

# SUMMER OF SIN: THE BREAKDOWN

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Michael Swartzentruber, Senior Minister

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## Colossians 1:15-20

<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; <sup>16</sup>for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup>He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup>He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. <sup>19</sup>For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup>and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

## REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase, or image stands out to you?
  2. What do you think it means for Jesus to be the "image of the invisible God" (v. 15)?
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### The Breakdown

The "fullness" or "completeness" of God mentioned in this passage is reflected in another word: *shalom* (peace, wholeness, or "the way things ought to be"). In *shalom*, there is a rich harmony between God, people, and creation that allows for flourishing and joy. Theologian Cornelius Plantinga presents sin as a breakdown (disturbance, disruption, or vandalism) of *shalom*.

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3. Sin can be understood as a kind of *breakdown* or *breaking apart* (separation) of what God intends to be together. Christ "holds together" what we (try to) separate or what we experience as separate. Reflect on this way of understanding sin and Christ.
  - a. Does it resonate with you? Why or why not?

**South Elkhorn Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**

4343 Harrodsburg Road, Lexington KY 40513

859-223-1433 [southelkhorncc.org](http://southelkhorncc.org)

- b. What forces of separation are at work in our lives, society, or world today?
- 4. Dualistic thinking is a binary, either/or way of processing the world into *separate* categories like good/evil, us/them, success/failure, win/lose, friend/enemy.
  - a. How does Jesus challenge these over-simplified categories and this way of living in the world?
  - b. How might trusting Christ—as the both/and of humanity and divinity—challenge dualistic thinking, open our vision, and expand our imagination?
- 5. Do you have any experiences of reconciliation in your life? What happened and what did you learn?
- 6. What does it mean practically for your life that "in him all things hold together" (v. 17)? Where do you need to see things held together right now?
- 7. Pastor Michael suggests, "Sin is not the reality that we are separate from God; it is the *illusion* that we can live separately from God."
  - a. How does Christ dispel our illusions of separateness?
  - b. Recognizing ourselves as in-separable from God is also

to see ourselves connected to everything and everyone else. How might that change the ways we live?