
St Andrews, Roseville

Bible Studies on The Seven Vices to Virtues

Bible Study 1 – Introducing ‘Vices to Virtues’

PRAYER AND PRAISE NIGHT – Weds, 2nd Sept 7:30-8:30 (Come as a Small Group!)

For Starters

- “Genuine change be both attractive and daunting” Discuss.

Read John 5:1-9

1. How does this story show us the basic pattern of Jesus bringing people to wholeness?
2. “A vice is a settled habit which bends us away from loving God and others; a virtue is a Spirit-formed habit which increasingly enables us to love them well.”
 - Can you think of examples that illustrate this?
3. “Christianity is not about self-improvement”. Do you agree? And if not, then what is it about?
4. What might it look like to have Jesus as Saviour but not Lord?
5. Can you identify a repeated pattern which has cut a ‘groove’ in your life requiring work? What right desires might be underneath it? (E.g. Security, Control, significance, comfort ...)

6. Where do you most need to remember that Jesus sees and knows you completely (in your brokenness) – and yet comes towards you with grace rather than condemnation?
7. How does our future hope – the renewal of all things and becoming fully like Christ – give us motivation for the slow work of character formation now?
8. What comfort can we draw from Philippians 2:12-13 and 1:5-6 as we move forward?
9. During this series, as we think about putting off old vices and working at Christlike virtues what are some things that could help or hinder our Small Group experience?

A private challenge:

- Spend some time this week bringing one or two areas of sin (vices) in your life honestly to Jesus in prayer rather than hiding, excusing or minimising them.

Take home message:

- Jesus sees us in our brokenness, offers the wholeness we cannot achieve for ourselves, and calls us to walk in the new life he gives and enables.

A suggested prayer:

- Lord Jesus, you see us completely and yet you still draw near to us with grace. Show us the grooves in our character that distort our love. Thank you that we do not have to make ourselves whole. By your Spirit, help us to leave old patterns behind and practise the life of the new creation. Make us more like you. Amen.

Bible Study 2 – The Seven PRIDE TO HUMILITY

Prayer and Praise Night (This weds 2nd Sept. 7:30-8:30pm @ Church)

For Starters

- When is pride ok and when is it not?

- How would you define pride?

Read Genesis 3:1-17

1. In Genesis 3:5 what is the essence of pride?

2. Where do you notice pride showing up in your life? Give some examples (if you're comfortable).

3. Does this kind of pride work? Does it deliver or detract from the good life? How so?

4. Where does our significance, and even glory come from?
 - Genesis 1:27-28

 - Psalm 8:4-5

5. "Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less" Do you agree? What might be a strength and a weakness of this definition? How would you define or describe humility?

6. What is the nature of humility according to Phil 2:1-11?

7. Why is humility not about self-loathing?

8. How could humility show up instead of pride ...
 - in conversation?

- in social group settings?
- in arguments?
- in decision making?
- when the pressures on?
- in your most important relationships?

9. What acts of service are you reluctant to do when nobody will notice?

10. ‘When we gaze on the glory of God as creator (Ps8:1, 9) and redeemer (Phil 2), we see ourselves rightly, and we are free to serve the needs of others out of the fulness of all we have in Christ.’ How can this help you move from pride to humility this week? What’s your next action point?

11. Tak home spiritual challenge: This week do something genuinely helpful that is unlikely to be noticed or praised. Pay attention to what happens in your heart when nobody knows you did it. Talk to God about it.

Pray together

Bible Study 3 – The Seven ENVY TO LOVING KINDNESS

For Starters

- Why do we tend to envy people who are like us?

Read Genesis 37:1-11

1. What is envy, and where do you see it in Genesis 37:1-11?
2. What are some ordinary, everyday forms of envy we might experience?
3. Think of the sort of people you might be envious of. What does their advantage seem to say about your worth, significance, and satisfaction?
4. In your experience can you identify with the three basic stages of envy (comparison > desire > resentment)?
5. What does envy reveal about what we believe about God, ourselves and others?
6. How does envy undo love (the three loves)? (1Cor 13:4)
 - a. Loving God?
 - b. Loving our neighbour?
 - c. Loving ourselves?
7. Envy undoes love, but love undoes envy! How so?
8. Our worth is not something we have to earn, accumulate or win through comparison and achievement. God gives us our value, and Christ demonstrates God's love for us by giving Himself for us. How does this help us move from envy to loving kindness?
9. How can we grow in contentment? (1Tim6:6-10, Phil 4:10-13)

10. How can we love rather than envy our neighbour? What would have to happen in your soul for you to be able to give thanks for another's blessings rather than feel envious?

11. What specific act of loving-kindness could you do towards the person you envy this week?

Pray together

Bible Study 4 – The Seven SLOTH TO DILIGENCE

For Starters

- What kinds of responsibilities do you tend to tackle straight away, put off, or avoid by getting busy with other things?

Read Proverbs 6:6-11

1. What is revealed about what happens when we repeatedly put off what needs to be done?
2. According to Romans 13:8 what 'needs' to be done?
3. Do you remember how the sermon defined 'Sloth'?
4. Is there an area of your life (a relationship, a responsibility, a task) where you find yourself thinking, "Not this week", "Later", or "Someone else can deal with it"?
5. When is it wise and appropriate to put something off?
6. How can the urgent crowd out the important? How can we guard against that? (See Lk10:38-42)
7. How can good things, like work, exercise, hobbies, or even church activity, become ways of avoiding people and responsibilities that require more costly love? How can we begin to count the cost and take a step towards loving in this way?

Read 1 Timothy 4:7-8, 12, 15-16.

8. "Sloth is resistance to love. Diligence is attentiveness to the people and purposes God has entrusted to us." What does this diligence look like for Timothy? What is a standout implication for you?

Read Matthew 11:28-30

9. How is Christian diligence different from trying to prove ourselves worthy of God?
10. Are you currently more tempted towards passivity ("Can't be bothered") or self-reliance ("Everything depends on me")?

11. The aim is not to become more productive, but to become more attentive to the people and purposes God has entrusted to us. With this in mind, what is one concrete step you can take this week to move from sloth towards loving diligence.

- a. At home
- b. At work / Uni
- c. At church
- d. At a recreational event

Pray together

Bible Study 5 – The Seven ANGER TO GENTLENESS

NB: Just a quick encouragement to keep loving each other through this series. Some of us may be feeling a bit exposed, discouraged, and even shamed. Let's keep remembering that we're all works in progress at different points along the road to glory, and that our great God holds us in the grip of grace the whole way. 'There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus' (Rom 8:1), and 'nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Rom 8:39).

For starters

- What sorts of relatively trivial things tend to irritate you to the point of anger?

- Can you think of a recent situation where your anger revealed that something you wanted had become something you felt you deserved?

Read Ephesians 4:1-3

1. Why should we expect anger and conflict in the church community?

2. How can you tell the difference between righteous anger and sinful anger?

3. What usually happens when you get angry? Do you tend to internalise it (implode/shut down) or externalise it (explode/vent)? Can you identify distinct stages as your anger builds?

Read Ephesians 4:22-32

4. What are we to work at putting off and putting on and why?

5. Why would letting the sun go down on your anger be a way of giving the devil a foothold?

6. Gentleness is a non-negotiable fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:23), which describes Jesus' very heart (Mt 11:29), and which he desires to cultivate in his people (Eph 4:2, Tit 3:2, 1 Pt 3:15-16, 2 Tim 2:24-25). Being gentle is not about being weak or passive or timid but choosing to act calmly and considerately for the good of others. With all that in mind ...
 - How can we practice this kind of gentleness even when we feel genuine anger?"

- How can God's patience & gentleness towards us change how we view and treat difficult people who trigger us? (Read Eph 4:31-5:2)
7. What helps you to regulate and manage your anger? Share tips on what works (or not) for you.
8. Which of the following four steps in managing anger do you most need to work on this week?
- Admission: What do I need to admit to God, myself, and the recipient of my anger? (Confess/apology)
 - Anticipation: When and where am I most likely to be triggered?
 - Awareness: What are the first physical or emotional signs that anger is rising within and beginning to take over? (How does anger turn up for you?)
 - Action: What specific action could interrupt this rising anger and help you respond with gentleness?

Pray together

Bible Study 6 – The Seven LUST TO CHASTITY

NB: This topic is personal and tricky for many people, so please be sensitive, respectful, and caring as you discuss it.

For Starters

- What's the difference between appreciating beauty (finding someone attractive) and lust?

DEFINITION: LUST is disordered sexual desire which seeks gratification without rightly loving the other person as a whole person.

Read Matthew 5:27-28.

- *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' 28 But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.*

1. How does lust dehumanise both the one who is lusted after and the one who lusts?
2. What might lust promise that it can't deliver?
3. What do we usually mean when we hear the word "chastity", and how is biblical chastity more than simply not having sex?

DEFINITION: CHASTITY is the Spirit-enabled habit of ordering our sexuality towards fidelity to God and the loving good of ourselves and others.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

- *For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honour, 5 not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; 6 that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. 7 For God has not called us for*

impurity, but in holiness. 8 Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

- 1 Corinthians 6:18-20. *Flee from sexual immorality ... glorify God in your body.*

4. What has God called us to? How has he equipped us for it?
5. "Sexual holiness is not merely private self-mastery, it is refusing to exploit another person." Discuss.
6. What might chastity look like in different seasons of life – whether single, dating, married, widowed, separated or divorced?
7. How can we work at ordering our sexuality towards faithfulness to God and love of neighbours? Jesus speaks about "cutting off" whatever causes us to stumble (Matthew 5:29–30). What might that look like practically for us?
8. What is required to become a community where vulnerability and honesty is experienced without shame or complacency?
9. Privately consider (or feel free to discuss if comfortable) one step that might help you or someone you know to move from lust to chastity.
 - Remove a source of temptation
 - Set a healthy boundary
 - Confess a struggle to a trusted Christian brother/sister
 - Seek professional counselling or pastoral help
 - Cultivate deeper friendships (spending time with)
 - Model vulnerability yourself (within a trusted friendship or small group)
 - Explore accountability software/programs. E.g.
 - <https://resistministries.org>
 - <https://www.covenanteyes.com>
 - Commit to regular scriptural meditation and prayer
 - Other suggestions?

Let's end on a note of grace

- Hebrews 4:15-16. *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. 16 Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

Pray together.