

The 7 Deadly Sins—and How to Deal with Them

Discussion 6 :: Dealing with Greed

Resource: *The Seven Deadly Sins*, by Graham Tomlin (Chapter 7—Greed).

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.

Recap last week's discussion :: Dealing with Lust

The Point: God created us to desire all forms of intimacy—emotional, spiritual and physical. All are meant to draw us closer to him and to one another. When these intimacies are expressed as God designed them, they are healthy and good. We talked about what God says about physical desire and why there is a time to abstain from it and a time to express it.

- Sex is designed to be expressed in a marriage relationship (Genesis 2:21-25).
- We can resist temptation and abstain (Galatians 5:16).
- Life in community helps meet relational needs (Galatians 5:13).

The Application: Ask a couple of people to share their experiences while attempting to cultivate the love of others in their lives. (refer to the action steps that were suggested last week)

Ice-breaker: break up into groups of two or three and discuss the following:

Which of your personal possessions would you not want to give away? What is it about this item that makes it so valuable to you?

Introduction to this week's discussion :: Dealing with Greed

There is a belief in our culture that says greed is good. It actually helps our society advance by inspiring the birth of new products and services. Another argument asserts that greed is simply a form of "self-interest" or "ambition," whereby one is looking after himself and his loved ones or he is wanting to make his life count in some way.

Webster's dictionary defines greed as, "a selfish and excessive desire for more of something than is needed." Many would argue that as long as their pursuits are not "excessive," they are not struggling with the sin of greed. The problem with this argument is that each of us would have a different measurement for what we consider excessive.

Jesus offers a solution that cuts directly to the heart of the matter—literally. The boundary between what is excessive and what is acceptable seems to lie in the state of our hearts. We need to consider what motivates our pursuits. Do the things that we pursue benefit only us (or those we love) or do they benefit society at large? Tonight's discussion will focus on what God thinks about material possessions and how the solution to greed is not being "without," but by being generous.

1. The material world is good (Genesis 1:31).

The Point: God created the material world that we see around us. He indicates that proper stewardship (i.e. use of) is required in order for everyone to benefit from his creation. Greed would have us believe or behave as if what we consume does not affect others.

- God provides for our needs (Matthew 6:25-34; 7:9-11).
- We are to receive with thanksgiving (2 Corinthians 9:11).
- We need to be proper custodians of what are given (Genesis 1:28; 2:15).

- We are not meant to live on the material alone (Deuteronomy 8:2-3).

An Illustration: Ask people to share about their material possessions. Do they believe that God would consider them “good stewards” of what they have been given—why or why not?

The Application: Take some time to consider what consumption looks like in your life. Have you thought about effect it has on others in your life? On society? What, if anything, would you like to do differently?

2. The grace of giving (2 Corinthians 8:7; Matthew 6:21).

The Point: How we feel about giving stems from the state of our hearts and what we think about God’s desire that we give freely. Greed can make us believe or behave as if giving is about following rules/commandments.

- Giving should flow out of a willing heart (Exodus 25:2; 2 Corinthians 8:12).
- We should have compassion for those in need (Mark 8:2-3).
- Our giving should glorify God—not us (2 Corinthians 9:12-13; Matthew 6:3-4).
- Loving others through giving results in joy (John 15:10-12; Proverbs 22:9).

An Illustration: Share how the act of giving (your time, possessions, money) has affected your heart, mind soul. How has it affected how you feel about God, yourself and others?

The Application: Take time to consider how you view the act of giving (your time, possessions, money) and how it relates to the state of your heart. For instance, ask yourself: do you give willingly or under obligation; do you want to receive credit for your giving or for God to get the glory; does giving result in joy or a sense of loss?

3. Generosity is not an option (Matthew 25:31-46).

The Point: God loves to give generously to those who are in relationship with him. But he expects us to do the same. We are called to help those in need. Greed would have us believe or behave as if we are responsible for ourselves only or that people in need should not be allowed to depend on others for assistance.

- God will provide for our needs—frees us to give generously (2 Corinthians 9:10-11; Romans 12:8).
- We are to look out for the interests of others (Philippians 2:1-4).
- God blesses others through us (Genesis 12:1-3; Acts 3:25; Galatians 3:8)
- Generosity is radical (Mark 14:3-9; Luke 21:1-4).

An Illustration: Share about a time when God’s provision in your life allowed you to provide for the needs of someone else.

The Application: Consider tonight’s conversation, and your attitudes toward giving generously. Do you live your life as if generosity were not an option? What practical steps might you take toward living in such a way?

Ideas for ministry/response time during the pastorate evening

- Ask someone to read the story of the rich young man in Mark 10:17-30 out loud to the group. Quietly ask God to reveal your heart toward what you read. **Note what word(s) stood out to you.** Ask a second person to re-read the passage. As you sit quietly, **ask God to reveal why that word(s) stood out to you** (i.e. what might it/they refer to? Ask someone to read the passage one last time. This time consider **how God may be calling you to respond.** End the time by praying together as a group to encourage and empower one another in what God has revealed during this time.

Ideas for response during the week :: cultivating generosity

- 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.
- Over the next two weeks, do a little research into the topic of radical giving/generosity. Bring ideas and suggestions of things that you can do as a group. When you meet again, discuss your findings and decide as a group how you would like to practice “radical generosity.”