



# THE SEVEN DEADLY MALPRACTICES



## INTRODUCTION

*The Seven Deadly Malpractices*, a series of seven studies, is based on the "seven deadly sins": Pride, Envy, Anger, Sloth, Greed, Gluttony and Lust. Over centuries of Christian tradition, this list of sins has come to embody the basic human dispositions that are contrary to God's law. You will not find this list in the Bible, but the sins are mentioned throughout the Old and New Testaments as traits that should be rejected by people who want to live godly lives.

Christian lawyers will face temptation from these seven sins, and the temptations will increase once they begin practicing law. The purpose of these brief Bible studies is to address these temptations and promote self-examination, discussion and spiritual growth.

These studies are deliberately informal. They are structured so that they can be considered in a short 30-minute session or become the basis of an hour-long discussion. No formal leader is required. The format consists of a brief scriptural passage to be

read, followed by a few questions to prod discussion. Please add your own questions because each study group's needs are different.

Some discussion "Do's":

1. **DO** resist the temptation to make Bible study a mere intellectual inquiry or to parade your finely tuned analytical skills
2. **DO** provoke each other into finding concrete ways to apply and incorporate scriptural insights into your lives.
3. **DO** commit yourselves to encouraging each other to stick to these commitments through friendship and prayer
4. **DO** share new questions that you develop with other chapter leaders and with CLS. Our mailing address: **Christian Legal Society, Membership Ministries, P.O. Box 657, Annandale, VA 22003**. Our e-mail address: [clsgroup@clsgroup.com](mailto:clsgroup@clsgroup.com)

# PRIDE

Passage for Study: Luke 18:9-14

Pride is a common pitfall for lawyers because, as North Carolina attorney Robert Singer writes, lawyers are brokers of power. When clients are unable to resolve their problems, they will come to us, vulnerable, surrendering some degree of control. We are then responsible for directing a chain of events to a desired result that is both just and in our client's best interests. Our self-centered, sinful nature can tempt us to use this grant of power to meet our needs: to "play God" or to use other people as chess pieces.

Pride has a "devilish strategy," says Dorothy Sayers. "It attacks us, not in our weakest points, but in our strongest." Consider some of the consequences of Pride: excessive competition; needing to win or to be right or first (sometimes at the cost of isolating those we love); taking unyielding positions; compulsive self-reliance that erects barriers against dependence on God and on others; stirring up arguments rather than fostering cooperation; boasting in accomplishments and hypocrisy that blocks effective communication with others.

1. To whom did Jesus address the parable starting in verse 9? What do you think it means to "trust" or to be "confident" in your own righteousness?
2. Read verse 11. *Revell's Bible Dictionary* defines Pride as an "overweening self-confidence, resulting in an unwillingness to submit to God and an insensitive disregard for others." How did the Pharisee demonstrate Pride?
  - a. Can you think of instances in law school and in legal practice where these characteristics are evident?
  - b. How would you characterize the relationship you have with God? With others?
3. Examine verse 12. What did the Pharisee think made him "right" with God? Compare Romans 1:17 and 3:20.
  - a. In law school, students are rewarded for individual performance and achievement which encourages them to build their identity on self-sufficiency and isolation from others. Does this statement reflect your experience?
  - b. Name some specific ways that you can demonstrate God's standard of "rightness"
4. Read Romans 12:10,16; 1 Corinthians 8:1-3 and 13:4-8. How can love act as the antidote to the consequences of Pride? What does this imply about the importance of Christian community and your CLS chapter?
5. In verses 13 and 14, Jesus praised the tax collector for humbling himself. How did Jesus characterize the tax collector's relationship with God?
6. Author Henry Fairlie writes, "The foundation of humility is truth...The humble man sees himself as he is...The humble man not only sees himself truthfully, he sees himself truthfully in relation to others." True or False? Are there ways in which you might need to humble yourself? ■

# ENVY

Passage for Study: Exodus 16:1-35

Andrea is a 2L who has just returned to school after spending a summer clerking at a small law firm in town. Her grades from her first year are average, but she is disappointed because she didn't make the top half of her class. It is interview season, and the hallways in Brown Center are buzzing with talk of who is interviewing with what firms and who is "the competition" among the 2Ls for the top spots. By the

second week of school, Andrea and everyone else knows who made the top 10% from the first-year class "What makes them better than me?" she wonders. This question haunted her for the rest of the school year.

The law school placement office posts course notices and interview sign-ups for different firms in the law school lobby. Everyone wants to get in a big firm where

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they can make a lot of money and list a prestigious firm name on their resume. Andrea cased out the career office and saw that top firms (and even many medium-sized firms) will take only students in the top 10-15% of her class. Andrea feels cheated. Hasn't she studied just as hard, if not harder, than they have? It just isn't fair! Andrea takes consolation in the fact that most of the "top tenners" she knows "have no personality" anyway. She secretly hopes that they'll bomb on their interviews because they "can't even hold a decent conversation." Then maybe at least she'll stand a chance.

1. "Envy is not merely a grieving on account of another's good ...but a grieving because one regards that good as diminishing one's own and even as reflecting disgrace on oneself." *Henry Fairlie*. In what way is this case study an example of Envy?
2. Read verses 1-3 and 8-10. What was the basis of the Israelite leaders' opposition to Moses and Aaron?
3. Read Proverbs 14:30 and James 3:14-16. According to these verses, what does Envy produce?
4. See verses 4-7. How did Moses respond to the attacks against him? What can you learn from Moses' response to his attackers?

5. From verses 11 and 30-33, who are we really attacking when we act out of envy? How is this true?
6. Consider verses 15-35 together with Galatians 5:19-21. What is God's response to those who habitually indulge in envy?
7. Re-read Galatians 5:19-21 and contrast verses 22-26; also see Titus 3:3-8, 1 Peter 2:1-3 and 1 Corinthians 13:4. As a Christian, can you choose not to act out of envy? How? What advice would you give Andrea in the case study above?
8. Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes 4:4: "And I saw that all labor and all achievement spring from man's envy of his neighbor. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind." Compare and contrast Ecclesiastes 12:13. Looking at society in general and your law school experience in particular, would you agree with this assessment? Why or why not? ■

# ANGER

*Passage for Study: 1 Samuel 18:5-30*

**T**here is a distinction between the sin of anger and the emotion of anger (Ephesians 4:26). Resentment, backbiting, foul language, discrimination, seeking revenge, outbursts of rage and violence against others are all sins of anger. Feeling anger is not wrong, but once a person becomes angry, it is extremely difficult not to act sinfully because anger affects our moral judgments (Psalm 37:8, Proverbs 29:22). Only God can balance His anger with love (see Exodus 34:6-7).

God's Word gives us clear guidelines about how to deal with anger. We cannot choose whether we will get angry, but we *can* choose not to act sinfully when we do (Proverbs 29:11, Ephesians 4:26, 31, Colossians 3:8, James 1:19, 20).

1. As lawyers and advocates, we can be both subject to anger and a source of anger and strife. In many courtrooms today, the idea that "might makes right" is common; belligerence is easily mistaken for strength or courage, and abrasive, obnoxious behavior is seen as effective advocacy. Have you encountered this attitude? If so, how have you responded?

2. Background: Saul was Israel's first king. David had a special relationship with Saul because David killed the Philistine giant Goliath and because David was close friends with Saul's son Jonathan (see 1 Samuel 17-18:4). Read verses 18:6-9. What precipitated Saul's anger against David?
3. Read verses 18:9-13, 17 and 20-27. Make a list of the actions that Saul took against David. Why do you think Saul acted this way? What do you think Saul could have done instead of taking these actions?
  - a. Think of an instance in your life when you were angry at someone. What actions did you take? What was the result? Do you think you could have acted differently? How?
  - b. On your own time, read 1 Samuel 19-31. Notice how far Saul was willing to take his actions against David. What can you learn about the consequences of anger from reading these chapters?

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4. Re-read verses 18:13-30. Compare and contrast David's responses to Saul with Saul's actions against David. Why do you think David responded this way? How did God show favor to David? How can you apply David's character in today's courtrooms or law schools?
5. Read Galatians 5:16-25. What kinds of acts are contrasted? Are any sins of anger listed? If so, what are they and in what category are they placed? How do you think this passage relates with the passage for study?
6. God's Word gives us specific steps for dealing with anger, especially anger directed toward other

Christians: **practice control** (Proverbs 16:32, James 1:19), **express** (Matthew 18:15-20), **confess** (1 John 1:9), **forgive** (Proverbs 19:11, Matthew 18:21-22, Colossians 3:13), **depend on God** (Romans 8:28, 12:19-21). Is there a situation in your life where you can apply these principles?

7. Do you think that you can be an effective advocate *and* a peacemaker? If yes, how? If no, why not? Use the principles you have learned from this lesson to help you answer this question. ■

# SLOTH

*Passage for Study: 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15*

**M**odern connotations for sloth lean toward idleness, laziness and an almost desirable "laid-backness." Sloth, however, is much more insidious. According to Dorothy L. Sayers, "In the world it is called Tolerance, but in hell it is called Despair. It is the sin that believes in nothing, cares for nothing, seeks to know nothing, interferes with nothing, lives for nothing, enjoys nothing, hates nothing, finds purpose in nothing and remains alive because there is nothing for which it will die."

How can a Christian avoid this despair? "Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise" (Proverbs 6:6). Stepping on an ant hill, besides being cruel, is also an exercise in futility. The industrious ants continuously rebuild their ruined homes until the destroyer grows bored and leaves them alone. Diligence wins their battles. Likewise, diligence must be a part of our characters if we are to conquer slothfulness and experience the rewards promised by Scripture: riches, authority, spiritual maturity, goodness and favor in society (Proverbs 10:4; 11:27; 12:24,27; 13:4; 21:5; and 22:29).

1. Read verse 6. Why are Christians commanded to "keep away from" and "not associate with" fellow Christians who have an idle lifestyle?
2. What is the role model described here in verses 7-9? How important is it for Jesus' followers to have role models?
3. See verse 10. If it were applied to society, what implication would this principle have? What is the basis for this standard? (Cf. Genesis 3:19) Do you agree with it?
4. In verse 11, what is a "busybody"? How is it a form of disobedience to God?
5. From verses 12-15, what response should we make to idle believers? How can our work be an act of worship? ■

# GREED

*Passage for Study: Luke 12:13-21*

**J**ohn is a young lawyer with excellent academic credentials, a sole practitioner in a small city. During his first five years after law school, he was able to build his practice to support his wife and two young children comfortably. Unexpectedly, he was given an

opportunity to represent Acme, Inc., one of the city's leading companies, in a complex piece of commercial litigation. John had the skills to handle the *Acme* case, but realized that a larger firm would be better equipped to

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deal with such a complex piece of work. Nevertheless, because he felt that success in this case would go a long way to establish his professional reputation, he accepted the client.

At first, by pushing himself to his limits, John was able to maintain the quality of his practice while handling the *Acme* litigation. Only his health and relationships with his family suffered. As time went on, however, John was consumed by the demands of the one case, letting his representation of other clients suffer. One by one, his steady, smaller clients left him for lawyers who were more attentive to their needs. At last, the *Acme* litigation ended victoriously, but John's reputation among his clients was so poor that even the victory could not save his practice. He was left with one good-sized fee, a dissolving family and a shambles of a professional life.

1. Greed is an "excessive desire for more than one needs or deserves." What are the different kinds of greed found in the legal arena? In what way is the case study an example of greed?

2. A senior partner may see greed as a healthy motivator for young associates. Is this wrong? Why or why not?

3. Check verse 15. If materialism is an "out of focus" perspective on life, what is a proper perspective? (Compare Psalms 49 and 52).

4. What are the legal profession's "bigger barns"? What are the pitfalls of such empire building? Was the *Acme, Inc.* case a bigger barn?

5. What is the setting for verse 19? Why is a "take life easy... be merry" philosophy objectionable?

6. Use verse 20 for career evaluation. If you were to submit a resume to God, The Senior Partner, what would it say?

7. Check verse 21. How does a lawyer or a law student become "rich toward God"? Compare this verse with verses 33 and 34. ■

# GLUTTONY

*Passage for Study: Philippians 3:10-21*

**W**hile not often discussed, Gluttony is a commonplace sin in our society. Webster's Dictionary defines a glutton as "one given habitually to greedy and voracious eating and drinking." Gluttony's connotations also extend beyond this simple definition. The thing the glutton consumes is not so important as the reason why he or she consumes it and the consequences of this behavior for the glutton and his or her relationship with others and with God. The glutton consumes but can never be satisfied. He or she will always consume more than what is needed because the glutton is looking for an escape from boredom and emptiness. Compared to most people in the world, Americans live an affluent lifestyle. With affluence comes boredom that causes many to bury themselves in some over-indulgence (food, diets, fads or television) to take their minds off their emptiness.

Perhaps lawyers can identify with the glutton because lawyers habitually engage in an extra high level of activity. As lawyers juggle tight deadlines and numerous competing clients, cases and other concerns, escape can become an obsession. It is well documented that workaholicism, alcoholism, drug use and overeating are common ways that lawyers "escape."

1. Review verses 10-16. What goal do you think Paul is pressing toward?

2. In verses 15-17, what does Paul exhort Christians to do?

3. Check verse 18. What words in the passage emphasize how important Paul thinks his exhortation is?

4. Read verses 18-19. List the characteristics of those who "live as enemies of the cross of Christ." Do any of these characteristics refer to gluttony? How?

5. See Proverbs 23:20-21. What are the consequences of gluttony? Here are some more: isolation, waste, ingratitude to God, lack of concern for others and an inability to appreciate or respect the beauty of creation. How does gluttony create each of these consequences?

6. In Philippians 3:20-21, what hope do we have as Christians to end the cycle of emptiness that causes gluttony?

7. Think of the ways that you "escape" the stresses of law school. How would God rate them? Review Philippians 3:12-17. What goal are you pressing toward that will help you to put the stressful demands of law school and law practice into perspective? ■

# LUST

Passage for Study: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

If lust is considered merely a strong sexual attraction to another person, what harm could it be? Lust is an illicit, inordinate, intense or unbridled *desire* to engage in sexual relations outside of God's revealed will (Matthew 5:27-28). Unlike with the six other deadly sins, God condemns both the desire *and* the actions that result from Lust. Lust is a perversion of God's will concerning sex and our sexual desires. The motive of Lust is self-gratification at the expense of others, at the expense of a relationship with God and even to the detriment of self. Just as anger easily gives way to sin, sexual immorality flows out of lust (James 1:13-15).

Like everyone, lawyers are vulnerable to the temptations of lust. Through the media, sexual titillation has become a profitable business in our society and in a way, we have all become voyeurs in a national pastime created to feed our lusts.

1. Read verses 1-3,7. How does God want Christians to live? What do you think it means to "be holy"? What relationship does sexual immorality have with being holy?
2. The Greek word "porneia," translated "sexual immorality," is broad and includes several practices outside of God's revealed will. What practices are sex-

ually immoral? Why do you think God says they are contrary to His will? See Hebrews 13:4, 1 Corinthians 5:1, 6:15, 7:1-2, Romans 1:27.

3. In verses 4-5, with whose behavior is ours to be contrasted? Also see Colossians 3:5 and 1 Peter 4:3.
4. Consider how lust creates each of the following consequences and why they are devastating.
  - a. See verse 8 and 1 Corinthians 6:12-20.
  - b. Review verse 6. In Henry Fairlie's words, "Lust is not interested in its partners, but only in the gratification of its own craving." How does Proverbs 6:26 illustrate this consequence of lust?
  - c. Isolation, disloyalty, impulsiveness, love of worldly pleasures
5. Can you think of instances in law school and in legal practice where Lust can become a temptation? How will you deal with the temptations you may face? ■

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