

The 7 Deadly Sins—and How to Overcome Them

Discussion 1 :: Dealing with Pride

Resource: 'The Seven Deadly Sins' by Graham Tomlin, Chapter 1, Sins and the Soul + Chapter 2, Pride.

Timing: 40-50 minutes, leading into ministry/response time.

The Point: The main idea of each section—feel free to add other Scriptures, stories, etc to support the ideas.

An Illustration: Living examples from your own lives. Suggestions are offered, but feel free to use your own.

The Application: Ideas for how to live out and apply the principles being discussed.

Introduction of the 'The Seven Deadly Sins' discussions.

Read the following quote from Graham Tomlin's book, and then **discuss** the following question as a group.

"A glance through the traditional list of the seven deadly sins raises an obvious issue for anyone with any sense of contemporary life and morals: these are not the ones that we would identify as the chief causes of evil in our world. If anything, our culture tends to admire these qualities, not avoid them."

- Do you agree with Tomlin's assertion—why or why not?
- Culture sees these qualities as virtues; God does not. Why might this be the case?
- In what way(s) do you believe that these discussions may personally benefit and/or challenge you?
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Ice-breaker—break up into pairs and discuss the following question:

What personal qualities and achievements make you smile with pleasure?

Introduction of this week's discussion :: Dealing with Pride

Pride is defined by Webster's dictionary as "having an inordinate amount of self-esteem or conceit." According to Augustine, it is "the love of one's own excellence." Meanwhile, humility is defined as "having a spirit of deference (respect) or submission."

Our enemy wants to steal and destroy our lives while Jesus wants to experience the richness of life in him (John 10:10). So what does that richness entail? It is not worldly riches—possessions, status and the like. Our significance is not related to what we have or what we do; rather, it is related to who we are in Christ. Acts 17:28 says that "in him we live and move and have our being."

Pride is not something that we can just 'will' away on our own. Our culture insists that we value the quality of our lives based on status or possessions. Tonight's discussion will focus on what it means to live in a counter-cultural way, measuring our self-worth by who we are in Christ rather than by what we own or have accomplished.

1. Root identity in God (Genesis 1:26-27).

The Point: First and foremost, we are made in the image of God—not the other way around. Pride can make us believe or behave like he is made in our image.

Knowledge of our identity as image-bearers gives us a sense of purpose and displaces our pride.

- We are invited to participate in God's redemptive purposes (2 Cor 5:18-20).
- God has a plan for our individual lives (Jer 29:11-13).
- He wants us to put his teachings into practice (John 13:12-17).

An illustration: Describe an area of your own life where attempting to meet the expectations of others—rather than God—led to frustration or disappointment.

The Application: Set Acts 17:28 as your computer password. Each time you boot your computer, recall this verse and its message that our identity is shaped by God, and God alone.

2. Cultivate truthful self-awareness and confession (1 John 1:8-10).

The Point: There is freedom in being truthful about our strengths and weaknesses. Pride can make us believe and behave as if we have no faults or are better than others.

Cultivate a habit of self-examination and confession. Doing so helps us receive God's love and forgiveness.

- Confession offers freedom and healing from our sins (James 5:16).
- Helps us know we are not alone as we struggle (Rom 3:22-24).
- Helps us to more readily forgive others (Eph 4:32).

An Illustration: Before the evening, ask someone to share a testimony of how truthful self-examination and/or confession has created or promoted freedom in his/her life. Ask him/her to share how it has improved their life.

The Application: Take time over the following week to examine your heart and to admit to yourself where you have fallen short of God's will for your life. Confess your sin and then choose to receive God's forgiveness and his love. Lastly, ask him to help you live in the freedom and healing of your confession. Consider sharing your thoughts with someone you trust.

3. Replace self-centeredness with other-centeredness (Luke 6:31).

The Point: We can approach life expecting to be served, or we can look for opportunities to serve others. Pride can make us believe and behave as if our needs are most important.

- An attitude of service should be our basic approach to life (Acts 2:42-47).
- We are most Christ-like when we consider the needs of others before our own (Eph 5:1-3).
- We are called to love by our actions (1 John 3:16-18).

An Illustration: Share with the group your own experience with relying on yourself or others rather than relying on God. Consider and discuss how relying on God may impact your view of yourself or others.

The Application: Philippians 2:5-11 paints a picture of Christ-like humility. Write this scripture on a post-it or card, and meditate on the words throughout the week. (You may consider printing the verse on a card and then hand out to the group at this time.)

Ideas for Ministry/Response time during pastorate evening:

- Read the story of Jesus washing his disciples' feet out loud to the group (John 13:1-17). In an act of submission and humility toward one another, wash one another's feet.
- In a time of open prayer thank God for giving us the Holy Spirit to help us become more honest before God and each other—invite open prayer as the Spirit moves.
- Break into threes to pray for one another's identity to be found in God alone and not in those things that our culture tell us shape who we are.

Ideas for response during the week :: cultivating humility **(be prepared to share your experiences next week)**

- Choose one of suggestions from the "The Application" portion of this week's talk and commit to doing it in the next two weeks. Be prepared to share your experiences and the results the next time the pastorate meets.

- Each day, offer to perform one worthwhile action of pure service for another—something that you would not normally expect to do. Examples include offering to get coffee or tea for someone, opening doors for others, doing your spouse or flatmate's laundry, etc.
- In conversations this week, try to resist the temptation to talk about yourself—instead practice taking a genuine interest in another person. Ask questions that demonstrate your wanting to know more about him/her.