

Summer RUF → Study guide #1

Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: Intro through Chapter 2

Just curious, as we get started, what was your initial impression when you read that we were going to spend the summer reading a book on sin?

Intro:

1 → Plantinga begins his book with the conclusion life is not the way things are supposed to be, that something's off. What are some of the examples he gives of this? *Where have you seen signs of this in your own life?*

2 → If annoyances, regrets, and miseries all trouble us, why is sin the chief problem of our world?

-How does sin distort our character? *Can you think of some examples?*

-Why is sin the ultimate root of all our annoyances, regrets, and miseries?

-What example did Plantinga give to illustrate this?

-What does our culture believe is the chief problem with the world?

3 → Look at page 5, can someone read the paragraph starting with, "At the center of the Christian Bible..."

-How does the 'solution' to sin give us a clue as to how serious this problem is?

-Do you guys agree or disagree with the statement: "Though sin may be familiar, it is never normal?"

4 → When you think of your life, what is your chief problem? Is it sin or something else?

Chapter 1

1 → Chapter one begins with an illustration that this book gets its name from. What is the illustration and how does he connect it to a book on sin?

2 → Plantinga uses the word shalom to describe the way things are supposed to be. What is shalom?

-Why does Plantinga clarify that "shalom" includes "thoughts, desires, emotions, words, and deeds?"

3 → In light of shalom, how does he define sin?

What does it mean that sin is "first and foremost a Godward force?"(13)

-Why does Plantinga want us to see sin as relational breaking before we see it as rule breaking?

-Why does God hate sin? How does this all relate to shalom?

Before we move out of this chapter, let's do a little diagnostic work on our own hearts.

→ How does the idea that there is a 'way that the world is supposed to be' challenge or redirect how you think about your own thoughts, desires, emotions, words, and deeds?

→ Does God *really* have the right to tell us how to think, what to desire, whether our emotions are right or wrong, the way we use language and the actions that we take in life? If so, what gives him the right? *Do you live as though God is your superior in all things?*

→ What do we need in our lives to keep us from adopting cultural norms like Jimmy Bob the racist did in the 1850s? *In other words, how do we see sin that our culture does not recognize?*

Any other ideas or arguments from this chapter that stood out to you?

Chapter 2

1→ Plantinga begins this chapter with a theological discussion of creation. How do we see the pattern of distinction and union and distinctions-within-union in God's original design?

2→ How is the "fall" anti-creation: where do you see the blurring of distinctions and the rupturing of bonds?

How has "sin" corrupt what it means to be human?

-If needed, go to page 32 and read the paragraph beginning with, "Corruption is thus a dynamic motif in the Christian understanding of sin..."

How has sin corrupted what it means to be human?

-How does it sit with you that we are "born sinners, in the same way that some are born athletes?"

How does Plantinga envision a spiritually sound person? What would she look like?

→ Dependent (Like a tree planted by streams of water yielding fruit) Psalm 1

→ What are her longings like?

In our corruption, what do we often long for instead of these things?

→ What is her character like?

In our corruption, why is it easy for us to be hypocrites?

→ What motivates her?

→ Why is she disciplined?

How does spiritual disciplines affect her?

→ What is the goal of her life?

Plantinga writes, “the point of our lives is not to get smart or to get rich or even to get happy. The point is to discover God’s purposes for us and to make them our own. The point is to learn ways of loving God above all and our neighbor as ourselves and then to use these loves the way a golfer uses certain checkpoints to set up for the drive. The point is to be lined up right, to seek first the kingdom of God (Matt 6:33), to try above all to increase the net amount of shalom in the world.

As you think about your own life, how has sin corrupted the “goal” of your life?

-How has this added to your stress, anxiety, and disappointment in life?

How does the gospel of Jesus fuel us pursue spiritual hygiene in our own lives?

→ What’s one major take away you hope to apply or think more about this week?