

**Praying for a Brother in Sin**  
**1 John 5:16-17**

**WHAT IS “SIN THAT LEADS TO DEATH” (v.16b)?**

**1. Some think John may be referring to a sin that is especially serious or heinous.**

- Roman Catholic distinction between ‘mortal’ and ‘venial’ sins. Ref. seven ‘deadly’ sins
- OT Law recognizes some sins as capital offenses (require the death penalty)
- A common (and wrong) belief among many Christians today is that no sin is worse than others.

→ Some sins are more heinous in the sight of God than others.

→ All sin is serious, and all sins are worthy of God’s judgment, but not all sins are as bad as others.

**2. Some think John may be referring to the “unforgiveable sin” – aka. blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.**

- Mark 3:22-30. When the works of Jesus evidently accomplished by God’s Spirit are attributed to Satan.
- A state of spiritual hardness and blindness so opposed to Jesus Christ as to never repent.

→ What if I have committed the unforgiveable sin? A: If you are concerned, afraid that you have, then you haven’t.

**3. Some think John may be referring to the false teachers he addressed in his letter.**

- The false teachers rejected Jesus as the Son of God, the Christ, and the Savior.
- The false teachers do not believe the truth, love fellow Christians, or obey God’s commandments.
- The false teachers left the Christian community because they did not really belong to it. 1 John 2:19

**PRAYING FOR A BROTHER IN SIN.**

**1. The emphasis is on interceding for those who have NOT committed a sin leading to death.**

- The focus of the text is on the sin NOT leading to death—mentioned 3 times.
- The focus is on praying for brothers in sin (NOT trying to figure out if they are ‘sinning unto death’.)

**2. If anyone sees his brother committing a sin. v.16**

**3. The NT teaches we have a responsibility to engage professing Christians when we see them in sin.**

- James 5:19-20: My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.
- Galatians 6:1-2: Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.
- Matthew 7:3-5: Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.

**4. He shall ask...and God will give him life. v.16**

- John’s emphasis is on praying for him. “He shall ask” – connected to v.14-15.
- The way to deal with sin in the congregation is to pray—and confess.
- James 5:16: Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.