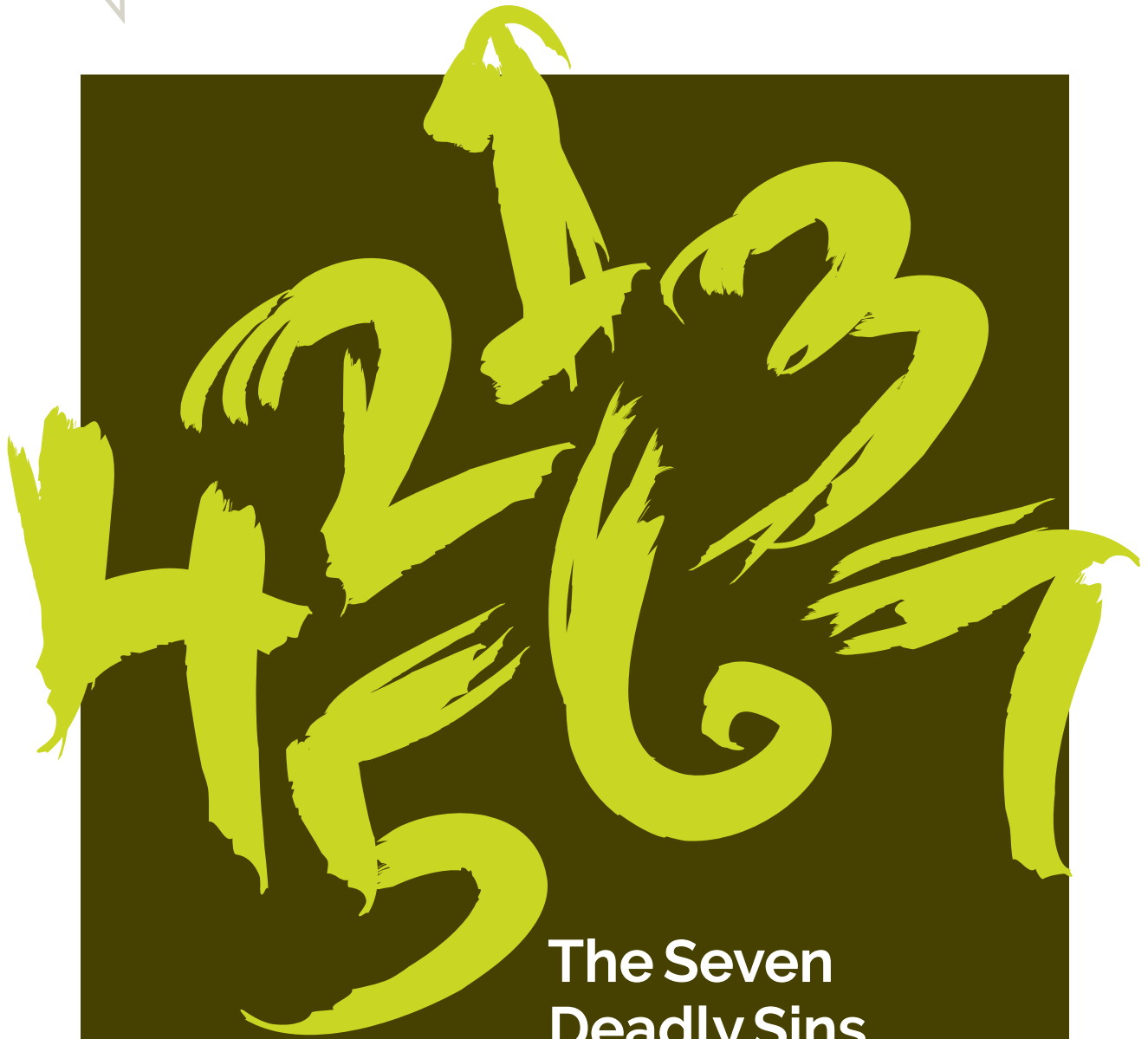


MAKE IT **COUNT**

A 10-week study for leadership teams by *Influence* magazine



The Seven Deadly Sins and Leadership

By STEPHEN BLANDINO

DISCUSSION GUIDE

MAKE IT COUNT

A 10-Week Study
For Leadership
Teams

What Is Make It Count?

Make It Count is a leadership development resource for use individually or with staff, volunteers, or board members.

Each installment is also available online as a downloadable PDF, along with interactive pages for group member use. The underlined words and phrases in the following text correspond to fill-in-the-blank sections on team member pages. Access these free resources at influencemagazine.com/Downloads.

These lessons are written by **STEPHEN BLANDINO**, lead pastor of 7 City Church in Fort Worth, Texas, and the author of several books.



Leaders face constant challenges as they navigate change, build teams, and make difficult decisions. But the toughest tests often come from within.

Fourth-century theologian Evagrius Ponticus identified some of these inner battles when he originated a list of eight deadly sins. Gregory I later consolidated the list into seven deadly sins.

This installment of *Make It Count* examines the seven deadly sins and how leaders can keep these issues from sabotaging their lives and ministries. It includes 10 lessons:

1. *Seven Deadly Sins*. There are many challenges and temptations in ministry, and the seven deadly sins can wreak havoc on leaders. These sins include pride, envy, anger, sloth, greed, gluttony and lust.



The Seven Deadly Sins and Leadership

By STEPHEN BLANDINO

2. **Pride vs. Humility.** God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Countering pride with humility requires a posture of listening, admitting “I don’t know,” using power in service of others, and welcoming honest feedback.
3. **Pride vs. Teachability.** Teachability is the gift humility makes possible. A desire to learn and willingness to change characterize a teachable spirit. Remaining curious, coachable and correctable makes learning possible.
4. **Envy vs. Contentment.** Envy creates a constant battle of comparisons. To replace envy with contentment, we should establish our identity in Christ, adopt a healthy definition of success, practice daily gratitude, and learn from the success of others.
5. **Anger vs. Patience.** Anger surfaces when we don’t get what we want, when we want it, and how we want it. But the cure for anger is patience. This spiritual virtue makes room for others’ imperfections and contributes to relational peace and understanding.
6. **Sloth vs. Diligence.** “Lazy leadership” might seem like an oxymoron, but the higher leaders climb, the more privileged we can become. Scripture implores us to learn a lesson from the sluggard, apply our hearts to understanding, and cultivate a life of diligence.
7. **Sloth vs. Stewardship.** Ministry leaders are accountable to God for how they steward their time, talent, money and influence. A slothful leader complains about not having enough, but a wise leader stewards resources with Kingdom interests in mind.
8. **Greed vs. Generosity.** Greed is a common downfall of leaders. Fighting the drift toward greed requires systems and guardrails to help us steward money responsibly and ethically. And to keep our hearts pure, we must practice generosity.
9. **Gluttony vs. Moderation.** Gluttony is the uncontrolled appetite for more than we need, usually to the point of overconsumption. The cure for gluttony is moderation — balancing *feasting* with *fasting*, with *normality* in between.
10. **Lust vs. Love.** Lust seeks selfish fulfillment while taking advantage of others. But love is patient and kind. It rejoices with the truth, protects, trusts, hopes and perseveres. It looks out for the well-being of others.

As you discuss each lesson with your team, seek to model humility, teachability, contentment, patience, diligence, stewardship, generosity, moderation and love.

1 | THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS AND LEADERSHIP

Seven Deadly Sins

Assess

Can you name the “seven deadly sins,” as they are often called in Church tradition?

Insights and Ideas

There are plenty of challenges and temptations in ministry. To lead well and finish strong, we must name the struggles of the flesh the enemy is using to sabotage leaders.

The apostle Paul wrote, “The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like” (Galatians 5:19–21).

Fourth-century theologian Evagrius Ponticus created a similar description when he originated a list of eight deadly sins. Gregory I later consolidated the list into the seven deadly sins below. Consider these sins, along with a brief definition of each.

1. *Pride*: The exaggerated view of self over God.
2. *Envy*: An intense yearning for others’ traits, possessions, influence or circumstances.
3. *Anger*: A deep-rooted sense of bitterness, hatred or vengefulness toward others.
4. *Sloth*: A posture of apathy and laziness evident in poor stewardship of time, talent and resources.
5. *Greed*: A love of money that leads to an inordinate desire for and pursuit of material things.
6. *Gluttony*: The uncontrolled appetite for more than is necessary or required, usually to the point of overconsumption.
7. *Lust*: A passionate and unbridled craving for sexual pleasure.

These lethal sins aren’t restricted to leadership, but their destructive force is *exaggerated* in leadership. In other words, not only do these sins hurt ministers, but they can also blow a hole under the waterline of a church’s ministry.

While the seven sins are indeed deadly, you cannot overcome them or mitigate their influence unless you first acknowledge them. Regular self-evaluation is essential to keep these sins from taking root in your heart. That happens best with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Psalm 139:23 says, “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.” When you invite Him to do so, the Spirit will reveal sin’s influence in your life. And as you yield to Him, you’ll begin bearing the fruit of His character (Galatians 5:22–23).

Reflect and Discuss

1. How have you seen the seven deadly sins show up in leadership?
2. Why do you think pride is so damaging in ministry?
3. How are leaders tempted to overlook the presence of sin in their lives and ministries?

Apply

Spend a few minutes in prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit to search your heart. Ask Him to reveal sins taking root in your life and impacting your leadership. Then repent of those sins and seek the Lord’s grace to help you bear the fruit of the Spirit.

1 | THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS AND LEADERSHIP

Seven Deadly Sins

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Apply

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2 | THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS AND LEADERSHIP

Pride vs. Humility

Team Review

How did the Holy Spirit speak to you and challenge you as you spent time inviting Him to search your heart?

Assess

How do prideful leaders make you feel?

Insights and Ideas

God takes seriously the sin of pride. In fact, the Bible says, “God opposes the proud” (James 4:6). Leaders may wield great influence and power, but if God opposes them, their leadership doesn’t have a chance.

King Nebuchadnezzar is a classic example of this truth. Despite Daniel’s warning to repent 12 months earlier, Nebuchadnezzar said, “Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?” (Daniel 4:30).

But Nebuchadnezzar’s glory didn’t last long. “Even as the words were on his lips, a voice came from heaven, ‘This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you’” (Daniel 4:31). In that moment, King Nebuchadnezzar lost his kingdom and his influence.

Proverbs 16:18 says, “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”

Thankfully, James offers a clear alternative to this path, and leaders would be wise to heed it. God opposes the proud, but He also “shows favor to the humble” (James 4:6).

So, how do you cultivate humility, attract God’s favor, and defeat the deadly sin of pride? Start with these four steps:

1. *Assume the posture of a listener.* When you stop talking and start listening, you elevate the value of others and turn yourself into a learner.
2. *Admit “I don’t know.”* These words don’t reveal weakness but rather meekness and the security to accept limitations.
3. *Use power in service of others.* Lift up those around you instead of just promoting yourself and advancing your own interests.
4. *Welcome honest feedback.* A secure leader invites input, whereas an insecure leader resists it. The former views feedback as a way to grow, while the latter sees it as a threat.

Author Max Lucado offers a profound warning on the danger of pride: “God resists the proud because the proud resist God. Arrogance stiffens the knee so it will not kneel, hardens the heart so it will not admit to sin. The heart of pride never confesses, never repents, never asks for forgiveness. Indeed, the arrogant never feel the need for forgiveness. Pride is the hidden reef that shipwrecks the soul.”

Guard your heart and cultivate an ongoing posture of humility.

Reflect and Discuss

1. What’s offensive about pride and attractive about humility?
2. Which of the four steps to cultivating humility most challenges you?
3. In what areas of your life is it easy to succumb to pride?

Apply

Think of specific situations in which you have behaved pridefully. Then identify ways to demonstrate a humble attitude in such scenarios instead. Ask God to help you respond with greater humility in the future. You might even ask a friend or co-worker to hold you accountable.

2 | THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS AND LEADERSHIP

Pride vs. Humility

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Four steps to cultivating humility:

1. *Assume the posture of a* _____ . When you stop talking and start listening, you elevate the value of others and turn yourself into a learner.
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3 THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS AND LEADERSHIP

Pride vs. Teachability

Team Review

How has God been helping you cultivate a greater posture of humility?

Assess

How have you seen pride get in the way of teachability?

Insights and Ideas

Pride is such a big issue in leadership we're devoting two lessons to this topic. The first focused on pride versus humility and the keys to cultivating a spirit of humility. This lesson addresses pride versus teachability.

The best leaders are learners, and a learning leader is a teachable leader. Author Roger Seip created a teachability index with a simple formula: Desire to learn × willingness to change = level of teachability.

Assess yourself on a scale from 1 to 10 for each part of the formula to reveal your teachability score in any area of life — spiritually, relationally, physically, financially or in leadership.

For example, let's say you need to grow your leadership skills in your current ministry role. If your desire to learn these new skills is a 5 out of 10, and your willingness to change is a 3, your score on the teachability index is only 15. This is bad news for you and your ministry.

On the other hand, if your spouse wants you to make some changes to improve your relationship, the score might be different. If your desire to learn in this area is a 9 and your willingness to change is an 8, you have a teachability index of 72. This is much better news for your marriage.

To become more teachable, work on developing these three traits:

1. *Be curious.* Having an intrinsic motivation to discover something new will give you an insatiable appetite to learn, discover and experiment.
2. *Be coachable.* Proverbs 19:20 says, "Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise." Be deliberate about *finding* coaches and *being* coachable. Teachability requires both — someone to pour into you and a willingness to receive what that person has to say.
3. *Be correctable.* Proverbs 15:5 says, "A fool spurns a parent's discipline, but whoever heeds correction shows prudence." When you resist correction, you slow your growth rate.

Each of these qualities requires a posture of humility. In other words, humility makes it possible to become curious, coachable and correctable. Cultivating a humble attitude, along with a *desire to learn* and a *willingness to change*, will open new avenues of growth and learning.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Why is teachability important for leaders?
2. In what areas of your life are you most and least teachable? Why?
3. Which of the three teachability traits — being curious, coachable or correctable — do you most need to develop?

Apply

Use the teachability index to assess one or two areas of your life. Calculate your score by multiplying your desire to learn by your willingness to change. Then put together a plan to become more curious, coachable and correctable.

3 | THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS AND LEADERSHIP

Pride vs. Teachability

The best leaders are learners, and a learning leader is a teachable leader. Author Roger Seip created a teachability index with a simple formula:

Desire to _____ × willingness to _____

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Three important traits:

1. *Be* _____. Having an intrinsic motivation to discover something new will give you an insatiable appetite to learn, discover and experiment.
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Apply

Use the teachability index to assess one or two areas of your life. Calculate your score by multiplying your desire to learn by your willingness to change. Then put together a plan to become more curious, coachable and correctable.

4 | THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS AND LEADERSHIP

Envy vs. Contentment

Team Review

What was the result of calculating the teachability index for a specific area of your life?

Assess

What does envy look like in leadership and ministry?

Insights and Ideas

Ministry leaders face a constant battle of comparisons. It's easy to measure attendance numbers, resources, and influence against other pastors, churches, and ministries. And that comparison often leads to the sin of envy.

The ultimate outcome of envy is disorder. James 3:16 says, "Where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice." The more we envy, the more disordered our lives become.

The solution is finding contentment. Being content helps us live in the tension between *satisfied* and *significant*.

The apostle Paul said, "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" (Philippians 4:12–13).

In today's culture, contentment can feel like laziness, coasting, or a loss of passion. In fact, many leaders equate contentment with giving up. However, learning to be content counters the unrestrained urge for more that can keep us from experiencing peace and fulfillment.

Here are four ways to battle the sin of envy and build contentment:

1. *Establish your identity in Christ.* Envy usually makes us devalue who we are and what we've accomplished. To defeat envy, ground your identity in Christ's love for you, not your performance for Him.
2. *Adopt a healthier definition of success.* Envy occurs when we measure our achievements against somebody else's definition of success. Instead, seek God's vision for your life and ministry, and make that your standard.
3. *Practice daily gratitude.* Whether it's saying "thank you" to three people, writing in a gratitude journal, or expressing heartfelt worship to God, make thankfulness a part of your daily routine. We envy what we don't have when we fail to give thanks for what we do have.
4. *Learn from successful leaders.* Rather than being envious of somebody who has experienced more "success," why not become that person's student? Get together for lunch, and ask him or her some questions about leadership. You might be surprised by how much you learn.

Envy will sometimes raise its ugly head in leadership, but these practices and habits will help you cultivate contentment and keep envy in check.

Reflect and Discuss

1. How have you seen envy create disorder?
2. In what areas of leadership and ministry does envy sometimes get the best of you?
3. Which of the insights for cultivating contentment most speaks to you? Why?

Apply

Pick at least one of the following four insights to put into practice today: Remind yourself of who you are in Christ; adopt a biblical definition of success; start a daily gratitude rhythm; or call a leader to schedule a lunch meeting so you can learn from his or her success.

4 | THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS AND LEADERSHIP

Envy vs. Contentment

Ministry leaders face a constant battle of comparisons. It's easy to measure attendance numbers, resources and influence against other pastors, churches and ministries. And that comparison often leads to the sin of envy.

"Where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice" (James 3:16).

"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" (Philippians 4:12-13).

Four ways to battle envy and build contentment:

1. *Establish your* _____ *in Christ.* To defeat envy, ground your identity in Christ's love for you, not your performance for Him.
2. *Adopt a healthier* _____ *of success.* Envy occurs when we measure our achievements against somebody else's definition of success. Instead, seek God's vision for your life and ministry, and make that your standard.
3. *Practice daily* _____. We envy what we don't have when we fail to give thanks for what we do have.
4. *Learn from* _____ *leaders.* Rather than being envious of somebody who has experienced more "success," why not become that person's student?

Apply

Pick at least one of the following four insights to put into practice today: Remind yourself of who you are in Christ; adopt a biblical definition of success; start a daily gratitude rhythm; or call a leader to schedule a lunch meeting so you can learn from his or her success.

5 | THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS AND LEADERSHIP

Anger vs. Patience

Team Review

Which practice have you implemented to decrease envy and increase contentment in your life?

Assess

What makes you angry in life? In leadership?

Insights and Ideas

Leaders often have high standards of excellence and low tolerance for failure. When something goes wrong, these dispositions sometimes trigger an angry response.

A quick temper is a destructive force. Ecclesiastes 7:9 says, “Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools.” One lapse in the direction of anger can expose foolishness in your leadership.

Ministry calls for patience. Patience can help us avoid an inappropriate — and even sinful — response. James 1:19–20 says, “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.”

As you cooperate with the Holy Spirit to see this fruit developed in your life, keep in mind four truths:

1. *Patience is a spiritual virtue.* Patience goes against the grain of today’s fast-paced leadership culture. Yet this virtue is part of the Spirit’s character He wants to produce in us. Proverbs 16:32 says, “Better a patient person than a warrior, one with self-control than one who takes a city.” Taking a city sounds like a leadership move, but a conqueror is not as wise as a patient person.
2. *Patience makes room for imperfection.* Leaders can become agitated when team members don’t perform at a certain standard. While accountability is important, ministers must also practice Ephesians 4:2: “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”
3. *Patience contributes to relational peace.* Leadership isn’t just about results. It’s also about relationships, and patience makes relationships healthier. Proverbs 15:18 says, “A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel.”
4. *Patience increases understanding.* Sometimes leaders need to slow down long enough to assess and understand the situation. Patience makes that possible. Proverbs 14:29 says, “Whoever is patient has great understanding, but one who is quick-tempered displays folly.”

Anger leads to a host of problems, while the path of patience produces a much healthier outcome.

Reflect and Discuss

1. How does a leader’s anger impact the people he or she leads?
2. What difference have you seen patience make in leadership situations?
3. Which of the four truths above most speaks to you? Why?

Apply

Think of a time when you became angry in the context of leadership. How would patience have made a difference? What will it take to cultivate greater patience in your life?

5 | THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS AND LEADERSHIP

Anger vs. Patience

Leaders often have high standards of excellence and low tolerance for failure. When something goes wrong, these dispositions sometimes trigger an angry response.

“Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools” (Ecclesiastes 7:9).

“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires” (James 1:19–20).

Four helpful truths:

1. *Patience is a spiritual* _____.

“Better a patient person than a warrior, one with self-control than one who takes a city” (Proverbs 16:32).

2. *Patience makes* _____ *for imperfection.*

“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love” (Ephesians 4:2).

3. *Patience contributes to* _____ *peace.*

“A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel” (Proverbs 15:18).

4. *Patience increases* _____.

“Whoever is patient has great understanding, but one who is quick-tempered displays folly” (Proverbs 14:29).

Apply

Think of a time when you became angry in the context of leadership. How would patience have made a difference? What will it take to cultivate greater patience in your life?

6 THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS AND LEADERSHIP

Sloth vs. Diligence

Team Review

How has the Holy Spirit been speaking to you about being patient rather than angry as a leader?

Assess

What does slothfulness look like in leadership?

Insights and Ideas

Sloth is a posture of apathy and laziness, and its effect on lives and ministries is disastrous. Proverbs 24:30–34 illustrates the impact of slothfulness: “I went past the field of a sluggard, past the vineyard of someone who has no sense; thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins. I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw: A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest — and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man.”

This passage reveals four important insights on slothfulness:

1. *The picture of slothfulness.* The picture of slothfulness in Proverbs is one of neglect and ruin. Simply put, when we are slothful, we neglect our responsibilities and invite ruin on the areas God has entrusted to us.
2. *The lesson from slothfulness.* There’s a simple but powerful lesson here: It only takes “a little” slothfulness for scarcity to find its way into your life. But that *little* can quickly turn into a *life* of laziness.
3. *The response to slothfulness.* Verse 32 contains the key to guarding against slothfulness: “I applied my heart to what I observed.” Defeating slothfulness begins not with the work of our hands but with the posture of our hearts.

A heart bent on receiving and reaping rather than giving and sowing will quickly drift toward complacency, laziness and entitlement.

4. *The antidote for slothfulness.* Proverbs 13:4 says, “A sluggard’s appetite is never filled, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.” Diligence keeps slothfulness from running and ruining our lives.

“Lazy leadership” might seem like an oxymoron, but the higher a leader climbs, the more privileged he or she can become. There is a real temptation to ditch diligence for perks, and work ethic for privilege. But keep in mind the end results.

Not only can slothfulness ruin us financially, but it will also impact the people we love, the fruit we bear, the ministries we lead, and the results we produce.

Reflect and Discuss

1. How is our culture becoming more slothful, and how is this attitude influencing the Church?
2. When are we most prone to slip into slothfulness as leaders?
3. What are some practical ways to cultivate diligence when you’re tempted to become slothful?

Apply

Read Proverbs 24:30–34. Meditate on this passage and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any areas of slothfulness in your life. Confess your sins, and then consider what steps you can take to become more diligent.

6

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS AND LEADERSHIP

Sloth vs. Diligence

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Four insights on slothfulness:

1. *The _____ of slothfulness.* The picture of slothfulness in Proverbs is one of neglect and ruin.
2. *The _____ from slothfulness.* It only takes “a little” slothfulness for scarcity to find its way into your life.
3. *The _____ to slothfulness.* Verse 32 says, “I applied my heart to what I observed.” Defeating slothfulness begins not with the work of our hands but with the posture of our hearts.
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Apply

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7 | THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS AND LEADERSHIP

Sloth vs. Stewardship

Team Review

In what area of your life are you aiming to become more diligent?

Assess

How would you define stewardship?

Insights and Ideas

Few people would admit to being lazy or slothful. In fact, most of us are quick to point out how hard we work. However, stewardship is the ultimate measure of diligence. How do we manage what God has entrusted to us?

Wise stewardship is our commitment to manage resources with God's best interests in mind. Following are four areas ministers should steward well:

1. **Time.** This is one resource we cannot manufacture. Each of us has the same number of minutes daily. Slothful leaders lack urgency and waste those minutes on things that don't matter. Wise leaders focus on *priorities* and *efficiency*. Priorities are what we do, and efficiency is how effectively we do it. Together, they help us do the right things in the right way.
2. **Talent.** God entrusts every leader with specific gifts and abilities. Slothful leaders lack the discipline to develop their talents, but wise leaders invest in reaching their highest potential. That commitment allows them to maximize their talents for the work of God's kingdom.
3. **Money.** A church's financial resources help advance the Kingdom locally and globally. A slothful leader complains about not having enough, but a good leader wisely stewards what God provides. If we want Him to entrust us with more, we must wisely use what He has already placed in our hands.
4. **Influence.** Every leader also has a measure of influence. We can use it to help or hurt others, to serve those around us or serve ourselves. Wise leaders leverage their influence for the greatest good, whereas slothful leaders fail to take seriously the ministry opportunities God has given them.

Colossians 3:23–24 says, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

Defeating slothfulness requires diligence and wise stewardship of time, talent, money and influence. When we serve God faithfully, it will be evident in our lives and ministries.

Reflect and Discuss

1. How does the relationship between slothfulness and stewardship challenge you?
2. How well do you steward the four areas above?
3. How can we better steward what God has entrusted to our church?

Apply

On a scale from 1 to 10, evaluate your stewardship in four areas: time, talent, money and influence. God holds us accountable for what He has entrusted to us. Therefore, identify what you can do in each area to make improvements.

7 | THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS AND LEADERSHIP

Sloth vs. Stewardship

Few people would admit to being lazy or slothful. In fact, most of us are quick to point out how hard we work. However, stewardship is the ultimate measure of diligence. How do we manage what God has entrusted to us?

Four areas of stewardship:

1. _____. Slothful leaders lack urgency and waste those minutes on things that don't matter. Wise leaders focus on *priorities* and *efficiency*. Priorities are what we do, and efficiency is how effectively we do it.
2. _____. Slothful leaders lack the discipline to develop their talents, but wise leaders invest in reaching their highest potential.
3. _____. A slothful leader complains about not having enough, but a good leader wisely stewards what God provides.
4. _____. Wise leaders leverage their influence for the greatest good, whereas slothful leaders fail to take seriously the ministry opportunities God has given them.

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving” (Colossians 3:23–24).

Apply

On a scale from 1 to 10, evaluate your stewardship in four areas: time, talent, money and influence. God holds us accountable for what He has entrusted to us. Therefore, identify what you can do in each area to make improvements.

8

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS AND LEADERSHIP

Greed vs. Generosity

Team Review

What steps have you taken to steward your time, talent, money and influence more effectively?

Assess

What are the most common ways you've seen greed undermine leaders?

Insights and Ideas

Greed is the love of money that leads to an inordinate desire for and pursuit of material wealth. Paul warned Timothy, “Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs” (1 Timothy 6:9–10).

Notice, Paul uses four words to get to the yearning people have in their lives for money: “want,” “desires,” “love,” and “eager.” Greed is a selfish drive to pursue, acquire, and fall in love with material things. The real fruit of the love of money isn't more stuff but “all kinds of evil.”

Leaders can be especially prone to the sin of greed. We can become greedy for perks, privilege, power and position — all of which are usually associated with money.

So, how do we counter this temptation? Start with these three steps:

1. *Create systems of **responsibility**.* Church finances can become sloppy, which is why systems are essential to long-term health. These systems define who is responsible for what when it comes to money. Furthermore, systems define how things are done to ensure appropriate financial management. Systems of responsibility should be implemented in the counting of offerings, donor management, writing and signing checks, and more.
2. *Establish guardrails of **accountability**.* Every leader needs board members or other overseers to whom they are accountable. These partners should approve annual budgets, receive regular financial reports, and provide financial guidance.
3. *Practice a habit of **generosity**.* Acting generously is not just a corporate function but a personal habit. A local church should generously meet the needs of the congregation, community and world, but pastors must lead the way.

Generosity is the antidote to greed. It keeps greed from controlling the heart.

Greed often starts small and grows into an uncontrollable appetite that creates ripples of devastation. As leaders, we must be proactive rather than reactive in managing money and practicing generosity.

Reflect and Discuss

1. How do the apostle Paul's words in 1 Timothy 6:9–10 challenge you?
2. What systems of responsibility and guardrails of accountability do we have in place to protect our staff and church?
3. How generous are we as a church, and what would be a good next step to grow in generosity?

Apply

Assess the condition of your own heart when it comes to greed versus generosity. Do you struggle with the love of money? Do you manage money wisely? How could you become more generous? Prayerfully consider these questions, and then commit to greater habits of responsibility, accountability and generosity.

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Three steps to countering the temptation of greed:

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9 THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS AND LEADERSHIP

Gluttony vs. Moderation

Team Review

What changes have you made to resist greed and practice generosity?

Assess

In what ways is gluttony evident in our culture today?

Insights and Ideas

Ecclésiastes 2:10 says, “I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil.”

This description might sound good on the surface, but the text continues: “Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun” (verse 11).

Gluttony is the uncontrolled appetite for more than is necessary or required, usually to the point of overconsumption. It involves trying to fill a spiritual vacuum with a physical remedy. Food, shopping and entertainment can all be good things, but the overconsumption of them will ruin us.

The cure for gluttony is moderation. Exercising self-control keeps a good thing from becoming an addiction.

Proverbs 25:16 says, “If you find honey, eat just enough — too much of it, and you will vomit.” Proper balance keeps appetites in check. With that in mind, consider four ways to avoid gluttony:

1. **Acknowledge your areas of *gluttony*.** The first step to overcoming any sin is admitting the struggle. First John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”
2. **Establish *boundaries*.** To keep our appetites under control, we need clear boundaries that define how much is too much. When boundaries are unclear, we quickly justify our actions and addictions.
3. **Pursue grace-filled *accountability*.** Henry Cloud says, “Life only changes when you bring structure and discipline from the outside. What was once external becomes internal.” Grace-filled accountability welcomes outside help so we can develop the internal disciplines we need to defeat gluttonous behavior.
4. **Balance *feasting* with *fasting*.** There are many examples in Scripture of both feasts and fasts. Feasts were celebrations, while fasts called for self-denial and a focus on prayer and repentance. A rhythm of *feasting* and *fasting*, with *normality* in between, is biblical.

Reflect and Discuss

1. How does Ecclesiastes 2:10–11 counter the message of our culture?
2. What might it look like to set boundaries in the areas of food, entertainment and shopping to avoid becoming gluttonous?
3. How does the following statement challenge you: “A rhythm of *feasting* and *fasting*, with *normality* in between, is biblical.”

Apply

Is there an area of your life in which gluttony is a struggle? If so, identify two steps you can take to change this, and then seek out a friend or family member who can hold you accountable to make those course corrections.

9

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS AND LEADERSHIP

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10

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS AND LEADERSHIP

Lust vs. Love

Team Review

What additional perspective have you gleaned about gluttony?

Assess

Why do you think so many leadership failures today are related to lust and sexual immorality?

Insights and Ideas

Lust has been the downfall of many leaders. The sin of lust is the passionate and unbridled craving for sexual pleasure. What starts in the heart often leads to acts of sexual immorality.

Lust is selfish and seeks to take advantage of others. It is impatient and dishonorable. Jesus had this to say about lust: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27–28).

The cure for lust is love — not romantic sentiments or brotherly affection, but agape love. The apostle Paul gives a well-rounded description of such love in 1 Corinthians 13: “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” (verses 4–7).

Paul describes love in four unique dimensions:

1. *What love is.* Paul says love is *patient* and *kind*. Those two words get to the core of Christian love. When we’re patient, we bear the imperfections of others. And when we’re kind, we model Christ’s compassion.
2. *What love does.* Paul continues by saying love rejoices with the truth, protects, trusts, hopes and perseveres. Each quality is an example of what love does in practical terms.
3. *What love does not do.* Paul also describes what agape love does not do. It does not envy, boast, dishonor, keep a record of wrongs, or delight in evil. These actions do not reflect the love Jesus modeled.
4. *What love is not.* Finally, Paul is clear about what love is not. It’s not proud, self-seeking or easily angered. These qualities are not in the nature of Christian love.

When we have Christlike love for others, we won’t think of people as objects to be exploited and used for our gratification. Instead, we’ll love our neighbors as ourselves, seeking God’s best for them.

Reflect and Discuss

1. How does lust degrade us and others?
2. What aspects of Paul’s description of agape love most inspire you, challenge you, and seem countercultural to you?
3. In what situations is it most difficult for you to express Christlike love to others?

Apply

Read 1 Corinthians 13 in its entirety. As you do, allow the Holy Spirit to reveal God’s love to you. Ask the Lord to point out practical ways for you to express this kind of love to the people you lead and serve.

10

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS AND LEADERSHIP

Lust vs. Love

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