn't have those feelings or desires.

We like to think, "C'mon, God, don't take things so seriously. I'm not perfect, but hey, I haven't killed or committed adultery." Today, Jesus makes this clear: if you are easily angered and impulsively blurt out ugly names and curses at others, you will pay with literal hellfire.

Wow. Sin is not a little oopsie because I'm having a bad day. It's a monster that will kill me.

How serious are you about getting rid of sin in your life? Next week ushers in the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday. Jesus is readying himself for the serious task of facing hellfire and death on the cross. He did not come to earth to relax God's holy standards. He came to obey them, even the least one we think we can fudge a bit. He kept them completely. If you've ever put together a 500-piece jigsaw puzzle, maybe you've felt the frustration of a few missing pieces ... So close! God demanded a righteousness no one could perfectly match. We have holes all over. Until Jesus came and completed it perfectly.

The missing piece of the puzzle is Jesus.

This week, identify your sinful impulses. Don't let them stay hidden. Listen to Jesus' words and shine a bright light on them. Repent of them. Remember your need for Jesus who killed the monster! Now fight the impulse to hurt people, especially people who hurt you first. Fight impure thoughts. Imitate Jesus and live a life of love.

Prayer: Lord, we thank you for your commandments that help expose the monster of sin within us. Forgive us for the times we sin against you. Send your Holy Spirit to give us the strength to resist temptations and to live a life that is pleasing to you. We do all of this to give you praise and glory. Amen.

Foundation Teen Facilitators Guide

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Starting the Discussion: *This first section is intended to be light and easy, to engage and get the conversation going. Have a little fun with these questions.*

When you think of monsters in movies, who is the greatest monster of all time and why? (*Monsters can include anything from Cookie Monster to Godzilla.*)

Connecting: *This section serves as a bridge between the opening conversation and the body of the study/discussion. It should get the group thinking about the topic/text even before they've looked at it.*

What is the definition of a monster? (*That which is unnatural and harmful. A serial killer is called a monster.*)

Digging In: *Here we want to dig into some texts or the text for the day and see what Scripture says. The questions are meant to be open ended to give a beginning of a scriptural conversation. These are a guide for a spiritual and scriptural conversation.*

- Why is our sinful nature technically unnatural?
- The Ten Commandments expose the monster of sin living within us. Briefly, review the Ten Commandments and identify all the different ways it is revealed in us. For example, the First Commandment exposes the sin monster of me wanting to be God.
- *True or false:* The Fifth and Sixth Commandments are for murderers and adulterers—but not you.
- Ash Wednesday ushers in the season of Lent. What's the connection between Lent and the monster of sin?
- What's the connection between your baptism and the monster of sin?

Conclusion: *Here we want to wrap up the discussion, perhaps circling back to the "connecting question" above.*

- Discuss a couple of issues you believe teens struggle the most with privately. What's the danger of hiding them?
- Here is this week's strategy: Everyday, wake up and say, "I am a baptized child of God" and every night go to bed and say, "I am a baptized child of God." Why is this such a good strategy for defeating sin monsters?