



Big Idea: The scariest thing isn't something hiding in the dark. It's sin hiding in our hearts.

Main Scripture: Mark 7:20-23; Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:9

Halloween is one of those times of year when people love being scared. Haunted houses are everywhere. People decorate their yards with giant spiders, skeletons, zombies, ghosts, and monsters. Some of you love scary movies. Others won't even watch the trailer because they'll be sleeping with the lights on for a week.

When we were kids, many of us were convinced something was hiding under our bed or inside our closet. We'd jump into bed because if our feet touched the floor, something was going to grab us. It made perfect sense back then. The funny thing is, most of us eventually grew out of those fears. We realized it was just our imagination. But what if the thing we should be most afraid of isn't something hiding in the dark? What if the real danger isn't outside of us, but inside of us?

Jesus talked about something much scarier than ghosts, monsters, or anything you could find in a haunted house. He said the biggest problem we face isn't something around us. It's something within us. It's our hearts.

²⁰ "What comes out of a person is what defiles them."²¹ For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, ²² adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. ²³ All these evils come from inside and defile a person."
(Mark 7:20-23, NIV)

That's a shocking statement. Most of us spend our lives blaming what's around us. We blame social media. We blame our friends. We blame culture. We blame our parents. We blame school. While those things absolutely influence us, Jesus said the real problem goes much deeper. The problem isn't just what's around us. The problem is what's inside us. Our hearts have scary things inside. Everything Jesus listed - lying, pride, jealousy, greed, lust, selfishness - those don't start on the outside. They

starts in here...your heart. That's why the scariest things aren't under your bed. They're in your heart.

Point #1: The real scare starts within.

Imagine you go to the doctor for a regular checkup. You feel completely fine. You're expecting to be in and out in fifteen minutes. Instead, the doctor walks into the room with a serious look on his face and says, *"I've got some difficult news. You have a disease."* You wouldn't shrug your shoulders and say, *"Well, thanks for letting me know."* No way. You'd have questions. *"How serious is it? Can it be treated? Am I going to be okay?"* If there's something threatening your life, you want to know everything about it. Well, the Bible gave us a serious diagnosis, telling us that every single one of us has a deadly spiritual disease. It's called sin. Romans 3:23 reads:

²³ ...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God... (Romans 3:23, NIV)

Notice that word all. Not most. Not almost everyone. Every person who has ever lived, except Jesus, has been infected by sin. John wrote something similar in 1 John 1:8:

⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. (1 John 1:8, NIV)

The Bible doesn't leave room for exceptions. Sin isn't just someone else's problem. It's my problem. It's your problem. It's everyone's problem. And here's what's dangerous: many people don't think they have a problem because they compare themselves to other people. As in, *"I've never murdered anyone."* *"I'm nicer than that kid."* *"I'm not as bad as the people on the news."* But comparison to others is not the standard. The standard is Jesus. When we compare ourselves to Him, we all fall short.

So, what is sin? Sometimes people hear the word sin and immediately think of a list of rules. But the Bible paints a much bigger picture than of dos and don'ts. One picture of sin is stepping over a boundary line. Think about a football game. If a player steps out of bounds, the play is over. They crossed a line that was placed there for a reason. God has given us boundaries because He loves us. When we lie, when we gossip, when

we're sexually immoral, when we're dishonest, when we're cruel, we're stepping over the boundaries God created for our good. Jesus summarized God's commands like this in Matthew 7:12:

12 So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you... (Matthew 7:12, NIV)

Imagine if everyone truly lived that way. Would you gossip about someone if you knew the same thing would immediately happen to you? Would you cheat someone if you knew someone would cheat you? Would you bully someone if you knew you'd be bullied tomorrow? God's commands aren't random rules designed to ruin our fun. They're boundaries meant to protect us and help us thrive.

The second picture the Bible gives about sin is of "missing the mark." Picture an archer aiming at a target. Or a basketball player trying to make a basket. The goal is to hit the target. The target God has given us is Jesus. Every time we fail to love like Jesus, forgive like Jesus, or serve like Jesus, we miss the mark. That means sin isn't only doing the wrong things. Sometimes sin is not doing the right things. Maybe you know someone who's hurting, but you ignore them. Maybe you have an opportunity to encourage someone, but you stay silent. Maybe you know someone needs to hear about Jesus, but fear keeps you quiet. In James 4:17 we read,

17 If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them. (James 4:17, NIV)

Sin isn't just breaking God's commands. It's failing to become and then live as the people He created us to be.

Why does God hate sin so much? God hates sin because He loves you. Every sin eventually hurts someone. Lying destroys trust. Gossip destroys friendships. Pride destroys relationships. Lust destroys intimacy. Bitterness destroys peace. Greed destroys contentment. Sin always promises more than it delivers. Jesus said in John 10:10:

10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. (John 10:10, NIV)

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