

Gluttony

This is the third lesson in the series on the “Seven Deadly Sins.”

From the [introduction](#) to the series:

The Seven Deadly Sins never occur as a formal list in the Bible.

Briefly the “seven deadly sins” are:

Pride is excessive belief in one's own abilities that interferes with the individual's recognition of the grace of God. It has been called the sin from which all others arise. Pride is also known as Vanity.

Envy is the desire for others' traits, status, abilities, or situation.

Gluttony is an inordinate desire to consume more than that which one requires.

Lust is an inordinate craving for the pleasures of the body.

Anger is manifested in the individual who spurns love and opts instead for fury. It is also known as Wrath.

Greed is the desire for material wealth or gain, ignoring the realm of the spiritual. It is also called Avarice or Covetousness.

Sloth is the avoidance of physical or spiritual work.

Where did the “seven deadly sins” originate?

According to *Sacred Origins of Profound Things*, by Charles Panati, Greek monastic theologian Evagrius of Pontus first drew up a list of eight offenses and wicked human passions:.. They were, in order of increasing seriousness: gluttony, lust, avarice, sadness, anger, acedia, vainglory, and pride. Evagrius saw the escalating severity as representing increasing fixation with the self, with pride as the most egregious of the sins. Acedia (from the Greek "akedia," or "not to care") denoted "spiritual sloth." In the late 6th century, Pope Gregory the Great reduced the list to seven items, folding vainglory into pride, acedia into sadness, and adding envy. His ranking of the Sins' seriousness was based on the degree from which they offended against love. It was, from most serious to least: pride, envy, anger, sadness, avarice, gluttony, and lust. Later theologians, including St. Thomas Aquinas, would contradict the notion that the seriousness of the sins could be ranked in this way. The term "covetousness" has historically been used interchangeably with "avarice" in accounts of the Deadly Sins. In the seventeenth century, the Church replaced the vague sin of "sadness" with sloth.

Gluttony is an inordinate desire to consume more than that which one requires.

Glutton

Heb. *zolel*, from a word meaning "to shake out," "to squander;" and hence one who is prodigal, who wastes his means by indulgence. In Prov 23:21, the word means debauchees or wasters of their own body. In Prov 28:7, the word (pl.) is rendered Authorized Version "riotous men;" Revised Version, "gluttonous." Matt 11:19; Luke 7:34, Greek *phagos*, given to eating, gluttonous.

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Proverbs 23:20-21

²⁰ Be not among drunkards
or among gluttonous eaters of meat,
²¹ for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty,
and slumber will clothe them with rags. ESV

Deuteronomy 21:18-21

¹⁸ "If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they discipline him, will not listen to them, ¹⁹ then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives, ²⁰ and they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.' ²¹ Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones. So you shall purge the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear, and fear. ESV

Proverbs 28:7

The one who keeps the law is a son with understanding,
but a companion of gluttons shames his father. ESV

Matthew 11:11-19

¹¹ Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ¹² From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. ¹³ For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, ¹⁴ and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come.

¹⁵ He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

¹⁶ "But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates,

¹⁷ "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn."

¹⁸ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' ¹⁹ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds."

GLUTTON

(glut'-n), (glut'-n-us) (*zalal*, "to be lavish"; *phagos*): "Glutton" (from glut, to swallow greedily) is the translation of *zolel* from *zalal*, "to shake or pour out," "to be lavish, a squanderer." In Deut 21:20, "This our son is a glutton, and a drunkard," the word may mean a squanderer or prodigal; the English Revised Version has "a riotous liver." In Prov 23:21, "For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty" (following *zole bhasar*, "squanderers of flesh," the Revised Version (British and American) "gluttonous eaters of flesh"), "glutton" in the usual sense is intended; "a man gluttonous," "a gluttonous man" (the Revised Version) (*phagos*, "an eater," "a glutton") was a term applied to Christ in His freedom from asceticism (Matt 11:19; Luke 7:34).

The Revised Version has "idle gluttons" (margin Greek, "bellies") for "slow bellies" (Titus 1:12); "gluttonous" "gluttons," for "riotous" (Prov 23:20; 28:7).

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Titus 1:10-16

¹⁰ For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. ¹¹ They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. ¹² One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." ¹³ This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴ not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. ¹⁵ To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. ¹⁶ They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

ESV

Often I have referred to The Screwtape Letters, by C. S. Lewis.

This book gives an excellent insight into the ways of the devil as he “goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.”

1 Peter 5:6-11

⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. ⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. ¹⁰ And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. ¹¹ To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

ESV

Each chapter is short and deals with some issue of Christian living.

The key to understanding Screwtape is to know that it is written from the perspective of the devil and everything is backwards. E.g. God is the “Enemy,” anything truly good is bad to the devil, a Christian is a “patient,” Wormwood is an imp assigned to corrupt the patient which is a new believer.

Chapter XVII is on Gluttony:

“My Dear Wormwood,

The contemptuous way in which you spoke of gluttony as a means of catching souls, in your last letter, only shows your ignorance. One of the great achievements of the last hundred years has been to deaden the human conscience on that subject, so that by now you will hardly find a sermon preached or a conscience troubled about it in the whole length and breadth of the Western World. This has largely been effected by concentrating all our efforts on gluttony of Delicacy, not gluttony of Excess. Your patient’s mother, as I learn from your dossier and you might have learned from Glubose, is a good example. She would be astonished – one day, I hope *will* be – to learn that her whole life is enslaved to this kind of sensuality, which is quite concealed from her by the fact that the quantities involved are small. But what do quantities matter, provided we can use a human belly and palate to produce querulousness, impatience, uncharitableness, and self-concern? Glubose has this old woman well in hand. She is a positive terror to hostesses and servants. She is always turning from what has been offered her to say with a demure little sigh and a smile, “Oh, please, please... *all* I want is a cup of tea, weak, but not too weak, and the teeniest weeniest bit of really crisp toast.” You see? Because what she wants is smaller and less costly than what has been set before her, she never recognises as gluttony her determination to get what she wants, however troublesome it may be to others. At the very moment of indulging her appetite she believes that she is practicing temperance. In a crowded restaurant she gives a little scream at the plate which some overworked waitress has set before her and says, “Oh, that’s far too much! Take it away and bring me about a quarter of it.” If challenged, she would say she was doing this to avoid waste; in reality she does it because the particular shade of delicacy to which we have enslaved her is offended by the sight of more food than she happens to want.

“The real value of the quiet, unobtrusive work which Glubose has been doing for years on this old woman can be gauged by the way in which her belly now dominates her whole life. The woman is what may be called the “All-I-want” state of mind. *All* she wants is a cup of tea properly made, or an egg properly boiled, or a slice of bread properly toasted. But she never finds any servant or any friend who can do these things “properly” – because her “properly” conceals an insatiable demand for the exact, and almost impossible, palatal pleasures which she imagines she remembers from the past; a past described by her as “the days when you could get good servants” but known to us as the days when her senses were more easily pleased and she had pleasures of other kinds which made her less dependent on those of the table. Meanwhile, the daily disappointment produces daily ill temper: cooks give notice and friendships are cooled. If ever the Enemy introduces into her mind a faint suspicion that she is too interested in food, Glubose counters it by suggesting to her that she doesn’t mind what she eats herself but “does like to have things nice for her boy.” In fact, of course, her greed has been one of the chief sources of his domestic discomfort for many years.

“Now your patient is his mother’s son. While working your hardest, quite rightly, on other fronts, you must not neglect a little quiet infiltration of gluttony. Being a male, he is not so likely to be caught by the “*All-I-want*” camouflage. Males are best turned into gluttons with the help of their vanity. They ought to be made to think themselves very knowing about food, to pique themselves on having found the only restaurant in the town where steaks are really “properly” cooked. What begins as vanity can then be gradually turned into habit. But, however you approach it, the great thing is to bring him into the state in which the denial of any one indulgence – it matters not which champagne or tea, *sole Colbert* or cigarettes – “puts him out,” for then his charity, justice, and obedience are all at your mercy.

“More excess in food is much less valuable than delicacy. Its chief use is as a kind of artillery preparation for attacks on chastity. On that, as on every other subject, keep your man in a condition of false spirituality. Never let him notice the medical aspect. Keep him wondering what pride or lack of faith has delivered him into your hands when a simple enquiry into what he has been eating or drinking for the last twenty-four hours would show him whence your ammunition comes and thus enable him by a little abstinence to imperil your lines of communication. If he *must* think of the medical side of chastity, feed him the grand lie which we have made the American humans believe, that physical exercises in excess and consequent fatigue are especially favourable to this virtue. How they can believe this, in face of the notorious lustfulness of sailors and soldiers, may well be asked. But we have used the athletic coaches to put the story about – men who were really interested in chastity as an excuse for games and therefore recommended games as an aid to chastity. But this whole business is too large to deal with at the tail-end of a letter.

Your affectionate uncle,
SCREWTAPE”

The Screwtape Letters, C. S. Lewis, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1976
Pages 85-88

When the Lord affords me another opportunity to teach on Wednesday Bible Study we will consider the sin of Lust.

Lust is an inordinate craving for the pleasures of the body.