

VICES & VIRTUES

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church
Hebrews 6:11-12 | April 7, 2019
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Introduction to this Study

This week we continue our Lenten series on the vices and virtues of life in Christ. Inspired by the “seven deadly sins” and “seven heavenly virtues”, we’re seeing how “the power of Christ’s perfect obedience, sinless sacrifice, and glorified resurrection gives us the freedom to confidently diagnose the root of our sins, boldly kill those sins through gospel-fueled repentance, and joyfully walk in newness of life”. We’ve engaged gluttony and abstinence, lust and chastity, greed and generosity, envy and kindness, wrath and patience. This week, sloth and diligence.

Connecting with One Another

The Latin word for Sloth is Acedia. Read this excerpt from Dom Jean-Charles Nault’s book *The Noonday Devil: Acedia, the Unnamed Evil of Our Times*.

On the one hand, acedia is a sin against the joy that springs from charity; it is sadness about what ought to gladden us most: participation in the very life of God. On the other hand, acedia is a sin against charity when it crushes or paralyzes activity, because then it effects the deepest motive force of activity, namely, charity, the participation of the Holy Spirit. (p. 80)

The results of rampant acedia not only influence our daily lives as children of God, but that lack of joy infects everyone around us, and eventually cripples our ability to carry out Our Lord’s last instructions to His Church. The three symptoms of acedia that affect the missionary spirit are loss of joy, lukewarmness of comfort and indifference toward nations’ salvation.

How do you define sloth?

Study the Text

1. Read Genesis 2:15
 - a. When people think of heaven, they often think of a place of luxury and ease. Why do you suppose this is and what does it have to do with sloth? How does this part from the Biblical narrative?
2. Read this quote from Frederick Buechner’s book, *Wishful Thinking, A Theological ABC*



- a. Sloth is not to be confused with laziness. A lazy man, a man who sits around and watches the grass grow, may be a man at peace. His sun-drenched, bumblebee dreaming may be the prelude to action or itself an act well worth the acting.
A slothful man, on the other hand, may be a very busy man. He is a man who goes through the motions, who flies on automatic pilot. Like a man with a bad head cold, he has mostly lost his sense of taste and smell. He knows something's wrong with him, but not wrong enough to do anything about. Other people come and go, but through glazed eyes he hardly notices them. He is letting things run their course. He is getting through his life.
3. If you are doing this study together as a Life Group, have each person pick one of the passages below and read it out loud. If you are using this study guide as a personal devotion, take some time to read the following scriptures from Proverbs.
 - a. Proverbs 10:26, 24:30-34, 10:4-5, 22:13, 12:27, 19:24, 28:19, 13:4, 21:25-26, 19:15, 26:13-16, 15:19, 26:16, 6:6-11
 - b. How do these Proverbs help us form a better definition of sloth? Did your initial definition of sloth change after reading these Proverbs?
4. What was your initial reaction to having to look up 14 different passages? Why?
5. What can sloth lead to?
6. How is sloth different than laziness? How is sloth different than rest?
7. How is moral sloth different from mental sloth?
8. Can busy people be slothful? What do you think busy people who struggle with sloth are trying to escape?
9. Read Hebrews 6:10-12
 - a. Why can't the Christian afford to be idle?
 - b. What kind of damage has sloth done to God's Church?
10. Read Matthew 25:14-30
 - a. How does the parable of the talents reveal how God sees the vice of sloth?
 - b. If we are slothful, how does that affect the unbelievers who come to know us? Why?



11. What needs to change in your life in order to be more diligent as a follower of Christ and keep away from a slothful life?

12. Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Philippians 4:11-12

- a. What is the root cause of slothfulness? Explain.
- b. What is the opposite of sloth from the Christian perspective?

13. Read Ezekiel 36:26-27

- a. How have you had a "heart of stone" and what do you think God wants to change about that?

14. We're all complacent in some ways concerning our Christian duty. So, what are we sluggards to do? (*Check out* Romans 12:11 and 2 Corinthians 10:5 for a hint)

Pray

- a. Ask God to show you where you are currently struggling with the vice of sloth. Be open to examining, confessing and asking God to give you the desire to be more diligent in your faith. Ask God where He is calling you to answer the call of Jesus to be part of making His Kingdom come.

