

Music:	<a href="#">00:00:16</a>	[inaudible].
Josh Mangelson:	<a href="#">00:00:17</a>	Welcome to the Project Zion podcast. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts Community of Christ offers for today's world.
Music:	<a href="#">00:00:32</a>	[inaudible]
Carla Long:	<a href="#">00:00:34</a>	Hello and welcome to the Project Zion podcast. I'm your host, Carla Long and today you're going to hear two voices, one of which you know really well and one of which I think you're getting to know pretty well. Um, I'm going to be interviewing Brittany Mangelson and Matt Frizzell and we are going to be talking about dun, dun duh sin. And I asked Brittany and Matt to be on this podcast with me because they are two of the biggest sinners that I know.
Matt Frizzell:	<a href="#">00:01:04</a>	Rock on! Woo!
Carla Long:	<a href="#">00:01:04</a>	Actually Matt talked to us about doing the podcast like this. He has been doing a couple of retreats that are named, what are they named Matt? These retreats that you're doing.
Matt Frizzell:	<a href="#">00:01:15</a>	Yeah, I did a couple of, well I did one called, well I did it, you know, my details aren't monitored, but I call it Die Sinner Die. It was sarcasm. That's good. Anyway, yeah.
Carla Long:	<a href="#">00:01:23</a>	Die sinner Die. So, um, what we've recognized and what Matt has recognized and what we're, we're figuring out is that it's really uncomfortable to talk about sin. And so we wanted to, you know, put it out there in the open and make sure everybody is as, as uncomfortable as we are. So Brittany, Matt, thank you so much for being on the podcast. So Matt, why don't you start off like, why do we even want to talk about sin? Why is it important? Why do we, why do we even need to think about it?
Matt Frizzell:	<a href="#">00:01:56</a>	Well, I appreciate that question and uh, I guess I would want to start by saying well one of the reasons why I think we need to talk about it is because the, the document of sin has been used as a Billy club to hurt people. The whole, the whole idea, uh, of, uh, the separation between righteous and center has really been used I think throughout history in many, many different ways to name exclude. And in some, in many cases just do violence against people. And what's interesting to me is first of all, I think we should, we need to repent of that just, and who does, I don't know anybody who's done that does that we need

to name it because in many ways theologians have already said the nature of sin means that nobody's excluded from it. So even people who think they know sin versus righteous are often committing the very sin of self righteousness.

Matt Frizzell:

[00:02:51](#)

So it's a, it's a doctrine that can really, um, spiral out of control because of its own nature, which in some ways proves to be right. Reinhold Niebuhr the great theologian of 20th century said, you know, sin is probably the only empirically provable Christian doctrine. And so it's a really interesting way to think about that. And so I guess I want a name that up front and then try to find different ways to understand sin because I'm of the observation as a contemporary theologian and a constructive theologian, my focus is like, how do you take this tradition and make it work and think about the world today? I have actually found that and our attempt to be less and less judgmental because of the way sin works as a Billy club, in many ways we've become more judgmental and it's been good and bad.

Matt Frizzell:

[00:03:49](#)

And in terms of, of how we talk about what's right and wrong. And so there's, I think it's just created, I think, I think the doctrine of sin, at least for folks who, who, who or intersect with Christianity forms this knot that is very, it's very important to spend time detangling and get into. So I think, I think that's one of the reasons why it's important. And maybe I'm like other people who had their own history with sin. I don't know about you guys, but I remember as a kid, I didn't like, I'm gonna not sin today, I'd be like six years old, you know, and be like, I'm gonna not send today. And as soon as I got through breakfast, I absolutely forgot about that commitment. And by the end of the day, I'm like, Oh, I sinned by forgetting that I wasn't going to sin. How did I? Oh no, you know, and it just kind of all fell apart for me.

Carla Long:

[00:04:40](#)

What an incredibly dorky kid you were, Matt.

Matt Frizzell:

[00:04:41](#)

Well I obviously was brought up in like a really religious home, right on both sides. And I guess, and I don't mean to draw this out, but this is where I think it might be interesting to people or at least it is interesting for me. I actually, for me personally, even though I have been the target of sin of being called a sinner in some ways and yet not as in brutal ways as others have, um, in many ways by being repulsed by it and then saying, well, I want to know more about what this doctrine means. I actually have discovered, for me it's one of the most helpful and interesting teachings in Christianity. And I know that's weird, but I think the sin is the good news. And let me explain what I mean by that. One. Sin lets me know that no matter how much I

think I'm supposed to be perfect and have high expectations of myself and I need to fulfill the responsibility of being successful, beautiful, effective, whatever expectations are put on me, send reminds me of a, that's not gonna happen. I'm imperfect, I'm off the hook, I'm gonna make mistakes. And I actually find that liberating. It's absolutely liberating to realize, give up on that, would you Matt? Let it go. And because you're just not gonna be perfect and you're not going to be righteous all the time or whatever, and we can use secular terms. I mean fill that in with the ones I'd thrown out. You know, I won't be famous. I won't always perform correctly. I won't always be successful. I won't always be effective. I will always be beautiful. All those things,

Carla Long: [00:06:09](#) Which is why you always send the second after you finished your cereal when you were six years old. That's an excellent first point. Keep going. You're doing great.

Matt Frizzell: [00:06:19](#) Well I don't mean to be long. It's just there for me. This is obviously an interesting, the second one is, and after this we'll move on. But sin is also the one the most helpful, liberating terms for me understanding the world. So the sin in many in, in modern theology as the way of reminding us that Christianity starts with this idea that the world is broken. It's broken, and it's so broken that even when we all get together and to try to do the right thing, sometimes actually the opposite happens or bad things that we never intended happen. Our intentions send us the reminder that our intentions do not drive consequences. They're only a piece of it. And anybody who's tried to do the right thing in this world and anybody who's tried to live the right life or have the right lifestyle or you know, save the planet, not hurt others, be just, you're gonna recognize that you're gonna fail, you're gonna fail epically. And it's going to, and it's because the world is fundamentally broken at this level that none of us can really escape from. And that also has helped me just cope with understanding the world and understanding life and realizing if I can't be perfect in the world is broken. Where's the hope? What can I do? And so that has driven me to understand spirituality and Christianity deeper in a deeper way. And that's that I found that liberating. So that's why I think it's important to talk about.

Carla Long: [00:07:48](#) Oh, that's really interesting. Brittany, do you have anything you wanna add? Like why you think talking about sin is important? Um, Brittany is going to be offering her perspective, but also, um, listeners, she's going to be offering kind of a, a, a Mormon perspective as well. So not necessarily at this very moment, but I wanted to let you know that she's going to be offering as a former Mormon herself. What Mormons think about sin. But

Brittany, before we get to that, why is sin important to talk about for you?

Britt Mangelson: [00:08:17](#)

So first I have had to giggle at Matt's comment about being a little kid and thinking, I'm not going to send today because I distinctly remember moments after I was baptized at eight. I was probably still wet even in the rest of the service was happening. And I just thought, I am perfect in this moment. I thought my sins had been washed away and the in this moment I was perfect and I was gonna have that going for me as long as I could. And then it dawned on me that I was, I probably didn't understand the word arrogance, but I probably understood what pride was. And so then I felt bad for feeling perfect. I felt, Oh, this is, Oh, I'm already sending it. So it did not last very long, which I think ties into some of my thoughts that I'm going to share with the LDS perspective.

Britt Mangelson: [00:09:04](#)

But as I was thinking about this topic, it dawned on me rather quickly how interconnected the doctrine or the theology of sin is to so many other points of theology. And Christian thought. How you think of Jesus probably dictates how you think of sin, how you think of humanity. And the human condition dictates how you think of sin. The afterlife, the ways that sin is connected in Christianity to other parts of Christianity and other theologies and doctrine, it's just married right there, right together. The purpose of this life, sin is right at the heart of this conversation. And so I have really had to reframe sin and we'll talk about that. But I can't just forget about sin completely because if I do, then like Matt said, I have to forget about the good news because it's all interconnected. And so I think that reframing what sin can be or what sin is, is really important as far as continuing your discipleship past a faith transition. I've noticed that for me, every time I come across something that is challenging or that triggers me or whatever, that I have to just sit and rest with it and then work through it. I can't just set it aside because it's kind of this nagging thing in my ear this topic that I need to do hard work and work through. And sin definitely was one of those because again, it's so interconnected to so many other parts of Christianity, so we can't really ignore it.

Matt Frizzell: [00:10:42](#)

Yeah. What Brittany said is brilliant because I just want to add, so just this one piece, we were talking about it personally, but if, if, if you, if anyone wants to take the biblical narrative seriously, if anyone wants to take Christian tradition and just teaching seriously, if you take sin out of the message in the story, it's like talking about resurrection with never talking about death, which makes no sense. I mean, you can't have resurrection

without something dying and you can't talk about Shalom without saying the world's broken and something's wrong and you can't talk about a, you know, whether whatever salvation deliverance liberation means to you, if you talk about those things without some operative assumption about what sin is, it becomes a really weird story that really doesn't have a lot of internal coherence to it. And Jesus and every one of the gospels starts his message with repent.

Matt Frizzell:

[00:11:40](#)

The kingdom of God is near. And of course Luke embellish isn't that the most, but that's what he says. Repent of what I mean. It doesn't make any, Jesus' very story, makes no sense without understanding some operative understanding of sin. And where you'll see me be going with this is towards the end. I hope everybody who's listening starts to realize, man, whether I think about sin in a good or a bad way, a constructive or destructive way or critical or an uncritical way, there's an assumption about sin and brokenness that's operative in almost every one of my beliefs when I start talking about the way the world should be. And so it's always already there. And just because we stop using the word sin or at least some people have, that doesn't mean we're not talking about it all the time.

Carla Long:

[00:12:26](#)

Well, that's kind of where I wanted to go next. What, what you just said. The fact is, I've been a full time minister, uh, working for the church since 2005 for 14 years. And I think I've probably used the word sin in a serious way, probably four times total. Like I just don't talk about it. I don't talk about sin. I, I don't want to, I, I just find it uncomfortable to talk about. So why have we stopped talking about it? Why, why don't we talk about it as ministers and as a priesthood and as people in Community of Christ. In fact, I was helping out at a high school class just last week. I was talking about Community Christ to a world religions class. And I pulled up the basic beliefs on online and one of them is sin and they're like, what do you guys believe about sin? And I was like, Ugh. Like I just didn't want to talk about it. So why have we stopped talking about it?

Matt Frizzell:

[00:13:22](#)

Well, I'll, I'll give my 2 cents. I'll be really interested to see how, how Brittany responds to this too. So I, I come from a kind of a Midwestern American world and in a Christian environment. And a lot of my personal life perspective has been shaped by this kind of tension between liberal, what we would call so-called liberal or progressive and so-called conservative or traditional Christianity and Christianity. And those, those are ideas. I actually are not just unique to me. They run deep throughout 18 fights in the 20th century. And so anyway, I think, I think one of the ways to think about it is just to name

something that a lot of people have experienced. Um, and I'm going to use the words dominant discourse. So, and what I mean by that is the way we talk about sin, I think, I think if you go into a traditional evangelical church or if you've listened to am radio, a Christian am radio or even FM radio or you tune in Trinity broadcasting, the message of sin has become quite narrow as this way to describe right and wrong, good and bad, who's in, who's out, and then ultimately tie that to a sense of shame, guilt and getting on the right side of religion.

Matt Frizzell: [00:14:36](#) And, and it's become a, it's become this, uh, intended or unintended too to I think, manipulate individuals to keep identities very uniform and tidy and clean and moralistic. I think we've used it as a way to, to hurt people who do not fit in our cultural, Christian understandings of what it means to be righteous and what it means then to be a center and be unrighteous. And so the term has really, we, we've created the condition. I say we, I guess I don't know who that we is through time the church Christianity has made, has set the conditions to use the term as a Billy club to shame and hurt people. And I think those, it has become so rigid and hurtful in the way it's been used, particularly as a term politically and in, in as, uh, I'll be, I'll just name it, it's used as social control, you know, to make sure people fit inside of a box.

Matt Frizzell: [00:15:35](#) All you gotta do is, is talk about the way sin is used and deconstruct it from a feminist perspective, how it's used to shame women and, and, and control sexuality and all these other different, uh, forms of it. Um, see it's very complicit with racism and homophobia. It's just become, I think such a problematic term that it's almost too dangerous to use cause you can no longer control what people think or feel when you use it. And so it's been very, it's been easier I think to just like a rock and a river to go around it. And I think many forms of Christianity have just tried to go around it because the term has almost become useless to them when they're trying to say something else. So that's one perspective I would say.

Carla Long: [00:16:21](#) I would agree with that and that's probably why I just don't talk about it either, either from the pulpit or when talking to people about it in a conversation because I, it feels like it requires a 30 to 45 minute conversation just about that one word. Brittany, do you have something?

Britt Mangelson: [00:16:39](#) Yeah. So I want to be clear that I am speaking from my own perspective as a former Mormon and I do know that a lot of former Mormons would agree with me, but I, I recognize that people would push back on this as well. But I think that from my

perspective, growing up in a rigid system of do's and don'ts and worthiness interviews and this idea that God's spirit can leave you if you're sinning, if you're not currently worthy of having God's spirit with you, that's all centered on sin. So when I said that it connects with so many different things, that's what I'm talking about. It connects with God's love for you. It connects with whether you are worthy, uh, it connects with whether you, and when I say worthy, I mean where they'd have the spirit with you worthy to enter into certain sacred spaces, worthy to hold certain positions in the church.

Britt Mangelson: [00:17:33](#)

Uh, things like that. So when Latter-day Seekers are ex-Mormons, whatever you want to call that population, when they leave, that system of do's and don'ts and these do's and don'ts are taught from the time you're three years old and you enter into their children's program. When they leave that usually they leave in a, with a deep sense of brokenness with a deep sense of that they've been betrayed or that they've been rejected by the system or they couldn't live up to the expectations. So there's deep, deep, deep pain. So in my ministry, when I'm talking with Latter-day Seekers, most people are pretty hesitant to talk about sin because they have been marginalized and hurt over this topic. Uh, their self esteem, their sense of worth has been diminished by this topic. And it's, it's like I really appreciated what Matt said that we've kind of narrowed down the definition because I think that that's what happens a lot is we think of sins as individual actions that we take.

Britt Mangelson: [00:18:35](#)

What we watch, what we say, what we drink, what we eat, those kinds of things. When we're not, we're not necessarily seeing the brokenness of the world or of humanity on a macro perspective, but we, we narrow it down to an individual, a micro perspective. And that's where all the shame and, and things like that come in. So I think that people are really hesitant to reframe that because it's a system, like Matt said, of control and they just don't even know where to start to reframe it. And so if they have healed themselves and consider themselves worthy in whole, maybe they've read some Brene Brown, maybe they've gone to therapy or you know, something like that. And they recognize that their worth is not tied to this concept of sin revisiting that can be pretty triggering. And it's, it's just daunting. It's, it's really, you just don't know where to go because when you've been taught one definition of this word since you were a little kid, it's really, really hard to want to reframe that and go visit it again. Because again, it's usually caused a lot of harm.

Matt Frizzell: [00:19:43](#) Yeah. I don't think it's too much to use the word. Well, I'm being kind when I say this and I, maybe I should just be more honest. It the words, the words have been used as spiritually abused people and uh, it's it to emotionally, mentally, and sometimes physically. And of course in the, in the Christian tradition, I really can't speak so much to LDS tradition, but in the Christian tradition, of course, sin is, uh, is connected intimately to two other, um, elements of spiritual practice as well as another theological idea. One of them is confession. And so confession is a very interesting tool too. When you start thinking about sin, you go speak to an authority and, and confess your sins. There's a power relationship at work there. There's a, there is a mechanism of getting right with the community and getting right with authority, obedience and fulfilling a responsibility and maintaining a power relationship that is involved with that, that I, that many theologians have unpacked and talked about how it's a bad thing.

Matt Frizzell: [00:20:46](#) But interestingly also theologians have come around and say, man, I wish tradition, I've heard people say in Community of Christ, I wish there was a way we could reconcile. That'd be another way that confession is, that's what's really about, but it's been turned into something else. But also this term evil. So, I mean, once you talk about someone who sins, you can start easily slipping directly into this way of naming and characterizing and decentralizing people's evil. If you keep doing this sin, why is it happening? Well, there must be something fundamentally wrong with you and that can go into all sorts of very interesting areas about you need to exercise a devil from you or you need to be, you need to repent and find Jesus and straighten out your life and your way. And on one hand, you know, when we think about these things, we think about it in horrible, terrible ways that can be very abusive.

Matt Frizzell: [00:21:33](#) And yet at the same time, just to talk how volatile this can be. I've, I've been in ministry and worked with others who were addicts and they needed this language. They adopted it because the only way out of addiction was to be rigid and to stay away from those places that pulled them into the darkness and the destruction and the difficulties of addiction. So it's not black and white, which is part of our point, right? Sin is not black and white, but it's not black and white. And so it gives us another reason to rethink and to try to recover what is at work here when we use this word and how can we do it in ways that don't abuse and how can we understand it in ways that are spiritually fulfilling and not just matters of spiritual abuse and social control and lead to this, this pink elephant in the room for so many religions, which is self-righteousness.



Matt Frizzell:	<a href="#">00:22:27</a>	<p>Cause that's a sin too. If you pretend to know exactly what God thinks and wants and you're just going to wield that stick and on everybody who doesn't fit in your understanding that itself is a problem and is a reflection of the sinful human condition in theological terms. I mean I think that's a fair thing to say. So anyway, I think that's why we stopped talking about it. It leads to judgmentalism than it leads to fashioning. It leads to power and abuse. And we, when we've used it so narrowly, it's almost become unusable. And for many people when I do retreats or talk about it, the Christian theology, for some people it plain is unusable. The term is unrecoverable. And I'm just suggesting maybe it's not, but I certainly would not argue against those who feel like it is. It's just a very hard word to replace. If we're going to then go back and read scripture because it's there.</p>
Carla Long:	<a href="#">00:23:20</a>	<p>Well that's actually where I want to go next. But, but you keep both of you, both Brittany and Matt, you booty both. Keep making me think of that line from Nadia Boltz Weber, uh, where it says the second you draw a line in the sand, Jesus has already on the other side of that line. You know, the second we start calling someone a center or pointing them out or pointing out whatever, that's when Jesus is farther away from us. And so I, I just, that line just keeps coming into my head over and over. The more we talk about this. I do want to go though, Matt, where you just ended up. So since we've, we've talked about why sin is important. We've talked about why we stopped talking about it. So let's talk about what it is like are there scriptural things that we can look at? Um, a theological understanding of sin that we can talk about that, that helps us frame it and do what it actually is rather than what it has become.</p>
Matt Frizzell:	<a href="#">00:24:17</a>	<p>Sure. Well, and I invite you to interrupt me here cause this is, you know, of course a good answer to that question would minimally run two hours and it would turn shut everybody off and nobody would even know where to go with it.</p>
Carla Long:	<a href="#">00:24:27</a>	<p>Nobody, nobody wants that, Matt.</p>
Matt Frizzell:	<a href="#">00:24:31</a>	<p>Well I'm not sure I do. So that's fair. But my background is contemporary theology. Um, I'm familiar with the historical tradition but I think in more modern theological terms. And so I'm just going to visit a couple of things that it hopefully just to kind of drop tools in touch points along the way to get at what I would say as a scriptural or a theological understanding of sin today, uh, that maybe we can pick up. So contemporary thinking of course for many people, and I'm going to kind of go back to the traditional categories, is thinking about sin is doing</p>

something wrong. It's like it has an opposite which is obedience. So sin is very much under there, stood in opposition to what it means to be obedient and um, that's connected to our theological understandings of, of law and commandment. Jesus did give commandments.

Matt Frizzell:

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The, the, the first five books of the, of the old Testament is Torah, has several laws over 600 laws. And of course keeping or not keep being those laws would be connected to how we understand sin. The Hebrew term you'll hear if you ever do Google or go on YouTube is the Hebrew term is many suggests that it's a term that actually means to miss the Mark. So it means that you, you know, sending means you don't quite hit the target. You might be taking a shot at the target, but you miss it in some way. And so that's what sending is. And of course the way it's always been used is it usually leads to some argument about sin. You can send in two ways, you can do something wrong or you can not do something you should do. And like evangelicals, we'll talk about that as sins of commission and omission.

Matt Frizzell:

[00:26:18](#)

And this is what leads to the separation of righteousness and center and all that. I actually think that's the path that's gotten us to the wrong place. And I, I've tried to get an understanding it differently. Um, you don't have, nobody's got to go back and read this book, but there was an interesting, I want to use this as a model. Paul Ricoeur wrote this book called Symbolism of Evil in 1986. Anyway, long and short of it is he was looking at the understanding evil from it's symbols. You know, have you ever talked about assemble and you'd say, well, what does assemble mean? Well, it means this. Well, the way he was trying to get at is he was looking at different symbols and saying, forget that, the idea that there's a central definition. If we look at the symbols of of evil, maybe we can understand sin that way and I won't get into his whole argument, but what I want to try to get people to think about is listen to the way the word sin is used as opposed to try to look for one definition of it and maybe that will illuminate more.

Matt Frizzell:

[00:27:12](#)

So he starts out with this understanding that sin is a breaking of a covenant. And I think the reason why that's interesting is that even if we don't like the word sin, most of us don't like to have agreements that are broken. Most of us think that if we make an agreement with somebody and it breaks, that's not a good thing. So that softens the idea of course, in the, in the scriptural tradition that's connected to Torah and law. And what's interesting here is in the biblical period, sin becomes this tool for understanding. If sending is breaking of a covenant with God

and God has issued these promises to you, when bad things start to happen, you start asking questions of how did we sin? Have you ever had anybody? Of course I think we all have were or even ourselves, I've had something terrible happen to us and we turn around and look back and go, what did we do wrong?

Matt Frizzell:

[00:28:07](#)

As if we somehow had an influence in it. Well, this, this way of thinking is I think really essential to understanding human thinking at all. In sin plays a big part of that. And in the history of Israel, sin becomes a way to explain why bad things are happening and that's actually even a very alive and Jesus is time. You have these different factions between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, um, and the zealots and others who all have a different understanding of what's gone wrong and why something is wrong with the covenant, which is why they are still not free. Why Israel is still not free and why they're still under Roman power. And the prophets of course have become very important to many of us in Community of Christ as we've gone back to recover what we understand prophetic ministry to be about and what the prophetic be about.

Matt Frizzell:

[00:28:59](#)

And many of us who don't like to name sins certainly love to hear what the prophets are talking about, which is its own, its own irony to there. So we, uh, begin to understand how a sin is, is a way of talking about an injustice. So anyway, where I'm going with that is that there was another book written later about 10 years ago, Gary Anderson wrote this book about sin a history. And he starts making this other observation that I just think is awesome that helps us understand under unpack sin. And he talks about how there's two ways sin is kind of talked about in scriptures. One is as a burden and the other one is as debt. So sin as a burden and sin is debt. And so the, and he was saying this, the, these two metaphors really drive how the scriptures talk about sin.

Matt Frizzell:

[00:29:47](#)

Now why am I bringing this up again, I want to invite you to think about it in reverse terms. I'm not asking you to think about sin. I'm asking you to think about burdens and depths and then think about what is scripture getting at when it's thinking about burdens and debt. As a contemporary theologian, I think it's very ironic that we live in a world where debt is everywhere and people feel burdened all the time. And so maybe sin is a part of our world. We just don't always see it and talk about it the same way. Anyway he suggest that sin kind of has this effect of, of being a burden or a debt. And so the, the, the big theological question is how do you relieve the burden or liberate the burden or how do you cancel the debt? And of course, uh, this is where atonement theory start to arise and

what's happening with Jesus, how Jesus cancels a debt or, or, or eliminates a debt, um, that is deep in Christian theology.

Matt Frizzell:

[00:30:45](#)

And so those are some ways to think about sin in modern terms. Where that goes, which I think is a way that's more familiar to people, is many modern theologians, I think particularly of Paul Tillich thinks about sin, helps us understand sin as a condition of existence. And so he talks about sin as alienation or brokenness. And he would even go far to say that you are technological modern world is a world of alienation. We're separated from each other. Technology doesn't actually connect us. It separates us. And that the way we manufacture things economically and the way we communicate to each other, the society itself is alienated. And so think about some of these words because they would then be associated with the experience of sin, brokenness, despair, isolation, wanting to anesthetize ourselves. You know, why do we need to watch a movie and let go?

Matt Frizzell:

[00:31:43](#)

Because the world is kind of a burden. Greed, control, a selfishness, self-destruction. These are all words that for, for a theologian would sign the, the, the existence of sin. And of course that's connected for him with despair and anxiety. So that's a way, that's the way modern theologian would say, not necessarily a finger pointing way, but we, if we're going to talk about sin, we're going to talk about how it shapes the world. And when we start talking to the Community of Christ in many social justice circles about injustice, inequity, violence, domination, objectifying, abusing, exploiting, apathy, indifference. If these are all sin words, man, we're talking about sin all the time. We're talking about sin in the social media, we're talking about it from the pulpit. We're talking about sin as if it's real and it's affecting us. And so those are some ways to think about sending a new way. And I think broad is just older definition.

Carla Long:

[00:32:44](#)

Well, that's really helpful for me. I, you know, like when I had, if I think about Senate all, I almost always think about it in the separation way. Um, it's me separating myself from the divine, separating myself from God, separating myself from love, making the choice between love and the alternative. I choose the alternative. So I really appreciate those. The, the different way of even framing that word cause separation I think is a good way also. But if, if it is all of those things, then it's part of our every single day thing. And we can't not sin all day as you tried to do when you're six years old. So that's really, I appreciate that very much. Brittany, what do you think, uh, is there a different way that we can reframe it for you?

Britt Mangelson: [00:33:34](#) Well, I will say that I'm not going to call my theology shallow, but it's not as, that's a little bit more simple. I think. I know that for me, when I was first in countering sin, after my faith transition, I had to reframe what God was because I had been taught that God was a God that did not want me to sin. And again, my framework was this very real list of checkoffs do's and don'ts will don'ts for the sins. Um, but if sin was going to be different than God needed to be different, and so, and the word obedience need to be needed to be different because I saw God as a vengeful God, more than a God of love. And so I had to reframe that God is love. God is, is everything good. God is peace. God is love. God is he inclusion.

Britt Mangelson: [00:34:27](#) God is equality. And so from there, if I think about being obedient to God's commandments, and we know the two great commandments are again centered on love. And if I believe that God is love and I believe that God commands us to love, and I believe that obeying God or keeping the commandments is all tied back to love, then that for me took down a lot of my anxieties around those words like sin and obedience. Because I, I do think that God is love and I do think that God wants us to love. And so when I hear words now, or even I preached a couple of years ago and it was, I can't even remember the scripture, but it was about keeping God's commandments. And I had to do some serious exegetical work on it. And it seems so silly now, but it was a really, really, really hard sermon for me to get through because of this baggage of sin.

Britt Mangelson: [00:35:29](#) And so when I really just get rid of all the voices in my head and when I get rid all of the different types of atonement theology, cause like Matt said, it ties in closely with that. When I just kind of strip my mind of all of those things and I just remember God is love and that's it. That's the end of it for me. And if I am sinning and going against that central point of love, then there is something wrong with my actions and that I am causing harm. So when I want to be my best self, when I am my best self, I am naturally obeying God's commandments. And I recognize that I'm going to fall short. I mean, I can have a short temper, I can have road rage, I can all, all of the things that I do through my day to day life that do not spread love in the world.

Britt Mangelson: [00:36:24](#) And that's how I see sin now is when I'm not my best self. And when I am forgetting that central key point of my theology that God is love and if God is in me than I am love and I am good and I am worthy and I am Holy. Um, so for me that's what it boils down to. Now it's not overly deep, but it's, it's practical and it's easy enough for me to remember. And when I do have those words that come up in scripture or in conversation or in music

or whatever it may be, I just always have to pause and reframe and turn it around and say, okay, but God is love. So that's what it all boils down to for me.

Matt Frizzell: [00:37:07](#)

There's two interesting things that really resonate to me as they hear you talk, Brittany. And as also I think about how Carla responded, it's really hard to get away from understanding sin in these one of two ways. And I don't necessarily mean black and white here, I'm going in a different direction. Many of us are ingrained in this idea that sin rises out of the will. In other words, there is something that we either do or can control or can execute or be in order to be in sin or not incentive to be in good graces or not in good graces. It's kind of an expectation and obedience and measurement. And we have to, we, and I'm not saying it's right or wrong, I'm just saying that's one way to start from it is to understand how we experience ourselves in the world. So sin is one way of getting at that, how we experience ourselves in the world and have some influence on that.

Matt Frizzell: [00:38:01](#)

And, and, and, and try. And that's a spiritual formation and spiritual direction is about, is trying to be, that is trying to be the best that we can be in the world and guidance towards the Divine and the Holy. And to into and to be a good steward of this gift. But there's this other way about it too, that I think goes back to Genesis three and the idea of the fall and, and, and where sin begins. And that's not about how we experience ourselves in the world, but how we experience the world, how the world is, is, is shaped in such a way that it's shaped by sin. And of course, since we're a part of that world, you get into this chicken and the egg situation. It's, and this is where the debate about original sin in, in the tradition starts to give rise and come up where we do we, do we miss the mark because the world is broken?

Matt Frizzell: [00:38:56](#)

Or is it because we all missed the Mark that the world is broken and the both are deeply interrelated, but sin is trying to get at both sides of that, how we experience ourselves in the world and also how we experience the world. And whether sin can be controlled by our wills. Millions we can, you know, sin or not sin or whether it doesn't matter what we do, it's we're going to sin. And that's, that's even where the arguments in scripture go. Paul talks about, you know, how I, I don't want to do something. And that's the thing that I exactly do. And he, he's, uh, he's actually talking exactly about sin and that in that debate. So there's these two ways we understand sin and that are always at work. I think. And I think everybody can relate to this. That's why you think it's interesting. It's how we experience ourselves

in the world, but also how we experience the world. And even if you don't believe in Christianity, you usually try to be an improved version of yourself. And most of us want to make the world a better place. Well, in Christian terms, sin affects both of those things. And so it's not as, I again, I, in some ways sin is a very, very broad theological idea. So getting at thinking of it, uh, and getting more familiar with it, not being afraid of it, I think is helpful.

- Carla Long : [00:40:07](#) That is so annoying. How can we not have control over it, you know? And so like I want to have control over everything. Thank you very much. And when you say that we, we may or may not have control over the fact that we sent or not, that just drives me insane.
- Matt Frizzell: [00:40:26](#) Truly. Well, it's a deep, it's a deep theological question. I'm glad you feel like you have controller it.
- Carla Long: [00:40:34](#) Well now I don't think you.
- Britt Mangelson: [00:40:35](#) But at the same time it brings me a lot of comfort because then I'm able to give everybody the benefit of the doubt. I don't see people as an inherently evil. I feel like people are just doing their best. And you know, yes, there are people that do make really, really harmful choices very deliberately. But in my day to day life recognizing that I am not in control helps me give grace to others because I realized they are not in control either.
- Britt Mangelson: [00:41:07](#) It can be.
- Matt Frizzell: [00:41:07](#) and that's exactly. I didn't mean to interrupt you. This is, it's easy to get for me. I, you know, I, I understand the criticism and I get too wrapped up in the ideas. And so it's like, so what? Well, if you live in a world where we hold people up to such a standard that if they no longer meet that standard, we lose all hope or sincerity and our appreciation of them. Sin helps us understand that. So it's some of our greatest heroes have done terrible things and sin reminds us that we're all human and maybe it was a problem to hold them up in that high of esteem. You know, I don't want to get into name bashing people here. I just, I could start listing out people that all of us look up to for moral reasons or for ethical reasons or social justice reasons or religious reasons.
- Matt Frizzell: [00:41:55](#) And they're all sinners. That's actually good news. They're like us. They don't have to be perfect. And that frees us up to understand them and the world and a better way. It frees our

judgment up. And it also then when we reverse that gaze and realize I did everything I could and tried my best, and if something terrible happened here, that's another way sin. We can yield this in and understand that we're not in control and God is ultimately in control and we have no idea what that control looks like because it is way too easy for me to project my understanding of control and power onto God and think that God is just a big superhuman who would control and have power over things the way I would. And that itself is a projection that's probably not helpful. So anyway, my point is that I think understanding sin, it helps us get into actually the gray area of life and why spirituality and spiritual formation is important and why relationships don't need to be perfect. They need to be reconciled in those notices are two very different things. And it's only because we begin to think about sin in new ways that we can think about maybe what Jesus is up to.

- Carla Long: [00:43:09](#) Ah, that's where that word, that sticky word grace comes in. Isn't that like grace between people and like Brittany you're talking about and Matt what you're talking about is that if no one really has control, then we have to offer a lot of grace to those that we look up to. Matt, I used to look up to you five minutes ago and now I realize I shouldn't because you're a sinner for instance.
- Matt Frizzell: [00:43:35](#) Uh, I'm not going to turn this into a confessional for you. I'm just not gonna do that.
- Carla Long: [00:43:40](#) That would be a heck of a podcast
- Britt Mangelson: [00:43:42](#) Entertaining!
- Matt Frizzell: [00:43:44](#) Well, it's because I know you guys are sinners too, and so are the listeners and they're going to do something with that information that I don't want them to know.
- Carla Long: [00:43:51](#) That's true. I Yeah, Brittany.
- Britt Mangelson: [00:43:56](#) I was just going to ask if I can share a quote. As Matt was talking, I was thinking, I have this book, Speaking of Sin, The Lost Language of Salvation by Barbara Brown Taylor and I actually just carried my computer down to my bookshelf and found it, but it's a, it's to me a really, really good quote and if I can have like 10 seconds, I'd love to share it. It says "Christian theology is neither no fault nor full fault. We do wrong, but we do not do wrong all alone. We live in a web of creation that binds us to all other living beings if we want to be saved than we better figure



out how to do it together since none of us can resign from this web of relationship." And then she goes on to say how sin is our only hope because a we do wrong together.

Britt Mangelson: [00:44:42](#) And recognizing that is the first step towards reconciliation. And then earlier in the book she also talks about not wanting to talk about sin is kind of the same idea of "I don't see color." So you're just ignoring the sin of racism. You're ignoring the sin of marginalization and you're just pretending like it doesn't exist. And that in and of itself is a sin because you're not doing the hard work of reconciliation. So I just wanted to mention those two things of, of pretending like it doesn't exist is really harmful because you're not acknowledging that we all are in this web and intertwined together, that is sin. What sounds like a real fun party to be in.

Matt Frizzell: [00:45:24](#) Well, it is hard to talk about this without getting to a depressive place. You know, I'm imagining all the people who started this podcast like 20 minutes ago and have already clicked off because they just are not turned on by the topic. You know, it's easy to go there, but at the same time, sin is the great equalizer and the great leveler sin is the reminder that, Oh well you think you're superior than me, that's full of crap because we're all sinners. I mean, it's this great leveler in equalizer. There's always just like, because there's always someone who's better than you, like if you're an athlete or a musician or if you're a business person, there's always somebody making more money and there's always somebody who's better than you and there's always somebody who's faster than you.

Matt Frizzell: [00:46:05](#) It's the great leveler when it comes down to it, we have to see our image in each other because none of us are perfect and nobody's attained to that right place. I find that liberating like psychologically liberating game changer. If I take it seriously, cause then all of a sudden I can have a right relationship with myself in who I am and how I've been made, knowing that even nobody can be me better than me and I'm not going to do it right. It, I mean liberates me to do that and I find that exciting. The other thing that you are saying Carla, that is so true is it does bring it back down to human relationships and I'll just talk about three different things that we all experience every day. You can't imagine human relationships without agreements or covenants. You can't imagine human relationships without rules.

Matt Frizzell: [00:46:54](#) I'm a parent. You sure as heck can't and I don't want my kids to steal my stuff, so I'm going to make a rule about that. You know, don't do this, don't do that and please do that. As much as we

don't like talk about soon, we do need rules. The great 10 commandments are not just religious rules. If you try to live in a community and not follow most of those, it's tough going. It's good to not murder each other in a community. It's good to not steal each other's stuff in the community. It's good to not want each other stuff in community and it's good to have a common cause, a common goal or a common source of honor and worship and we can, we may be can start to understand what God's up to. That way when we talk about honoring God and the last thing is where do we live in a world where people don't go into debt or we don't, we don't share burdens, debts, burdens, agreements, rules. You can't imagine. You cannot imagine human relationships without those things. And sin is the great recognizer that we're all going to be at dead at some point. We're all going to break the rules at some point. We're all going to carry burdens that are bigger than for us to carry at some point and we're all going to have agreements that we break

- Matt Frizzell: [00:47:59](#) and Jesus is about saying that is real and it's reconcilable and it's okay. Take your yolk upon me, follow my way. It's possible to bring this back together again. And that's beautiful. And yet you can't get there without recognizing and understanding the role that we play in sin and I, so anyway, I think that's why those things, it's really helpful to go look at those metaphors and symbols again and take the sting of judgment out, but also recognize that there's a statement of reality that helps us understand what Christianity is up to, what hope is about, what love is really for what justice means and all these things that we really do love and want to talk about because sins a reality in our lives and within ourselves.
- Carla Long: [00:48:51](#) Well is is all this stuff you're talking about when Brittany, what you are talking about too, is this what we call the human condition is this, you know, is this, and where does systematic sin kind of fit into this mix that we're talking about too? So I guess I have two questions there. Are we talking right now about what, you know, we've all heard the term human condition. Is that what it is? And what about systematic sin?
- Matt Frizzell: [00:49:17](#) Brittany, do you want to respond to that first?
- Britt Mangelson: [00:49:21](#) I like to jump off your thoughts, but, sure I'll tackle it.
- Matt Frizzell: [00:49:28](#) Well I'm just curious about you see those things for real in your life or maybe even in your, your collective life because I mean, religion is a form of systemic sin sometimes and yeah, and I'm

not, I'm not limiting it to one religion. I mean politics, society. I just wondered what you were, what your reactions were.

Britt Mangelson: [00:49:45](#)

Yeah. So I do think that sin is related to the human condition. I think that we, I think that it is impossible to escape sin. I think that we all sin, we all fall short and that that is part of life and living and learning. And hopefully we do better as each day goes. I do think, uh, I guess, you know, I, I used to believe that the natural man was something that was inside of us that was a direct enemy to God and that we were in errantly evil and carnal and devilishly and selfish. And I don't know, I no longer believe that. I think that we were in a broken state. And whenever you get a lot of people together, drama will obviously ensue. And so I think that that is what the human condition is. I think that greed is very real.

Britt Mangelson: [00:50:37](#)

And I think that when I think of sin, I think of the sins of poverty, the sins of all the isms, of racism, of sexism, of homophobia, of poverty, of, of all of these things that pit humans against each other. And when I think of our political climate right now in the US I think a lot of the angst, especially that my generation is having, I'm millennial, uh, but what the younger generations are struggling with is kind of a reaction to these sins that are more corporate or more systemic. So I know that I get really frustrated when I think of my own economic reality in that I, I live in a society where people my age, including myself, are riddled with student loan debt and the reality that making a minimum wage can't afford you rent in virtually any city in the United States, whereas just a few decades ago it could.

Britt Mangelson: [00:51:40](#)

And my retirement is going to look very different from my parents and all these things that just make me angry. And I think, uh, what really is fueling some of the polarization in our society today. And I see that as a corporate or a systemic sin, it's a few people on up top that are making astronomical amounts of wealth while the working class and the middle-class are shrinking and shrinking and shrinking, and it's a big deal. And then it's a conversation that is obviously happening. But it's a conversation that needs to continue and it needs to move beyond a conversation, I think, and something needs to change. But I also look at other systemic issues and I have to wonder what my part in it is. Where is my accountability? For instance, I'm currently listening to a book about fast fashion and my reality of wanting to get a pair of jeans for under \$50 impacts not only people across the globe, but even in the United States, and it impacts them negatively and it impacts the planet.

Britt Mangelson: [00:52:50](#) But that the price of clothing and our need to have it, uh, so quickly, so instantly to follow these fast changing trends is killing the environment. It's putting people in poverty and the waste is just astronomical. And it, it puts people in really horrible working conditions. So I play into that system. You know, I, I am guilty of contributing to that sin. And so even in my millennial angst, and if I think that the system is rigged or it's unfair that there's no way out of it, I in turn have to look at what systems am I playing into that that caused a lot of harm for others. So, and I understand that there's a lot of systemic sins, but those are just kinda some of the ones that are on my mind, a lot of being a angsty millennial, I guess. I feel like I'm rambling, but.

Matt Frizzell: [00:53:51](#) It's complicated. No, go ahead.

Britt Mangelson: [00:53:55](#) Yeah, I'm just agreeing that it, that it is, and it's taking that, that recognition that, that I can get mad at student debt or the broken economy. But then at the same time, I play into it as through my own personal choices. So there's an accountability that I have to hold myself to. And I can't just be an angry millennial all the time.

Matt Frizzell: [00:54:19](#) Maybe you can, I mean, and that's not a bad thing. Uh, the, yeah, so I, we could have a podcast just on systemic sin in terms of understanding how it's tied into our concept of Shalom, social justice, what the profits were upset about, what the prophets were judge, were warning is real about and what, even our own doctrine and covenants, passages are reminding us of through passages like "In their welfare lies your welfare." and talking about the ethics of Christ peace and how to move those out into the church and to equip disciples to make a difference in the world. We could talk about systemic sin. I think Brittany, your example is an interesting one. I just want to try to see if I can articulate how systemic sin works. I mean, if we, if we have the technology and power and interest to figure out how someone on the other side of the globe can offer us a cheaper way to produce something, but we can't take that same technology and understanding to then help the consumer understand how buying the thing that, that labor on the other side of the world helped produce.

Matt Frizzell: [00:55:28](#) How buying it doesn't, how it affects that person and where they live and what kind of world that they live in and what kind of effect the wage has on their lives. That's a form of systemic sin. Um, it's, in other words, we will, we're all, we will organize the world to benefit folks this way, but we won't organize the world of [inaudible] benefit people this way. And yet we have

the power to do both. The nature of systemic sin at least in the way liberation theology works and also just good sociology. But we're gonna use this field, logical word, sin to talk about inequality and injustice and brokenness and racism. Others, these things is systemic thing just gets away, gets at the way that we organize things. So we organize things in inequitable ways. We organize the world and unjust ways.

Matt Frizzell:

[00:56:19](#)

And it's also very popular today to come up with blame games and conspiracy theories as if people as if there's a smile after, as if there's one or two people who are in control of this. I do think there's a, what I'm trying, I'll be specific about what I mean, I do think there are those who benefit and those who don't benefit and usually those who are powerful and benefit are the ones that set the rules of the game. So I will say that that's true, but some of what's happening in systemic sin is not going to be changed if we change the actors. It's the organization itself that is the problem. And that's the way of understanding how sin can be systemic. It doesn't matter how well you play the game, the game's unfair. It doesn't matter if you follow all the rules, the games unfair and systemic sin names that, and I think that's how we often get confused and are politically or even theological world because it is complicated and it is easier to just say, I'm going to worry about my relationship with God and being the best I can be and following the rules as I'm supposed to follow them because I can't control the rest of it.

Matt Frizzell:

[00:57:31](#)

Well, I just said if you follow all the rules and do it the right way, the game is still unfair. And so that means the sin that it creates is going to perpetuate the brokenness and the way it, it preferences these people over these people are, makes life easier for these and harder for those uh, and self-selects those out in arbitrary ways like skin color or accent or where people are from. That's a way of getting at how sin. In other words, human brokenness, the brokenness of human relationships become systematized into the way we organize life in the world. And absolutely, that's complicated. And if I didn't want to spend the time and energy to worry about that, I would just turn the podcast off and I wouldn't read those books because it isn't easy. But at the same time, it's the nature of our theology.

Matt Frizzell:

[00:58:19](#)

Our theology says that it's broken. Our prophets in the in the old Testament says it's broken. It's not just about whether we followed the commandments in Leviticus that the world is falling apart, the oppressed are oppressing the poor. That's what the prophets are telling us, and that's a problem because in the law you're not supposed to do that, to put it back in a biblical register. So it is, sin is important and there's this, at least

if we want to play theology here, there is this, the listeners can't see my hands move together, but my point is is that there's this kind of pedaling back and forth. If you think of a way a bike moves, you know on one leg you have systemic realities and the sin that gets perpetuated. On the other side, there's the, there's the press of the human condition. Theologians make this statement that they say human beings are just like this when we get together, I mean, and any sociologists who aren't theologians recognize the same thing.

- Matt Frizzell: [00:59:15](#) An individual can make a sacrifice for choice or sacrificial choice, but when groups get together, they tend to act towards self interest. It just plain happens again and again and again. And so that too is part of the sinful human nature. Maybe you're a good person, maybe I'm a good person, maybe our hearts are pure. But when we get together, we act in our own interests and we act in our shared collective interests. And what if that arrangement of the world puts those people over there and vulnerable and difficult and even violent situations. That's the problem of systemic sin in the human condition. And again, our doctrine and covenants is sections one 63 one 64 and one 65 are all trying to get at that.
- Britt Mangelson: [01:00:07](#) Matt, I just want to say thank you for bringing my example to a theological point.
- Matt Frizzell: [01:00:13](#) You were doing fine. I just like to comment like, cause I'm not a good sports commentator so I.
- Britt Mangelson: [01:00:21](#) Yeah, what you said was what I was trying to get out in my, you know, in my own life. So yeah, that was helpful.
- Carla Long: [01:00:29](#) Well I appreciate this conversation very much and if we still have any listeners out there, thanks for hanging with us.
- Matt Frizzell: [01:00:35](#) The sinners!
- Carla Long: [01:00:41](#) There is a sin and leaving a podcast in the middle of it, don't you think?
- Matt Frizzell: [01:00:47](#) There is! Especially when there's no commercials. I mean what do you have to lose except time? Exactly.
- Britt Mangelson: [01:00:52](#) This is true! We're not trying to sell you anything. There's no sponsorships.

- Carla Long: [01:00:59](#) Before I were, I don't want this podcast to go on forever, but I do want to get to what community of Christ thinks about sin and what the LDS church thinks about sin. And because I think a lot of the people who listen to this podcast either know one way or the other way, they don't know both. And so I think it'd be important just to say this is how we see it. So I don't know who wants to go first and talk about the LDS church perspective or the Community of Christ perspective. But let's just take it, let's just bring it back from a macro level down to a micro level. What does Community of Christ about saying, what does the LDS church say about sin?
- Matt Frizzell: [01:01:33](#) Well, I'd like to jump in on this one first because only because for some people, and I don't know if this will be true for your listeners, but for some people the question of original sin is a rather decisive one. I've talked to many people who, who just have an issue with original sin. And actually my understanding is that the LDS and, uh, the Community of Christ actually have at least a starting point together on this idea of sin in terms of the position on original sin. And by the way, the Community of Christ position on original sin, I would not say is absolutely unique. Matter of fact, I wouldn't say it's absolutely unique at all. It's a reflection of the time in 19th century theology and particularly what it means to think about sin after the enlightenment and after the Western world has developed this positive view of human nature.
- Matt Frizzell: [01:02:21](#) While I'm in the short of it is that Community of Christ folks do not, we as a tradition have not upheld the idea of original sin. Matter of fact, we, we, we denounced the idea of original sin and the way that's usually put together and in a very comic book version, you know, an over simplified is that there was something that took place in the story of the fall, Adam and Eve eating the Apple and betraying God and eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and that that condition of disobedience and brokenness and separation from God, that that completely upsets the humanity's relationship with God. And also the image of God in humanity gets passed all the way through actually through the biological event of sex all the way through every human being. And that's an August that that idea kind of goes back to Augustine and it has a long historical tradition and basically it has led to the idea that human beings need to be saved before they ever make any decision ever.
- Matt Frizzell: [01:03:25](#) Well, it around the time of the birth of the restoration movements, there's a different idea. Basically there's this idea that human, um, it actually goes back to some, some English philosopher's idea of tabula rasa. In other words, we're born as

blank slates. And so we're born kind of pure and innocent. And it's not until that were anybody heard the word age of accountability? Until you're accountable for your decisions, that's when sin starts. And of course we all eventually, eventually do it. But this idea of whether babies needed to be baptized or whether we were born inherently sinful and in need of salvation was a very important idea. And Joseph Smith was among those who said basically, no, we don't believe in original sin. Now that's the original sin piece. At the same time, if you go to the Community of Christ website, as you were saying, and alluded to Carla, we have, we have an under, we have a fairly traditional understanding of sin as the condition, uh, of, of, of human life together and that the world is broken and the world is in need of deliverance and salvation. I think Community of Christ are very symbolically and, uh, applicably concretely open to what that means.

Matt Frizzell:

[01:04:36](#)

But we do believe in this fundamental logic that the world is broken, sinful, and alienated and does need reconciliation. And that the, the idea that our separation from God is absolutely entwined with our separation from one another and ourselves. So it's not like I can be good with God, but not good with my neighbor. They're always entwined. I can't be good with my neighbor, but not be good with God and good with myself. In other words, my relationship with myself and my neighbor, and we've got our always interlinked, kind of in a Trinitarian way though I won't go down that road, but they're all tied together. And so, um, that, that idea of sin I think is real and why the relationship and discipleship to Christ is essential to our confession. So no on, no one original sin, but yes, in terms of understanding that none of us escape the reality of the broken as separation and, and, and harm that we participate in, in the world because of the reality of sin.

Carla Long:

[01:05:33](#)

Okay. Brittany.

Britt Mangelson:

[01:05:35](#)

So the LDS church has a complicated relationship with the original sin because on a common understanding is that they would not prescribe to the original sin for the same reasons that Matt suggested. And you know, even one of the articles of faith is about men not being punished for Adam's transgressions. However, and this is the feminist in me that comes out. In the LDS endowments ceremony, it is very clear that Eve is punished for her act of partaking of the fruits. And you know, as the story goes, that's how, that's why they were banished from the garden of Eden. But when she is conversing with God, who of course is a white male, God is very specific. That in saying that because she was the first partake of the fruit, she must basically



and the wording has changed over time. But basically that she has to follow her husband, obey her husband, harken to her husband as her husband follows God.

Britt Mangelson: [01:06:37](#)

And so there's two different covenants that men and women make and they make it because Eve was the first to partake in the fruit. And I'm pretty convinced that because of this covenant, and I should admit that by the time I left the LDS church since then, the wording has been softened even a little bit. But I know that the word used to be obey. So that was very much used to keep women in their place and to reinforce patriarchy. And so when Mormon say that they don't believe in original sin, I push back against that a little bit because they kind of do for women and they would believe that men are not punished for Adam's transgressions. And yet they do not extend that same grace to women. And it's even said that that's why bearing children is painful and just things like that that are very real human biological consequences, I guess, of getting pregnant.

Britt Mangelson: [01:07:32](#)

And like Matt said, it is all related to sex, but they make it very clear that women are not equal to men in that degree. So I've seen conversations online where people will say that Mormons don't agree with original sin. And I always kind of wave my little finger of skepticism and say, well then why? So I just wanted to throw that out there that it is complicated and I think that that's one reason why this topic is so, uh, it's, it's important to consider who is coming at it because the perspective of a Mormon woman on the concept of sin is going to be different from a Mormon man. And again, that comes directly from the temple endowment. And again, in the Mormon church there is a very real process of confession and there is a very real process of admitting what you did to clergy, to your Bishop and your Bishop deems you worthy or not depending on the severity of the sin and what you have done to actually repent.

Britt Mangelson: [01:08:31](#)

And again, like Community of Christ. But I would say not as open as Community of Christ. This concept of atonement that the world is broken and needs to be reconciled through Jesus is, is the whole point of the gospel. But it's very much a substitutionary atonement. And that's taught very literal. And so sometimes I've seen, I'm in several Facebook groups and I've seen some evangelicals talk about how they felt so shamed as a kid because they got this messaging of, you know, how many ounces of blood or how many drops of blood that Jesus shed for you. And I got that kind of messaging as a kid too. So there was the guilt of sinning, not just because of the immediate consequence, but then knowing that somehow I contributed to

this sacrificial murderous event that already happened. But because I was sinning in 1995, that somehow made it worse.

Britt Mangelson: [01:09:25](#)

And so there was a lot of, uh, just guilt that was, that was played in. So, yeah, and again, this is something that, you know, maybe I would get some pushback with faithful latter day saints, but that's the sin concept that I grew up with that I was, I was taught that the original sin was not a thing until I went through the Mormon temple. And I thought, well, actually it is kind of for women. And then all growing up there was just kind of this guilt factor. And, and there's a real sense of perfectionism within Mormonism because you don't want to be contributing to that brokenness. You don't want to be contributing to the need for atonement. Again, in their minds, even though it hits happened several thousands of years ago, but it kind of fuels this system of unworthiness and striving for perfection. And it's this loop that you can't really get out of.

Britt Mangelson: [01:10:20](#)

So, and you can't really get out of it because these questions of worthiness and of sin and of confession are asked periodically when you are a youth every six months when you go meet with your Bishop and then when you are an adult every, I don't know, two or three years, whenever your temple recommend expires. So you have to declare yourself as sin free as you can be and declare yourself worthy. And then you have what they would consider a judge in Israel to to either validate that or to question you further and then send you down the road to repentance. So yeah, that's the model of sin that I grew up with.

Carla Long: [01:10:59](#)

Wow, that's, that's intense. Like the amount of guilt that goes along with how many drops of blood did Jesus shed for you? I mean that's, for me, that is so not helpful in this conversation at all. Like it just makes people feel guilty and feel bad. And maybe that changes behavior for a day, a week maybe, but certainly not forever. I've never thought the guilt and fear changes behavior love is the only thing that I found that actually changes behavior for good anyway. So that just, ah, ah, okay. So that drives me crazy. Matt, do you have any response?

Matt Frizzell: [01:11:43](#)

Well, just for good. I, yeah, I again, I, so there, I do think there is this kind of sin of self righteousness that can run in the Community of Christ too sometimes. And, and even amongst liberal and progressive Christians who, who find it really easy to batch evangelical theology, though I do want to name it's, it's elements of abuse and um, and, and emotional, spiritual violence because I've felt it, even though I haven't felt it in the same way others has, I have felt it. When my grandmother, for instance, was worried about the salvation of my soul. And so,

uh, this idea I, I just want to name this, sin becomes a problem when we start asking ourselves and even little children, a man died because of what you did. That's the way the theology starts. A man died and spilled blood because of what you did and when your sin, when your theology of sin starts there, I want to just say it's off.

Matt Frizzell:

[01:12:42](#)

It is off because we understand Jesus as a universal event. It's not just about me. How, how sinful and first, how self-centered for me to start the whole salvation story around myself. It's not until I understand it as a universal event and even getting it, I don't mean to rant, but I think as a theologian, this is where I'm trying to repent and do the right thing in name something that went wrong. Get the, get the questions in the right order. Jesus wasn't necessarily, uh, killed or the way I understand it, I don't even want to soften it that way cause this is a very tender point. The fact is Jesus didn't need to die because we're a bunch of sinners. We're a bunch of sinners. So we killed Jesus. I want to get that in the right order. Jesus comes in upsets of the order, and upsets power structures, and he upsets a lot of even understandings of what it means to be righteous.

Matt Frizzell:

[01:13:42](#)

Cause if you were to ask the question, did Jesus, what? Did Jesus die a sinner? Well, depends who's judging for many, many, many people he was because he broke all sorts of rules and so he did deserve to die. It's not until after that event and the evolution of, of, um, and by the way, I'm not even assuming it's a historical fact at this point. I'm just saying, let's follow the narrative. If we put it in some sort of historical context and belief that there was some person named Jesus died who was thought to be a Messiah. It's not until after that offense that, uh, that many that many people, many thinkers, Jewish thinkers particularly like Paul, start to rethinking, start rethinking sin and what it means to, to be in right relationship with God. That's where it begins. And even though Paul is also the source of saying a lot of things in regards to, you know, Jesus necessarily had to die because of the sinful condition that is never labeled or landed on one person.

Matt Frizzell:

[01:14:40](#)

It's the nature of the relationship with God because of a broken covenant. That's what it's about. And so I get very frustrated and of course I'm being a Pharisee here, I'll own it. But I think it's the wrong interpretation to ever tell a child or to say to anyone, somebody die because of what you did. And it starts as a religious truth that I think is a seed bed for harm. And I want to name it as something that's harmful. And I, that's the part that I think when that Brittany was saying that you know it, that you and I resonated with, and it's not limited to any one

religion. There are, excuse me, any one, Christianity, that idea runs throughout Christianity. And I think we have to start with a different starting point of why faith and Jesus is important. It's not because I'm just a piece of scum. It's because I share a condition with others in the world and I dream for a better world and I can't fix it on my own. Matter of fact, it's gonna take an act of God and believing that that act was Jesus. And then having faith and moving forward is what the story is about.

Carla Long: [01:15:49](#)

Oh, there it was. I was waiting for a rant from Matt. I was waiting for it and I got one and I liked it. I feel, I feel the same way. Matt, like people, you know, when we talk about the death of Jesus and how Jesus had to die for our sins, I'm like, I don't think that humans had to kill someone in order for God to forgive our sins. I don't, I don't think that God works in that way. So I appreciate the way you said it. I appreciate what you said. So ha, this has been a huge conversation, a huge conversation. But I feel like we need to draw to a close, but I don't want to cut either of you off. So is there something that you want to say that you didn't get a chance to say or um, yeah, that you want to say before we sign off?

Matt Frizzell: [01:16:39](#)

Brittany, you go first this time again.

Britt Mangelson: [01:16:44](#)

I think that I would just send out an invitation to study more about this topic and again, intersects with so many other points of theology within Christian thought that it's impossible to quote unquote solve sin or solve atonement or solve Jesus in isolation that they all intersect. And so I would encourage listeners if you are struggling with any one point of theology to just dive into it, to look up some theologians. Matt has mentioned a few authors, I did mention one book, but to just have this be a conversation starter and an exploration into something deeper because I know that it's really, really easy to just kind of set everything aside. And if that is where you're at, that's fine. But I'm assuming if you've listened to this whole podcast, you want to maybe explore some of these topics a little bit more. So I would just invite you to do that. And I know that it takes a lot of work, but I have just found so much richness in saving the story of Jesus and to reframe the story of Jesus and how it is relevant today, here and now. And so I think that the work is worth it. And again, I would just invite everyone to take that step in, in figuring it out for yourself because there's a whole wide range of really appropriate, helpful ways to look at this topic. So find one that works for you and run with it.

- Matt Frizzell: [01:18:20](#) Amen. You know, I just keep coming back. I would invite people to think about at least my little silly coffee cup testimony. I find sin to be liberating. I don't have to be perfect in the world is broken. That explains like 99.5% of my life experience. I don't have to be perfect in the world is freaking broken. And from that point I have a life that I can live and the only way it can live it is learning to trust. And so learning to trust others, learning to trust God, learning to trust that this is all meaningful. That is, that is why I find the, the doctrine of sin to be so absolutely fascinating and wonderful. The other, the other thing is if you, if you have a theology of sin, and I'm going to sound trite, but I mean this in deep sincerity and I hope I just, I hope I evoke a sense of incredulity in people, cause there is something really strange about it, if your sense of religion in faith is that for God so loved the world, that he's, that he sent his only begotten son and killed them so that you can be happy.
- Matt Frizzell: [01:19:30](#) Don't you want to be a child of God too? I mean if that's the way your theology of sin goes, that's broken, it makes no sense. And there's gotta be another way to look at this. And I actually think it's in the scriptures itself. Yeah. The last thing I just want to say is sometimes people make arguments about saying this is what the Bible really says. And that's what the scriptures really mean. And folks, I don't think we have left in this podcast any of the questions that are always already in scripture already we could sit and unpack. Job job is one of the most difficult and frustrating passages around the question of sin because it's not, it's not job's fault that he suffers. And it really ends with the question of why did jobs, why, why did job suffer? And it's like because God is God and that's on one hand liberating and cruel depending on how you read the story and welcome to life.
- Matt Frizzell: [01:20:22](#) And so anyway, I have found to read the story in a positive way because the story of job isn't the only story. I like the testimony of Jesus, the reconciliation of the world. It does make sense that the world needs to be reconciled. To me, it does make sense that I need to be reconciled to my neighbor and to others and that I could live in a privileged world where I thought I was an individual and I didn't affect anybody else and that I can just do what I want. And I have found that to be a false narrative. It's just plain wrong and that the one about needing to be reconciled makes more sense. And so again, all that brings me back to the doctrine of sin and I just think there's an alternative way to look at it. And I, I think there's actually good news in the story.
- Carla Long: [01:21:02](#) Well what an awesome podcast. Thank you so much, both of you for putting in the time and the effort to even talk about this

kind of stuff. I think it's fascinating and I, I have certainly heard more about sin in the last hour or so then I have thought about in the last 10 years. So I really appreciate it. Thank you very much for being on the podcast.

- Matt Frizzell: [01:21:24](#) I'll thank you. I think you guys should start a coffee confessional. Do you need another theme and move forward with, with Podcast you can have the coffee confessional, you're gonna have all the church leaders come out and share about the things that they've done that didn't want to tell anybody.
- Carla Long: [01:21:37](#) Yes, that would be amazing. I would listen to that one every single time.
- Carla Long: [01:21:44](#) That would be the wrong definition though.
- Britt Mangelson: [01:21:45](#) You heard it here first!
- Carla Long: [01:21:49](#) Thanks again you too.
- Matt Frizzell: [01:21:51](#) Thank you, Carla. Blessings, Brittany. Rock on.
- Music: [01:22:00](#) [inaudible].
- Josh Mangelson: [01:22:02](#) Thanks for listening to Project Zion podcast. Subscribe to our podcast on Apple podcast, Stitcher, or whatever podcast streaming service you use. And while you are there, give us a five star rating projects. Project Zion Podcast t is sponsored by Latter-day Seeker Ministries of Community of Christ. The views and opinions expressed in this episode are of those speaking and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of Latter-day Seeker Ministries or Community of Christ. The music has been graciously provided by Dave Heinze.
- Music: [01:22:58](#) [inaudible]