

Instructions:

Group leaders, take some time before your gathering to look over these questions. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you pick 3-5 questions to discuss that pertain to your group's unique style and needs.



Series: Vice

Talking about sin makes us uncomfortable. We can identify and try to avoid the “bad ones.” It’s easy to see in the lives of our neighbors. And evil is clearly at work out there in the world beyond us. But what about the sin and evil that arises from our own hearts? What about our own propensity to sin; those bad habits, tendencies, or traits that we would rather *not* be reminded of? Join us this Lent as we reflect on the historic seven vices in order to identify a multitude of mundane, everyday sins that can cling too closely.

Message Description:

Pride, referred to as the root of all other sins. Vainglory, seeking the attention, approval, and applause of others. The first everyday vice of pride and vainglory places an over-emphasis on the self-image, self-love, and self-importance. Instead of being boastful, exaggerating, and self-centered, with God’s help, we long to be honest, humble, realistic, and caring toward others. How can we create space for stillness, silence, and self-examination this week? How can we ask ourselves, do the things I am striving to achieve or receive recognition for really matter? Whose approval am I seeking and why? Who is the glory for?

Key Scriptures

*Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me and know my thoughts!
See if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!*
Psalm 139:23-24

Additional Resources:

- For more information on a daily practice of self-examination, check-out: <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/>
- For a prayer practice that will lead you through study and examination, check-out <https://www.24-7prayer.com/resource/lectio-365/> or download the app, lectio365!

Questions Related to This Week's Teaching:

1. How familiar are you with the seven vices? Have you studied them before?
2. Are there any vices that you think our culture and world struggle with the most?
3. What is the difference between pride and vainglory?
4. Have you practiced self-examination with silence/stillness before, and are you willing to give it a try for this Lenten teaching series?

Going Deeper:

Read Luke 18:9-14

- Where do you see pride or vainglory at work in this parable?
- How is this related to Jesus' teaching on prayer in Matthew 6 (studied in the previous series)?
- What should we learn from both the Pharisee and the tax collector?

"Perhaps the Fathers of the Church called Pride the chief sin, the very first sin, in an admirably honest attempt to address that particular sin of 'good' people first, the sin one most likely would find hanging out in the church, the sin most likely to breed among good, faithful people...." (William Willimon, *Sinning Like a Christian*)

"Especially in our religious practice and devotion, hypocrisy- traditionally marked as a vice that springs from vainglory- trades truthfulness for a false front or respectable reputation, all in God's holy name. Jesus reserves some of his harshest words for the Pharisees because they cared more about the outward observances of piety than a heart truly dedicated to worshipping God.... (See Matthew 23:27-28)," (Rebecca DeYoung, *Glittery Vices*).

- Do you agree with the excerpts above, that religious folks can sometimes be more prone to hypocrisy born out of pride and/or vainglory?
- It is true our best acts of service and virtues can be corrupted by the wrong intention or heart. How can we make sure we are seeking the approval and glory for God in all that we do?

For Personal or Group reflection (questions from Rebecca DeYoung):

1. Try to think of a good you have sought glory in that fits the following categories of vainglory:
 - a. A quality, appearance, or action that you have faked having
 - b. A quality, appearance, or action that isn't worth much in the eternal scheme of things
 - c. A quality, appearance, or action that is unkind, unjust, unethical, or illegal but that garners valuable social acceptance for you
 - d. A truly good quality that you have taken too much credit for or have used to enhance your own reputation without showing gratitude to God for his gifts to you

Which form of vainglory are you most susceptible to? Are you motivated by prideful vainglory (the need to display your goodness) or fearful vainglory (the need to cover up your defects)?

2. Try silencing your self-talk for a day or a week. Avoid sharing your opinions or feelings, and don't respond to criticism. A fast from social media might be a useful part of the exercise. Focus on listening attentively and lovingly to others instead. Journal each day of the experience.

What have you learned about how you use conversation for self-aggrandizement, image-enhancement, and reputation-building? In what ways is your communication about yourself healthy and loving?