



# Deadly Sins

**SERMON & SCRIPTURE  
DISCUSSION GUIDE**

# The Seven Deadly Sins

## Why Are They Called Deadly Sins?

In Christian theology, the term "deadly sins" refers to a list of particularly egregious sins that are considered to be especially damaging to the soul. This concept is often associated with the Seven Deadly Sins, also known as the capital vices or cardinal sins. These sins are not explicitly listed in a single biblical passage, but they have been derived from various biblical teachings and reflections on moral and spiritual matters.

The concept of deadly sins serves as a framework for moral and spiritual reflection, guiding for believers to avoid behaviors that are considered particularly damaging to the soul and detrimental to one's relationship with God. The idea is that these sins, if not repented and corrected, can lead to spiritual death (damnation).

In contrast, Christian theology also emphasizes the virtues that counteract the deadly sins. These virtues include humility (opposite of pride), kindness (opposite of envy), patience (opposite of wrath), diligence (opposite of sloth), generosity (opposite of greed), chastity (opposite of lust), and temperance (opposite of gluttony). The cultivation of virtues is seen as essential for spiritual growth and moral integrity.

## Historical Background

The list is centuries old, found as frequently in literature and pop culture as in manuals of theology and devotion. The seven deadly sins were a popular motif in medieval art and literature, and this likely helped them persist as a concept through the centuries. Dante surveyed these sins in his tours through hell and purgatory in *The Divine Comedy*, Chaucer moralized about them in "The Parson's Tale," and Brad Pitt investigated a series of grisly murders based on the list in *Se7en*. Even on *Gilligan's Island*, the American sitcom that aired from 1964-1967, each character was supposed to represent a different deadly sin, according to the show's creator (Gilligan was "sloth").

The first evidence of the list is from a monk in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Evagrius of Pontus. In his treatise "On the Eight Thoughts", Evagrius listed eight evil thoughts or "demons" that hound and harass the desert hermit. Evagrius work is basically a catalog of problems and temptations faced by the monk, each followed by a lengthy list of biblical passages to use in resistance. The list was altered slightly and enumerated by Pope Gregory I in 590 CE. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, theologian Thomas Aquinas again visited the list in "Summa Theologica". Like Gregory, Aquinas described "pride" as the overarching ruler of the seven sins.

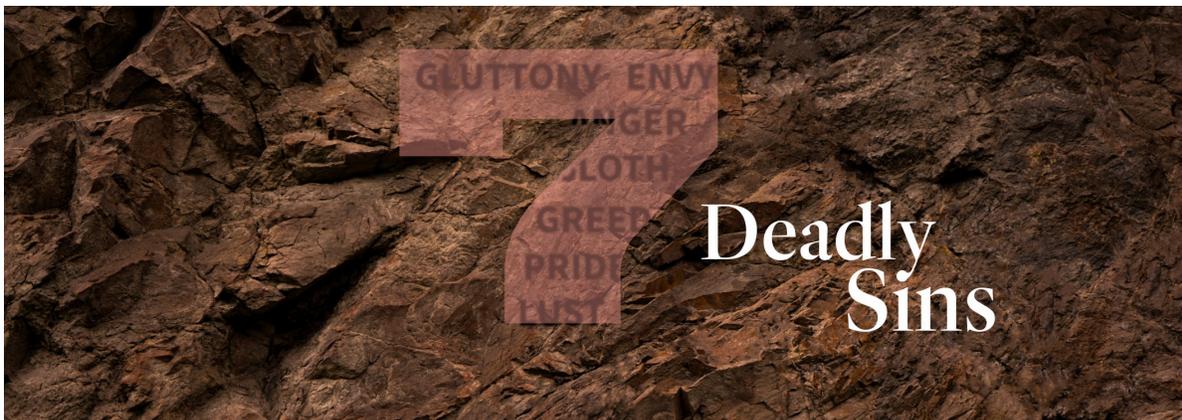
John Wesley viewed the seven deadly sins—pride, envy, wrath, sloth, greed, gluttony, and lust—as evidence of humanity's fallen, sinful nature and a departure from God's grace. He emphasized that these sins must be resisted, arguing that even believers must fight against the "inward" remnants of sin (especially pride and self-will) to reach perfection in love. Wesley believed that through faith, God enables individuals to overcome these "foolish and hurtful desires," leading to a life characterized by love rather than sin. You can learn more about John Wesley's theological view on sin by visiting: <https://wesleyscholar.com/john-wesley-on-sin-and-holiness/>.

## Resources:

<https://www.history.com/articles/seven-deadly-sins-origins>

[https://www.christianity.com/wiki/sin/what-are-the-seven-deadly-sins.html?fbclid=IwY2xjawPOVjFleHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETE5TVRjR2p0dDFIV2d6ODFic3J0YwZhcHBfaWQQMjlyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABHsFbagzTQeaC3ESN58iBPMi\\_4UirTulESYk6VTEnysorR14jDMgTompVhfOTu\\_aem\\_zCcrRoHy4qXRcJ2WRW33fw](https://www.christianity.com/wiki/sin/what-are-the-seven-deadly-sins.html?fbclid=IwY2xjawPOVjFleHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETE5TVRjR2p0dDFIV2d6ODFic3J0YwZhcHBfaWQQMjlyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABHsFbagzTQeaC3ESN58iBPMi_4UirTulESYk6VTEnysorR14jDMgTompVhfOTu_aem_zCcrRoHy4qXRcJ2WRW33fw)

**For Further Reading Consider:** "Ask of Old Paths" By: Grace Hamman



## **Ash Wednesday, February 18, 2026: PRIDE**

**Text:** Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; Psalm 51; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21 [Luke 15:17-19, Luke 18:9-14]

**Topics:** Sin, Repentance, Forgiveness, Free Will, Grace, Self-Examination, Pride, Humility

**Core Values:** Recognizing and admitting our sins; receiving God's grace and forgiveness; turning back toward God's way for us; avoiding the pervasive, corrosive sin of pride.

**Main Idea:** To recognize and admit our sinful nature requires humility and opens us to God's grace, forgiveness, and newness of life.

*Application/Beginning thought... We have an opportunity here at the beginning of Lent to examine our living, to admit where we are governed by pride, and to make a new start by humbly receiving God's grace.*

### **Bible Study Questions:**

1. Look briefly at Psalm 14:2-3 and Romans 3:10-12 about the pervasiveness of sin. Historically, the church has taught seven classes of sin are particularly harmful to human thriving: Pride, Envy, Anger, Sloth/Apathy, Greed, Lust, and Gluttony.
2. Note the "works of the flesh" Paul names in Galatians 5:19-21. How do these reflect "The Seven Deadly Sins"?
3. How does each of the three passages above (Joel, Psalm, Matthew) relate to the sin of Pride?
4. Note Luke 15:17-19 from Jesus' parable of the run-away ("lost") son and consider the relationship to Psalm 51.
5. How does Jesus' parable about two men in prayer (Luke 18:9-14) relate to Matthew 6?
6. Which Scripture passage (Joel, Psalm, Matthew) speaks most vividly to you? Why?
7. Is there a word, phrase, or thought from any of these three passages that particularly catches your attention or calls you to change or action?

### **Group Discussion Questions:**

1. Why do you think it might be appropriate to focus on sin during Lent?
2. What do you recall about previous sermons or studies about sin, especially the Seven?
3. Why do you think these 7 human traits (pride, envy, anger, sloth/apathy, greed, lust, gluttony) might be considered "deadly" sins? Discuss how these traits can each be "deadly" both inwardly and outwardly?
4. Why is Pride a sin? Aren't we supposed to have pride in workmanship? family pride, team pride, community pride, national pride?
5. C.S. Lewis has written\* that "every sin is the distortion of an energy breathed into us" by God; or as Adam Hamilton puts it, "a misuse of a good gift God gives us." Which of God's good gifts is distorted in the sin of Pride? (Think of the creation stories in Genesis 1 and 2.)
6. How do you think the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount relate to human sins and in particular the sin of Pride? Is there a "fruit of the Spirit" that counteracts Pride?
7. Reflect on how the sin of Pride shows itself in your life and how you might need to repent.
8. How can we pray for you?

**Prayer:** *Merciful God, we bow before you acknowledging that we are often driven by pride in our relationships with one another and with you, and we don't even know it! We believe we are right and hate to confess that we are wrong. Forgive us. Teach us the humble way of your son Jesus that day by day, like him, we can learn to serve you and others with humble hearts made clean by your mercy and grace. Thank you, loving Father. Amen.*



## February 22, 2026 (First Sunday of Lent): ENVY

**Text:** Genesis 2:15-3:7 [Genesis 4:1-8; Luke 15:11-32]

**Topics:** Deception, Dishonesty, Envy, Free Will, Obedience, Pride, Relationships, Sin, Temptation

**Core values:** Exercising free will responsibly; maintaining honest and open relationships with God and with each other; respecting and being grateful for each other's unique gifts

**Main Idea: Healthy relationships with God and with each other require obedience, honesty, and mutual respect.**

*Application/Beginning thought... When we are caught up in envy, our relationships with others can be damaged and have negative consequences for ourselves and others.*

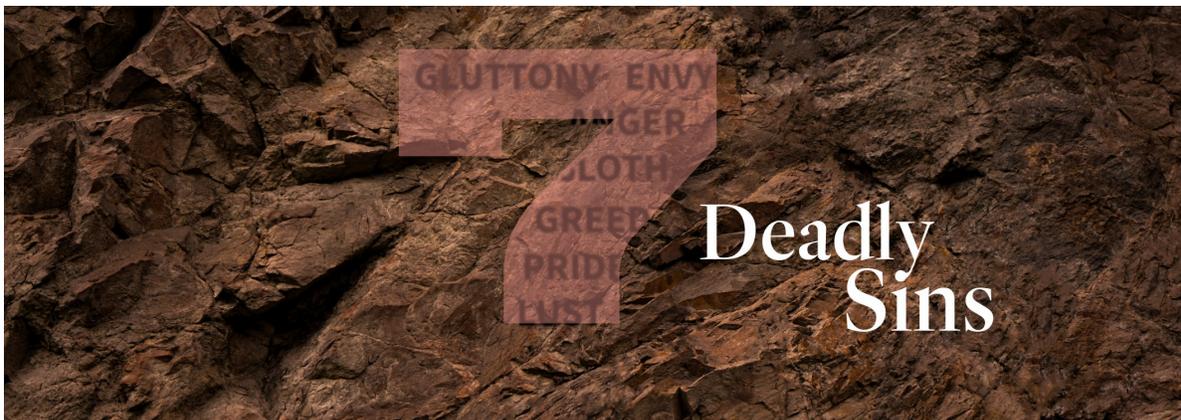
### Bible Study Questions:

1. How does the Creation story in Genesis 2 demonstrate the sin of Envy? Who would you say is envious of whom? What is the source of the Envy?
2. What is the result/impact of the Envy at play in this passage? What are the negative outcomes of Envy among the parties of this scene (Adam, Eve, serpent, Creator)?
3. Look also at Genesis 4:1-8, the story of Cain and Abel. Describe the source and impact of Envy here. How would you compare this sibling story with Jesus' parable about the older (responsible) and younger (run-away) brother in Luke 15:11-32? Does Envy operate in this story as well? What is the evidence? [Note that Genesis 4:7 is the first use of the word "sin" in Scripture.]
4. How would you describe the hearts and spirits of each person in these stories?
5. Is there a word, phrase, or thought from these passages that particularly catches your attention or calls you to change or action?

### Group Discussion Questions:

1. Aristotle wrote that "Envy is the pain we feel at the good fortunes of others." How would YOU define Envy? What good gift from God is distorted or misused into Envy?
2. How do you understand the difference between Envy and jealousy? Do you see any connections between the sins of Pride and Envy?
3. How does Envy impact our inner lives?
4. How does Envy relate to "coveting", the 10th Commandment (See Exodus 20:17).
5. Envy is an inward, "secret" sin; describe how Envy might escalate from a painful inner state to harmful outer actions. (Refer to Cain; also see James 3:14-16 and 4:1-2).
6. What types of situations or persons tend to stir Envy in you?
7. In a broader context, how might Envy prevent cooperation and damage community?
8. Can you name ways Envy is encouraged and cultivated in our broader world?
9. What Fruit of the Spirit might be an antidote to envy?
10. How can we pray for you?

**Prayer:** *Lord, I confess to you that I do harbor envy in my heart. I am aware that my envy stands in the way of healthy, helpful relationships with others and with you. Please remind me to celebrate the good things that come into the lives of others and to be always content and grateful for the good things you give me as well. In the name of your Son Jesus, Amen.*



### **March 1, 2026 (Second Sunday of Lent): ANGER**

**Text:** Ephesians 4:25-32 [Matthew 5:21-24; James 1:19-20]

**Topics:** Sin, grace, anger, judgmentalism, relationship, reconciliation

**Core Values:** Maintaining healthy relationships; avoiding doing harm to others or self; cultivating peace and justice

**Main Idea:** Anger is a powerful human emotion with potential for effecting change... or for causing great harm.

*Application/Beginning thought... Am I able to recognize when anger might be an appropriate response urging me to take action and when it is becoming disruptive and destructive?*

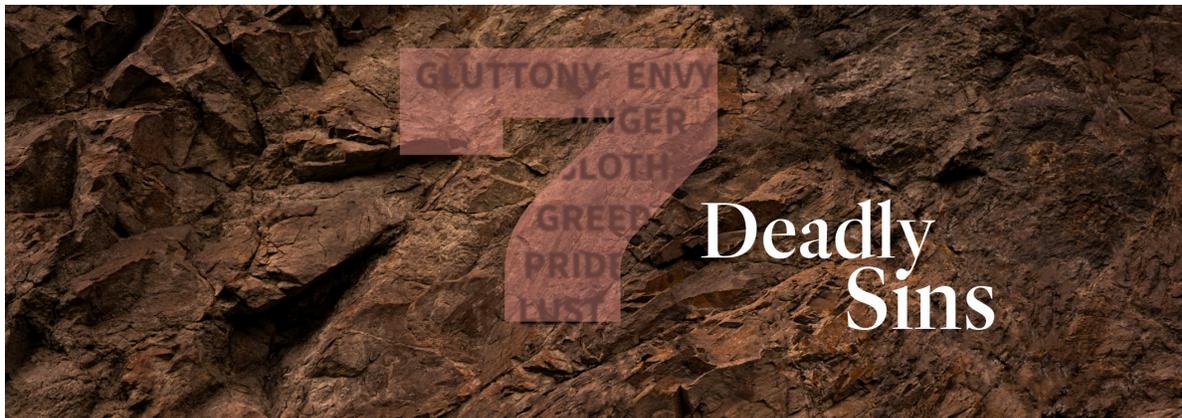
#### **Bible Study Questions:**

1. In some Bibles, Ephesians 4:25-32 is titled "Rules for the New Life". The writer of Ephesians admonishes us to "be angry but do not sin" in this new life. What seems to be the boundary between sinful and non-sinful Anger?
2. Look at Jesus' teaching about Anger in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:21-24). Jesus speaks of Anger in the context of murder. Why? Is that overblown?
3. Jesus' cleansing of the Temple (John 2:13-22, for example) is sometimes mentioned as a kind of justification for Anger. Compare what Jesus teaches about Anger in Matthew (and also what Ephesians teaches) to Jesus' actions in Jerusalem. How do they differ?
4. In the New Living Translation of the Bible, there are at least 325 references to Anger and only 3 of those references are in the gospels. Recall examples of holy people in Scripture showing great Anger. What kinds of situations or circumstances provoke their Anger?
5. By far the most frequent references to Anger in Scripture are attributed to God! Can you recall some examples? Comment on the paradox that this trait of God is also a "Deadly Sin".
6. What intrigues you or catches your attention in the Scripture passages on anger above?

#### **Group Discussion Questions:**

1. Have you ever known a really angry person? How did you feel around that person?
2. Recall the last time YOU felt REAL Anger: How did it feel? What did it sound like? What did it look like? What was the trigger? What was the aftermath?
3. Do you believe Anger is a universal human experience? Of what good gift is Anger a distortion or misuse?
4. What would you say makes God angry? How might Anger be directed toward accomplishing God's good will/ God's justice?
5. Why do you believe it is said that Anger damages both the target of our anger and ourselves?
6. Can Anger be considered a gift? Can Anger be used in a holy way ("be angry but not sin")? Is there an antidote to Anger among the Fruits of the Spirit?
7. How can we pray for you?

**Prayer:** *Oh, Father God! We confess that we are often angry people and that our anger is often provoked by our pride and envy...these sins seem to feed each other! We are sorry for our hurtful and unproductive anger. Please forgive us! Instead, teach us to be angry at those things that anger you: injustice, faithlessness, unkindness, and our lack of love for each other. And, by your grace, point us toward the new life of patience, gentleness, love, and self-control. Amen.*



## March 8, 2026 (Third Sunday of Lent): SLOTH/APATHY

**Text:** Proverbs 6:6-11; 24:30-34 [2 Thessalonians 3:6-13]

**Topics:** Apathy, Diligence, Discipleship, Purpose, Responsibility, Repentance, Work

**Core Values:** Staying in love with God through spiritual disciplines; using God's gifts for the benefit of our community and the world; responding to the invitation to follow Jesus

**Main Idea: "Sloth" is more than physical laziness: it is a spiritual and mental malady that breeds indifference and irresponsibility.**

**Note:** Through the centuries, "acedia" (original Latin translated as "sloth") has been the most difficult to define and carries connotations in church teachings of apathy, neglect, or indifference - inner mental and spiritual states that might reflect "spiritual laziness".

*Application/Beginning thought... Is my "busy-ness" a cover for the sin of Sloth?*

### **Bible Study Questions:**

1. For the writer of Proverbs, what is the main reason idleness/Sloth should be avoided? Is this a personal or a communal concern?
2. Look also at 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 and compare with Proverbs text. For Paul, does there seem to be a different or additional motivation for avoiding idleness?
3. Does either passage imply that laziness, idleness, Sloth is anything more than a physical problem of doing work necessary for survival?
4. Do these passages give a clear rationale for why idleness/Sloth would be considered a major sin by the Church?
5. Can you think of any other passages of Scripture that might relate to the broader understanding in the note above of the sin of Sloth (See for example, Luke 9:57-62)?
6. Which passage aligns most closely with your understanding of "Sloth" as a sin?

### **Group Discussion Questions:**

1. Do you consider yourself a slothful or a busy person? Is there a difference for you between physical "Sloth" and spiritual "Sloth"; between personal Sloth and communal Sloth?
2. How might a "too busy" person actually be guilty of the sin of Sloth? How does "distraction" relate to Sloth? What do we do to prevent us from doing something of greater importance?
3. Have you ever experienced a prompting from the Spirit but not followed through on it? Have you ever been called to use God's gifts to benefit the community and not responded? Are you aware of needs in the church community or in the broader community that you could help with but you avoid the involvement? How might these situations relate to "sloth"?
4. How do you think "Sloth" might relate to discipleship? In "Sinning Like a Christian" Bishop Will Willamon writes that Methodism offers the perfect antidote to Sloth by providing a clear method for practicing spiritual disciplines. Comment on this.
5. What synonym for the ancient word "Acedia"/Sloth (apathy, neglect, indifference) best helps you understand why Sloth would be considered by the Church to be a "deadly sin"?
6. How can we pray for you?

**Prayer:** *Jesus, I confess that I have heard your call to pick up a cross and follow you, and I see many things happening in the world that stir my spirit to help, but I don't really want to get involved; I am comfortable in my life; I don't have energy to take on something so big and risky. Am I guilty of Sloth, Lord? Am I inclined to apathy, neglect, and indifference instead of discipleship? Forgive me, Lord. And stir me to do what I can, with your grace and help. Amen.*



## March 15, 2026 (Fourth Sunday of Lent): GREED

**Text:** Luke 12:15-21 [Exodus 16:13-21; Isaiah 5:8; Luke 21:1-3]

**Topics:** Abundance, faith, generosity, grace, gratefulness, provision, scarcity, social justice, trust

**Core Values:** Acknowledging God's abundance and provision; living a life of gratitude and generosity

**Main Idea:** Greed deceives us into believing we always need more to feel secure and happy and prevents us from being generous to others.

*Application/Beginning thought... Where and how is greed at work in my life?*

### Bible Study Questions:

1. Notice what Jesus says to his disciples in the section just following his parable of the Rich Fool. How do the two passages relate, and why would this teaching be important to his followers?
2. Notice in verse 16 that "the land produced abundantly". What does this teach us about God's provision? Instead of "building bigger barns" what else might the landowner have considered?
3. Note, too, the Rich Fool's plan for his life after all his stuff was stored. Comment about the possible relationship between Greed and Sloth.
4. Luke includes other teachings about accumulating excessive wealth. See, for example, Luke 16:19-31; Luke 18:18-23; Luke 21:1-3. How does greed affect social relationships?
5. For a few comments on Greed and its impact in the Hebrew Bible, see Exodus 16:13-21 and Isaiah 5:8. Also, note which two of the Ten Commandments relate to Greed.
6. Is there a word, phrase, or thought from this passage that particularly catches your attention?

### Group Discussion Questions

1. We think of Greed mostly in relation to material possessions. But if Greed is "the insatiable desire to acquire or possess more than one needs," what intangibles might also trigger Greed?
2. Consider connections between Greed and Envy; Greed and Pride; Greed and Anger.
3. In the 1987 film "Wall Street", chief broker Gordon Gekko exclaims, "Greed is good!" For whom is Greed "good"? Comment on recent social disasters fueled by Greed.
4. Do you agree with the observation that our economic system is founded on Greed? Think about consumerism, advertising... and the self-storage business (!).
5. What is the impact of Greed on peace? What is the impact of Greed on the environment?
6. How does the world's economy compare to God's economy? What do you believe about needs and wants, about scarcity and abundance? Do our practices and attitudes towards things reflect our understanding of God and God's creation?
7. What good gift does Greed distort or misuse?
8. Comment on the NY Times' assigning a writer/reporter to cover "the culture of recreational acquisition".
9. John Wesley famously said, "Earn all you can; save all you can; give all you can." Does this sound like Greed? If not, why not?
10. How can we overcome the tendency toward Greed? What fruit of the spirit might help in this?
11. How can we pray for you?

**Prayer:** *Generous God of abundance, every day you give me all I need and more. Yet, I still experience cravings and desires for more stuff! Forgive me, and grant me grace to turn away from greed and toward generosity. Teach me the joy of gratitude and the blessing of sharing. Remind us that you provide more than enough for us all and give us the will to defeat accumulation through generous and unselfish love of our neighbors. In Jesus' name, Amen.*



**March 22, 2026 (Fifth Sunday of Lent): LUST**

**Text:** James 1: 12-18 [Matthew 5:27-30] [2 Samuel 11]

**Topics:** Faithfulness, Power, Relationships, Repentance, Respect, Sin, Temptation, Grace, Forgiveness

**Core Values:** Importance of relationships over personal indulgence; recognizing impact of inner desires and the importance of maintaining self-control

**Main Idea:** God's good gift of intimacy can be distorted by lust.

*Application/Beginning thought... when not recognized and attended to, inner lustful desires can lead us into harmful behaviors that damage important relationships.*

**Bible Study Questions:**

1. What is the main point of James' teaching on "desire"? Is James equating "temptation" and "desire"? (Note that the original Greek word James uses here for "desire" is *epithemia* and carries specifically sexual connotations.)
2. For James, what is the potential (likely?) outcome of responding to desire? Is this overstated? What might "die" in the process James lays out from "desire" to "death"?
3. Read also Jesus' teaching on adultery and Lust in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:27-30). Is Jesus exaggerating the power of lust? What dynamic do you think Jesus might be addressing by this focus on "looking at a woman with lust in his heart"?
4. What connections do you see between Jesus' teaching and that of James?
5. Consider also the story of King David, Bathsheba, and Uriah in 2 Samuel 11. What were the impacts of David's Lust?
6. Is Lust more than physical attraction, craving? How important are healthy personal relationships to forming healthy communities, and how does that relate to what both Jesus and James are doing in their teaching?
7. How does Lust relate to Pride? to Envy? What is the key harm of Lust?
8. Is there a word, phrase, or thought from this week's Scripture that particularly captures your attention?

**Group Discussion Questions:**

1. How might God's good gift of intimacy be distorted by Lust? Does Lust lead to intimacy?
2. What Fruit of the Spirit (from Galatians 5) might be an "antidote" to the sin of Lust?
3. What is the difference between Lust and passion?
4. What is the impact of Lust on the one lusted after?
5. Comment on the idea that Lust has been considered by the Church as a form of idolatry. What is Lust's idol?
6. How can we pray for you?

**Prayer:** *Lord God, you made us physical creatures who long for intimacy and closeness. We admit that there are times that our longings tip precariously toward lust. Remind us, Lord, that lust diminishes the blessing of your gift by focusing on personal indulgence rather than mutual relationship. Enable us, Lord, by your grace, to recognize inflamed desire when it arises and to claim and practice the spiritual fruits of self-control and faithfulness to avoid desire's enticement. In faith, through Jesus, Amen.*



**March 29, 2026 (Palm/Passion Sunday): GLUTTONY**

**Text:** Philippians 3:17-21 [Exodus 16:1-8; Luke 16:19-31]

**Topics:** Contentment, gratefulness, repentance, responsibility, social justice, temptation,

**Core Values:** sharing instead of wasting precious resources; being mindful of the needs of other; recognizing the responsibilities of community

**Main Idea:** **Gobbling up more than we need to be satisfied prevents others in the community from having “enough”.**

*Application/Beginning thought...Do I consume more than I need and does my consumption keep others from having what they need for a good life?*

**Bible Study Questions:**

1. What does Paul mean when he writes “their god is their belly”? What might have prompted this?
2. What images come to mind as you read vv. 18-20? What is Paul’s point in this passage?
3. Notice that these verses are included in a section titled “Pressing toward the Goal”. What does Paul indicate as the goal?
4. Look at Exodus 16:1-8 and say something about how this might relate to the sin of “Gluttony”. What is God’s plan to make overconsumption unnecessary and even destructive? A clue is in v. 4.
5. What “test” does God devise to check the Hebrews’ trust and obedience?
6. For another look at how God perceives gluttonous cravings, read Numbers 11:4-6 and 18-20! How is Gluttony its own punishment?
7. Also review Luke 16:19-31, Jesus’ parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. Describe the scene and say something about how it makes you feel as an observer of these two men.
8. How does this parable relate to issues of social justice?
9. Comment on the different forms of Gluttony reflected in each of these passages of Scripture.
10. Is there a word, phrase, image, or thought in this passage that particularly captures your attention?

**Group Discussion Questions:**

1. Why did the church list Gluttony among the deadly sins? Doesn’t Gluttony just hurt the glutton?
2. How does Gluttony relate to Greed? to Lust?
3. What good gift does Gluttony abuse or distort?
4. Will Willamon points out that the Church defined Gluttony not as a physical disorder but as a moral disorder. What do you think this means?
5. Are we guilty of Gluttony in areas other than food? Think: gadgets, vehicles, clothes, etc. Can you think of other areas where we consume more than we need or we spend excessively? (e.g. “binge watching”).
6. How does our consumption relate to the needs of others in our community?
7. How can we guard against the sin of Gluttony? Is there a fruit of the spirit that addresses this deadly sin? Why do we need spiritual help to overcome sins like Gluttony, Lust, and Greed?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, we see how very much we need your grace, for we are battered on every side by opportunities to sin. Forgive us when we fall prey to the “deadly” influence of sin and remind us that sin hurts not only ourselves but also our relationships to others and to our community. Teach us to rely on your Holy Spirit to guide us away from sin and toward your good gifts with gratitude and joy. Amen.*



### **Some General Thoughts:**

1. Willamon writes that the Church attributes the 7 Deadly Sins to three sources: physical, emotional, and moral. To which category would you assign each of the seven sins?
2. Have you seen something of yourself in each of the Seven Sins? Do you consider this to be an effective way of self-examination leading to confession, repentance, and renewal, or is this just an antiquated system of imposing church-induced guilt?

### **SOURCES**

\*Lewis, C. S. *Letters to Malcolm*, Letter 13

*The New Interpreter's Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha*; Abingdon Press, 2003

*The Wesley Study Bible: NRSV*; Abingdon Press, 2009

Wikipedia, general church history of The Seven Deadly Sins, plus additional articles on each individual sin

Willamon, Will. *Sinning Like a Christian: A New Look at the Seven Deadly Sins*, Abingdon Press, 2013