Address for Small Group Bible Study:

Contact Info:

Topic and Dates:

Anger
Pride
Greed
Lust
Gluttony
Sloth
Envy

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7 Deadly Sins: Anger

Background: Anger is an inappropriate expression of hatred or malice. Anger is manifested in the individual who spurns love and opts instead for fury. It is realized in a desire to do evil or harm others in some way. AKA Wrath, Hatred, Malice, and Rage. Of the 7 Deadly Sins, this sin is voted most likely to hurt someone else. So… don’t be hatin’!

Ice Breaker: Act it out! Set up a counter for a new Fast Food Restaurant, “The Incompetent Taco.” You will play the highly incompetent and completely indifferent order taker. Set up a makeshift menu board behind you (props encourage the Bible Discussion Group -- it shows you care enough to play a cashier who doesn’t care). Make sure the volunteers who wait in your line understand that they have very limited time for lunch. Botch the orders, delay the line, forget their words, refute their claims, short change them, etc. After the skit, open up a discussion. Ask the “customers” how and why they experienced anger. How did they want to express their anger? How do they usually vent their anger? What happened the last time you “blew your top” in a fit of rage. What other sins are ingredients for our anger? (ALTERNATIVE SKITS: Waiting in traffic, Brother/sister conflicts, Parental conflicts, etc.)

Read Genesis 4:1-16

Textual Questions:

- Why did Cain and Abel make offerings to the Lord? When God received the offerings, He looked on Abel’s gift with favor but not Cain’s. How did Cain feel about that? Why do you think he became angry? How would you feel if you gave your mom something for Mother’s day and she wasn’t pleased with it?
- How does verse 7 illustrate the nature of sin and our response to it? At what point in this story does Cain begin to “not do what is right”? What do you think God meant when He told Cain, “But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door?” God goes on to say that the “sin desires to have him, but he must master it.” Did Cain try to master the sin at his door, or did he allow it to master him? What other sins were working together to master Cain? What can we learn about our own anger from this dynamic? What resources do we have to master sin?
- How does Cain’s failure stress the seriousness of our conflict with sin? Do you think he killed Abel in a moment of brief insanity? What makes you think that? Does that excuse his behavior? Have you ever been “mad” with anger? Has the loss of control ever felt good? Why?
- How did Cain react when God came looking for Abel? What’s the absolute worst strategy to use after sinning? Why do we try to excuse, minimize, justify, or control the damage from our sin? Would you rather be excused, understood, validated … or forgiven?
- What was God’s reaction to Cain’s angry outburst (that is, his slaughter of his brother)? How did Cain respond to the curse God placed on him? In what way is Cain’s punishment (vv. 10–16) a logical consequence of his sin?
- Notice the description of Cain in v. 1-2 and compare it to v. 11-16. Sin destroys… list everything that sin destroys in this story. How have you experienced the destruction of sin (in general) in your life? As representatives of Christ, what are some consequences of losing control to anger?

Concluding Question: What is one thing you’ve learned today that shows how deadly anger can really be in your life? And how will you go mastering any anger, bitterness, frustration, or malice that is either present or may come up in the future (especially in traffic or in queues)?

Final Charge: Remember that anger is something that can cause us to do things we would never imagine. If you feel mastered by your anger, you need to be liberated from the bondage of sin. That means that you need to seriously pursue repentance. Let’s be sure that we help one another be free from the dominion of sin. Let’s start today.
7 Deadly Sins: PRIDE

**Background:** (It’s always a good idea to provide general background the 7 Deadly Sins.)

One’s pride can blind them to the simple solutions God has given us, and prevent us from being healed in whatever way we need to be. Pride is excessive belief in one’s own abilities, that interferes with the individual’s recognition of the grace of God (built up over many years of well meaning elementary school teachers who told us to “believe in yourself.”) It is “the mother of all sins, the sin from which all others arise... the thin line between rightousness and self-righteousness.” Pride is also known as Vanity, Conceit, Arrogance, and Hubris.

C. S. Lewis call it the Great Sin, saying, “It is a terrible thing that the worst of all the vices can smuggle itself into the very centre of our religious life. But you can see why. The other, and less bad, vices come from the devil working on us through our animal nature. But this does not come through our animal nature at all. It comes direct from Hell. It is purely spiritual: consequently it is far more subtle and deadly.”

**Ice Breaker:** How can Pride be destructive? How does it “smuggle itself into our religious life?” How can Pride blind us from objectivity… how has that happened in your life? Why is Pride so hard to detect in ourselves? Why is it so easy to see in others?

**Read 2Kings 5:1-19a**

**Textual Questions:**

- **V. 1.** Who is responsible for Naaman’s victories? Who might Naaman credit for his greatness? Though he was great, he still had a flaw. What was his outward flaw that required healing?
- **V. 2-6.** It’s easier to seek help when we see our need for help. Why was it easy for Naaman to see his need for help? How does he display his willingness to get help?
- **V. 7-10.** Naaman travels all the way from Aram to Elisha’s front door (since Elisha invites him to come to him). When Elisha doesn’t even come out of his house to address the valiant Naaman, how do you think Naaman reacted? Naaman does, however, hear the prescription for his leprosy… what is he to do for the cure?
- **V. 11-12.** Why was Naaman angry? How can pride manifest itself in anger? How else does pride show itself in us? What was ‘wrong’ with Elisha’s answer according to Naaman? What were Naaman’s expectations? How can our expectations and preconceptions make us proud? What is keeping Naaman from accepting Elisha’s answer? Identify evidence of pride in his statements. Have you ever had preconceptions about God that were wrong? Was it hard to accept God’s correction of your preconception? Were you angry about it? Is it harder for you to admit to sin or admit to being wrong? Naaman admitted that he needed to be healed, but he couldn’t accept being wrong about how he would be healed.
- **V. 13-14.** How do Naaman’s servants try to help him see his error? Would Naaman have killed an army or gone on an epic quest to get healed if Elisha asked him? Why are simple answers the hardest to accept? Do you think that Naaman would have again been tempted with pride as dipped the fourth, fifth, sixth or seventh time in the Jordan River? What do you think prevented him from returning to his pride and rejecting Elisha’s advice? What can we learn from that?
- **V. 15-19a.** Did God’s way work? What was Naaman’s reaction to being cleansed? Why is it refreshing to admit to being wrong? Naaman calls himself Elisha’s servant. How drastic is this change? Have you ever been proven wrong about something, but did not have the humility to accept it as Naaman did? What is the healing power of humility as seen in this story? What is the destructive power of pride? Was Naaman’s pride potentially deadly to him? If he had not become humble, what would have been his condition?

**Concluding Question:** How can pride be deadly to our spiritual health? How can we deal with the pride of thinking we know how things should work out best? How can pride be overcome to see one healed of other sins? What have you learned from Naaman’s example in your battle against pride?

**Final Charge:** According to C. S. Lewis, “…the essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere fleaibites in comparison: it was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind.” Naaman overcomes his pride by listening to the advice of others. Ask someone today whether or not you are proud, arrogant or vain. Your pride will try to prevent you from asking, but it’s the absolute best step you can take today to overcome this sin. Get help.
7 Deadly Sins: GREED

Background: (It’s always a good idea to provide background the 7 Deadly Sins in general.)
Greed was originally included among the Seven Deadly Sins under the name of Avarice. Avarice certainly includes our modern idea of materialism; however, it is also a blanket term that can describe other forms of sinful behavior. These include disloyalty, deliberate betrayal, or treason, especially for personal gain. Thus, Avarice should be seen as a sin that betrays faith in God for worldly and personal gain.

Ice Breaker: Bring a sewing needle and a stuffed animal (if by any chance you’ve got a stuffed camel then by all means bring that one!) to the Bible Talk. Invite each participant to try to pass the animal through the eye of the needle. Then ask why Jesus would state: “It’s easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into heaven.”? After a few moments of discussion, redirect the conversation to the main Scripture for the study...

Read 1st Luke 12:13-31

Textual Questions:

• V. 13-15. Why would Jesus refuse to mediate a dispute over money? Instead of arbitrating, what charge does he issue? Jesus mentions “all kinds of greed” - - what are some different expressions of greed that you need to guard against? Have you ever measured yourself against someone else based on possessions? Why is that a completely unspiritual state of mind?

• V. 16-19. If this man were on the cover of BusinessWeek magazine, what would be the headline that accompanies his picture? Why is it smart business to build bigger barns rather than build more barns? [A: Additional barns would take away from the available land for farming.]

• V. 20-21. Jesus fills in an important detail about this rich man. What details does he add to the story? Have you ever had a windfall of money - - big or small? Did you consider how you could be rich toward God with that windfall? What similarities do you share with the man in this parable?

• V. 22-30. Ravens do not have storerooms or barns, yet they do not go hungry. How are they fed? Do you trust God to clothe and feed you? What’s an area of your life which you find difficult to entrust to God? Does trusting God mean that you shouldn’t store up food or provisions or savings? What distinguishes prudence from avarice? [Verse 31 will answer this question.]

• V. 31-34. What does it mean to seek God’s kingdom? What other priorities have bumped the kingdom from being your top priority (it may be helpful to quickly reference Matthew 6:33 in which Jesus commands us to “seek first His kingdom”)? Jesus sets this charge in the context of our possessions, so how do we seek God’s kingdom with regard to our possessions? How different would this year play out if you truly sought God’s kingdom as your top priority? Can you trust in Jesus’ promise of treasure in heaven? Which do you value more, treasure on earth or treasure in heaven?

Concluding Question: What one lesson have you learned from this study that can help you recognize and resist “all kinds of greed” in your life?

Final Charge: According to Eph. 5:5-6, “For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient.” Greed is among the vilest of all sins in the eyes of God because it is our betrayal of Him. It is deadly, because it is the clearest expression of our distrust of God. Greed strikes at the heart of our faith, and will keep you from entering the kingdom of God. Find a friend today who will offer you more than “empty words” of false assurance. Find a friend who can help you truly trust and believe Jesus.
7 Deadly Sins: LUST (For Men)

**Background:** (It's always a good idea to provide general background the 7 Deadly Sins.) See if the discussion group can guess the results on an online poll which asked, “Of the Seven Deadly Sins, this is my biggest failing:” Lust 35%, Anger 18%, Pride 12%, Sloth 10%, Envy 10%, Gluttony 9%, Greed 6%.

**Ice Breaker:** [Keep the Ice Breaker short today - - save time for the discussion that these Scriptures promise to produce.] Bring in two tall glasses (not cups… these need to be clear) of cool water. Drop something impure (like dirt or ink or even something repulsive like a finger nail clipping) into it (again use just a small amount). Offer the drinks to someone. Which do they prefer? Why? What’s wrong with even a very small impurity in the water? How much impurity contaminates purity?

**Read Matthew 5:27-30 then 1Thessalonians 4:3-8**

**Textual Questions:**

- **Matthew 5:27-28.** Where would Jesus’ audience have heard ‘Do not commit adultery’? Does Jesus nullify or intensify the Old Covenant Law through his teaching? Henry David Thoreau wrote, “There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to the one striking at the roots.” Where is Jesus attacking evil… at the branches or the roots? Where does an immoral relationship really start? What is the real harm in looking lustfully at a woman? How do you rationalize your lust? Can real change occur from the “outside in” or only from the “inside out”? What would you call someone who has modified his behavior without changing his heart?

- **Matthew 5:29-30.** Why has Jesus specifically mentioned the eye and the hand in his prohibition against lust? What role does the eye play? What role does the hand play? This passage provides insights into Jesus’ attitude toward sin… how does He view sin? How does Jesus’ eternal perspective help you gain a perspective on your lust? Is Jesus making empty threats here? Does lust qualify as a deadly sin? What radical actions do you need to take to pursue purity? What do you need to do without your life and throw away? What do you need to cut off and throw away? Which is easier, to cut something off (like the hand illustration) quickly or slowly? What can you commit to cutting out/gouging out/throwing away from your life right now? What are you hesitant to throw out… and why is it worth more than your eternal consequences? Jesus prescribes a “zero tolerance” for lust… why is “zero tolerance” more effective than becoming comfortable with even a small experience with lust?

- **1Thess 4:3.** God’s will is our sanctification… what is sanctification? How does sanctification relate to the avoidance of sexual immorality?

- **1Thess 4:4-5.** Why do we need to “learn to control” our own body in a way that is “holy and honorable”? *How can we learn to control our body in a way that is holy and honorable?* If you cannot control passionate lust, whom do you resemble in this passage? If you do not know God, can you hope to overcome the lusts of the flesh? But most people claim to know God and most people still fall to the lusts of the flesh, so how can we be sure that we know God?

- **1Thess 4:6-7.** The Lord Jesus is here described an ‘Avenger’ (in most translations other than NIV)... what does an Avenger do? What sins does Paul most likely include in “all such sins”? Do you have a reason to meet with the Avenger? If you’ve been called by God to follow Him, what does a holy life without impurity look like? How much impurity destroys holiness?

**Concluding Question:** What have the Scriptures exposed in you today? What convictions have the Scriptures instilled in you today? How does exposure and conviction help you back to a path of righteousness?

**Final Charge:** Let’s conclude with the final words from 1Thessalonians 4:8, “Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.” Don’t let the conviction that God has produced in you fall to the ground today. He is calling all of us not to impurity but holiness… heed His call. He’s the only one who can call us out of impurity. Make every effort to seek Him and His deliverance. Act – today - on the convictions that you’ve gained from His Word. You will either conform your desire to the truth or conform truth to your desire… choose truth over desire!
7 Deadly Sins: Gluttony

Background: (It’s always a good idea to provide background the 7 Deadly Sins in general.)
Gluttony is an inordinate desire to consume more than that which one requires. The chief error about Gluttony is to think it only pertains to food. Some people can't have enough toys, television, entertainment, pleasure, or company. It is essentially about the lack of self control or self discipline. And it is about an excess of anything. The Bible also refers to Gluttony as Debauchery (a close synonym).

Ice Breaker: Prepare the best fudge brownies that you’ve ever ever made for this one (they really need to be good, so plan ahead – don’t be slothful!!! Hand out one brownie to each member of the discussion group. Invite them all to eat during the introductions (“Hi! My name is Ed and I’m Sociology major at HU.”) Place a large and inviting platter of more delicious brownies on a table in the middle of the discussion group. Encourage anyone to have some more while you continue to get to know one another. Ask a few introductory questions:

- How many brownies did you NEED to eat? Was it OK to have the first one? (for most, the answer could be YES since it would be a polite acceptance of hospitality)
- Was it necessary to eat more than one brownie? (only if you’re carb loading for a marathon in which you’ll be competing tomorrow)
- Is this an issue of self discipline? In what areas of life have you lacked self discipline?
- Why would gluttony or a lack of self discipline qualify as a “deadly sin”?
- How is it different from Greed or Lust?

Read 1st Peter 4:1-5

Textual Questions:

- V. 3. Do you actually CHOOSE to live in debauchery? Describe some of those choices and the consequence of making that choice. How are “debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry” related to one another? How much time have you spent in the past doing what pagans do? How did this excessive indulgence affect your conscience?
- V.4. Do you have old friends who still expect you to join them in your old indulgences? When was the last time you were tempted to join them in their “flood of dissipation” (or “flood of debauchery” ESV)? Why would they “heap abuse on” your self discipline? Have you ever criticized someone for being too “self controlled” (as religious folks, we might malign them with the term “legalistic”)?
- V.5. We will each stand before Jesus to “give an account to Him” for all our indulgences and debauchery (see also 2 Cor. 5:9-10 if this concept is a surprise to your discussion group). What do you dread about that “day of reckoning” (NET)? … So let’s go back to verse 1 for a solution:
- V.1-2. How does Christ’s “suffering in the body” help us be done with the sin of gluttony? If we “arm ourselves with the same attitude” as Jesus, how will we view gluttony? How can you better understand and share Jesus’ attitude toward sin? How will that help you live for the will of God?

Concluding Question: What one lesson have you learned from this study that can help you recognize and resist gluttony in your life?

Final Charge: According to Galatians 5:22, self control is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. That is, it’s evidence that one has the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit has convicted you today via the Bible, then perhaps the Spirit is calling you to consider even deeper questions. There’s no quick fix or magic pill to cure gluttonous indulgence. But there is great help for those who will be born of the Spirit. Find out how God wants to give you victory in the area of self discipline through His Holy Spirit.
7 Deadly Sins: Sloth

Background: (It’s always a good idea to provide background the 7 Deadly Sins in general.) Sloth is most often viewed as “laziness”, but it is the most misunderstood of the deadly sins. Sloth refers to a despairing, indifferent, apathetic attitude of the heart and mind – it’s spiritual inactivity. Have you ever viewed yourself as slothful? Under what circumstances?

Ice Breaker: Give everybody 8 Popsicle sticks and a string (you’ll need to buy these ahead of time, so do it – don’t be slothful!). Allow them two minutes to create anything they want with the items. Once time is over, ask these questions:

- Is anyone excited to present their product? Why are you so enthusiastic?
- Who really worked hard to make a neat item? Who honestly did not work hard? Why not? What were the mental hurdles? (“just a silly popsicle activity”, “confused as to what you expected”, “I’m not creative”, “Not enough time”)
- So what was your attitude towards this activity? Has there ever been a time you’ve entrusted a valuable of yours to somebody, yet they never used it? How did you feel? (“angry”, “disrespected”, “wish you never wasted it on them”, “they don’t deserve your valuable”, “will not give it to them again”).

Read Matthew 25:14-30 Textual Questions:

- V. 14-15. What is a talent in the sense it is used here? (A talent in Jesus’ time was a valuable sum of money worth about two years’ wages. It would be worth more than $500,000). Is it easy to entrust someone with millions of dollars? Why would the master do such a thing? What does that show about the master’s character? How did he decide the amount of responsibility he would entrust to each? What was his expectation of what they would do with his valuable money? What are some responsibilities that God has entrusted to you?
- V.16-17. Describe how the first two servants exercised their responsibility. Why is that admirable?
- V. 18. Describe the third servant’s response to his responsibility. Would you hire this person to help you paint your house? Would you fire him if you had hired him? Why?
- V. 19-23. Why do each of these two servants receive greater responsibility from the master? Does that mean more work? Did either have a fear of failure or success? What is to be feared in success?
- V. 24-25. Describe the attitude of the third servant? What was his attitude towards his responsibilities? What excuses or accusations did he make? What does he fear? Have you ever shared his fears? Are you often slothful with responsibilities by procrastinating, not caring, or quitting? How have you justified yourself in your sloth? How does it lead to more sin? In what ways is it deadly? Is there a responsibility in your life with which you are not proactive? What are some occurrences that have exposed your sloth? What spiritual responsibilities have you shirked?
- V. 26-27. Why wasn’t the master sympathetic towards the servant’s sloth? He is described as both lazy and wicked. How is he lazy in the master’s eyes? And how is he evil in the master’s eyes? Are you willing to consider your sloth as evil? What’s the danger in minimizing sloth? What would Jesus say today if he came to inspect the spiritual responsibilities that he has given to you?
- V. 28-30. What’s the final fate of the slothful servant? What does that judgment represent?

Concluding Question: How will Jesus’ parable about spiritual responsibility change the path you take this week? What is the first proactive thing you need to do? What are the obstacles along the way that you need to hurdle? How can you enlist help from the group?

Final Charge: It takes trust, love, and belief to entrust valuable property to anyone. God, in his mercy, has given you the brainpower, free will, Bible access, and his Son’s sacrificial grace. And he is fair. However, the most dreadful thing is to take what God values and show indifference, laziness, or apathy towards Him. There are real consequences for all who procrastinate or neglect these responsibilities. Now is not the time to procrastinate on the Spirit’s urging.
7 Deadly Sins: Envy

**Background:** (It's always a good idea to provide concise background the 7 Deadly Sins in general.) Envy is an emotion that “occurs when a person lacks another's superior quality, achievement, or possession and either desires it or wishes that the other lacked it.” At the core of envy seems to be an upward social comparison that threatens a person's self-esteem. Jealousy typically refers to the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that occur when a person believes a valued relationship is being threatened by a rival. But the Bible uses the terms as synonyms.

**Ice Breaker:** Who here has brothers or sisters? Have you ever harbored the idea that your parents or grandparents favored one of you above the others? How does that make you feel? Are you competitive with your siblings - for parents’ affection, attention, and praise… or for other things like "shotgun" in the car… or the bottom bunk… or the last piece of desert… or the remote control… or the comfy chair? Why is it sometimes hardest to get along with your very own brothers and sisters? How does this also apply to roommates? Can you rejoice over luckier, smarter, more accomplished, more attractive, or richer classmates with cooler cars, laptops, shoes, and mobile phones? If not, we had better find out more about envy…

**Read Genesis 37:1-11**

**Textual Questions:**

- **V. 1-3.** First, let's talk about Joseph and Jacob. Do you see Joseph as innocent, naïve, and righteous or as arrogant, manipulating, and ambitious? Did he bring a bad report about his brothers because it was the truth or because he wanted to make them look bad? [Most commentators see Joseph as naive and truthful here and later when he shares his dreams, but perhaps he’s insensitive.] Now let's consider Jacob. What's the great harm in showing favoritism? What became a physical symbol of his favoritism? [The robe]

- **V. 4.** Now we’ll turn our attention to Joseph’s brothers. If your father or mother blatantly favored your brother/sister, how would you treat the brother/sister? How many of Joseph’s ten older brothers would have wanted to receive that robe of many colors? How does the Bible describe their envy of Joseph? What do you ever resent a friend’s relationship with another person – what was the relationship? Have you ever resented someone so much that you were unable to "speak a kind word" to Joseph? Have you ever considered a friend’s relationship with another person – what was the relationship? Have you ever resented someone so much that you were unable to speak a sincere kind word to them? Did this envy and hatred take your eyes off God…how? What would happen to your resentment if you gained a godly perspective? Were Joseph’s brothers fixing their eyes on God as they expressed hatred toward him?

- **V. 5-9.** The Dreams. How would you respond if your brother/sister woke up this morning and told you they had just dreamed that you were bowing to their authority? How would your parents respond if they were included in this bowing ceremony? What other sins (besides envy) were gripping the hearts of the brothers as Joseph described his dreams? How has one sin opened the door to other sins in your experience? Have you ever experienced envy to the point of hatred…what were the circumstances?

- **V. 10-11.** Who ‘gave’ Joseph this dream? What was Jacob’s first reaction to the sun/moon/stars dream? [He rebuked Joseph.] How did Jacob begin to feel differently toward Joseph's dreams? How did the brothers continue to regard Joseph? Now we’ll see the tragic results of their jealousy….

**Read v. 16-19 to conclude.** If someone you envy is separated from you – and he/she is continuing to enjoy their advantages in life - does the separation lessen or deepen your resentment? What happens with Joseph and his brothers? What’s the end result? How have you inflicted punishment on someone whom you have resented? What could you have done to reconcile the conflict?

**Concluding Question:** What one lesson have you learned from this study that can help you recognize and resist envy or jealousy in your life?

**Final Charge:** According to James 3:16, “*where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.*” So don’t take this deadly sin lightly. If you’ve allowed envy, jealousy, or selfish ambition a foothold in your life, then you likely have more evil to deal with than you realize. Subtle Sins that we simply harbor in our heart are still portals for destruction. Get help today from a friend who can show you solutions from God’s word - - that is, if you can accept and rejoice over someone else knowing the Bible better than you do!