

THE
SEVEN
DEADLY
SINS

THE
SEVEN
DEADLY
SINS HOW THEY
RIVAL GOD'S LOVE

J. MCKINLEY WILLIAMS III

REDEMPTION  PRESS

© 2012 by J. McKinley Williams III. All rights reserved.

Published by Redemption Press, PO Box 427, Enumclaw, WA 98022

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any way by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without the prior permission of the copyright holder, except as provided by USA copyright law.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures are taken from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*[®], *NIV*[®]. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by Biblica, Inc.[™] Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com

Scripture references marked KJV are taken from the *King James Version* of the Bible.

Scripture references marked NKJV are taken from the *New King James Version*. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture references marked CEB are taken from the *Common English Bible* copyright 2011 Used by permission. All rights reserved.

ISBN 13: 978-1-63232-259-3

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2011917473

*This book is dedicated
to the memory of my natural mother,
CeCelia D. Williams, 1937 - 1984
and in honor of my wife, Susan, and my three daughters,
CeCelia, Shelby, and Lillian*

CONTENTS



Acknowledgments	ix
Introduction.	xi
1. The Sin of Pride	1
2. The Sin of Envy	11
3. The Sin of Anger	21
4. The Sin of Slothfulness.	31
5. The Sin of Greed	41
6. The Sin of Gluttony.	51
7. The Sin of Lust.	59
Works Cited.	71

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



I STAND ON the shoulders of many giants who have helped me. I would like to thank them all. First, I would like to express my thanks to our Lord. Next, I would like to thank my wife and soul mate, Susan, who encouraged me to go after the dream of writing this Bible study.

I would like to thank my parents (my natural mother, Cecelia, my father, John Jr., and my mother, Ginny), for all of the sacrifices they made for me. I could not have completed my education without their help. I would like to thank my sisters, Teresa, Chris, and Becky, for their roles in helping me as their little brother. I would like to thank my college and seminary professors and former churches where I served as a pastor. I would also like to express appreciation to my peers in ministry with whom I have served.

INTRODUCTION



SIN SETS US apart from our relationship with God and each other. God created us to be in relationship with Himself. Just as sin created distance in the relationship that Adam and Eve had with God, sin creates distance in the relationship we have with God and in relationships with others. From the beginning of Genesis, God created a sinless world and everything in it. Adam and Eve’s sin changed that.

One of the ways we can describe sin is rebellion. When we sin, we are rebelling against God’s love. As the apostle Paul said, we have all sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God (see Rom. 3:23). If we needed an acronym for sin we could say that the “s” stands for *subtle*, the “i” stands for *invasive*, and the “n” stands for *nullifying*. Though sin’s destruction may not always be immediate, it is still a destructive force.

Historically, the seven deadly sins (SDS) have been understood as “destructive” for centuries. They are destructive to individuals as well as to the community. Although there is no list of the SDS in the Bible, the destructive nature of them can be seen in various places throughout the Bible. The seven deadly sins rival God’s love. “God saw everything he had made: it was supremely good” (Gen. 1:31 CEB). God even created humans in God’s own image (see Gen. 1:27). Sin is therefore destructive

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

to the camaraderie that God shares with humanity. It is also destructive to the peace, love, and goodwill God intended for us to have with our fellow human beings. For that reason, we can conclude that the seven deadly sins rival God's love.

CHAPTER 1
THE SIN OF PRIDE



Luke 18:11-14

God created the world out of nothing, and as long as we are nothing,
He can make something out of us.

—Martin Luther¹

He who climbs too high is near a fall.

—Italian proverb²

Sincere humility attracts. Lack of humility subtracts. Artificial humility
detracts.

—Italian Proverb³

Humility is pride in God.

—Austin O'malley⁴

Nothing sets a person so much out of the devil's reach as humility.

—Jonathan Edwards⁵

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

Most people would succeed in small things if they were not troubled with great ambitions.

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow⁶

Humility is a strange thing: The moment you think you have it, you have lost it.

—Anonymous⁷

Humility is not the belittling of self; it is the forgetting of self.

—Anonymous⁸

There is no true holiness without humility.

—Thomas Fuller, M. D., *Gnomologia*⁹

Soar not too high to fall; but stoop to rise.

—Philip Massinger, *The Duke of Milan*, I.¹⁰

DURING THE 70s, popular music artist Carly Simon wrote a song entitled, “You’re So Vain.” It is said she wrote that song about Warren Beatty because he thought that he was God’s gift to women. Some of the lyrics to that song go like this: “You’re so vain, you probably think this song’s about you.”

According to Paul, vanity such as that comes when someone thinks more highly of himself/herself than he ought to think (see Rom. 12:3). James 4:6 says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Pride in its original God-given context is not a bad thing. The kind of pride God opposes is the kind that is arrogant and condescending. Racism, sexism, ageism, nationalism, denominationalism, subordination due to social class, intellectual conceit, and flaunting success through materialism are all forms of pride that are condescending. Egotism is at the root of all of them.

Looking at this parable, we will be able to see the way the Pharisee saw himself, God, and others.

THE WAY THE PHARISEE SAW HIMSELF

He Saw Himself as Above Reproach

According to the self-assessment of the Pharisee, he did no wrong in the eyes of God. He saw himself as the epitome of proper conduct. He fasted twice a week. He gave a tenth of all his income. He did all the right things, but for the wrong reasons. It seems that he did all that he did to get the praise of men. Consider what Matthew 6:5 says: “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men.” That is precisely what the Pharisee did when he went up to the temple to pray. He stood up (see Luke 18:11). There are two things we can gather from the Pharisee’s sanctimonious attitude. First, the fact that he stood up is an indication that he saw himself above reproach as he physically exalted himself. Second, he looked down on everyone else who was not just like him.

He Looked Down on Others with an Attitude of Scorn

To be scornful of someone is to look at him/her with shame, disgust, and disappointment. Pharisees were not good at looking at themselves in the mirror. They were good at pointing out the flaws of others while they neglected to see their own. When we do that, we tend to treat others based upon how we have judged them, rather than treating them as equals.

It is said that Dorothy Parker once attended a social gathering. In the group was a celebrity who was vain and proud. During the conversation the celebrity declared condescendingly, “I always try to be gracious to my inferiors.” “How wonderful,” purred the disarming Parker. “But tell me, where do you find them?”¹¹ Have you ever had someone give you a reality check like Dorothy Parker?

It stings when someone gives you a reality check about how you might be too proud. Muhammad Ali was in his prime, and as he was

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

about to take off on an airplane flight, the flight attendant reminded him to fasten his seat belt. He said brashly, “Superman don’t need no seat belt.” The flight attendant quickly came back, “Superman don’t need no airplane, either.” Ali fastened his belt.¹² No one could doubt that the flight attendant handled that situation well.

It can also sting and hurt your pride when others make you feel slighted. We do not always consider others as equals. Consider Romans 12:16: “Consider everyone as equal, and don’t think that you’re better than anyone else. Instead associate with people who have no status. Don’t think that you’re so smart” (CEB). Imagine that there are two team captains choosing who will be on their team either at school or in the neighborhood. It makes you feel great if you are one of the first ones picked. It could also hurt your pride if you were one of the last ones picked. There were times in my childhood when being picked last did not make me feel that the captain who made the choice had much confidence in me.

THE WAY THE PHARISEE SAW GOD

It Seems the Pharisee Saw God as Being Indebted to Him

In his prayer, he told God how good he was. He thanked God that he was so good. Yes, he was good in the practice of the religious and legalistic ideals he upheld. But he was poor at looking within his own heart. His self-examination was lame because he never thought beyond himself. He appeared to be thanking God, but he was really praising himself. Yes, he mentioned God in his prayer, but God was not the object of his praise.

The Pharisee Prayed in a Way He Thought Would Be Pleasing to God

Fred B. Craddock notes that “While his prayer was in the spirit of Psalm 51, his life was offensive.” Furthermore, “His prayer of thanksgiving is a modification of a common rabbinic prayer (‘I thank thee that I am not...’) joined to the spirit and content of Psalm 17:3-5).”¹³ There is no

question that though he may have been practicing what was the norm for Pharisees as to a prayer pattern, he came across as being arrogant.

In his book, *The 7 Deadly Sins*, Billy Graham notes that Lucifer's self-centeredness as described in Isaiah 14:12-15 was based upon PRIDE, which became his downfall.¹⁴ The Pharisee is similar because he too exalted himself too highly. God created us to have pride within certain bounds. When our pride exceeds the bounds that God intended for it, we have the potential to become arrogant, presumptuous, and condescending.

There is a reciprocity factor to consider. George Buttrick made the point that, "What we think of ourselves and our neighbors stems from what we think about God."¹⁵ All we have to do is look at the Pharisee in this parable to see how this rings true. Paul states that we are not to think of ourselves more highly of than we should (see Rom. 12:3). In the words of Jesus, the way we treat others is also a reflection of the way we treat God (see Matt. 25:40, 45).

There is the story about Dwight Moody, a nineteenth-century evangelist, who got put out with drunken passengers who sat across from him on a train. When they realized who he was, it seems that the two men tried to annoy him by singing hymns loudly. One of the train employees came by to punch the tickets of the passengers. Rev. Moody was disgusted because all the seats were taken and he had to contend with the drunken, swollen-eyed singer and his drunken pal. The train conductor, however, brought the drunken fellows to the baggage cart, nursed their wounds, and gave them something to eat. The next morning Rev. Moody became convicted of his behavior of the night before. He had begun to act like the Pharisee in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. We too act like that without realizing that we have exalted ourselves while subordinating another or others.¹⁶ Like Moody, it can be humbling to find out the ways in which we have acted like a Pharisee.

Gossip neglects the reciprocity factor. Gossip is one of the ways someone tries to exalt one's self at the expense of others. Why? The answer is that if people are talking about others, then they will be too

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

busy to focus on their own faults. Everybody has faults. None of us has the right to exalt ourselves while subordinating or humiliating another or others—whether the method is by gossip or any other means. Gossiping has the character of selfish ambition because of its condescending agenda. The Bible tells us that we are to think of others by looking to their interests and not only to our own interests (see Phil. 2:4 NIV). Jesus Christ Himself exemplified this model (see Phil. 2:5-11).

THE WAY THE PHARISEE SAW OTHERS

He Saw the Publican Based upon His Reputation and Not His Character

The Pharisees categorized evildoers, adulterers, robbers, and tax collectors by the same rule (see Luke 18:11). This rule was that they were all sinners who were to be avoided. Many scholars have said that the point in this parable is that it is not the proud, but the humble and repentant, that God justifies with the gift of His grace. God's grace is something that no one can earn. All have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God (see Rom. 3:23). The difference between the publican and the Pharisee is obvious. Jesus makes the point that it is often the people whom we consider to be beyond hope and help who are sometimes the most remorseful, while the proud are too self-righteous to see their need.

The Pharisees Thought That Their Understanding and Conduct Were Right

They were forever disagreeing with Jesus about His point of view and what God expected. If any of them were ever proven to be wrong, they were often too proud to admit their error and amend their ways. As mentioned earlier, Lucifer, whom we also call Satan, had the same problem with his pride.

How we view others says something about the way we view God. An anonymous person once said, "We use religion like a trolley car—we ride on it only when it is going our way." Were the Pharisees using their

religion as a “trolley car”? Jesus welcomed those the Pharisees excluded, and that is why they were at odds with Jesus. It is interesting to note that Paul, who was a former Pharisee, became a follower of Jesus Christ. He gave fellow Christians this advice: “Consider everyone as equal, and don’t think that you’re better than anyone else. Instead associate with people who have no status. Don’t think that you’re so smart” (Rom. 12:16 CEB). The Pharisees often condemned sinners. However, those they condemned were often much more responsive to the gospel than the Pharisees. Do we treat others as equals?

When Jesus called the tax collector Levi, also known as Matthew, to come and be a disciple, Matthew got up and followed Jesus (see Mark 2:14). According to the theological perception of the Pharisees, tax collectors were considered to be just as worthy of reproach as all other sinners. It is important to note that tax collectors and publicans are one in the same. But listen to what happened after Matthew decided to follow Jesus.

While Jesus was having dinner at Levi’s house, many tax collectors and “sinners” were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the “sinners” and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: “Why does he eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?” On hearing this Jesus said to them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.

—Mark 2:15-17

With whom do we identify most in this parable: the Pharisee or the publican?

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

QUESTIONS:

1. How are we like the Pharisee?

2. How do we wrestle with pride?

3. What does the Bible say about pride?

4. Why do you think pride is necessary?

THE SIN OF PRIDE

5. When does pride become excessive?

6. How do we see ourselves when we look in the mirror?

7. Do we do things that make others feel slighted?

8. How well do we treat others as equals?

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

9. Do we exercise any double standards? If so, why?
