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## NOTES ON LESSON 2: THE PROBLEM

(Also see “The Problem” and “Answer Guide for Teachers”)

God’s Word teaches us that repentance is a necessary part of our conversion to Christ. Just as we cannot assume from the beginning that people believe in God or value His Word, we cannot assume that they have a sense of what is right or wrong in His sight. The world around us is continually minimizing the problem of sin and rejecting the idea that there is absolute truth to be believed.

Lesson 2 is designed to show how sin came into the world. It also demonstrates the results of sin’s coming into the world. Sin is clearly defined in this lesson. People will not understand the need for Jesus if they do not understand what it means to be lost. This lesson is very helpful for situations in which an understanding of the unscriptural nature of infant baptism is needed.

### How Did Sin Come Into the World?

*Genesis 1:1, 31.* These verses immediately remind the student of the conclusions that were drawn in the last lesson. Trust in God and His Word and the common ground they have developed with the teacher are brought to mind once again.

*Genesis 2:9–17.* This section allows us to see that God loves us enough to warn us of evil things or actions that can harm us. It also emphasizes the fact that God seeks genuine love from us and has therefore given us the opportunity to choose to love and obey Him rather than forcing us to do so. The freedom of choice is given through love, but we can turn that opportunity into pain and death.

*Genesis 3:1–6.* Here we see the foolish choice that was made. Point out that the road to sin begins with the wrong kind of thinking. First John 2:16 speaks of the cravings of sinful man, lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life. The dangers and the process of committing sin are timeless.

*Genesis 3:7–22.* When sin entered the world, with it came serious consequences. It is important to take advantage of the opportunity for discussion by using the open question that is offered. God put man out of the garden for a number of reasons. He could not fellowship sin, but it was also an act of love. Some believe that Genesis 3:15 is a prophecy about the birth of Christ. That verse

certainly contains a great promise.

*Deuteronomy 1:39; Isaiah 7:16.* This section supports the idea that infants cannot be responsible for knowing good and evil or making moral choices. In Deuteronomy we read about the children of Israel who would not see the land that was promised to them. God did not punish the children—only those who were old enough to understand the choice to obey or to rebel. In the prophecy about the child called “Immanuel,” Isaiah predicted changes that would happen before the boy was old enough to choose good and refuse evil. You can also point out that God forms our spirits and is the Father of our spirits (Zechariah 12:1; Hebrews 12:9). If God gives us our spirits (and He does), then we did not come into the world depraved, as some teach. That would make God the source of evil, which He is not (James 1:13).

### Who Is Responsible for Sin?

*Ezekiel 18:4, 20–24; Romans 5:12.* Ezekiel teaches in a very pointed way that we do not inherit sin. Later in the lesson, 2 Corinthians 5:10 is examined. This verse shows that each person will be judged by his own deeds. God’s Word clearly teaches that the sinful soul will die. Romans 5:12 shows that, though we do not inherit sin, we are affected by the consequences of sin. People are quick to agree that a child from a broken home is not to blame, yet all can see that such children are affected by the consequences of divorce.

Be sure to let the student take time to share his thoughts about babies inheriting sin. We can make it clear here that children who do not understand the difference between right and wrong and are not guilty of sin cannot repent. Repentance is a necessary part of becoming a Christian (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38). Second Corinthians 7:10 teaches that repentance leads to salvation.

### What Is Man’s Greatest Problem?

*John 8:21–24; Hebrews 9:27.* Many in our world think that they will be saved even though they do not obey Jesus and walk closely with Him. This verse is a strong reminder that death and judgment are ahead of us. No one is “doing okay” without Jesus.

*Romans 3:23; 6:23.* Before we can convince a lost soul of his need to become a Christian, we must help him to understand that he is lost without Jesus and how terrible it is to be lost. A child who wanders away from his mother and gets lost has a good time wandering before he realizes that he is lost. Only when the child realizes his lost condition do the tears begin to flow.

### What Is Sin?

*1 John 3:4* through *Proverbs 24:9.* The five brief verses and the accompanying questions help the student to understand what sin is. The Scriptures also give a good picture of the things that one living the Christian life must avoid. These passages emphasize the importance of respect for God's Word, the conscience, and the heart.

*Ephesians 6:11, 12; John 8:44* and *1 Peter 5:8.* Christians are engaged in daily spiritual warfare. Just as we must remind people of a God who loves them, we must remind them of the enemy who is trying to deceive and destroy them. Remind the student that, even as you study God's Word, the devil is trying to cause the seed to be carried away.

*Acts 17:30, 31.* Repentance is emphasized once again as we think about man's sin problem. God has set a day in which He will judge us through Jesus, whom He raised from the dead. The proof is the resurrection of Jesus. If God were going to save even those who do not belong to Jesus, then He would not have sent His only Son to die and be raised.

*2 Corinthians 5:9–11; John 5:25–29.* This section reminds the student that our deeds do matter. It also makes clear that Jesus will be the Judge on Judgment Day. We will stand before the same Jesus who shed His blood and died for us. We must stand before Him and give an account for the way we have lived, in view of His sacrifice for us.

*Romans 2:16; Ecclesiastes 12:14.* Just as Adam and Eve could not keep their actions a secret from God, neither can we. Many people struggle with secret guilt. Also, there are those who think that as long as something remains a secret, it is not a problem. The truth that God is always watching is a helpful reminder. A healthy respect or fear of God is an important part of repentance. There can also be comfort, for some, in knowing that God has known their sins all along. We can bring our failures and burdens to Him.

*2 Thessalonians 2:8–12; 1 John 2:3–6.* When truth is thrown away, all we are left with is confusion. During the reading of these passages you can

stress the fact that what we believe is important. Some of the most religious people of Jesus' day did not recognize the Lord when He walked down their streets. We need to love the truth. We cannot love the truth and willingly substitute something else for it.

*John 14:1–6; Revelation 20:10–15; 21:1–8.* Some people with whom we come into contact will tell us that all religion is good. Some will say that we are all going to the same place. Jesus made a much bolder claim than this: He said that no one will make it to heaven without Him.

Spend some time on the subjects of heaven and hell. While we want to highlight the fact that Christianity is a wonderful life now, we must not fail to teach about heaven and hell. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. In order to encourage your student to prepare, you must help him to be excited about the prospects. Some brethren do not believe that Revelation 21 is talking about heaven. They think it is picturing the church. I think it is speaking of the glorified church in heaven.

Revelation 21 also presents a graphic picture of hell. Other passages that can be used are Mark 9:42–49 and Luke 16:19–31. Do not fail to point out, through the open question, the terror of hell. You will want to ask at this point, "Do you want to go to heaven?"

### Review & Summary

Be sure that the student considers carefully each question in the review and summary. Make sure that he has learned that sin is something we do, that sin separates us from God, and that each person must take responsibility for his own sins. Do not exaggerate or minimize man's sin debt. ❖

### Personal Encounters

Study the personal encounters of Paul with the following people in Acts. What can you, as a Christian who wants to share the gospel, learn from his example?

- Elymas (13:6–12)
- Lydia (16:13–15)
- The jailer (16:27–34)
- Felix (24:24–27)
- Agrippa (26:1–32)
- The people of Malta (28:1–10)