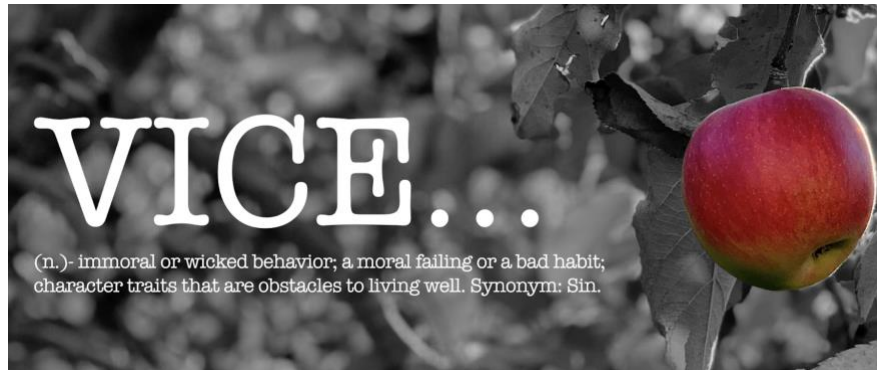


Instructions:

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:

In today's world that seems fueled by the non-stop busyness of our lives, it's hard to see us as a "couch potato" society. But with all the modern advantages and amenities, are we making our lives more productive, or simply creating more distractions? What is sloth? Where does it come from? What does it look like and how can we recognize it in ourselves? What does scripture say about it? What happens if left unaddressed? How can we address it?

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. Sloth is derived from the Latin word _____ which means _____ .
2. Sloth is a sin of _____ rather than omission.
3. The Book of Proverbs addresses the issue of sloth more than any other book in scripture. The "sluggard," as it is referred in Proverbs, is someone with slothful patterns. This is addressed in Proverbs _____ times.
4. How can sloth impact our Christian growth and journey towards true sanctification?

Going Deeper:

Read Luke 18:18-25

- In light of our current teaching series, what surprises you or stands out about this encounter with Jesus?
- Depending on which version you read, verse 23 can read "he became very sad," "he turned away sorrowful," or "his countenance fell." Why do you think the rich man became sad? What is it about his wealth that impedes him from following Jesus in this moment?
- Church fathers noted that behind the face of spiritual apathy or acedia lay a "spiritual monster" of despair. There is a sort of sadness found within apathy of not being able to take the step toward God that you may want to or need to take. Where do you see despair at work in this passage? And does the connection between sloth/acedia, apathy, and sadness/despair resonate with you?

Will Willimon on sloth in "Sinning Like a Christian: A New Look at the 7 Deadly Sins"

"The great goal of life- communion with God- is forsaken by diving into a sea of triviality. The end of life is forfeited, and the means toward the end seem unrealistic and pointless. Failing to avail oneself of God's appointed modes of gracious ascent, we fall victim to malice and spite toward spiritual things, ridiculing the ways of the Spirit as we sink back into the ways of the flesh. 'Wandering after illicit things' consumes our lives, resulting in a constant flux of mind in which we fail to alight anywhere. Idle curiosity, prattling, general restlessness, and instability fill our days." (Willimon, 83)

"Distraction and restlessness of spirit are listed by the Fathers as aspects of apathy, failure to focus on what matters." (Willimon, 85)

- According to Bishop Will Willimon, sloth can persist in our lives through an inability or failure to focus on what really matters in life; that is, the end goal of our lives, which is communion with God. Our inability to do the things we need to or desire to move us closer to God can often make us feel frustrated, sad, despairing, and at worst self-loathing. Do you ever find yourself struggling to focus in this way? Or do you ever feel bogged down and overwhelmed by smaller responsibilities and tasks that you don't have the time or capacity to pursue a holy life with God?
- Thomas Aquinas notes there is a joy and a zeal that comes from seeing the beauty within things, and this particular joy can be an antidote to despair. How can you cultivate joy in seeing the beauty of life in this season? Do you believe this could serve as an antidote to sadness, despair, or acedia for you?
- How can we help you remain focused on the real goal (and consequently the real joy) of our lives in Jesus Christ?

For Personal or Group reflection (questions from Rebecca DeYoung)

Consider journaling or reflecting on the following questions:

1. In what areas of your life, or in what situations, are you most tempted to escape from the demands of love? What acts of love do you find oppressive or a daily burden? What forms of sloth shows itself most in your life- “restlessness” or “false rest”? What forms of restlessness or busyness are you culturally rewarded for?
2. How will you intentionally nurture your relationships of love in healthy rhythms of work, worship, and rest? How can contemporary people like us practice stability?