

Paper Cutter (Forgiveness) (Sin Separates)

But your iniquities have separated you from your God. Isaiah 59:2

The Basic Bible Truth

Our sin, our iniquity, breaks our fellowship with God. Ultimately, our sin is against God. It offends Him, it goes against His rules and commands. He is the one we hurt. God's perfect plan is that we walk closely beside Him through life. But when we sin, it is as if we take a side step away from Him. How many side steps can we take, how many sins will we tolerate in our lives, before we realize that our close walk with Him is no longer a close walk?

The Object

(Link To A Video Of This Lesson)

A Standard Office Type Paper Cutter

Printer Paper

A Magic Marker

Rubber Cement

Odorless (Foot) Powder



This lesson requires a small amount of preparation before your presentation. I use a clean sheet of white copy paper. Generally, I lay it out on a piece of throw away newspaper, and, using an even coat of rubber cement, brush the back side of the piece of copy paper covering the entire paper. Use as thick a coat as you can but do not allow the glue to stay wet so long that it soaks through the paper and deforms the face with wrinkles. Laying it out on newspaper allows you to brush the glue on all the way to the edges. Allow it to dry completely. This may take an hour or so, depending on temperature and humidity. Then, lightly sprinkle the powder over the entire paper, covering the dried rubber cement. This will keep it from sticking to itself. Sometimes it is helpful to spread the powder around the paper using your fingers to ensure that everything is covered. Then shake off all of the excess powder. Usually, I then place the “doctored” piece of copy paper in a folder so I don’t rub the powder off on my clothing.

I will then strategically place the piece of paper somewhere in the room where it can be easily accessed. I coordinate with another adult to help me “find” a piece of paper, when I need one. The key to this whole illusion is the paper, so I attempt to draw as little suspicion to the paper as possible. What better way to do that, than to have an “unbiased” person supply me with a “random” sheet of paper?

Once I have received this seemingly “random” sheet of paper, I cut off about a third of it lengthwise, using the paper cutter and keep the 2 ½ to 3 inch wide piece and throw the rest aside. It can then be folded in half, powder side to itself. It is very important that this be done nicely aligned. Crease it heavily. Fold the paper back open and write on the top on the unpowdered side of the paper the name “Jesus”. At the very bottom write the word “me”. This paper represents my life or yours. Jesus at one end, me at the other. Just below the crease, on the “me” side of the fold, write three typical sins we all deal with in our lives. The Bible says that our sins separate us from God.

On His side of the line, there is nothing else. He has done everything necessary for us to have a walk with Him, but our sin still separates. We must ask forgiveness.

I then ask everyone to watch closely, and I take every step from this point on, very slowly and deliberately. I slowly fold the paper over, and take it to the paper cutter, laying it face up so everyone can see it clearly. I cut off the first sin, the one closest to the fold and throw it over my shoulder. I then can take the paper off of the cutter and hold it vertical, showing Jesus at the top. I allow the back piece to swing down, and if everything has been done correctly, the glue will have bonded the two edges together and they will seem to remain one piece of paper. We have just done the impossible. We have removed a section of paper from the middle of a sheet of paper and there is nothing visible to indicate how it occurred. This illusion goes against the first rule of magic. Don’t do a trick more than once. But this one is good enough to do multiple times. The members of the audience who were half paying attention in boredom will usually come around about now and realize something absolutely impossible just happened. Their curiosity will keep them with you the rest of the way. Make sure to point out the neat side effect of forgiveness, our walk with Jesus has improved significantly. Notice how much closer we are now.

I again, slowly and deliberately fold the paper over, laying it again on the paper cutter, face side up and I cut off the next sin in my life. Tossing it away, I hold up the Jesus side of the paper and allow the back half to swing down and it has happened a second time. The impossible has occurred once more. And again notice the side effect, even more noticeable now, that Jesus and I are much closer than before.

I will do this a third time, removing the last sin on my list of issues in my life and, as before, the miracle of forgiveness is there. With this last effort, all of the sins in my life have been dealt with and my walk with Jesus is restored and is as it should always be—walking side by side.

I usually have to assure everyone that there is nothing odd about the paper cutter, there is no tape involved, it just is one of those things that they must accept as something they will never understand. I never reveal the secrets to an illusion to an audience—ever. Be sure to pick up the tossed pieces of paper and the left over 2/3rd that you did not use. They need to just disappear completely from sight.

The Lesson

Allow me to read Isaiah 59, the second verse. God, through Isaiah, is talking to Israel, reminding them of their sin. He also tells them that they need to confess their mistakes and ask for forgiveness. “But your iniquities have separated you from your God”. “Your iniquities have separated you from your God.”

Iniquities is a big poetic word that basically refers to sin. Anything we do wrong, that is against God's rules and order can be called sin or iniquity.

And those things that we do wrong cause our walk with God to suffer. You see, we get a glimpse of God's perfect plan for your life and mine when we see in Genesis the hint that God would come down in the cool of the day and walk and talk with Adam. What must that have been like, to experience God in that way. God wants us to walk and talk with Him also. But our sin causes us problems in that area.

Imagine if God were standing right here next to me. When I sin, it's as if I take a giant side step away from Him. He doesn't move, I do. How many sins can I tolerate in my life, how many times can I take a giant side step away from Him before I am no longer beside Him, before I can't even carry on a conversation with Him? We need forgiveness.

Luckily, we serve a God who is a very loving and forgiving God. I John 1:9 says that *if I confess my sins, He is faithful and just to forgive me my sins and cleanse me from all unrighteousness*. Let's make sure we understand the word *confess*. It means that we agree with God that we have done wrong and are genuinely sorry for what we have done and do not want to fail again. And we go to Him and say "God, I am so sorry for what I have done, will you please forgive me?" He has promised that He will forgive.

And when God forgives, He forgives much better than I can. When I was in college 45 years ago, I had occasion to go across country to a friend's wedding. 4 of us college buddies decided to drive together. I would drive the car, because I had the most reliable automobile of the 4 of us, and we would simply split the cost of gasoline 4 ways, each paying an equal share. I volunteered to buy all of the gas for the trip, track receipts and then divide it up and they could each pay me back. It seemed like a workable solution. One weekend later and \$120 worth of gas, the wedding went off without a hitch. After a couple of days, I caught each of the guys to get paid back for the gas, and everyone paid me except for one. He didn't have the money right then. Maybe in a few days. A few days went by and still the answer was, "no". Each time I asked, there was another excuse. 45 years later it is still a burr under my saddle that he never paid me my \$30. I should have forgiven the debt. I did, but I not well enough to have forgotten about it.

God forgives so completely that we stand before Him justified. That is a big word, so let me give you a very simple way to remember the definition of that word next time you hear it used in church. God forgives so completely that I stand before Him "Just as if I'd never sinned." Justified. "Just as if I'd never sinned." What an amazing concept.

I have a demonstration with me to help you understand the truth of Isaiah 59:2. It involves a plain, ordinary paper cutter, the same type you might see in any office downtown. I think I bought mine at Staples. And then I need my piece of paper that I thought I had right here. Uh, oh. Where did it go? Does anyone have a piece of paper I can borrow, preferably a clean sheet of copy paper would be nice. Oh thank you so much. This is perfect. Here, let me cut part of this off and you can have the rest back. Thanks.

Ok, ladies and gentlemen, I have a simple piece of paper now and I will fold it in half just like this. I also have a magic marker and I am going to write "Jesus" at the top, and "me" at the bottom. This is my life, this is your life. Jesus and me. But separated by my sin. I'm not looking for confession time here, but give me some everyday sins we all might struggle with each day. Lying. We all struggle with that, don't we. I'm going to write that down right here just on my side of the line in the middle of my life. What else. Disobeying parents. That's a good one. And one more. Fighting with siblings. Ok, I've written all three down in my life. Notice they are all on my side of the line. There is nothing on Jesus' side of the line to separate us. He had done everything necessary for me to have a relationship with Him. But my sin separates me from my God. It needs to be taken care of.

I John 1:9 says that if I will confess, He will forgive. Let's see just how that works. Watch very closely now. I am simply going to fold the paper in half and lay it in the paper cutter of God's forgiveness. See my sin of lying right there. I'm going to tell God how sorry I am and ask Him to forgive me of that terrible thing. The paper cutter of God's forgiveness cuts that sin right off, and as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed my transgressions from me. Let's see how that worked. Look at that, I am forgiven, and my life is "Just as if I'd never sinned." I am whole again, but look at the side effect. Jesus and I are walking closer together now. I like that, don't you?

In fact, I like that so much, I'd like to clear up this problem I have had with disobedience. Let me fold the paper over and take it to the paper cutter of God's forgiveness and ask God to forgive me of my disobedience. The paper cutter cuts that sin right out of my life and as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed my transgression from me. Let's take a look, shall we? There is Jesus, and here is me, justified again, and look at how closely Jesus and I are walking now. Amazing, isn't it.

I wonder what it would be like if we kept a short account with God, if we would stop and confess our sins immediately. Let me fold the paper over one more time. I take it to the paper cutter of God's forgiveness and ask Him to forgive me for teasing my brother and sister. I John 1:9 says that He will forgive. The paper cutter removes that last sin from my life, and as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. Here is Jesus, and look, here is me, side by side, just the way God meant for it to be.

Isaiah 59:2—Do you not know that your iniquity separates you from your God? All we need to do is ask for forgiveness and He will forgive so perfectly that we can stand before Him "Just as if I'd never sinned."