

The 7 Deadly Sins—and How to Deal with Them

Discussion 7 :: Dealing with Sloth

Resource: *The Seven Deadly Sins*, by Graham Tomlin (Chapter 8—Sloth).

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 Greed

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. Our last discussion focused on what God thinks about material possessions and his solution for greed:

- The material world is good (Genesis 1:31).
- The grace of giving (2 Corinthians 8:7; Matthew 6:21).
- Generosity is not an option (Matthew 25:31-46).

The Application: Ask a few people to share their findings regarding the topic of radical giving/generosity. Share ideas and suggestions of things that you can do as a group. Decide as a group how you would like to practice “radical generosity.”

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

Describe something that you are passionate about. Why does this person, place or thing arouse such strong feelings?

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

No doubt that of the seven deadly sins, sloth might be the most difficult to define, let alone identify. The dictionary defines sloth as “inactivity, specifically in a spiritual sense.” In order to understand what sloth refers to—and to determine if we need to address it in our own lives—we need to be clear about what “inactivity” actually means.

While it is true that we need to consider how *active* we are in terms of how we approach our faith, we also need to consider our *attitude* in how we approach it. Jesus consistently challenged his listeners to consider not only their actions, but also their hearts. In particular, he challenged the religious leaders’ intentions calling them hypocrites as they “looked beautiful on the outside (i.e. observed the letter of the Law), but inside were “full of hypocrisy and wickedness.” (Matthew 23:27-28)

The leaders appeared to be doing the “right” things, and yet somewhere along the line they lost sight of God’s purposes for doing them. Tonight’s discussion will focus on how what it means to lose our taste for God and his purposes, the understanding that we were created to active and effective member of God’s kingdom, and how our activities should be the result of our heart’s passions.

1. Losing sight of God (Deuteronomy 9:11-13).

The Point: God wants us to know how much he loves us and to what lengths he will go to be reconciled to us. Sloth can make us believe or behave as if God is distant and uncaring—and unworthy of our devotion.

- We are to revere him above all else (Exodus 20:1-7).
- We find salvation in him (Psalm 79:9; Psalm 91:14-16).
- He rescues us (Psalm 18:16-19).
- He died for us (John 3:16).

An illustration: Share about a circumstance where you felt saved, protected or cared for by God. Who/what was your “enemy,” and what did God do on your behalf?

The Application: Consider your relationship with God. In what way(s) do you “see” him in your everyday life? Under what circumstance would you like to see him?

2. We were created for a purpose (Psalm 139).

The Point: God created the whole of the Law (the Torah) to show us how to be reconciled to him and to others—and we were made to share in that purpose. Sloth can make us believe or behave as if our lives are ultimately meaningless and without purpose.

- We were made to worship (Psalm 100).
- God created us for certain works (Ephesians 2:10).
- Our gifts are meant to serve others (Ephesians 4:11-13).
- We are to draw others to him (2 Corinthians 5:16-21).

An Illustration: Share how God has used you/your life to reveal himself to another person. What were the circumstances, and what did he/she learn about God?

The Application: Consider the idea that the worship of God involves much more than singing on Sundays at church. Make a list of ways that your life can reveal or give glory to God. Think of practical things like reading a psalm...or helping someone carry a heavy bag up the stairs on the tube. Commit yourself to doing at least one of those things every day.

3. Love should compel us (Colossians 3:12-17).

The Point: Jesus’ heart was filled with a compassion that stirred him to act—he could not help but respond to the needs that he was confronted with. As his followers we are also called to such action—and to have a passion toward things that matter. Sloth would have us believe or behave as if our own contribution will have no affect on the world’s issues.

- The Law ultimately hinged on two things (Luke 10:26-28).
- Faith has to be followed by action (James 2:17).
- Love is not expressed words (1 John 3:17-19).
- We need to advocate justice (Micah 6:8; Psalm 106:3; Proverbs 29:7).

An Illustration: Share a time when you saw someone in need and were moved to act out of compassion for their circumstances.

The Application: Use a concordance to look up the word “justice” in the Bible. (You can do this online at www.biblegateway.com.) Take time to jot down words or thoughts that come to mind as you read. How might God be calling you to act?

Ideas for ministry/response time during the pastorate evening

- Break up into smaller groups for a time of prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the state of your heart today. Consider if you have lost sight of God—who he is and what his purposes are. Ask God to reveal to you what he wants you to know about himself.
- Break up into smaller groups for a time of prayer. Consider the following questions: Do you believe that you were created for a purpose? Do you feel compelled to action when confronted with the needs of others? Share your heart in these matters.

Ideas for response during the week :: cultivating passion for justice

- 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.
- Do some research into the topic of justice or advocacy (acting on another’s behalf). Bring ideas and suggestions of things that you can do as a group. When you meet again, discuss your findings and decide how you might like to put your passions to action.