

A monochromatic, blue-toned photograph of a person's hands holding a large apple. The person's face is partially visible in the background, looking down at the apple. The image has a soft, slightly blurred quality.

The Seven Deadly Sins

Series Study Guide



GROUNDWORK

— BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR LIFE —

Why Study the Seven Deadly Sins?

You don't have to look very far to find books, cartoon depictions, or movies about the seven sins deemed most perilous to humanity. What is it about pride, envy, anger, sloth, greed, gluttony, and lust that make these sins particularly deadly? And is it the attitudes themselves, or the actions they produce, that prove most fatal? In this special *Groundwork* series, we focus on the ancient Seven Deadly Sins because they are the root attitudes that lead to all sinful actions. William Willamon, in his book *Sinning Like a Christian: A New Look at the Seven Deadly Sins*, describes the Seven Deadlies this way:

"The church does not teach that these sins are 'deadly,' for they don't lead directly to damnation. They are more accurately called the capital or cardinal sins, the source, the 'head,' the necessary first step toward other sin."

For each of the Seven Deadly Sins, we study scriptural examples of these vices to better understand what they are, what they are not, and to examine their pernicious consequences. But our study does not end with merely a deeper knowledge of our human sinfulness. Instead, Revs. Scott Hoezee and Dave Bast discuss relevant scriptures that acknowledge our limitations, lead us to repentance and, most importantly, explore how we can combat these sins in our lives.

Thankfully, we live in the knowledge of our salvation in Christ our Messiah. The Bible tells us that we are a redeemed people and challenges us to live by the law of the Spirit. Paul writes in [Galatians 2:22-25](#):

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

To help us "keep in step," this study resource contains seven guides that prepare us for listening to each of the *Groundwork* episodes. The collection also engages us in thoughtful reflection on what we've heard and how we can apply what we've learned in everyday life. There are also suggestions for further scripture and recommended readings that encourage us to go even deeper.

So join us as we dig into scripture for the antidotes to the infamous Seven Deadly Sins. Together, may we heed the Holy Spirit's call to be continually made over into the image of Christ Jesus our Lord.



GROUNDWORK

— BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR LIFE —

PRIDE

Primary Text: [Genesis 3:1-7](#) & [1 Peter 5:4-5](#)



Awareness

Before Listening

- Do you consider yourself to be a proud person? Why or why not?
- If someone asked you to define pride, what words would you use? What examples might you give? Do you think of pride in a more positive or negative way?

According to both the Bible and universal Christian tradition, pride is the first sin, the chief sin, and the root of most other sins. Yet, we're often encouraged to take pride in ourselves, our heritage, and our work. There might be a fine line between healthy and sinful pride, but studying both the original biblical example of pride and the Apostle Peter's teaching about pride will help us dig deeper into the nature of this sin: what it is, what it isn't, and how to combat it.



Listen

[Play Audio](#)



Reflection

After Listening

- How has your understanding and definition of pride changed after listening to Dave Bast and Scott Hoezee discuss [Genesis 3](#)? Is it more nuanced? What clarifications enlightened or convicted you?
- When are you most susceptible to pride? Do you ever get caught up in how obedient you are to God, all the good things you do for Him, or how right you are in your interpretation of the Bible or your worship?
- In what areas of your life do you seem to always try to take over or control, and rely on yourself rather than God? How can being honest with yourself about this lead you on the path toward humility?
- Why is false humility or perverted humility just another form of pride?
- In *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis writes, "The real test of being in the presence of God is that you either forget about yourself all together or see yourself as a small, dirty object. It is better to forget about yourself altogether." Why does this matter, why does he say forgetting is better than seeing all your bad qualities? How does it help us combat pride?



Related Passages

Further Study

[1 Samuel 17](#) • [Luke 1:46-55](#) • [2 Chronicles 26](#) • [Philippians 2:1-11](#)



Conclusion

Consider the biblical command in [Micah 6:8](#), "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" Think about how focusing on justice, kindness, and walking humbly with God helps you forget yourself altogether as C.S. Lewis recommends. Pray as God leads you; confess your moments of pride, surrender yourself to Him, request the mind of Christ, and seek the Holy Spirit's continued assistance in addressing the areas of pride in your life.

Primary Text: Genesis 4:1-8 & 1 Corinthians 12:7-11**Awareness**[Before Listening](#)

- How do you define envy? How does it compare to jealousy -- is it the same thing or is it different?
- Identify a time in your life when you struggled with envy. What did you do about it?

Thomas Aquinas once wrote that envy is "sorrow at another's good." The trouble with envy is that it's so easy to hide, and that it harms both the person consumed with envy and the subject of their envy. Once again, we turn to Genesis to see just how long envy has been part of the human condition and discuss how it is similar, yet very different from jealousy and covetousness. Then we dig into the New Testament to discover how we can keep in step with the Holy Spirit to combat this sneaky sin.

**Listen**[Play Audio](#)**Reflection**[After Listening](#)

- In segment 1, host Dave Bast quoted Dorothy Sayers, who wrote, "Envy begins by asking plausibly, 'Why should I not enjoy what others enjoy,' and it ends by demanding, 'Why should others enjoy what I may not?'" Have you ever observed this progression of attitude in others? What about in yourself?
- How do attitudes and feelings of envy threaten or disrupt community?
- Reflect on your own level of contentment. In which areas of life are you truly content and in which areas do you struggle with contentment? Spend some time thinking about what causes your feelings of discontentment in these particular parts of your life. Then, write down what you are grateful for in these same areas. Do your feelings change at all after intentional reflection?

**Related Passages**[Further Study](#)

[1 Samuel 18:5-9](#) • [Matthew 20:1-16](#) • [1 Corinthians 13](#) • [Romans 8](#)

**Conclusion**

Take the first step in acknowledging envy by talking about it -- with God for sure and, if you feel the Holy Spirit's leading, with a trusted friend or mentor. After confessing and reflecting on the places in your life where envy is prone to lurk, take time to pray that the Spirit would help you to recognize sooner when envy is taking hold and guide you in addressing it.



7 Deadly Sins - Part 3

ANGER

Primary Text: 1 Samuel 18:6-11 & Ephesians 4:26-27



Awareness

Before Listening

- Reflect on a recent time when you were very angry. How long did that anger last? What helped bring it to conclusion? Did you take any particular action? How did your anger affect those around you? Did it change your relationships significantly?
- How do you define righteous anger? What characteristics set righteous anger apart from unrighteous anger?

God created us as beings with emotions and these emotions are not inherently sinful. So if anger is not necessarily a sin, why then, do we include it in the list of Seven Deadly Sins? Studying the story of Saul's anger against David in 1 Samuel 18 we learn how anger can become a dangerous sin, and one that can quickly lead to injury. But, the Bible is clear that sinning in anger is not inevitable. In Ephesians, we find hope and guidance for controlling and dissipating our anger.



Listen

[Play Audio](#)



Reflection

After Listening

- When have you witnessed anger leading to injury -- emotional or physical injury of self, of another, or of a community? Why do you think anger is sometimes called a community killer?
- The emotion of anger is not a sin, but it becomes sin when it takes control of one's will. How can your motives and desires help you determine whether your anger is merely an emotional response or if it has shifted into sin?
- In segment 2, hosts Dave Bast and Scott Hoezee discuss two stories that describe times when Jesus got angry. What does it mean to you that Jesus got angry? What do these stories show us about the person of Jesus?
- How can we embrace righteous anger and work for peace and justice while also leaving vengeance and justice in God's hands?
- In segment 3, Dave and Scott discuss ways to combat anger: by nurturing the fruits of the Spirit to extend forgiveness, and even employing humor to get back to a place of humility and meekness. What strategies will you use to deal with your anger? How will you remind yourself of these strategies in the heat of your anger?



Related Passages

Further Study

[Matthew 5:21-26](#) • [Mark 3:1-6](#) • [Galatians 5:16-26](#) • [Colossians 3:1-17](#) • [James 1:19-21](#)



Conclusion

Read [Galatians 5:22-23](#) and reflect on the fruits of the Spirit that you find most difficult to employ in moments of anger. Write down ways you might ask the Holy Spirit to cultivate these fruits in your daily life. Make it a point to return to these notes from time-to-time.



7 Deadly Sins - Part 4

SLOTH

Primary Text: Matthew 8:28-34 & Galatians 6:7-10



Awareness

Before Listening

- What is sloth? How would you describe it to someone else? As you currently understand it, what makes sloth a sin?
- Can you identify a time in your life when you lacked passion for something important to the point that you just gave up on it?

Sloth is often equated with laziness, so we think the natural remedy is busyness. But is that really all sloth is? This common misperception of sloth is what makes it one of the more difficult deadly sins to identify until after it has already done major damage to someone's spiritual life. Sloth is more than just inactivity. It involves giving in to a lack of passion, spiritual weariness, boredom, or excuses, and when left unchecked, sloth can quickly lead to loss of faith and even despair, the complete loss of hope. The effects of sloth can be deadly, but thankfully, scripture teaches us how to recognize the sin and gives us a remedy through Jesus Christ.



Listen

[Play Audio](#)



Reflection

After Listening

- Before listening to the program, we asked you to identify a time in your life when you lacked passion for something important. Looking back on that time, would you now identify that attitude as sloth? Why or why not?
- How is sloth different than relaxing? How does sloth relate to boredom?
- In segment 2, host Scott Hoezee considers the importance and value of community in working against the sin of sloth. What issues do your communities face? Where might sloth loom and threaten the good your community does?
- In segment 3, Dave Bast discusses how we tend to avoid activities or conversations that seem to cast our spirits low. Do you see this tendency in your own life?
- Which promises in scripture bring you hope or lift your spirits every time you read them? Make a list for quick reference when you need a dose of biblical joy and encouragement.



Related Passages

Further Study

[Ecclesiastes 1:1-11](#) • [Proverbs 6:6-11](#) • [Psalm 63](#) • [Psalm 51:10-12](#) • [Luke 18:18-30](#) • [1 Corinthians 15:50-58](#)



Conclusion

Seek the Lord in prayer. Bring before Him everything you've reflected on in this exercise: struggles with sloth, communities, downers, promises in scripture. Seek His guidance and help through the Holy Spirit; thank Him for the promises you identified in scripture and the beauty around you. Remember and pray the words of the psalmist in [Psalm 51:12](#): "O Lord, restore to me the joy of Your salvation."

7 Deadly Sins - Part 5

GREED

Primary Text: [Mark 10:17-25](#) & [Isaiah 58:7-10](#)



Awareness

[Before Listening](#)

- How do you define greed? Do you think you struggle with it? Why or why not?
- What consequences of greed have you observed in your own life or in the life of someone close to you?

Greed might seem like the easiest of the Seven Deadly Sins to identify -- just look for the person who can't seem to get enough money or stuff. But is that all there is to greed? If so, would poverty or perpetual self-denial be the only options to avoid the sin of greed? Or, is there something deeper that makes the attitude of greed a threat to us all whether or not we have money or lots of stuff? Join us in studying scripture to discover the multiple facets of this subtle and dangerous sin and to find help in turning our minds and hearts to Christ for spiritual healing.



Listen

[Play Audio](#)



Reflection

[After Listening](#)

- How has your opinion about another person's relationship with money or possessions affected your opinion about their worth or value to your community? Is it an accurate reflection of their value in God's eyes?
- How can our desire for security lead us to fall victim to greed? In what other areas of life might the attitude of greed lead you to trust in created things rather than the Creator?
- James Ogilvy once wrote, "Greed turns love into lust, leisure into sloth, hunger into gluttony, honor into pride, righteous indignation into anger, and admiration into envy. If it weren't for greed, we would suffer fewer of the other vices." Where in your life has the attitude of greed taken something good and turned it into a vice?
- Which ideas discussed in segment 3 seem practical to you for counteracting greed (e.g. finding joy in acts of generosity, rejecting the consumer culture, rejoicing in what you have)? Are there specific areas (money or otherwise) where you need to begin cultivating your spiritual health to work against an attitude of greed?



Related Passages

[Further Study](#)

[Matthew 6:19-24](#) • [1 Chronicles 29:14-16](#) • [Philippians 2:1-11](#) • [2 Corinthians 8:1-15](#)

The story of the rich young ruler is also found in [Matthew 19:16-30](#) and [Luke 18:18-30](#)



Conclusion

In [Luke 12:15](#) Jesus warns, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions." Pray for God's grace and mercy for the times you've fallen victim to greed, and request his strength and help to follow Jesus' warning.

7 Deadly Sins - Part 6

GLUTTONY

Primary Text: Philippians 3:19 & 1 Corinthians 9:24-27



Awareness

Before Listening

- How much thought do you give to what and how much you eat? Do you have any routines or habits associated with your mealtimes or snack times?
- How does our culture contribute to an attitude of gluttony?

Do you struggle with gluttony? Many people think that if they're not excessive eaters or do not struggle with alcohol that they're free from the grip of gluttony. But like the other deadly sins, gluttony is an attitude that takes something that is good and perverts it. Os Guinness puts it this way, "Just as avarice idolizes possession, and lust, sex, so gluttony idolizes food. It lifts it out of its place and distorts both food and eating." But gluttony goes beyond just eating and drinking. Studying scripture for God's perspective on excess helps us evaluate whether we're in line with God or possibly flirting with gluttony, and helps us guard against gluttony in our hearts and actions.



Listen

[Play Audio](#)



Reflection

After Listening

- What do you think about the concept that gluttony is more than just eating excessively? Did the idea that gluttony could include being too fussy, or thinking too little or too much about food surprise or challenge you?
- What attitude or mindset is at the root of gluttony? How does your attitude toward food and eating affect your spiritual life? How are they related?
- How do biblical examples of feasts, and the sacrament of communion, help us understand and appreciate God's gift of food and to see His perspective on eating? Can these biblical examples help us counteract negative perspectives on food that dieting culture imparts to us?
- Beyond what you eat or drink, are there other areas of your life in which you overindulge? How does this affect you spiritually? What biblical passages do you find most useful in combating the self-indulgent messages we constantly encounter in our consumer culture?



Related Passages

Further Study

[Titus 2:11-14](#) • [1 Corinthians 9:24-25](#) • [Matthew 6:25-34](#) • [Exodus 16](#) • [1 Timothy 4:1-5](#) • [Proverbs 23:19-21](#) • [Ecclesiastes 10:17](#)
[Ecclesiastes 2:24-25](#) • [1 Corinthians 8](#)



Conclusion

Read [Galatians 5:22-25](#). Be encouraged by verse 24 which says that in Christ Jesus we have crucified the passions of our sinful nature. This does not mean we won't encounter temptation, but it does mean that through Him, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, we can bear spiritual fruits, like self-control, that will free us from our compulsions to give into gluttonous desires and struggles.

Primary Text: 2 Samuel 13:1-18 & 1 Corinthians 6:15-20**Awareness**

Before Listening

- What is lust? How is lust different than appropriate sexual desire?
- What has influenced or shaped your thoughts about lust?
- In what ways have you possibly struggled personally with lust?

God created sex and sexual desire as a gift to end loneliness and build lifelong relationships of intimacy and trust. However, humans have perverted sexual desire by removing it from relationship and detaching it from the humanity of the person they desire. Biblically, lust is a misplaced or perverted sexual desire, usually for someone or something that ought not be the object of one's desire. Let's look at scripture and discuss what is wrong with lust, but more importantly seek to understand and live into God's original design and purpose for sex and sexual desire.

**Listen**[Play Audio](#)**Reflection**

After Listening

- Humanity tends to view sex, sexuality, and sexual desire as private matters. Consider Dave Bast and Scott Hoezee's conversation in segment 2 about how lust is often expressed when a person is alone or isolated rather than in relationship. What are potential consequences for when sexual desires are wrongly directed and no longer serve the purposes for which God created them?
- Consider this quote from Os Guinness's book, *Steering Through Chaos: Vice and Virtue in an Age of Moral Confusion*: "But at its heart, lust is an idolizing of sex in the sense of an unethical and unrestrained expression of the sexual impulse. It happens even in proper sexual relations when the object of sexual desire is not the sexual partner but rather the pleasure of services that the partner can provide." What do you think of his observation that lust can occur even in proper sexual relations? How can recognizing every person's identity as a child of God, made in His image, help combat the temptation to lust?
- Do you think Christians should be more open to discussing sex and sexuality? What would be important guidelines for those conversations so that they are beneficial and congruent with God's intention and not another destructive path to lust?

**Related Passages**[Further Study](#)

[Genesis 2:18-25](#) • [Matthew 5:27-28](#) • [Song of Songs](#)

**Conclusion**

Meditate on the following prayer: *Dear Lord, by your perfect design, you created us for relationship with you and with each other. Help me honor your creation intent. Guard my heart and mind that I might see the people I love and the people I meet as your image bearers, as your redeemed children. Grant me the wisdom and guidance of your Holy Spirit to appreciate, respect, and understand your gift of sex and sexual desire from your perspective and according to your design. Amen.*

Resources for Further Study

- **Glittering Vices: A New Look at the Seven Deadly Sins and Their Remedies** by Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung. Published in 2009 by Brazos Press.
- **Sinning Like a Christian: A New Look at the Seven Deadly Sins** by William H. Willimon. Copyright 2005 by Abingdon Press.
- **Steering Through Chaos: Vice and Virtue in an Age of Moral Confusion** by Os Guinness. Copyright 2000 by The Trinity Forum (NavPress).
- **The Other Six Deadly Sins** by Dorothy Sayers. Published by Methuen in 1944.
- **The Seven Deadly Sins Today** by Henry Fairlie. Published in 1978 by Univ. of Notre Dame Press.

Groundwork is produced by:



ReFrame
Ministries

God's Story. Today's Media.

Family of programs:

Today


GROUNDWORK

think
CHRISTIAN

KIDS
CORNER


CHURCH JUICE
ENERGIZING CHURCH COMMUNICATIONS

 FamilyFire