

Jesus on Avoiding Sin

Jesus tells us very specifically how to avoid sin.

The "occasion of sin"

The "occasion of sin" is the opportunity, place, inducement of the moment of sin. By avoiding the occasion, we can avoid the sin. In the [Beatitudes](#), Jesus advises that we avoid sin by distancing ourselves from it. In what seems in the literal sense harsh, in [Mt 5:29-30](#), he says,

"If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body go into Gehenna."

Interpreting through the "Senses of Scripture"

Literal (textual)	gouge your eye, cut off your hand
Allegorical (metaphorical)	cut off your source/s of sin
Moral (right v. wrong)	we are too weak to resist temptation, so we must avoid the temptation itself
Anagogical (where does it lead us?)	by avoiding sin, we will avoid "Gehenna" (hell)

Here Jesus tells us powerfully how to avoid sin: *avoid its occasion*.

Prayer

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus tells the sleeping Peter, John and James, [Mk 14:38](#):

"Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak."

Turn to Scripture

When Satan tempted him, Jesus answered every temptation with Scripture:

He said in reply, "It is written: 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God. ([Mt 4:4](#))"

Jesus answered him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.'" ([Mt 4:7](#))

"Get away, Satan! It is written: 'The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.'" ([Mt 4:10](#))

Repentance and Humility

From the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector ([Lk 18:11-14](#)), Jesus teaches us to pray in humility:

"The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, 'O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity—greedy, dishonest, adulterous—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.'

But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner.'

I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

*But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner.'*¹⁴*I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."*

The Holy Spirit

In the Last Supper Discourses, Jesus promised the Apostles that he would send a "helper" or "advocate" ([Jn 14:15-17](#)) who will support us when we are in a state of Grace (outside of sin):

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you, and will be in you."*

and from [Jn 15:26-27](#)

"When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me. And you also testify, because you have been with me from the beginning."