

# **Reconstructing the Christian Life**

## **Workbook Nine Vices and Nine Virtues**

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It is the intention that this section of Bible studies is done in the context of a small group. The place to begin is with the seven questions every believer needs to answer at the start of the journey of the spiritual life.

1. *What is the goal of the spiritual life?*(John 14:1-4; John 17:6-19)
2. *What is the path to the goal of the spiritual life?* (Proverbs 6:16-19; Galatians 3:5-8; Ephesians 4:22-24)
3. *What motivates us to begin the spiritual life?*
4. *What helps us make progress in the spiritual life?*
5. *What hinders us in making progress in the spiritual life?*
6. *How do we measure progress in the spiritual life?* (Leviticus 18:3-4; Matthew 22:36-40; John 13:34-35; Galatians 5:14-15; Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 4:7, 11-12)
7. *What are the fruits of the spiritual life?* (Matthew 12:33; 24:31-46; John 15:1-16; Romans 12:21; 15:2; 16:19; Colossians 1:9-10)

To get the greatest benefit out of these studies it is best to do it in the context of a closed group that is seeking to establish a community of trust, vulnerability, and accountability. The questions are designed to create discussions in areas that the believer usually does not delve into in any depth. The application is discussing the three-fold response of putting off the old nature, renewing the mind, and putting on the new nature. Each response must take into consideration how the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual dimensions of our lives must be engaged in this process. Each section has a Bible verse that is to be memorized and informs the way we respond to temptations in the nine areas. To keep the small group vibrant and growing it needs three essential ingredients of spiritual formation (studying the nine vices and virtues),

community development (creating a community of trust, vulnerability, and accountability), and mission (an outward focus of the group doing ministry to others).

The \* sign indicates the important sections and passages to cover if the goal is to cover one vice/virtue in one session. Those questions and passages that are unmarked passages can be included if more time is allowed for each vice/virtue, or at a later date when more time is given to explore the deadly thoughts in more depth. I have also included an appendix of model prayers to help new Christians learn how to pray. For the purposes of this study, I have recategorized and updated the language and will use the following outline.

### **Laying the Ethical Foundation**

- Foundation – Lying vs Truth-telling

### **Stage 1, Animal Vices – the Irrational-Instinctive**

- Cravings – Gluttony vs Self-Control (Fasting)
- Sexuality – Lust/Impurity vs Chastity
- Needs – Greed vs Generosity

### **Stage 2, Emotional Vices**

- Emotions – Anger vs Meekness
- Emotions – Sadness/Melancholy/Depression vs Wisdom

### **Stage 3, Human Vices – the Rational Will**

- Purpose – Indifference/Laziness vs Diligence
- Mental State – Envy/Jealousy vs Happiness/Contentment
- Self-Understanding – Pride vs Humility

## Foundation – Lying vs Truth-telling

*\*Universality:* Lying, saving face, and blaming the other has been our default setting since the fall of mankind.

*\*Definition:* The simplest definition of lying is to speak falsely. It is the intention to deceive. Augustine understands, “the lie is deliberately duplicitous speech, insincere speech that deliberately contradicts what its speaker takes to be true.”<sup>1</sup> Any statement that does not faithfully represent what is in the mind of the speaker is a material lie. Any statement intended to cause someone to have a false opinion, whether or not it is truthful, is a formal lie.

*\*Consequences:* Dishonesty breeds deception, cheating, hypocrisy, guile, duplicity, pretense, trickery, fraud, and corruption. Lying promotes suspicion, fear, and a survival mentality. It is a false notion that lying can help a person to escape or prevent negative judgment by others. Instead, deceit causes feelings of inferiority, worthlessness, abandonment, weakness, abjection, rejection, violation, defilement, stigmatization, unlovability, and social exclusion to persist. Lying stems from fear of several possible outcomes: not being liked; loss of love; loss of connection; loss of approval; receiving anger; or being known. This fear builds a bridge of deception, leading to a belief that the bridge of truth will not work in this world.

*\*Foundation:* Truth is the foundation of all knowledge. A man who violates the truth sins against the very foundation of his moral being. At its heart, falsehood is the intent to miscommunicate. It is the belief that honesty will hurt relationships. It believes that God will not uphold those who are truthful. Therefore, we shade the truth to protect honor, or to avoid risk, uncertainty, and unknown situations.

*\*What do these passages teach us about the nature of God: Numbers 23:19; Hebrews 6:18?*

*\*What do these passages teach us about the nature of Satan: John 8:44; Revelation 12:9?*

*\*Three characteristics of lying: Share how easy it is to give in to any of these.*

1. Telling what is false
2. The intention to deceive
3. The violation of a promise or the violation of the obligation to speak the truth

*\*Example:* I must project myself as perfect or people will not respect me. Lying hurts relationships by undermining trust. God admonishes us to be honest and to live in the light (read Ephesians 5:8-10).

*\*Why is 2 Corinthians 4:2 foundational to the Christian life?*

*Scriptural teaching:* For each of the following passages, determine whether it describes a sin to avoid or a principle to follow: Exodus 20:16; Leviticus 19:11; \*Job 27:4-6; \*Psalm 15; 141: 3-4;

\*Proverbs 8:8-9; 12:22; 30:7-8.

*Discuss the motives of lying found in these passages:*

- Adam and Eve meeting God in the Garden (Gen. 3:6-13)
- \*Sons of Jacob reporting that Joseph was killed by a wild animal (Gen. 37:28-36)
- \*Gehazi’s lie to Elisha after Naaman is cleansed from leprosy (2 Kings 5:22-27)
- Story of King Saul rejected as king and the cover-up (1 Sam. 15:13-23)

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Griffiths, *Lying: An Augustinian Theology of Duplicity* (Grand Rapids MI: Brazos Press, 2004), 31.

- Ananias and Sapphira's lying about their sale of property (Acts 5:1-11)

\*How serious is lying in light of Revelation 21:27 and 22:15?

\**Godly virtue*: Put on truth-telling, transparency, honesty, and integrity.

\**Universality*: Our relationship in the Garden of Eden was built on truth, honesty, and integrity.

\**Definition*: Truth is the affirmation of what is. Truth has a moral, spiritual, and intellectual dimension.

\**Outcomes*: Truth creates trust, integrity, and honesty. Relationships will become genuine and restored.

\**Foundation*: Truth is the foundation for having right relations with each other and with oneself.

*Discussion questions*:

1. What are the implications of John 14:6 about truth?
2. How is Psalm 78:72 relevant to truth and lying?
3. \*Why is the instruction Paul gave to Titus in Titus 2:6-8 so important?

\*Digging Deeper:

1. What do you think of this Iranian statement? "If you don't speak of everything so openly, it's better. Being able to keep a secret even if you have to mislead is considered a sign of maturity." Expedient lies.
2. \*How does my culture view lying?
3. In what situations do you feel that you must project something that you are not?
4. When do you feel the need to lie and cover-up?
5. What do you think will happen if people perceive that you are weak or imperfect?
6. Do you lie to avoid conflict?
7. \*Do you lie so as not to hurt relationships?
8. What would you think if a church leader were as vulnerable as David was in Psalm 51?
9. \*How does being a Christian complicate just how honest you can be?

Look up each of these Scriptures and make a list of what we learn about truth-telling or lying:

Psalm 52:2-5; 119:163; \*Proverbs 6:16-19; 12:17-22; Isaiah 59:1-4; Matthew 12:33-37; 15:18-20; \*Colossians 3:9-10.

\**Vulnerability questions for discussion*:

1. Are you afraid to let people see your vulnerabilities and weaknesses?
2. What do you do to escape or prevent negative judgment by others?
3. Will you compromise truth and integrity to save face?
4. What happens where there is competition, envy, or rivalry?

Digging Deeper – Ethics: Which of the following statements reflects your understanding about lying? Critique the following statements.

1. Lying is neutral, neither right nor wrong. There are no norms or rules (Antinomianism).
2. Lying is generally wrong. There are no universal norms (Generalism).
3. Lying is sometimes right. There is one universal norm, i.e., love. Example: The loving thing is not telling the mother that her son died in a car accident for fear that she will die with emotional loss (Situationism).

4. Lying is always wrong. There are many non-conflicting universal norms. The world is viewed in black and white; right or wrong; truth or lies. (Non-conflict Absolutism)
5. Lying is never right. There are many conflicting universal norms but lying is always wrong (Ideal Absolutism or Utilitarianism).
6. Lying is sometimes right. There are hierarchically ordered of universal norms that can guide us (Hierarchicalism).

*\*Truth telling check list:*

1. Is the statement of an untruth deliberate?
2. Is what you say a calculated intent to deceive?
3. Is what you say an intentional deception for the malicious purpose of bringing misery upon another or for the selfish end of one's own advantage?
4. Is the lie for defense?
5. Can the polite untruth demanded by etiquette be differentiated from the morally unjustifiable lie?

*\*Application exercise:* Write out what you think are the unwritten fears associated with vulnerability and honesty.

*\*How does the scriptural three-fold response look at dealing with falsehood? Remember that there are four contributing factors that must be addressed: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual.*

*\*Step #1 Put off the old self – How do we put off lying when it is so much a part of our culture? Read 2 Corinthians 4:2 and discuss how this happens in your context and your daily relationships.*

*\*Step #2 Renew your mind – How do we reset our minds to become open and vulnerable? (How does Philippians 4:8 relate to renewing the mind?)*

*\*Step #3 Put on the new – What do we need in the place of lying? (How does Ephesians 4:25, 29-32 work out in daily life?)*

*Scripture to memorize to guard against lying:*

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. (Eph. 4:25)

## Cravings – Gluttony vs Self-Control (Fasting)

*\*Universality:* God created us to enjoy food. Yet, food is the first area that Satan used to tempt Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:1-6) and Jesus (Matt. 4:1-4). Our thinking goes, if a little is good, a lot is better.

*\*Definition:* Gluttony is an inordinate desire to consume more than that which one requires. Gluttony is the insatiable desire to take things in, to consume, and to attempt to satisfy desire by gorging. (This is seen with people who come from a subsistence culture when they are not assured where the next meal is coming, so they fill their plates with more than they can eat. People from an unlimited-resource culture believe that there are unlimited resources, so they take as much without thinking of others). Gluttony seduces us into believing that satisfaction in life can come from sources other than God.

*\*Consequences:* The areas affected are: drunkenness and overeating. The glutton is enamored with the five senses. Gluttons are so given over to the sense of the body that they have dulled their spirit and character. Like alcohol or drugs, food can be a means of escaping from pain.

*\*Foundation:* Gluttony is a sin against the self. Food unchecked can become an addiction that controls the thoughts and body. It is a loss of confidence in God's provision and is the epitome of human selfishness. Gluttony has an emotional dimension such as avoidance of feeling hungry or needing comfort food when disappointments happen.

*\*Example:* Craving attention on social media can also be compensation for a boring life. Gorging on food can also be compensation for poor self-image. How does the Old Testament example of Jacob and Esau in Genesis 25:29-34 relate to gluttony?

*\*Godly virtue:* Put on temperance.

*\*Universality:* In most traditions, bringing the bodily cravings into balance is seen as a sign of spirituality.

*\*Definition:* Temperance is moderation or restraint in action, thought, or feeling. Temperance is not too much and not too little, everything in moderation.

*\*Outcomes:* When food and drink are in moderation, the mind is free to make virtuous choices.

*\*Foundation:* Fasting – breaking the hold of the all-consuming thing (self-control). The aim is to control disturbing thoughts. Put on limits on consumption—neither extreme nor excessive. Embrace confidence that there will always be more to come, and that God will provide. Take only what is needed. Starve a habit and live a balanced life (moderation in all things). We are to manage our drives, compulsions, appetites, and hunger through fasting.

*\*Goal of fasting:* 1) To have more to share with others; 2) To change my craving to satisfy myself.

*\*Scriptural teaching:* The Bible gives examples of restraining of eating or drinking. Why would God suggest such restraint? See Leviticus 10:9-10 and Deuteronomy 8:1-5.

1. What can we learn about Daniel's disciple on his food choices (Dan. 1:8-20; 10:1-3)?
2. Why does Jesus teach about fasting in Matthew 6:16-18?
3. The Bible talks about the behavior of unrestrained indulgence. What do these passages teach us about our own lives and food: Proverbs 21:20; 25-26; 23:20-21; Titus 1:10-16?

4. Paul talks about beating his body into submission in 1 Corinthians 9:27. Does what we do with our body have an effect on our spiritual life?

*\*Renewing the mind:* Trust and a hope in a future that does not presently exist. Trust that our future needs will be met and that we do not need to hoard now, as long as we follow God. How does Matthew 6:25-26 address the anxious thoughts regarding food?

*\*Application:* In a monastic lifestyle, the place to begin was to tame the appetites of the body and bring it into submission. Regular fasting was a part of Jewish practice. Have you ever fasted? If so, for how long? Why have you fasted?

*\*Expand our definition of gluttony:* Americans are known for their obesity. Has an addiction to food become an acceptable sin? What can people overindulge in or become addicted to besides food? Can one become addicted to the Internet, a sports team, TV, clubbing, or news? What are you addicted to?

*\*What did people fast for in the following passages: Exodus 13:3-10; Judges 20:24-26; 2 Samuel 1:11-12; Nehemiah 9:1-4; Esther 4:15-16; Psalm 35:12-13; Daniel 9:3; Jonah 3:6-10?*

*Dig Deeper:*

1. If food is neutral, then why did Satan use food as a temptation for Christ (Matt. 4:1-4)?
2. Hospitality involves food and social interaction: What does this passage teach us about hospitality (Luke 14:12-14)?
3. How do the thoughts of food negatively impact the emerging nation of Israel (Num. 11:1-23,31-34)?
4. How does our modern life with its fear about food allergies, good nutrition, genetically modified organisms (GMO), and chemicals in food fit into the area of food?
5. What do you think of the following statement by Jason Todd?: “Many of us can look at the sin of gluttony and think, ‘That’s not really my struggle.’ Or, we think, ‘What’s the big deal?’ After all, most congregations have compulsive over-eaters among them, and they’re not considered ‘less spiritual’ or ‘backslidden’ for it. But gluttony has never been merely an addiction to food. And if we look at it in its original definition and context, gluttony becomes far closer to home than we’d like to admit. At its simplest, gluttony is the soul’s addiction to excess. It occurs when taste overrules hunger, when want outweighs need.”<sup>2</sup>
6. *\*Can food and obsession with it become gods? What do these passages teach about food and our bodies: 1 Corinthians 6:12-13,19-20; Philippians 3:19?*
7. Americans are known for their obesity. Has an addiction to food become an acceptable sin?
8. What can people overindulge in or become addicted to besides food?
9. *\*Can one become addicted to the Internet, a sports team, TV, clubbing, or news? What are you addicted to?*

*\*How does the scriptural three-fold response look at dealing with gluttony? Engage with the four contributing factors that must be addressed in the three-step response: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual.*

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<sup>2</sup> Jason Todd, “The Socially Acceptable Sin,” *Relevant*, April 16, 2015, <http://www.relevantmagazine.com/god/practical-faith/socially-acceptable-sin>.



\*Step #1 Put off the old self – What things do I need to fast from this week?

\*Step #2 Renew your mind – How do I get my senses back into balance? How can I renew my mind?

\*Step #3 Put on the new – To whom can I give the food I abstained from? What can I do when I free up time consumed by my addiction?

*\*Scripture to memorize to tame cravings:*

Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger ... to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. (Deut. 8:2-3)

## Sexuality – Lust/Impurity vs Chastity

*\*Universality:* God created us as sexual beings. Sexual sin comes after gluttony and follows upon the same base human instincts distorted by Satan.

*\*Definition:* Lust is an inordinate craving for the sexual pleasures of the body. Sexual sins can be in both thought and deed. Lust thrives in privacy and isolation.

*\*Consequences:* Lust ruins lives. It is also a belief in a lie that relationships are not necessary.

*\*Foundation:* Lust unchecked becomes an addiction. Humanism, a worldview divorced from faith in God, calls for a moral revolution which defends the right to complete sexual license, alternative lifestyles, and euthanasia. When boundaries are broken in one area, it affects all others (Prov. 25:28). Egocentrism and the belief that the person after whom we lust exists only to satisfy our unbridled desires. Sexual temptation resides in the memory.

*\*Nature of Lust:* Lust is an illusion that promises satisfaction but leaves you empty;

- Lust is immaturity—unable to choose one person and make a commitment;
- Denial of death of hormones—a response when we desire what we had in our youth;
- Lust dehumanizes the person we lust after.

*\*Discussion question:*

Do you agree or disagree with this statement and **why**? Lust lurks in the shadows of our minds.

What do you do when you have sexual dreams and fantasies?

*Scripture on sex:*

Sensual dancing is powerful (Mark 6:21-29).

*\*The Bible records unlawful sexual relations (Lev. 18).*

*\*Godly virtue:* Put on chastity.

*\*Definition:* Chastity is not mere abstinence of sex outside of marriage or just saying no to lust. Chastity preserves and protects and paves the way for wholeness in all our relationship, all of the time.

*\*Outcomes:* Humility about needing God to overcome your thoughts, charity toward others, hospitality, and relationship with others that seeks their best interests, not meeting your needs or interests and knowing that true love waits until marriage.

*\*Foundation:* Discipline of mind, body, and soul so to preserve integrity and purity of heart. Chastity works to properly balance love with the capacity to be loved. Chastity is found in relationship, fueled by fidelity, and endures through time.

*\*Scriptural teaching:*

1. *\*What is the antidote to lust of the flesh (Gal. 5:16-21)?*
2. *\*What is the warning about lust found in Proverbs 6:32-35?*
3. *How has sex become perverted (Gen. 19:1-9; Lev. 18:1-30; Rom. 1:24-27; Jude 7)?*
4. *How important is it to teach boundaries when it comes to sex?*
5. *Does my culture allow us to teach this? If not, what can be done?*

Who are some of the Biblical figures whose sexual failures are recorded? See *\*Judges 16:1-3, 4-21; 2 Samuel 11; 1 Kings 11:1-4; \*1 Corinthians 5:1-5.*

What are positive examples in the Bible? See Genesis 39:7-12; Book of Ruth.

What do these passages teach us about overcoming lust: Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 20:10-21; \*Job 31:1; \*Psalm 119:9-11; Proverbs 5:1-23; 6:20-29; \*Matthew 5:27-32?

\*Why is sexual sin singled out in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20?

What is the New Testament's admonition regarding sex (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Heb. 13:4)?

*\*Vulnerability discussion questions:*

1. When is sexual temptation the greatest for you?
2. Are there different types of sexual temptations depending on age? If so, what are they?
3. Some cultures put a lot of pressure on viewing women only as sex objects and women can't refuse sex requests from their husbands. Is this right? Please explain.
4. Finding a mature Christian marriage partner is difficult. How do we treat celibacy (1 Cor. 7:32-33)?

*\*Dig Deeper:*

1. \*What do you do with same sex attractions?
2. \*What do you do when you see or participate in seductive dancing?
3. \*Women seek to get attention when as a culture they were not to be seen and covered. What do you say or do when women use sexuality to gain a man's attention?
4. God created us as sexual beings. How do we encourage expressing our sexuality appropriately?
5. \*Our imaginations are constantly being stimulated by suggestive sexual imagery. How do you control this stimulation?
6. Have you been enticed by the anonymity of travel and the enticement of the sexual issues involved? What are your opinions/thoughts about the Shiite religious provision of sex and its role of enticement while traveling?
7. Our world is flooded with pornography, sexual jokes, sex in movies, sex in social media, and sex in advertising. You can feed the sexual appetite or seek healthy boundaries. What advice do you have to share?
8. What do you do when your family or society views singleness as shameful?

\*How does the scriptural three-fold response look at dealing with lust? Remember that there are four contributing factors that must be addressed: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual.

\*Step #1 Put off the old self – Once you are caught in a sin, how do you break free from it?

\*Step #2 Renew your mind – How do we get our senses back into balance (2 Cor. 10:3-6)?

\*Step #3 Put on the new – What should replace this addiction (Phil. 4:8)?

*\*Scriptures to memorize concerning lust:*

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. (1 Cor. 13:4-7)

To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. (Titus 1:15)

## Needs – Greed vs Generosity

*\*Universality:* Greed and lack of contentment has been with us since the Garden of Eden. Greed motivates people to buy things they don't need.

*\*Definition:* Greed is the desire for material wealth or gain, ignoring the realm of the spiritual. It is also called avarice or covetousness. Greed knows no limits (never enough). It is always grasping for more money, more fame, more power, or filling the minds of others with ourselves.

*\*Consequences:* Greed leads to a lack of respect for the needs of others and its hold lasts until death. Greed can be compulsive consumption, miserliness, dishonest gain, and self-enrichment. Greed motivates injustice, oppression, and crimes.

*\*Foundation:* Unchecked greed becomes a way of life and addictive. Self-centered on our own needs. It is motivated by the shame of having to accept the necessities of life from others.

What was Satan's reasoning to Eve in Genesis 3:1-6?

*\*Example:* Greed provides for the "what ifs" in life – aging, famines, sickness, poverty, depending on others. Two Bible stories on greed are found in Jeremiah 22:13-17 and 1 Kings 21:1-19. What do they teach us?

*Scriptural passages on greed:*

1. \*Is anyone exempt from greed in Jeremiah 6:13?
2. The Bible talks about social responsibilities. How do Exodus 20:17 and Exodus 22:22-30 address greed?
3. \*Does Ecclesiastes 4:8 describe you or someone you know?
4. What were people to repent of in Luke 3:10-14?
5. What are we to keep from in Hebrews 13:5-6?
6. Who will not inherit the kingdom of God according to 1 Corinthians 6:9-10?

What do the following passages teach us about greed: 1 Kings 21:1-19; John 12:4-6; Matthew 27:1-5; 1 Timothy 3:3; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; James 5:1-6?

*\*Godly virtue:* Generosity

*\*Definition:* Generosity includes contentment, self-denial.

*\*Outcomes:* Our greatest good is found in sharing with others in the community. It celebrates contributions. It's not about me but about others.

*\*Foundation:* Generosity is not how much is given away, but the way it is given: the manner of giving reveals the inner desires and attachments of the giver.

*Scripture:*

1. \*What does God teach about the poor in Deuteronomy 15:7-11?
2. What can we learn from David's perspective at the end of his life in Psalm 37:25-26?
3. \*What does Jesus teach about giving in Matthew 6:1-4 and Luke 21:1-4?
4. What does Paul teach about generosity in 2 Corinthians 8:1-15, 2 Corinthians 9:6-15, and 1 Timothy 6:17-19?

Some people come from a culture in which the pace of life is much slower than in the West.

1. \*What does the Bible teach about work and possessions in Proverbs 6:6-11?
2. \*What are we commanded to do in Ephesians 4:28?

3. How should we live our lives according to 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12?
4. What are the rich to do according to 1 Timothy 6:17-19?

*Discussion questions:*

1. What motivates people to be workaholics?
2. John D. Rockefeller was asked, “How much would be enough?” He answered, “Just a little bit more.” What does this statement tell us about our sinful nature?
3. How does Ecclesiastes 5:10-20 address this statement?
4. \*What do we learn from Jesus’ teaching on money in Matthew 6:19-24? In Luke 12:13-21?

*Digging deeper:*

1. \*Hoarding is another expression of greed. It is often tied to the emotions. Do you keep things or throw them away?
2. Greed for the hoarder is an end in itself.
3. \*Old age, infirmity, loss of income through retirement, disability or inadequate pension provision are the soil in which greed grows. Fears about shortages, illnesses, chronic poverty or being dependent upon others can arise. What anxieties do you have?

*Vulnerability discussion questions:*

1. \*If we have the money, should we live up to our means or below our means? Why or why not? How does 1 John 3:17 address this question?
2. \*Many cultures put a premium on giving the impression of wealth, even when they do not have much. Have you been drawn into this same mentality?
3. \*Prosperity theology (sometimes referred to as the prosperity gospel, the health and wealth gospel, or the gospel of success) is a religious belief among some Christians who hold that financial blessing and physical well-being are always the will of God for them, and that faith, positive speech, and donations to religious causes will increase one’s material wealth. Do you listen to preachers who teach this? Why does this have such a universal appeal?
4. If you are worth \$2.5 million, can you drive an expensive car? How does Luke 12:16-21 address this question?
5. Prophecy and greed: What does Revelation 18:1-5, 11-20 say to us?
6. Does this statistic have anything to do with the deadly thought of greed? *Twelve percent of the world’s population lives in North America and Western Europe and accounts for 60 percent of private consumption spending, but a third of humanity who live in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa account for only 3.2 percent.*<sup>3</sup>

\*How does the scriptural three-fold response look at dealing with greed? Remember that there are four contributing factors that must be addressed: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual.

\*Step #1 Put off the old self – How do we curb our greed to consume? How much does media drive this appetite for things?

\*Step #2 Renew your mind – How do we get our senses back into balance? How do these passages help us renew our mind: Philippians 4:11-13; 1 Timothy 6:6-10?

\*Step #3 Put on the new – How should we seek to live with our money (Luke 14:12-14)?

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<sup>3</sup> “The State of Consumption Today,” Worldwatch Institute, <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/810>.

*\*Scriptures to memorize about greed:*

But godliness with contentment is great gain. (1 Tim. 6:6)

I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength. (Phil. 4:11-13)

## Emotions – Anger vs Meekness

*\*Universality:* All the other sins can lead to anger. Anger begins in infancy and continues through to old age.

*\*Definition:* Anger is a strong feeling that makes you want to hurt someone or be unpleasant because of something unfair or unkind that has happened or being shamed or humiliated. Anger causes murder, provokes torture, leads to wars, and motivates crimes. It knows no bounds as it leads to vengeance. Anger is manifested in the individual who spurns love and opts instead for fury. It is also known as wrath. Anger arises from a sense of violation—of self, of agreements, or of principles. Anger comes when we feel a threat to our social status, or a desire to control other people’s lives. The person consumed by anger gradually loses his humanity, and anger clouds a person’s judgment. The evangelist Billy Graham states that, “Anger is one of man’s most devastating sins.”<sup>4</sup> Anger is a great adversary for the mind in the struggle for peace.

*\*Consequences:* Anger results in rage, resentment, combativeness, quarrelsomeness, rudeness, retaliation, and victimization. The sin of anger or wrath arguably causes more harm in our world than all the other sins combined.<sup>5</sup> Anger robs the person of peace and joy, wounds others, makes the soul blind to reality, and interferes with the prayer life preventing one from drawing near to God.

*\*Foundation:* Anger is a type of emotional force of resistance or attack that wells up within us when something blocks our way to something good.<sup>6</sup> Anger is an emotion related to one’s psychological interpretation of having been offended, wronged, shamed, or denied, and a tendency to undo that situation by retaliation.

*\*Example:* Evagrius of Ponticus, wrote, “The most fierce passion is anger. In fact, it is defined as a boiling and stirring up of wrath against one who has given injury.”<sup>7</sup> It tends to lead to a preoccupation with the one with whom we are angry. It ruins our health—both physical and mental.

What causes anger in these situations? Genesis 4:1-5; Exodus 2:11-14; 1 Samuel 18:6-9.

What is God’s counsel concerning anger? Genesis 4:6-7.

### *Scriptural teaching:*

1. \*Is anger addressed in the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:13?
2. \*What wise counsel does Solomon give about anger in Proverbs 15:1-2; 27:4; 22:24-25; and 29:8-11?
3. \*What steps are we to take when anger arises (James 1:19-21)?
4. What responsibility do parents have concerning their children in Ephesians 6:4?
5. What does the Bible teach about our worship and anger (1 Tim. 2:8)?
6. Anger was a problem in the New Testament church in 2 Corinthians 12:20. What was the result?

### *Vulnerability discussion question:*

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<sup>4</sup> Graham, *7 Deadly Sins*, 27.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Mangis, *Signature Sins: Taming Our Wayward Hearts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 35.

<sup>6</sup> Rebecca DeYoung, *Glittering Vices: A New Look at the Seven Deadly Sins and their Remedies* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 120.

<sup>7</sup> Tilby, *Seven Deadly Sins*, 115.

1. \*What causes you to get angry?
2. \*Do you struggle with anger issues?
3. Would you describe yourself as an angry person?
4. Is there an event that you can trace your anger to?
5. \*There are two unhealthy responses to anger: 1) burying it inside; 2) letting it all out. Which response do you tend to use? How can either reaction be destructive?
6. How does Romans 12:9-21 speak to the anger issue?

*\*Godly virtue:* Put on meekness and forgiveness.

*\*Universality:* A meek person is strong enough emotionally to have the ability to overlook an offense.

*\*Definition:* A meek forgiving person is gentle or temperate in the way they relate toward others, considering the needs of others before themselves. A meek person is characterized by inner peace with themselves and others.

*\*Outcomes:* Seeks to restore relationships, listens to others, and understands that God seeks

*\*Foundation:* Jesus said a disciple is one who dies to himself, takes up his cross and follows in the footsteps of Jesus that led him to the cross (Luke 9:21-26).

*Spiritual discipline:* Confession and self-restraint are required.

1. \*What is Jesus teaching about anger in Matthew 5:21-26?
2. \*How are Christians to respond when offended (Matt. 5:38-42)?
3. How does Jesus see the spiritual virtue of meekness (Matt. 5:5)?
4. The center of our life should be on God and not others. Our need to be valued and recognized needs to be totally satisfied in God. Forgiveness is part of the process. How does 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 help us keep a positive perspective?

*Digging Deeper:*

1. \*Some people have trouble distinguishing between minor offenses and major offenses. How does Proverbs 19:11 help?
2. \*Honor and shame cultures have different standards that must be guarded, such as the honor of family or their name. How does Ephesians 4:25-32 address this mentality?
3. What is a characteristic of God in Exodus 34:6-7? How can reflecting on this passage help us in our anger?
4. \*Adults can be emotional infants, children, teenagers, or adults (see Appendix B). How does one's emotional maturity play into how someone responds to an offense? What can be done?
5. If you follow the following principles for forgiveness, what would be the outcome?
  - a. Forgiveness is a realistic view of the hurt and hurters (Gen. 50:20).
  - b. Forgiveness is releasing the right to get even.
  - c. Forgiveness requires admitting that forgiving is not merely difficult; it is humanly impossible (Gen. 41:51).
  - d. Stop cultivating bitterness (Heb. 12:15).
  - e. Be specific about the hurts and about forgiving the offenders.<sup>8</sup>

*\*When is it appropriate to have righteous anger?*

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<sup>8</sup> Oksnevad, *Burden of Baggage*, 143.



1. \*What teaching does Jesus give us to overcome anger (Matt. 18:21-33)?
2. \*When is it right to get angry (John 2:13-17)?
3. Is it possible to be angry and not sin (Eph. 4:26-27)? What would that look like?
4. (Note: The imprecatory psalms<sup>9</sup> such as Psalms 25, 69, and 109 show righteous anger at the wicked.)

\*How does the scriptural three-fold response look at dealing with anger? Remember that there are four contributing factors that must be addressed: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual.

\*Step #1 Put off the old self – What perspective do we need to have to put off anger before it consumes us?

\*Step #2 Renew your mind – How do we get our emotions back into balance (2 Cor. 10:3-6)?

\*Step #3 Put on the new – What do we need in place of anger (Phil. 4:8-9; Eph. 5:19-20; Col. 3:16-17)?

*\*Scripture to memorize concerning anger:*

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. (Col. 3:12-15)

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<sup>9</sup> Imprecatory Psalms invoke judgment, calamity, or curses upon one's enemies or those perceived as the enemies of God.

## Emotions – Sadness/Melancholy/Depression vs Wisdom

*\*Universality:* Depression can be physical and emotional. It is a multi-dimensional problem suffered by millions throughout the world. “Depression is a common mental disorder. Globally, more than 300 million people of all ages suffer from depression. More women are affected by depression than men.”<sup>10</sup>

*\*Definition:* Sadness or melancholy arises when desire is frustrated. Depressed feelings and behavior, which along with associated physical problems, interfere with one’s ability to feel good about one’s life, to perceive one’s situation accurately and realistically, and to interact well with other persons.<sup>11</sup> Melancholy or depression comes from the loss of confidence in the goodness of the world and our place in it. Our very existence doesn’t matter. A trigger of melancholy or depression can be a feeling of loss such as a job, career, or death of a loved one. It can also be triggered by the change in seasons, lack of vitamin D or sunlight, or serious injury or sickness. Proverbs 17:22 expresses it this way: “A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.” Have you experienced loss?

*\*Consequences:* Terms describing melancholy are: sad, empty, alone, hopeless, afraid, worthless, ambivalent, irritability, physical aches and pains, feeling of rejection and weight loss. The person idealizes the past. “Depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide, and is a major contributor to the overall global burden of disease. At its worst, depression can lead to suicide. Close to 800,000 people die due to suicide every year. Suicide is the second leading cause of death in 15-29-year-olds.”<sup>12</sup>

*\*Foundation:* Depression comes from deprivation of our desires, especially of those things we most desire.

*Example:* It is often expressed, “How would my life be better if I had ...?” Often our opinion about ourselves is affected by comparing ourselves to others.

### *Scriptural teaching:*

1. \*Jeremiah’s scribe Baruch was depressed during the siege of Jerusalem. Read Jeremiah 45 to see how God answered him.
2. Read Psalm 42:5-11. What does this describe?
3. Read Job 2. What loss did Job experience?
4. What was Job’s response to loss (Job 3)? For more about how Job felt, read Job chapters 29-31, where he pours out his heart over his loss. (The Bible talks about grief, so shouldn’t we do the same?)
5. \*Read Psalm 32:2-4. What emotion does this passage display? How does this relate to melancholy?

*\*Godly virtue:* Put on wisdom.

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<sup>10</sup> *Depression*, World Health Organization, 22 March, 2018. (<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/depression>) (accessed April 2, 2019).

<sup>11</sup> Richard Berg and Christine McCartney, *Depressions and the Integrated Life: A Christian Understanding of Sadness and Inner Suffering* (New York: Alba House, 1981), 17.

<sup>12</sup> *Depression*, World Health Organization, 22 March, 2018. (<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/depression>) (accessed April 2, 2019).

*\*Universality:* Wisdom is found in the streets and available to whomever seeks it (Prov. 8:1-5).

*\*Definition:* Wisdom begins with the fear of the LORD. It is also realistic thinking, knowing that God will meet our needs. It understands that discouragement is a part of the life experience here on earth, knows how to deal the past injustices and failures, and directs our thinking toward what is good, positive, and just. Wisdom preserves sound judgment and discretion.

*\*Outcomes:* Remembering God's deeds of justice and deliverance in the past creates the expectation that he will act in this way again. It produces hope, trust, and joy.

*\*Foundation:* Wisdom is the ability to recognize the role our life plays in the greater affairs of the world. We also need to know who we are in Christ.

*\*Depression or melancholy in the Bible:*

1. King Saul suffered from some type of depression or melancholy. Read 1 Samuel 15:26-28. What did Saul lose?
2. What were Saul's feelings in 1 Samuel 16:14-16, 23?
3. Why do you think music helped Saul?
4. The prophet Elijah had an episode of depression. Read 1 Kings 19:1-18. What triggered Elijah's depression?
5. What was Elijah's perspective while he was depressed (verse 10)?
6. What was God's remedy (verses 11-13)?
7. What small tasks did God give Elijah to get him going again (verses 15-18)?
8. What does this teach us?

Read Matthew 6:25-34. Discuss how this passage teaches about anxiety.

*Vulnerability discussion:*

1. \*Everyone experiences loss of some sort. It can be a country, identity, family, or health. Share your story of loss and how it has affected you.
2. What can happen when we don't allow ourselves the time and occasion to grieve?
3. \*Have you lost hope about your situation in life and it is becoming an all-consuming thought?
4. Do you feel that you are a failure and a disappointment to others?
5. How do the following two passages help when we get depressed because things aren't going our way: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; Hebrews 11:1, 39-40?
6. People who struggle with depression/melancholy pull away from people and isolate themselves. How important are people during this time?

\*How does the scriptural three-fold response look at dealing with depression? Remember that there are four contributing factors that must be addressed: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual.

\*Step #1 Put off the old self – How do we put off destructive thoughts before they consume us?

\*Step #2 Renew your mind – How do we get our emotions back into balance? Meditating on Scripture and Christian music can help reorient the mind on Christ.

\*Step #3 Put on the new – What do we need in place of negative thoughts (Phil. 4: 8-13; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16)?

\*Tips: Know yourself – journal your moods, thoughts, and circumstances. Look for a pattern that triggers the mood. It can be triggered by poor eating habits, particular seasons (in life or yearly),

lack of sunshine, unbalanced hormones, time of day, or time alone. Community can be the best cure for melancholy.

Psalm 40 is a great prayer for help when depressed.

*\*Scripture to memorize on keeping a perspective on life:*

Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights.  
(Hab. 3:17-19)

## Purpose – Indifference/Laziness vs Diligence

*\*Universality:* Indifference is an attitude of the mind and heart which refuses to find purpose and meaning in the restrictions and requirements of daily living.

*\*Definition:* Indifference is laziness, apathy, and inactivity in the practice of our spiritual life. It is the avoidance of physical or spiritual work. It happens when we lose confidence that the way we spend our life really matters. A slothful person is like driftwood floating along with the current. These people need to avoid conflict at all costs. It is the difference between the person you are and the person you could be. It takes no effort, no strength, no manhood or womanhood to just not care. Sloth is a sin against God and yourself.

*\*Consequences:* A decline into poverty, unprepared for troubled times, having no reserves for lean times, restlessness, loss of energy and purpose. A lazy person pursues distractions wasting time in an attempt to escape choice and commitment. It is despairing resignation (apathy) or desperate escapism (avoidance).

*\*Foundation:* It is the attitude that the daily affairs of life don't matter, or that we are insignificant. Sloth is the old, sinful self-resisting transformation into the new self in Christ.<sup>13</sup>

*\*Scriptural teaching:*

1. \*What does Habakkuk 3:17-19 teach us when everything goes wrong?
2. \*How does Romans 8:14-17 help to reorient our perspective on our significance?
3. Read each passage to see what the Bible says about laziness: Proverbs 10:4-5; 12:27; 18:9; 19:15; 21:25; Matthew 25:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:11-13; Hebrews 6:10-12.
4. \*Can being ignorant or being lazy be a sin? Leviticus 5:14-19; James 4:17.

*\*Discuss the following statements:* Laziness can creep in over time—so a slothful person is too lazy to love in marriage; too lazy to love others; too lazy to nurture children; too lazy to enjoy life; too lazy to grow in Christ.

*\*Vulnerability Questions:*

1. \*Do you feel trapped by the feeling that you are meant for more but refuse to face it?
2. \*Do you avoid activities and people that bring you face-to-face with your identity in Christ?
3. Have you constructed walls that separate you and the demands of love for others?
4. Are you tempted to crawl into the virtual reality of social media, games, or entertainment instead of facing the reality of living in a difficult world?
5. \*Do you feel inwardly unwilling to be moved, stuck between a self you cannot bear and a self you cannot bear to become?

*\*Godly virtue:* Put on diligence, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Address the fear of failure.

*\*Universality:* Diligence is the perseverance that helps us get through tough times, having a future and a hope.

*\*Definition:* It is the belief that the ultimate purpose of our life rests in God's hands and the belief that God will eventually reverse our fortune or reward us for our diligence. It maintains

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<sup>13</sup> DeYoung, *Glittering Vices*, 89.

confidence in the providence of God even when there is no immediate evidence to justify such confidence. It is important to have a community of encouragers to help you grow in diligence.

*\*Outcomes:* A diligent person takes on the challenge of the day, lives a life that counts each day as its last, and experiences deep joy, satisfaction, direction, and purpose in life. It is freedom from the compulsive fears and longings in life.

*\*Foundation:* A diligent person wants his/her life to bear fruit that will last.

*Scriptural teaching:*

1. How does the story in Exodus 17:8-13 illustrate this principle?
2. What attitude should we have? Look at the following passages: \*Proverbs 2:1-5; \*Ephesians 5:15-18; \*Galatians 6:6-10; Ecclesiastes 11:1-6; 1 Peter 1:13-16; 4:7-11; 5:7-11.

*Digging Deeper:*

1. \*Some people come from a society in which the government rations stable goods to remain in power. The problem is that by doing this, governments build a culture of dependency, with ever-more people relying on an ever-growing federal government to give them cash or benefits.<sup>14</sup> Have you experienced relying on government for basics in life? How has this shaped your ambition to work?
2. Are you caught between desiring to work and the fear you will lose the subsidies you receive and the fear the wages you get would be too low to live on?
3. \*Has your family or culture taught you to depend on family members or government to provide you with things, or to bail you out of bad choices and decisions?
4. Do you feel that Western culture is too focused on work?

*\*Discuss this statement by Dorothy Sayers:* “It [laziness] is the sin that believes in nothing, cares for nothing, seeks to know nothing, interferes with nothing, enjoys nothing, loves nothing, hates nothing, finds purpose in nothing, lives for nothing, and remains alive only because there is nothing it would die for.”<sup>15</sup>

\*How does the scriptural three-fold response look at dealing with sloth? Remember that there are four contributing factors that must be addressed: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual.

\*Step #1 Put off the old self – How do we take control of our will? Would exercise and better diet help to wake us up?

\*Step #2 Renew your mind – How do we get our senses back into balance? Could memorizing Scripture passages wake up our soul? What role does a group have in combatting mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual laziness?

\*Step #3 Put on the new – What should replace this indifference? Could a community that’s committed to service, loving each other, and loving the lost help?

*\*Scripture to memorize to encourage us to be diligent:*

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<sup>14</sup> Matthew Spalding, “Why the U.S. Has a Culture of Dependency,” CNN, September 21, 2012, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/09/21/opinion/spalding-welfare-state-dependency/>.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Fairlie, *Seven Deadly Sins Today*, 114, from Dorothy Sayer’s lecture *The Other Six Deadly Sins*, (London: Methuen, 1944).

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. (John 15:16)

## Mental State – Envy/Jealousy vs Happiness/Contentment

*\*Universality:* Envy was found in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve wanted the knowledge of good and evil just like God.

*\*Definition:* Envy is the desire for others' traits, status, abilities, or situation. We can say it is a desire to have what another person has. We experience envy when we feel inadequate about our own gifts and abilities and begin to resent the gifts and abilities of others. It is the fear of losing our place. Envy ultimately prevents us from seeing our own gifts and celebrating the role we have to play in the social networks and organizations where we find our greater meaning.

*\*Consequences:* The envious person wants to strip another of something in order to possess it completely and solely. Billy Graham stated, "Envy and jealousy can ruin reputations, split churches and cause murders."<sup>16</sup> Envy concludes that others have it better. There is no gratification for envy, nothing it can ever enjoy. Augustine said envy is "sorrow over other men's good fortune and joy over other men's misfortune."<sup>17</sup>

*\*Foundation:* Envy wants something that belongs to another, something we ourselves lack. Envy and covetousness want the very thing the rival has. The envious person doesn't want their rival to even have the object of their envy. Jealousy can even rob the joy of enjoying what we have because we fear losing it.

*\*Description:* Envy takes the joy, happiness, and contentment out of living. Envy is focused on material goods, gifts, talents of other people, positions others hold, attention others get, and someone's spiritual life. How do Facebook and other social media platforms feed this mentality?

*\*Digging Deeper:*

1. \*Does envy pit unequals (people with different gifts and talents) against each other?
2. \*What do you think of our consumer society and advertising? "In what ways does advertising try to make us want what others want or be what others are?"
3. Limited-good theory means that another person's success or gain means my loss. Do you know of people who view life this way, and is this perspective motivated by envy?
4. In some cultures, there are protocols to avoid the evil eye of envy. Have you been influenced by avoiding compliments which might bring the negative effects?

*Scriptural teaching:*

1. \*What should be our response to rich people (Ps. 49:16-20)?
2. What does Proverbs 23:1-5 teach about getting rich?
3. What do Proverbs 12:9 and 13:7 tell us about envy?
4. Why do some people work hard (Ecc. 4:4)?
5. \*Where does envy originate and what is its outcome (James 3:13-16)?

*Bible stories about envy:*

1. \*What was the relationship like between the two wives of Jacob (Gen. 30:1-24)?
2. What motivated Joseph's brothers and the outcome of selling their brother (Gen. 37:1-11, 17-20)?
3. What do you think was the motivation in Numbers 11:26-29?

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<sup>16</sup> Graham, *7 Deadly Sins*, 41.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.



4. \*What happens when envy is fully grown (1 Sam. 18:5-11)?
5. What was one of the motives to kill Jesus (Mark 15:9-10)?
6. Why were the Jews jealous in Acts 17:4-5?

\**Godly virtue*: Put on happiness or contentment.

\**Universality*: People with inner happiness and contentment have the inner strength to accept both themselves and others, and can focus on the needs of others.

\**Definition*: Happiness or contentment with one's self frees you from focusing on what the other person has.

\**Outcomes*: Humility seeks to contribute to harmonious living, restrains from gossip, anger, and resentment. Contentment allows us to do acts of love that are hidden so as not to catch the others' attention.

\**Foundation*: Happiness or contentment is an attitude of being happy with what you have and who you are.

*Scripture passages*:

1. \*What is best (Ecc. 3:12-13)?
2. \*How does Matthew 6:1-4 address envy?
3. What should our attitude be (Ecc. 7:14)?
4. What should our focus be (Matt. 6:33)?
5. What should we be about (Rom. 12:3-8)?
6. What does this passage teach about equality (1 Cor. 12:12-31)?
7. \*How can you have" this same attitude" (Phil. 4:12-13)?
8. What needs to dominate our life (1 Cor. 13:4-7)?
9. What lives forever (1 John 2:15-17)?

*Vulnerability questions*:

1. Do you accept all that God says about you in the Bible?
2. Do you accept how God deals with you without resistance or bitterness?
3. Can you accept how people relate to you without retaliation?
4. Do you accept your faults and the differences of others?
5. \*Does your self-worth rely on being seen by others?
6. \*What happens if no one greets you like you think you should be greeted?
7. \*Are you happy when someone is given a responsibility in church and you were overlooked?

\*How does the scriptural three-fold response look at dealing with envy and jealousy? Remember that there are four contributing factors that must be addressed: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual.

\*Step #1 Put off the old self – How do we take control of our will? How do we put off our egocentrism?

\*Step #2 Renew your mind – How do we get our will back under control? Could memorizing Scripture passages reorient our mind?

Step #3 Put on the new – What should replace our self-centeredness so we can achieve contentment?

*\*Scripture to memorize to encourage us to be content:*

Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. (Rom. 12:15-16)

## Self-Understanding – Pride vs Humility

*\*Universality:* Pride was the reason Satan fell. It is a foundational sin of humanity.

*\*Definition:* Pride is the excessive belief in one's own abilities, which interferes with the individual's recognition of the grace of God. It has been called the sin from which all others arise. Pride is also known as vanity. Pride is the result of a disproportionate sense of our own contribution or importance. Vainglory is the desire to fill the mind of others with ourselves.

*\*Consequences:* Pride sees the contributions of others as a threat to the view we want to hold of ourselves. When pride is full-blown there is no longer any need for God, nor any capacity to live in dependence on God or anyone else. Pride destroys relationships, and is cold, isolating, and domineering. Pride is narcissism or self-love, a fixation on the self as the source of value and worth.

*\*Foundation:* Pride is rebellion against God, a refusal to accept the status of being God's creature.

*Scriptural teaching:*

1. \*Pride is possibly the most persistent of our sins. Pride is a mental and moral condition that precedes almost all other sins (Prov. 16:18-19).
2. Pride consists essentially in undue self-esteem, delighting in the thought of one's own superiority over others (Prov. 16:5; 29:23).
3. \*God hates pride (Ps. 101:5; Prov. 8:13).
4. The devil's downfall was due to pride (Isa. 14:12-15).
5. Pride is a primary barrier to salvation (Ps. 10:4).
6. \*Pride makes it difficult for many to live in community with others (Prov. 13:10).

\*Pride can have several dimensions such as spiritual, intellectual, material, or social.

1. It ruins relationships, destroys those we love, and can destroy a nation. What do these verses talk about: \*1 Corinthians 8:1-3; Romans 12:16; Proverbs 3:5?
2. Pride can be material: Deuteronomy 8:18; 1 Chronicles 29:12; \*1 Timothy 6:9-10.
3. Pride can be social: 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; \*James 2:1-13.

*\*Discussion question:* Jesus uses this phrase: "for those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted" in three passages (Matt. 23:1-12; Luke 14:7-11; 18:9-14). What is he teaching?

There are four types of pride in the following passages (material, intellectual, spiritual, and social). Determine the kind of pride you see in the following passages?

1. \* \_\_\_\_\_ pride: (Luke 18:9-14)
2. \* \_\_\_\_\_ pride: (Prov. 26:12)
3. \* \_\_\_\_\_ pride: (Ps. 62:10)
4. \* \_\_\_\_\_ pride: (Acts 6:1-2)

*Warnings about pride:*

1. What will God punish (Isa. 13:11)?
2. What sin is mentioned about Sodom (Ezek. 16:49-50)?
3. What happened to King Nebuchadnezzar and why (Dan. 4:28-37)?
4. \*What was King Belshazzar's sin (Dan. 5:17-28)?
5. \*Whom does God oppose (1 Peter 5:5-6)?

6. God seemingly hates pride the most (Prov. 8:13).

*\*Godly virtue:* Put on humility.

*\*Universality:* To embrace the kingdom of God is to be the least. People are drawn to humble people.

*\*Definition:* Humility is content to be needy and lowly in terms of possessions, power, and status. Humility is the ability to see ourselves properly for the greater purposes of God's design without feeling threatened by the achievements of others.

*\*Outcomes:* An interest in others, gentleness, and compassion.

*\*Foundation:* Humility is not thinking of yourself more highly than you ought. It is submitting yourself to God.

*Scriptural teaching on humility:*

1. \*How should we consider others (Phil. 2:3-4)?
2. \*How is Jesus the example of humility (Phil. 2:5-11)?
3. How do we do this (James 4:10)?
4. Jesus used a normal practice to teach about humility in Luke 14:7-11. What does this teach us?
5. Can humility be corporate (2 Chron. 7:13-14)? What will be the outcome?
6. \*Whom does God esteem (Isa. 66:2b)?

*\*Pride can have several dimensions, such as spiritual, intellectual, material, or social.*

Moses is considered the most humble person on the face of the earth (Num. 12:3). Why does the Bible say this of Moses (Read the context, 12:1-16)? How can we be like Moses in our daily lives?

*\*Danger:* A false sense of humility can mask our pride and can result in self-abasement. Shame views self as defective and is not humility.

*\*Vulnerability questions:*

1. \*What is false humility? How do you recognize it?
2. \*Is there a form of good pride? If so, how does it differ from evil pride?
3. How does a small group community help in countering pride?
4. \*How do we express spiritual, intellectual, material, and social humility when the culture expects competent people to show pride and lord it over others?

*\*How does the scriptural three-fold response look at dealing with pride? Remember that there are four contributing factors that must be addressed: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual.*

*\*Step #1 Put off the old self – Our ability for self-deception is great. How do we know when we put off pride?*

*\*Step #2 Renew your mind – How can we renew our mind concerning pride, humility, and meekness?*

*\*Step #3 Put on the new – On which occasions is humility best seen?*

*\*Scripture to memorize to tame pride:*

All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.” Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. (1 Peter 5:5b-6)

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others. (Phil. 2:3-4)

## Appendix A

### MODEL PRAYERS

#### Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,  
 hallowed be your name,  
 your kingdom come,  
 your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
 Give us today our daily bread.  
 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.  
 For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.  
 Amen.  
 Matthew 6:9-13

#### John Wesley – Watch Night Service

I am no longer mine, but Thine. Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt, put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be employed for Thee, or laid aside for Thee, exalted for Thee or brought low for Thee, let me be full, let me be empty; let me have all things, let me have nothing; I freely and heartily yield all things to Thy disposal and pleasure.

And now O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Thou art mine and I am Thine. So be it. And the covenant I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.

#### The Prayer of Saint Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.  
 Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
 Where there is injury, pardon;  
 Where there is doubt, faith;  
 Where there is despair, hope;  
 Where there is darkness, light;  
 Where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
 To be consoled as to console,  
 To be understood as to understand,  
 To be loved as to love;  
 For it is in giving that we receive;  
 It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
 It is in dying to self that we are born to eternal life.

## Daily Prayer for Standing Firmly

### Starting and Ending the Day: Mark's Prayer (The Individual Prays)

Lord God, the eternal salvation you have given me in Jesus Christ is glorious.

In Jesus' holy Name I (**name:** \_\_\_\_\_) declare that Jesus is the Good Shepherd. Therefore I will not get in front of the Good Shepherd, stand next to or wander away from the Good Shepherd. I place myself close behind the Good Shepherd and will follow where he leads, for he is the great, good, and chief Shepherd.

I ask you, Lord Jesus, to lead me not into temptation but deliver me from evil.

In Jesus' powerful name I (**name:** \_\_\_\_\_) command all forces of evil to immediately stop oppression and leave my presence and residence. I ask the Lord God to send his angels to remove all spiritual oppression from my presence and residence. Lord God, please fill me with your Holy Spirit and surround me and my residence with your angels. I dedicate myself and my residence to you as holy unto the Lord God.

In Jesus' holy Name I (**name:** \_\_\_\_\_) confess, renounce, and separate myself from idolatry, adultery, a divided heart, self-pity, envy, lust, bigotry, jealousy, anger, hatred, bitterness, vengeance, gluttony, arrogance, pride, condescension, patronizing, sarcasm, cynicism, gossip, slander, individualism, autonomy, fear, anxiety, doubt, discouragement, selfishness, passivity, unforgiveness, faithlessness, divisiveness, depression helplessness, hopelessness (**other:** \_\_\_\_\_).

I ask you, Heavenly Father, to fill me with your Holy Spirit so that I may walk in joyful communion with you, glorify Jesus' Name, build up his church, expand his kingdom, and use my gifts to produce much fruit to your glory and honor.

Please transform me from one degree to another into that image of Jesus Christ which is part of my glorious heritage in him.

Please lead me to those good works you established for me beforehand that I may walk in them

Help me be a good steward of my relationships and resources.

*I gratefully pray these things in the Name of Jesus the Good Shepherd, Messiah, King of Kings, Savior and Lord. All blessing, honor, glory, and power be to your Name.*

**Amen, So Be It!**