# Series Introduction Virtue and Freedom – Why Should You Care?

Episode Timecode **0:05**  It might seem like "Virtue" and "Freedom" don't belong together.

Virtue probably sounds like an obligation—following the rules all the time, doing the "right thing"—while Freedom sounds like being able to do whatever you want, basically the opposite of an obligation.



# The Link between Virtue and Happiness

As we'll see in this series, it turns out that Virtue and Freedom are connected by one very important word: Happiness. We all want to be happy. We always have—the ancient philosopher Aristotle wrote that every choice we make in our lives is ultimately motivated by the hope of achieving happiness. The problem is that life is full of obstacles to happiness. Some obstacles are internal, coming from our own brokenness, and some are external, coming from the brokenness of others or the world we live in.

Virtue gives us the power to beat all of these obstacles. We'll be talking a lot about fighting evil influences that lead us away from happiness. And here is where the three ideas connect, because virtue gives us the power to overcome these evils, which in turn gives us the freedom to pursue happiness.

"Happiness is the **one** thing you can choose for itself; **everything else** is chosen for the sake of happiness."

-Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics

# NOTES

Rachel Beauregard Series Host Hosting the Virtue and Freedom series is Rachel Beauregard, an artist from Virginia. She has performed around the count



around the country as part of the musical duo, Native Run.

# Happiness drives our choice of:

- Friends
- Career
- Spouse
- Habits
- Way of Life
- Relationship with God
- Legacy



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#### **Obstacles to Happiness:**

Our own brokenness

Other people's brokenness

External problems in the world around us



Aristotle (384-322 BC) Greek philosopher. A student of Plato, his many writings laid the foundation for subjects as varied as biology, theater, ethics and physics. His study of happiness is found in the Nichomachean Ethics.

# The Path to Happiness

Happiness is so important that we have a whole separate video series examining what happiness means and how to pursue it.

In this series, our goal is to understand how virtue can put us on the path to happiness. We'll start by looking at the reality of evil, and then learn ways we can resist evil. We'll finish by learning the positive principles that can help us lead virtuous lives.

# The Plan for This Series:

- Learn about the struggle between good and evil, and examine how evil is present in the world and in our lives
- Study the ways we can resist evil
- Learn positive principles to help us lead virtuous lives

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# **NOTES**

# Episode Timecode 2:33EPIC

# Lesson One: The Cosmic Battle between Good and Evil

#### **Evil in Ordinary Life**

It may seem overdramatic to talk about the reality of evil in our day-to-day lives. We live in a more low-key world where people make mistakes and give in to human weakness. Unless you're talking about Hitler or terrorists, evil is just too strong of an idea, isn't it?

But when we look at epic stories—both in ancient literature and in popular sagas like Star Wars, Harry Potter, and The Lord of the Rings—we find a strong sense that we are all in fact caught up in a cosmic struggle between good and evil.

# The Cosmic Battle in Epic Stories

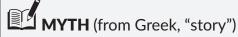
#### The Paradox of Myth



Myths have a lot to tell us about the cosmic battle between good and evil. Today we often use "myth" simply to mean something that's made-up, or even a lie. But the original sense of the word "myth" was a story that revealed a deeper truth about reality.

An extensive story told in elevated language about the heroic deeds of a great figure. Epics usually celebrated significant and formative events in a shared history.

Famous epics include the *Epic of* Gilgamesh (Sumerian), the Iliad and Odyssey (Greek), the Aeneid (Roman), Beowulf and Paradise Lost (English).



A traditional story passed down within a culture, illustrating some shared value and often describing the origin of something important to that culture.

Since these stories often combined historical and symbolic elements. the term myth has taken on a secondary meaning today of stories that are false or unhistorical.

For example, the modern sagas we listed all begin with a main character who is called out of a mundane life into a "hero's journey" where a battle for the fate of the world must be won by great personal sacrifice and heroism.

Even though each of these stories take place in a different, made-up world, we feel a connection to the basic hero's journey of these "everyman" characters because it reflects a real experience: we too can feel the call to something greater in the midst of our ordinary lives.



Joseph Pearce Author and biographer Author of several literary biographies and studies, including books on Shakespeare, Tolkien, and Oscar Wilde. Director of the Center for Faith & Culture at Aquinas College in Nashville and editor of *St. Austin Review*.

# PARABLE

A short narrative told with human characters to illustrate a moral truth.

Jesus frequently used parables in his teaching - famous examples include The Prodigal Son, The Good Shepherd, The Rich Man and Lazarus, and The Good Samaritan.



#### God the Storyteller

Ultimately, we feel these connections reading stories because our lives are part of a greater story. God is a storyteller, the story is history, we are the characters, and the central conflict is our choice between good and evil.

As we'll see, God himself enters the story with the coming of Jesus. (And it's no coincidence that Jesus also used stories to illustrate real truths with the parables.)

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NOTES	xamples	in The Lord of the Ri	ings of Basic Mythic Characters
(Re the hui	epresents le universal uman	Answers God's universal call to love by self-sacrifice for the good of others	<b>Frodo</b> , in taking the burden of the ring; <b>Sam</b> , in assisting Frodo in this quest with perseverance and loyalty, as both are brought to the point of death during the quest.
a cha	n all identify	Deals with the consequences of sin and the temptation to sin	<b>Frodo</b> , as symbolized by the burden of the ring. Struggling to bear the burden without giving in to the temptation of the ring to wear it also evokes the carrying of the cross, which all men are called to do as followers of Christ.
Ch	Christ	Lays down his life for his friends, Dies in a conflict with a demonic figure and comes back to life	<b>Gandalf</b> , in his confrontation with a Balrog. When he returns, he even appears in resplendent white robes that evoke Christ's Transfiguration.
		Descends into the domain of the dead and liberates them	<b>Aragorn</b> , taking the Paths of the dead and coming out having released the dead from their curse.
Kir	ing	A true king who has disappeared in exile but returns to save his people in their time of need, someone with the power of healing (both for individuals and for the land in turmoil)	<b>Aragorn</b> , evoking the traditional longings of Britain's Arthurian legends and the later Jacobite movement.
	Evil	Servant of the original rebel against the natural order	<b>Sauron</b> , the primary antagonist (and titular Lord of the Rings) is a servant of Melkor, the fallen spirit whose rebellion sets off the discord in the book's universe. This underlines the good vs. evil stakes of the story.
		Cunning and deceitful like a serpent	<b>Wormtongue</b> , the evil counselor whose name suggests the Old Englsh <i>wrym</i> ("serpent" or "dragon"). Gandalf condemns him saying "Down on your belly, snake", evoking the curse God gives to Satan in Genesis after the temptation of Adam and Eve.

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Human desires that are not fully aligned with our reason, due to our imperfect and weakened intellect and will.

These desires can incline us to sin even when we recognize it would be wrong to do so, and they make pursuing the path of virtue and happiness more challenging.

# **JACOBITES**

Members of a political movement that supported the line of King James II and his successors as the rightful kings of England. They supported several uprisings between 1688 (when James II was driven out) and 1745, and Jacobitism continued as a cultural movement afterwards, as romanticized underdogs waiting for their "king over the water".

#### NOTES



# King Arthur (5th-6th century, estimated)

#### King of England

Said to have led a defense of Britain against invading Saxons. Little is known historically, but many medieval legends developed about the King Arthur's reign, his idyllic court of Camelot, and his Knights of the Round Table who upheld the new ethical code of chivalry and sought the Holy Grail. As the "Once and Future King", Arthur is not only a model of kingship in these legends, but one who it is said will return to Britain in time of need.



# King James II (1633-1701)

#### King of England

King of England whose short reign (1685-1688) was disrupted by religious tensions. A convert to Catholicism who pushed for more civic tolerance of non-Anglican Christians, he came into conflict with political factions who ultimately invited the Protestant William of Orange to come to England with an army to take the throne. James II fled to France and Parliament decreed that he had thereby abdicated, but those loyal to his line, the Jacobites, still held him to be king and waited for his return.

# NOTES

#### A Battle in the Cosmos

This greater story is older than humanity itself, beginning when God creates the universe and sees that it is good, but this goodness is then met with rebellion by Satan and the other fallen angels. The conflict between good and evil enters the human race with Adam and Eve, who were given life in paradise by a loving God but nonetheless chose to rebel against God as well by giving in to Satan's temptation.

#### A Battle in our Hearts

This battle isn't just happening on an epic scale in the world around us—it is also happening inside our own individual hearts. We have a natural tendency towards the good: we are made in the image of God so we are aware of the natural law and our conscience feels at peace when we follow that law. But we also have a brokenness inside us through sin and concupiscence, which inclines us to abuse our freedom and reject the good.



Writer and scholar

Famous both for his novels and for his nonfiction books on Christianity. His fiction often deals with people encountering timeless

spiritual truths in a world beyond our own, in fantasy (*The Chronicles of Narnia*) as well as science fiction (*The Space Trilogy*).



# **J. R. R. Tolkien** (1892-1973)

Linguist and Author

His fantasies about Middle-Earth, including *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*, depict ordinary people who



are sent out into a world full of extraordinary wonders and are caught up in epic moral conflicts.

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# From Story to History: The True Myth of Jesus

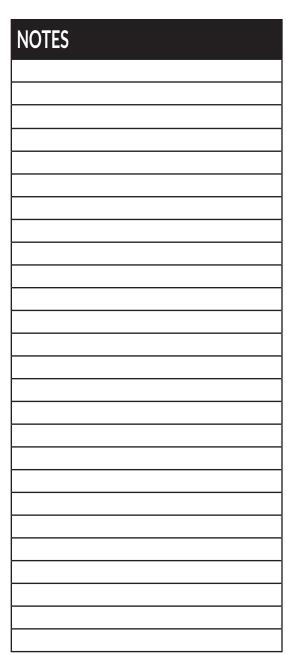
#### "Deliver Us From Evil": Jesus' Mission

As Tolkien once explained to his colleague C. S. Lewis, the life of Jesus Christ is a true myth, an epic story that enters into history with the truly epic stakes of saving the human race. Jesus' mission is often portrayed as bringing us forgiveness and teaching the good news, but His mission also encompassed the establishing of the Kingdom of God on earth, actively doing battle against Satan to deliver humanity from bondage.

"What Dyson and Tolkien showed me was this: that if I met the idea of sacrifice in a Pagan story I didn't mind it at all ... the story of Christ is simply a **true myth**: a myth working on us in the same way as the others, but with this tremendous difference that it **really happened**."

> – C. S. Lewis (on the conversations that helped inspire his conversion)

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# NOTES

Dr. Mary Healy Professor and speaker

Professor of Sacred Scripture at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit and an international speaker on topics related to Scripture, evangelization, healing, and the spiritual life.



"For this purpose, the Son of God appeared, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

- 1 John 3:8

#### The Temptations of the Devil

Beginning with Adam and Eve, Satan had seduced humanity to his domain by his temptations to rebel against God's goodness, just as Satan himself had rebelled. At the beginning of Jesus' public life, Satan tried to tempt Jesus using the same strategy. At Jesus' baptism, a voice from the heavens had declared "This is my Beloved Son", yet Satan says to Jesus "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to turn into bread."

Just as he had with Adam and Eve, Satan was trying to incite doubt in God. Once Satan can get us doubting God and God's loving care, he can persuade us that we need to rebel against God and grasp for ourselves the good that—in actuality—God wants to freely give us.

"And a **voice** came from **heaven**: Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased."

- Luke 3:22

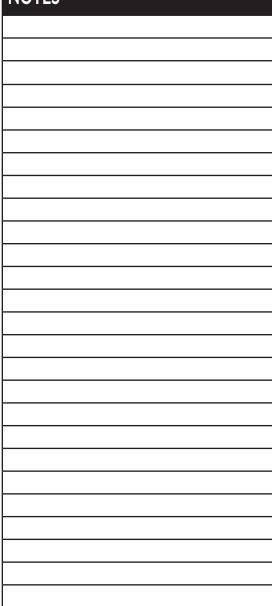
"And the **devil** said to him: If thou be the Son of God, say to this stone that it be made bread."



- Luke 4:3



#### NOTES



#### **Setting Captives Free**

Jesus rejected Satan's temptations and their false promise of freedom. Throughout His ministry, He was constantly setting people free. In some cases, he was directly liberating people from Satan's bondage through exorcisms. In other cases, he brought deliverance from physical bondage by healing the sick. In the culmination of his mission, Jesus brought us all freedom from sin and death through his death and Resurrection.

#### The Mission Continues Today

Jesus still wants to bring healing and deliverance to us today. Many people are weighted down in bondage and often don't realize it. Satan still sows deception in our hearts, telling us that God doesn't love us and that we can only find happiness on our own by rejecting God's plan. Satan still oppresses us with fear, guilt, self-loathing, depression—anything to help trap us in darkness and close us off from the love and happiness that God is trying to give us.

We are called to participate in Jesus' mission of deliverance, both to fight the temptations of evil in our own lives and then to help others find freedom and deliverance as well.

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# Fighting Evil Today: 21:30 Extraordinary and Everyday Battles

#### **Relationships: Inviting Evil In**

We can invite the influence of evil spirits if we give in to the temptation to take "shortcuts" to happiness that reject God's plan and grasp what we want ourselves through immoral means. This can take the active form of divination—when we can't find the results we want through natural efforts, so we turn to using artificial means to find answers. Seeking 'help' in this way can open us up to a relationship with evil spirits, and we are most vulnerable to turn to such relationships when we feel closed off from love – from God's love and from connections with other people.

The most extreme form demonic influence can take in these relationships is possession (taking control of someone's body and psyche, though not their free will). More often this influence takes the lesser form of demonic attachment, often called oppression or obsession, where people can function in their day-to-day lives but are spiritually oppressed (discomfort in spiritual places or activities and/or symptoms of mental or physical affliction that cannot be accounted for medically).



Practices that seek to acquire hidden or future knowledge by the "shortcut" of invoking powers outside the ordinary course of nature.

Unlike prayer, which brings requests to God to be answered according to His will and in His time, divination is often driven by a desire to demand immediate results.

Tarot cards, Ouija boards and mediums are examples of divination practices today—while such practices are often ineffective or fraudulent, they can sometimes also function as an invitation for contact with actual, and malevolent, spiritual forces. For this reason, use of—or even experimentation with—divination practices is discouraged.



# Case Study:

#### Fr. Gary Thomas: Hollywood Inspiration and Modern-Day Exorcist

In July 2005, Fr. Gary Thomas was contacted unexpectedly by his bishop, Bishop Patrick Joseph McGrath of San Jose, CA. The bishop had received a letter from Pope John Paul II instructing the bishops of the world that every diocese should have an exorcist. In San Jose, as in many dioceses, there was no exorcist among the clergy, so the bishop appointed Fr. Thomas to go to Rome for training to serve as the exorcist for their diocese.

While studying at the Regina Apostolorum Seminary, Fr. Gary Thomas gained experience in an apprenticeship with a long-serving exorcist, Fr. Carmine De Filippis, and he also met Matt Baglio, an author who wrote a book profiling Fr. Thomas' experiences. That book would go on to be adapted into a Hollywood film, *The Rite*, in 2011.

Fr Thomas has served as an exorcist for over a decade, and he describes exorcism as an important healing ministry in the Church. It is also a very collaborative ministry, with a team of experts that assist in diagnosing the suffering people they encounter, to see when spiritual, medical, or therapeutic remedies (or some combination) are needed. The mission is about healing people from suffering, and it has deepened Fr. Thomas' own appreciation of the cosmic battle between good and evil, in which the happiness and well-being of every human being is at stake.

# NOTES

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# NOTES

#### **Discernment and Treatment**

Deliverance for these extraordinary forms of demonic influence is done by a team of trained professionals in spiritual, mental, and medical fields. See the Case Study of Fr. Thomas, a priest who serves as an exorcist. Though some think of exorcism as a defunct practice, it is a rare but important part of the healing ministry of deliverance today—Fr. Thomas' training, in fact, was prompted by a letter from the Pope instructing bishops that every diocese should have an exorcist. The process of exorcism and deliverance, however, is different from the sensationalized version often found in Hollywood and pop culture.

There are three stages of deliverance intervention:

1. Practice of One's Faith

The first remedy used in all cases; for a Catholic, this means participating in the life of the church, receiving the Eucharist and confession regularly, and having an active prayer life.

2. Deliverance Prayers

Prayers, which can be prayed by anyone, asking God for spiritual liberation and healing.

3. Formal rite of exorcism

In some cases, the above steps may not prove sufficient to fully relieve the afflicted person, and only then will an exorcist's team proceed to the formal rite of exorcism.

# DELIVERANCE MINISTRY

Ministry dedicated to helping people experience freedom from the bondage of evil influence in their lives. It can be as simple as an effort to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist more or praying with someone in need.

There are more formal ministries available for people in need of more sustained intervention, such as Neal Lozano's *Unbound* program. An exorcist and his team perform deliverance ministry in cases of the extraordinary forms of evil influence – possession and demonic attachment.

# Beyond Exorcism: A Deliverance Ministry team includes expertise in

- Psychology
- Psychiatry
- Other Medical fields like Toxicology
- Discernment of Spirits
- Prayer and Deliverance

and a dedicated Prayer Team

# EXORCISM

A spiritual exercise to drive out the presence of an evil spirit, or to ward off such a demonic presence, typically by invoking the higher authority of God.

Jesus performed exorcisms in his public life, as did the apostles in the Acts of the Apostles, and it is considered part of the Church's ongoing ministry of deliverance and healing.

#### **Everyone Is Suffering**

Not everyone who comes to an exorcist is being oppressed by evil spirits. The discernment task of the team of experts involves assessing when a person's suffering has a psychological or psychiatric or physical cause. (As we'll discuss later in the series, people can often suffer in multiple and interrelated ways, too.)

Ultimately, they are all suffering in some form, and it is important to use the power of Jesus' healing to help relieve that suffering in the cases where that power is needed, just as we use medicine and therapy when they are needed.

# **Deliverance from Bondage**

#### 1. Ordinary solutions

Increased participation in a life of faith

(For Catholics–minimum of monthly Confession, weekly Eucharist, prayer life, etc.)

2. When intervention is needed

Deliverance prayers

- 3. In severe/resistant cases
- Solemn rite of exorcism

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# NOTES

#### The Everyday Temptations

We should avoid divination, but evil influence in our lives usually takes a more



subtle and less dramatic form than possession. We are much more likely to be afflicted by the everyday lies the devil tries to use to block us from God's love and take us off the path to happiness.

Lies that make us worry that God hates us, or that God is trying to make us unhappy.

Lies that make us think our value comes from our appearance, our success, or other superficial attributes, and that deep down we aren't good enough to deserve love.

Lies that make us feel like it's too late, that we've sinned too much to be forgiven anyway, and that we might as well give up and embrace the darkness.



# My value is based on ...

- My popularity
- My sexiness
- My athletic ability
- My intelligence
- My successes
- How much I can accomplish

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"And they were all amazed and questioned among themselves, saying: What is this? A new **teaching with authority**, for with power he commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they obey him."

– Mark 1:27

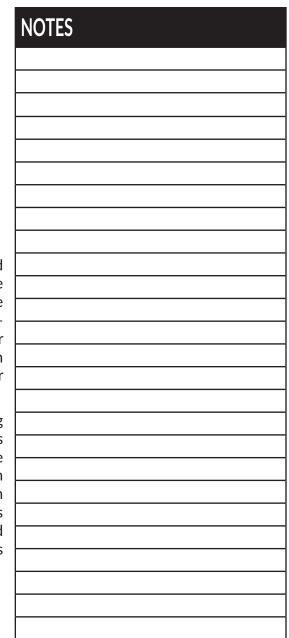
#### ... and I don't measure up, so:

- I don't matter
- I will never be loved
- I will always be rejected
- I will never amount to anything
- I don't deserve to be happy
- God doesn't love me
- God is angry at me
- God hates me

#### The Truth will set you free

These are powerful and dangerous lies, and it is clear that Satan is afflicting many people with them in today's world. The best defense against such lies is the truth about God's love the unconditional love that has destined us for eternal happiness and that waits for us with open arms no matter what, just like the Father waited for the Prodigal Son.

This is how Jesus battled Satan. In the opening chapter of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus liberates a possessed man, and the onlookers recognize that Jesus is delivering "a new teaching with authority." He is casting out evil spirits with the Word, because what sets people free is proclamation of the truth of who God is and the salvation Jesus has come to give us as God's children.



### NOTES

#### The Everyday Solution: A Personal Relationship with Jesus

Every time we give into temptation, we are trapping ourselves in the darkness of a lie. The path to freedom is to embrace the truth about God's love and the destiny He is calling us to. The best defense against evil and temptation, then, is to stay close to Jesus, and welcome Him into our lives. The more we let His light in, the less room there will be for the darkness. The more we experience God's love and the peace that comes from realizing His plan in our lives, the harder it is for Satan's lies to sound persuasive. A personal relationship with Jesus is the key.



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# A Personal Relationship with Jesus means...

- Talking to Jesus in prayer sometime every day
- Participating in the Sacraments
- Having a well-formed conscience
- Participating in the people of God
- Having my faith influence what I say and how I act
- Knowing Jesus well enough to be aware of what he would want me to do

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# NOTES

#### Our role in the Cosmic Battle

Of course, a life in Christ means so much more than simply resisting temptation, or even making an individual choice for goodness. We are called to participate in Jesus' Mission to liberate those in bondage and establish the Kingdom of God, spreading the good news of liberation and God's love to everyone who is afflicted and suffering in darkness.

When Jesus established his Church and promised that the gates of Hell would not prevail against, he did not mean we would simply persevere in the face of evil. Gates are not an offensive weapon, but a defense: Jesus was saying that we would go on the offensive against evil and be victorious. We are called to make the Kingdom of God present wherever we are. Every time we reach out with love, pray with someone in their suffering, or bear witness to what Jesus has done in our lives, we can awaken faith in the hearts of others—and Satan loses his grip on people's lives.

Jesus defeated Satan, but the battle is played out in each of our hearts, and we can share in bringing that good news of deliverance to others, and thus we have the power of participating in Jesus' victory. Jesus has revealed to us how the cosmic battle between good and evil ends, and so we should turn to him with confidence in our own struggles and as we help others.



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#### SMALL GROUP REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. What does "Virtue" mean to you?
- 2. What makes you happy in general? In your day-to-day life?
- 3. What is Freedom?
- 4. What is an epic story you read or watched that felt relevant to your own life? What is an epic story that inspired you in your own life?
- 5. Does God care about you? Why or why not?
- 6. What are some areas in life where you feel pressure to measure up? What do you think you need to do to deserve love?
- 7. Is there anything you can do to make God stop loving you? Is there anything you can do to stop yourself from accepting God's love?

8. What did Jesus accomplish by dying?



#### **SMALL GROUP REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- 9. What did Jesus accomplish by rising from the dead?
- 10. When has evil influence or temptation taken you off the path to happiness? How does connecting with Jesus in your life help protect from that influence?
- 11. What does spiritual bondage look like in someone's life today? How does spiritual bondage interfere with happiness? What is deliverance ministry and how can it help someone in spiritual bondage?

- 12. How can spiritual pain, like guilt or despair, influence your mind or body?How can mental distress, like anxiety or depression, affect your spiritual life or your physical health?How can a bodily problem like hunger or sickness interfere with your mental well-being or your spiritual health?
- 13. What are some of the powerful lies that can tempt us to isolate ourselves from others, from God, from pursuing happiness? What can we do when we recognize that we are being tempted by one of these lies?

# Introduction – Happiness and Sin

We all want to be happy. The good news is, God created us to experience true happiness 0:15 in Him. No one can take that destiny from us.

However, we can choose to close ourselves off from happiness. Temptations promise to give us a shortcut to happiness but if we give in to temptation, our sinful choices instead lead to problems and pain.

# The Three Stages of Temptation

#### **Temptation and the Tempter**

No one sets out to make bad choices. Temptation is the deceptive process that coaxes us by stages to rationalize our way into the darkness. Often this process can be encouraged by the evil spirit (who seeks to deceive us, as Jesus warned) but not always-we can and do think of sins and plan sins on our own.

But any sin requires a free choice, so we fortunately have the power, at any stage of a temptation, to stop the temptation and choose not to sin

# "He is a **liar** and the father of lies"

– Jesus on the Tempter (John 8:44)

Father Robert J. Spitzer, S.J., Ph.D.

Author and speaker

The President and co-founder of the Magis Center, Fr. Spitzer is a Catholic Priest in the Jesuit order (Society of Jesus) and former President of Gonzaga University.

"Fearing lest the **Tempter** had tempted you"

- St. Paul (1 Thessalonians 3:5)

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NOTES	Temptation progresses in three stages:
	1. Desire — We want something that we know is wrong
	It can be something valuable that doesn't belong to us, a shortcut to success that damages our integrity, lifting ourselves up at another's expense—the first step begins within us when an illegitimate desire is enkindled.
	Tempting Desires
	Something good that isn't rightfully ours:
	<ul> <li>Property that doesn't belong to us</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Success we haven't earned</li> </ul>
	Power we don't deserve
	Something good used in a damaging way:
	<ul> <li>Addictions (alcohol/drugs, food, shopping, TV/internet/games, sex, etc.)</li> </ul>
	Relationships that exploit/manipulate/abuse someone
	SELF-ALIENATION
	Becoming distant or estranged from our own feelings or actions.
	This may produce negative feelings like emotional detachment, numbness, apathy, depression, a loss of identity/sense of self/self-worth.

# 2. Planning – Rationalization NOTES The desire moves closer to reality when we start thinking about it as a real possibility: thinking about how we will do it. At this stage resistance to the sin kicks in (see the three defenses below), so for the temptation to continue, we need to rationalize why this sinful act is somehow okay: "No one will know" – "Who's getting harmed, really?" – "It'll be so great it's worth it" **Rationalizations during temptation** • "You're not doing anything wrong" • "It's no big deal" "No one's getting hurt" "You won't get caught" • "What do you have to lose? • "You'll finally get what you want" RATIONALIZATION Making up logical-sounding reasons for a decision we've already reached, so we can avoid acknowledging the real (and less justifiable) reasons that led to our decision.

NOTES	3. Resentment
	If resistance is still too strong, we may lash out with resentment—toward our conscience, toward God, toward everything pointing us toward the light: "Why should I listen to my conscience/God/ the Church/the rules of moral life? I want this! I deserve this! I owe it to myself!"
	The more we know we're in the wrong, the louder we protest to drown out that inner voice, so that in the noise we'll give in to the temptation and commit the sinful action before we can think better of it.
	Resentments
	Against our own conscience
	Against God
	Against our mentors — parents, teachers, the Church
	Against our friends, anything good that reminds us     of our better selves
	Against our own fear of doing wrong
	PRUDENCE         Seeing and acting on the basis of truth.         A prudent person is rational and honest         when looking at all the different variables         that impact a decision—and thus knows         the appropriate response to take.    Conscience produces positive feelings when we act against it and do wrong.

# Three Defenses in the Moment of Temptation

Episode Timecode5:03We'll be discussing many defenses we can draw on to help us avoid sin –there are three that are especially helpful in the moment we are confronted with a temptation.

#### 1. Prudence and fear

The virtue of prudence can warn us of negative consequences—even a fear as basic as "I might get caught" or "I might get into trouble if I do this" can sometimes break the spell of a temptation.

#### 2. Conscience – Feeling guilt and alienation

Conscience alerts us to something being wrong, generally through our feelings. Thinking about doing a wrong act, we will feel guilt (different from fear of consequences) and alienation from ourselves ("this isn't how I think of myself/who I want to be").

#### 3. Our relationship with God

The more time we spend with God, praying and experiencing his love and guidance, the more we'll feel motivated to avoid doing something sinful that would hurt him and betray that relationship.

#### **Guilt vs. Fear**

Guilt looks inward – it is the pain of perceiving that we have compromised our principles and done what is wrong.

Fear looks outward – it is concern at perceiving negative consequences that may arise.

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# What happens after we sin?

Episode Timecode **12:27** Sin doesn't just hurt people in the moment—it can push us on a path further into darkness. Part of the cosmic battle is which direction we choose to move in after we sin: we can give into sin's negative effects (as the tempter wants), or we can turn back to the light and resolve to do better (as God wants).

#### What the Tempter wants:

#### 1. To make us unhappy

Temptation uses the promise of a shortcut to happiness, but after the sin we are left instead with the damage and the guilt.

#### 2. To bring us to **despair**

Sin can draw us deeper into sin: we lie, then need to tell more lies to avoid exposure; we cheat on a test, then need more cheating to maintain the stolen grade; we indulge in addictive behaviors to avoid confronting pain, then need to increase the addiction to keep the pain repressed. Our conscience numbs; we don't recognize ourselves; we feel we are in too deep, beyond help, and might as well keep sinning. We lose hope.

#### 3. To reject God permanently

As with temptation, our guilt and despair can make us so defensive that we lash out with indignation and resentment against God, against our friends and mentors, against everything pointing us the way out of our isolation and back towards the light. The ultimate danger is that while we are struggling with despair, we also become so filled with resentment toward God that we can't see our way out—we choose the darkness and choose it forever.

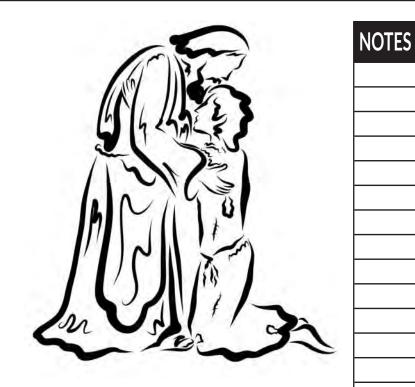
#### What God wants

After we sin, the Tempter ("This is harmless") turns into the Accuser ("That was unforgivable – you're too far gone, it's hopeless").

In contrast, God calls out to us that we always have the freedom to return to Him, no matter how greatly we've sinned.

Like the Father of the Prodigal Son, God loves us and will take us back with jubilation even if we have long delayed.

If you feel you are too far into the darkness to come out, call upon the name of Jesus–God's mercy is infinite. There is always a way back.



"And that great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who seduces the whole world . . . And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying "Now the salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ have come: because **the accuser of our brethren** has been cast out."

- Revelation 12: 9-11

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# NOTES

# Understanding Specific Temptations: The Seven Deadly Sins

Episode Timecode 18:21 There are many false paths to happiness—it helps to recognize the most common ones, called the seven deadly sins.

For each sin, an example is included from famous stories in literature, where we can see the effects of these false paths.

#### Pride – Making ourselves God

Every sinful choice starts with an empty promise that we can find a better shortcut to our own happiness, even if it hurts people, betrays our integrity, or goes against God's plan. Every sinful choice thus begins with Pride, where we put ourselves ahead of God and give ourselves permission to choose every other sin.

*The Lord of the Rings* — the ring is forged to rule over all, and consumes its wearer with an absolute desire for power that (like the ring itself) is self-centered and ultimately hollow.

*Macbeth* — Macbeth is initially a virtuous warrior, but evil tempters inspire him to self-aggrandize and become king himself.

To pursue this self-centered goal, Macbeth and his wife destroy the reigning king, destroy many innocent people who get in their way, and ultimately even destroy themselves.



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# Greed – Grasping for more than we need or are entitled to (such as wealth/possessions)

A Christmas Carol – Scrooge is a cruel miser whose obsession with making money has enslaved him to a cramped joyless life isolated from his former friends and family.

His conversion from greed to generosity reconnects him with others and liberates him to see the wider happiness in a world with love.



NOTES

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#### NOTES

# Lust – Objectifying ourselves or others through inappropriate sexual desires or acts

**The Picture of Dorian Gray** – A morality fable about a Victorian man who keeps the youthful appearance of his portrait his whole life, while the portrait gradually changes to show his true moral state. As he exploits his invincible youth to focus his life on sensual pleasures, the man ruins many lives and breaks many hearts as he moves from one casual encounter to another. He destroys his own soul and happiness in the process, as the corruption on his increasingly hideous portrait reveals. As in the story, the damage people experience when objectified by lust is often hidden from view.



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# Envy – Pain at another's good fortune, desiring that they suffer because they have what we want

**Othello** — In this play by Shakespeare, lago resents that a fellow soldier has received a promotion from General Othello that lago wanted for himself. In revenge, he sets out to frame the soldier as having an affair with the general's wife, a deception that betrays his own friendship with Othello and ultimately results in murders, suicide and his own imprisonment.

*Wuthering Heights* – Two characters, Cathy and Heathcliff, follow their passions for each other. But when their lust turns sour, it transforms into hatred manifested by envy, wishing evil on each other.



"To love is to will the good of the other."

- **St. Thomas Aquinas** (Summa Theologiae II-II.26.6)

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NOTES		

# NOTES

#### Gluttony – Excessive consumption or overindulgence of appetites, especially for food/drink or wealth/luxury.

**À** Rebours (Against Nature) — the main character in this French novel goes on a wide-ranging spree seeking to experience every sensual pleasure to excess. "Satisfaction" comes from the Latin for "enough"—when the character gives free rein to his appetites, the constant quest for more means that nothing is ever enough, an addictive cycle in which, ironically, he can never be satisfied. He thus ends the novel empty and unfilled, making a cry from the heart for help.





#### Author

Huysmans was part of the French decadent literary movement, most notably in his famous novel, À Rebours (Against Nature), which follows a man living a life of excess, experiencing as many luxuries, artworks and sensory pleasures as possible. The man is left dissatisfied and lost at the novel's end, crying out to God in his pain and doubt. This cry proved prophetic, as Huysmans himself would ultimately convert to Catholicism. charting his journey in semi-autobiographical novels and spending his final years in a monastery.

À Rebours is also believed to be an influence for Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray.

NOTES

#### Sloth – Declining to engage with the world around us

**Poetry of T.S. Eliot and early novels of Evelyn Waugh** – Sloth is commonly recognized in the form of physical laziness, but sloth can also be a mental listlessness or boredom (what the French term ennui) and even a spiritual state, acedia, where we are closed off from engaging in wonder with the goodness and beauty of God's creation. Evelyn Waugh's satirical novels portray the "Bright Young People" (tabloid stars of 1920's England, living in a whirlwind of high-society parties) as suffering from ennui-like the man in A Rebours, their pursuit of indulgent luxury ultimately leaves them hollow. T. S. Eliot's poems like the Wasteland and The Hollow Men portray modern characters similarly suffering from acedia-they live lives empty of purpose, in a wasteland of their own making because their eyes are closed to the beauty of the cosmos.



# ENNU

Pervasive dissatisfaction and listlessness, a sense that nothing ultimately matters 'so why bother?' Borrowed from the French word meaning boredom (which is also the source of the word annoy).

# THE DIVINE COMEDY

An epic poem completed by the Italian poet Dante Alighieri shortly before his death in 1321. In the three books of the poem-the Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso-the poet is guided through Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven.

Many punishments in the Inferno and penances in the Purgatorio are tailored to address specific deadly sins, and the poem often includes stories of the people who committed those sins.

#### NOTES

#### Wrath — Violent, hateful, or irrational actions motivated by anger Anger is an emotional response to something we experience as wrong, such as a threat or an injustice. While anger can prompt us to take needed actions (like speaking up for ourselves or

injustice. While anger can prompt us to take needed actions (like speaking up for ourselves or others), it can also frequently inspire destructive behaviors. We may act without thinking, escalate a conflict, retaliate excessively, fixate on grudges or revenge, etc.

**The Merchant of Venice** — When Antonio fails to reply a large loan from his enemy Shylock, Shylock seeks to demand the contracted penalty of a pound of Antonio's flesh. Shylock is not motivated by greed (as suggested in anti-Semitic prejudice of the period) but rather by wrath—he wants to kill his enemy and turns down a late offer of triple payment so he can instead claim his lethal penalty.

*Hamlet* – Hamlet demonstrates the dangers in "righteous anger." He has every right to be angry– after the death of his father, his mother almost immediately marries an untrustworthy uncle who, it turns out, murdered Hamlet's father to take the throne. But Hamlet's anger overwhelms him and proves destructive: it first poisons him internally (including literal temptations of self-destruction and desire for his uncle's damnation) and then lashes out in irrational violent outbursts that destroy many additional lives on a path to revenge. We are not perfectly just, rational and merciful like God, and our fallen nature can still behave irresponsibly even when we deem our anger is justified—our "righteous anger" can quickly become sinful.



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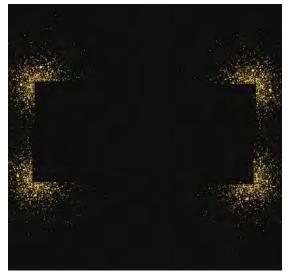
# **Case Study:**

#### "Glitter Gold" by Marie Miller

Episode Timecode 33:23

 Singer/songwriter Marie Miller wrote the song "Glitter Gold" about "how many of us can be

lured in, tempted by the glitter, the glamour of sin." It follows someone giving in the appeal of temptation: at first it feels liberating, but over time the sins gradually take over his life, and this new lifestyle leaves no room for the things he used to love, the truly good things like family, faith, and authentic relationships. The gold things in life have been forced out for the glitter of sinful, addictive pleasures. As Marie explains:



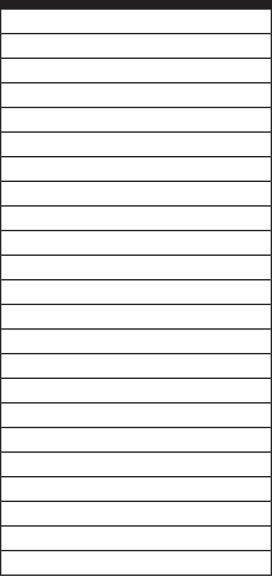
On our best days, we want to get out, we want to have that good life that we used to have, but we're addicted to that empty pleasure, that thing that promised so much, and gave so little, we're still holding onto, almost in hopes that somehow it will fulfill the promises that it never will.

So, in our pain, we cry out to God and say, "God, take away this darkness. Bring me back home. I'm tired of this." and maybe pretty soon after we fall into the same sin again. We think, "How am I ever gonna get out of this?" and I'm reminded of a quote by Pope Francis. He says, "God never tires of forgiving us. It's we that tire of asking for forgiveness." and that's the thing, God is with us every time we fall. He's with us through our tears. He's with us when we're trying so hard to get better and when we fall again.

We think of God as this mean judge who's just waiting for us to mess up, so he can say "Aha, I knew you were gonna do that. I knew that you were gonna mess up again." but that's totally wrong.

Our God loves us for who we are, not for what we do, and who we are is his son or his daughter. His love for us doesn't change on our good days and our bad days. It's completely unconditional, and what's so amazing is that he is always, always ready to extend his mercy.

### NOTES





# **Conclusion: Vicious Cycles and Virtuous Cycles**

We can see how the deadly sins can take over a person's life. Just like in these classic stories, many modern-day movies, TV, and reality shows also portray characters driven by greed and envy, consumed by pride and lust, jaded by their wealth into sloth and boredom.

Sin leads to sin—but fortunately virtue also leads to virtue, which is how we turn away from sin and embrace a life of goodness. We've looked at helpful strategies in the moment of temptation, but ultimately we want a life that isn't just fending off temptation but is actively orientated towards happiness.

So we'll look next at how to expand our strategy and build long-term defenses as well, so temptation doesn't even have the same influence on us.



#### **SMALL GROUP REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What are the three stages of temptation?

Why does it get harder to resist temptation if we wait until stage two?

Why does it get harder to resist temptation if we wait until stage three?

2. What are the three defenses we can use in the moment of temptation?

3. If evil spirits can influence our temptations, then can we say after we sin that "the Devil made me do it"? Explain why or why not.



#### **SMALL GROUP REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

4. Give an example you have seen in modern stories—including movies or TV—where a character gives in to one or more of the seven deadly sins.

What were the effects of this choice?

How was this choice relevant to your own experience?

What did you learn?

5. What are some common temptations that arise in your community?

For each temptation, what is the desire it promises to fulfill?

What is the bad effect it actually leads to?

Virtue helps us move toward our destined happiness—good habits make it easier to make the right choices as we go through life.

But bad choices can also become a habit, so part of growing in virtue is learning how to prevent temptation from isolating us and dragging us down into habits of sin. We want to learn how to defend against evil influences, not only in moments of temptation but in the way we structure our lives.



#### A Dialogue between Science and Faith

As we saw with Fr. Thomas in the first lesson, the Church's ministry of spiritual healing involves collaborating with medical experts who heal physical and mental ills. If we want to pursue spiritual wellbeing, we need a holistic approach—that is, we must look at the human person as a whole and recognize that our spiritual, mental, and physical experiences are all interconnected in our experience of life. All truth is one, so there should always be a dialogue between the insights of science and medicine about our bodily and psychological needs and the insights of the faith about our spiritual needs.



Treating something as a unified whole, rather than just looking at its individual parts.





#### Dr. Aaron Kheriaty, M.D.

#### Author and teacher

Professor of Psychiatry at UCI School of Medicine and Director of the Medical Ethics Program at UCI Health. Author of many books and articles on bioethics, social science, psychiatry, religion, and culture.

# NOTES

## A Unity of Body, Mind, and Soul

If we have a painful toothache, it can be more difficult to study for a test. If we are suffering from depression, it might be harder to feel connected to God when we pray. If we are weighted down with spiritual guilt, we may withdraw more from our relationships with others. We can talk about problems affecting us on different levels—biological, psychological, social, spiritual—but ultimately, these levels are all interconnected in the unity of a human person. Problems on one level will impact us on other levels as well.

### PSYCHOLOGIST

Specialist studying and treating mental health issues, often through talk therapy

## PSYCHIATRIST

Medical doctors that can treat both mental health issues and related physical issues (e.g. prescribing medication for chemical imbalances in the brain)

#### 

Medical specialist for treating the nervous system

# HYPER-RELIGIOUS SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of mental health issues that incorporate religious ideas or practices.

E.g. a person suffering hallucinations may manifest as a perceived vision from an angel/demon or hearing the voice of God. Compulsions or anxieties might manifest as 'penitential' acts of self-harm, excessive repetitions of prayers, etc.

# **Case Study:**



### Jean Lhermitte-science and faith in dialogue

Jean Lhermitte was a French neuropsychologist who applied medical analysis to the notion of demonic possession by examining historical cases of people thought to be suffering from it. His book, *True or False Possession*, concluded in most of these cases that there was a plausible medical or psychological explanation for the person's suffering, while other cases may have gone beyond the explanation of medicine or science. His work illustrates the importance of ongoing dialogue between science and faith.

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#### An integrated approach to avoiding evil

This means that if we want to build our spiritual defenses to avoid evil, we need to recognize our integrated nature, understanding that vulnerability can come from physical, mental or spiritual hardship.

We can be more vulnerable to anger and impatience if we have unaddressed physical pain. We can be more vulnerable to acedia or addictive behaviors if we have unaddressed psychological trauma. Care for ourselves must be integrated in these cases—seeking spiritual healing while also seeking the psychological and medical care we need to be well.



Let's focus in now on the spiritual defenses specifically, and how we can use them as we confront our primary spiritual challenge—the temptations we face to turn away from the love of God and choose sin.

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Episode Timecode 9:44

# <sup>Anecode</sup> Building our Spiritual Defenses: The 3 Spontaneous Defenses

We looked in the previous lesson at 3 spontaneous defenses we can turn to in the moment of temptation. We'll discuss how we can develop and build up those 3 defenses, and then we'll explore 3 long-term defenses that can help to make temptations have less impact in our lives.

#### **Prudence and Fear**

Prudence involves weighing the consequences of an action and comparing it to what we want our lives to be.

Fear of negative consequences can help push us to resist a temptation. For all this to work, we need to actively ask ourselves questions before we act, so we are in the habit of thinking about consequences, calling it to mind before it is too late.

On the positive side, we want to ask ourselves about what we want to accomplish with our lives, and if our actions are going to have the effects we want. Contribution is a key aspect of happiness – we want to think about the legacy we are creating with our lives, and ask if our actions are living up to that.



**Plato** (428-347 BC)

Greek philosopher

One of the earliest, most influential thinkers of Western Civilization, he founded one of its first schools, the Academy. His best-known works include his *Dialogues* and the *Republic*.



#### Questions Prudence asks: Consequences

If I do this, what could happen?

What could happen if I get caught?

What could happen if someone **discovers** it?

What could happen if this appears on the **front page** of the paper?

What would happen to my **parents**, **friends**, **family**?

What would happen to my career?

What would happen to my future?

What would happen to my soul?

#### Questions Prudence asks: Legacy

What do I really want?

What is it I want from my life?

What is it that would make my life **worth living**?

How am I contributing to the world?

What reputation am I creating by what I do?

How am I serving others?

What noble purposes am I pursuing?

What **principles** are important to me?

How do my actions match those principles?

Is my life **pleasing to God**?

What **legacy** am I leaving behind with my life?

"The unexamined life is not worth living."

- Plato, The Apology of Socrates

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# NOTES

#### Conscience

Thinking about our legacy can also help build up our conscience. Conscience has a negative role, activating feelings of foreboding, discomfort, and shame when we are tempted to doing something wrong. But conscience also has a positive role—we have a strong desire even from childhood to be noble and heroic, to lead a life worth living and fight on the side of cosmic good against cosmic evil. We want to be willing to sacrifice for others and fight against injustice. Conscience gives us strong positive feelings when we are moving toward the light, and if we reflect on this and keep it in our minds, it can motivate us before we act, making it easier to make the right choice and less desirable to give in to temptation.

This inner movement towards good actions, what Aquinas called synderesis, can also be strengthened by educating ourselves on moral principles, so that in difficult choices our conscience will have enough knowledge to pursue the right decision.



#### **Basic Moral Principles**

- Do good Avoid evil
- Be just Avoid injustice
- Be honest Avoid dishonesty



Our natural awareness of the good; our intuitive sense of basic moral principles.

#### "Lord, I know you are here and I know you love me."



#### **Relationship with God**

When we have a close relationship with someone, we are more likely to want to avoid doing something that could hurt them. How can we develop our relationship with God?

Communication is essential for any relationship, so the first way is to talk to God—prayer. (We'll explore prayer in more detail in the next lesson.)

We also strengthen the relationship by simply trying to connect with God in some way on a daily basis. Something as simple as taking a moment to remember that God is present, stopping to think about God's love for us, giving praise to God by thanking him for what he has given us in our lives. Keeping these thoughts in mind every day will make our relationship with God more real. Even a short prayer, like a decade of the rosary, can build that daily connection, and we can call God to mind with a simple phrase like "Lord, I know you are here and I know you love me".

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Episode Timecode 22:14

# **Building our Spiritual Defenses:** The 3 Long-Term Defenses

#### he Sacrament of Reconciliation

his sacrament gives more than simply forgiveness of past sins. It also gives us healing and rengthens our spontaneous defenses through grace—we are truly reconciled with God and econnected with his love and support. A sustained connection with God is the most effective, so econciliation is worth making time for—recommended at least once every month.



# **SACRAMENTS** (from Latin, "made holy")

In the Catholic Church, the sacraments are visible rituals that are channels through which God confers his presence and his grace to people.



Training ourselves to do something consistently (especially something that may be difficult to stick with at first), so that we can form a habit that will make us live better.

#### The Sacrament of the Eucharist

The Eucharist is the most powerful sacrament for our relationship with God, since it is the literal presence of God, the body and blood of Christ which we can receive into ourselves.

Jesus' love is so great that he comes directly to us—protecting, loving, healing, forgiving.

This presence is everything that defeats the tempter and invites us into the light, so receiving the Eucharist is a powerful defense against temptation and a powerful way to strengthen our connection to God.



# **GRACE**

The help God gives us.

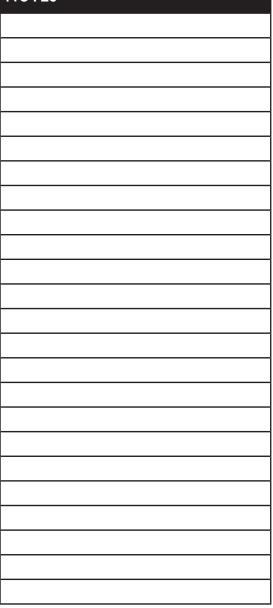
God gives us many gifts, generously and freely, to help us—he forgives our sins, he inspires us with his guidance, he comforts us with his love. Much of this help is given when we encounter God in the Sacraments or talk to him in prayer.

God's grace often strengthens us in virtues—simply experiencing that God is present can make us more peaceful or courageous, for instance.

> On a related note, when we are in a moment of temptation, we can turn to God's support simply by calling on the name of Jesus.

We know that Jesus has won the victory against the forces of evil, and he will help us reject any temptation if we ask.

# NOTES



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NOTES	<ul> <li>The Sacrament of Reconciliation</li> <li>Gives us healing and forgiveness</li> <li>Gives us grace</li> <li>Makes us stronger to fight temptation next time</li> <li>Can bring permanent change if we go regularly</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>The Sacrament of the Eucharist</li> <li>Jesus actually enters within you</li> <li>He is there to love and heal you</li> <li>His presence is the greatest protection against temptation (The more you call upon the name of Jesus when tempted, the more he will empower you to resist)</li> </ul>

#### **The Virtues**

As we'll discuss in lesson five, the best way to avoid evil is to actively pursue goodness, which is why the final long-term defense against temptation is the virtues. We've already looked at one virtue, Prudence, and will explore many others. A few significant virtues to introduce include:

**Courage or fortitude** – building up strength to persevere in doing the right thing even when it is difficult

Courage can come from within us and can also be strengthened through prayer and our relationship with God; through faith, God can enkindle the courage when we can't find it on our own, empowering us to brave more than we thought possible.



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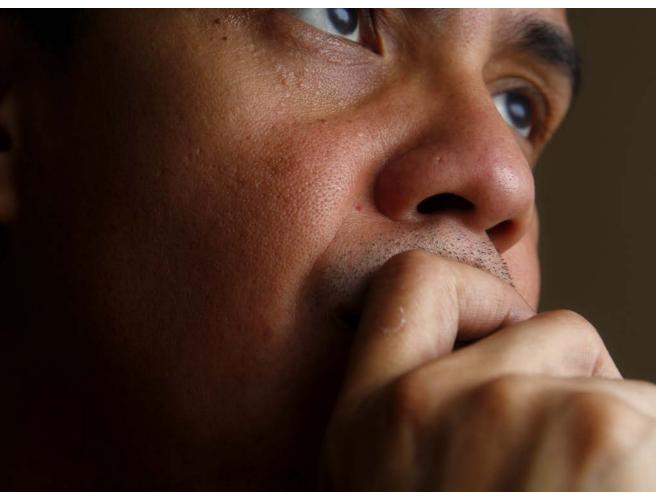
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Temperance or moderation – bringing peace to our passions

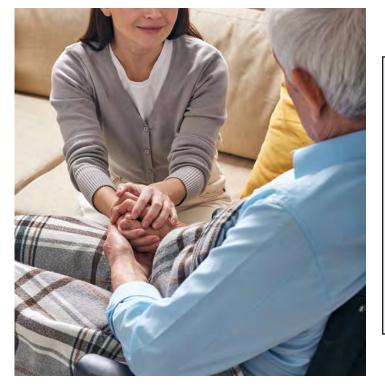
Sometimes our desires can get out of control and push us to unhealthy extremes.

In temperance, we empower an internal voice to speak up and interrupt that passion to say "I really don't need this" or "Calm down, here are some things that need to be considered."



The supreme virtue of Caritas (charity) – acting with love toward all

Just as all vices ultimately trace back to the selfishness of Pride, where we are willing to damage others and reject God's plan so we can attempt our own shortcut to happiness, all virtues flow from Charity, where we reach beyond ourselves to embrace a life of love and goodness that God has created us for.



"And now there remain faith, hope, and love, these three: but the greatest of these is love."

- 1 Corinthians 13:13

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**COURAGE / FORTITUDE** 

is difficult

Building up strength to persevere in doing the right thing even when it

**TEMPERANCE / MODERATION** 

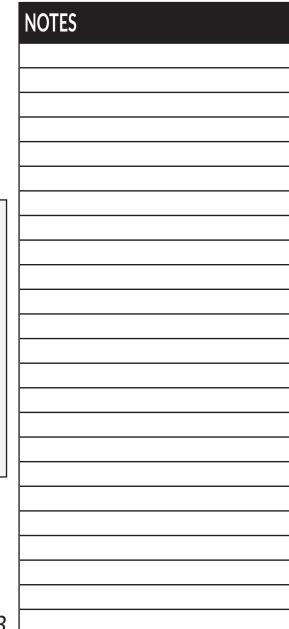
(One of the three Theological virtues:

Bringing peace to our passions

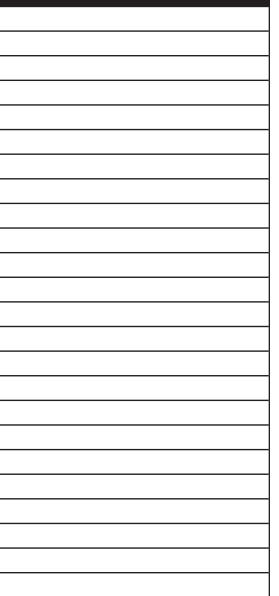
**CARITAS (Charity)** 

Faith, Hope, Charity)

Acting with love toward all



# NOTES



# **3 Spontaneous Defenses against Temptation** (what to do *in the moment* of temptation)

- 1. Prudence and fear
- 2. Conscience negative fear of doing wrong and positive desire to act nobly
- 3. A relationship with God

# **3 Long-Term Defenses against Temptation** (*habits* that make us less vulnerable to temptation)

- 1. The Sacraments
  - Reconciliation at least a few times every year Eucharist — every Sunday at Mass
- 2. Prayer staying in touch with God
- 3. The Virtues habits of doing good, including Courage/Fortitude, Moderation/Temperance, and Charity



# Episode Timecode<br/>32:53Spiritual Defenses in action:<br/>The Cosmic Struggle in "Normal Life"

It's easy to drift into the false notion of a "normal life" that sits safely in-between good and evil: we aren't heroically virtuous, but we also don't commit atrocities—most of us avoid both extremes and just live a normal life.

But in reality, the small choices we make ultimately transform our lives in major ways. Sin has a way of poisoning our lives gradually, changing the atmosphere bit by bit with each moral compromise until we feel hopeless.

And on the other hand, equally small choices to move toward God can open our lives unexpectedly to places we never would have imagined, giving us hope and happiness and peace that we hadn't even realized we were missing and lifting burdens from us that we were carrying silently for years.

But there's no neutral ground—we're all in the middle of that cosmic battle, choosing between good and evil.



This is why the spiritual defenses are so significant.

A few minutes of connecting with God, a weekend visit to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, stopping to think about our legacy in a moment of choice, and other simple changes in routine can send us down a transformative path, keeping us healthy and freeing us from the burdens of sinful choices.

The struggle to replace bad habits with good ones doesn't happen all at once. But God's love is always there to support us, calling us by name and offering us hope as we strive to follow the path to happiness.

NOTES

# NOTES



# **Case Study:**

#### **Crystalina Evert** – The path to healing

Divorce and infidelity were common in Crystalina's family during her childhood, so when she began dating in high school, she had already been taught to expect that love would only be temporary. A series of sexual relationships in a life of partying and drinking left

her feeling lonely and miserable, even while she appeared to be popular and happy. The short-term relationships reinforced her sense that she was ultimately unlovable; without a strong sense of self, she let the world around her define who she was, and she felt unable to say no to anyone or stand up for herself. Her friends were just as secretly miserable, but like her, were afraid to let down the mask for each other and admit their darker, less attractive feelings.

Crystalina didn't think there was a way out of this life, but the breakthrough came at a chastity talk that her concerned mother had pressed her into attending. The young speaker spoke with disarming honesty about his own past experiences with sex and pornography. Crystalina could identify with many of his experiences, but while she was weighted down with shame—shame so strong that she hated being alone with herself—this man was free and happy. His example gave her courage to resolve right there to change her life, so she could feel that same freedom. That night, she wrote down everything she had done, and was struck by all the sins that had built up through the small compromises over the years, the little "it's not that bad" dismissals that added up to a life of "a whole lot of bad."

This conversion didn't change her life overnight, there was a still a struggle as she had one foot in her old life and the other trying to chart this new life of following God's will. One night, she was at a party that she realized she ought to leave—on an impulse, she stopped at an adoration chapel on her route home. She felt so low, so far from God that it was an effort just to gather the courage to go inside and kneel in the very back. Finally, she looked up at Jesus in the Eucharist and said "Here I am, my God. Here I am in all of my filth. Please help me." And then rushed out.

In that moment, she recognized a crucial turning point in her relationship with Jesus. She used to think that God's love was conditional, that Jesus loved her when she was perfect, a saint, doing everything she was supposed to. Now she realized that love was so much more: Jesus also wanted to love her in her mess, in her brokenness. He wanted to help her overcome everything she was

ashamed of, to heal all the wounds she wanted to hide in the darkness from him. It's where he wanted to be, and over time, he healed her.

Crystalina's life began to change in many positive ways. She realized she wanted to be a speaker helping young woman who had felt lost the same way she did. She met a man who shared her mission. She married him and became a mother.

#### **Crystalina Evert's 4 Healing Steps**

- 1. Find a good Catholic counselor
- 2. Find a good priest
- 3. Eucharistic Adoration
- Seek positive influences + Step back from bad influences

However, she was surprised and frustrated to find that she was struggling in this new life: struggling with feelings of anger and inadequacy and difficulty with family life. She eventually concluded that in addition to her spiritual healing, she had a need to go to counseling as well. In counseling, she was able to uncover unexplored feelings from the pain of her earlier life. She discovered she had been molested as a girl and had suppressed many experiences and feelings—these difficult revelations helped her make sense of her early life and her feelings around love and relationships. Her spiritual conversion had prepared her by given her the strength to process these revelations, and her counseling had given her the tools to make sense of the trauma that had impeded her healing.

For this second healing process, Crystalina relied on four supports:

- A good Catholic counselor to help her walk through her past experiences
- A good priest for confession and spiritual direction, offering guidance for any spiritual aspects that came up, as well as prayerful support.
- Eucharistic adoration to spend time with Jesus, the ultimate healer who can help overcome anything in our life if we come to him.

• Keeping good people in her life and taking time away from toxic influences. Sometimes it can be necessary to take a sabbatical even from a friend or loved one so we can fully heal the way that we need to (then we can always return when we are stronger).

The biggest challenge to healing can be our own fear—fear of letting go, fear of letting God into the dark place where we hide our shame. But this is a deception from the tempter to keep us trapped. In reality, no matter how dark our experiences, if we let Jesus in, he will bring his light and heal us.

As Crystalina puts it: "God just wants to heal you and love you and take what you have and give you something great and do great things and become this amazing strong person for the kingdom of God. . . He's gonna do that."

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For immediate help with a personal crisis, including Sexual abuse — Domestic Violence Depression — Addiction — Suicide

Text HOME to 741741 (in the U.S.) or visit CrisisTextLine.org for free 24/7 crisis support

In any crisis, if you are in immediate danger, call emergency services (911 in the U.S.)



#### SMALL GROUP REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. What are some situations where a physical problem might influence your mental well-being?
- 2. If someone is suffering from a spiritual burden like guilt or feeling abandoned by God, or suffering from mental burdens like stress, anxiety or depression, how might these burdens affect their behavior or physical health?
- 3. What does it mean to treat someone's suffering holistically? Why is a holistic approach necessary when trying to heal someone?
- 4. In episode one, Fr. Gary Thomas described the process he used as an exorcist in assessing someone's suffering. Is this process holistic? Explain why or why not.
- 5. What legacy do you want to create with your life?
  - What is something you are doing to build that legacy?
  - What is something you want to do differently to build that legacy?
- 6. What are the three spontaneous defenses against temptation? How can thinking about our legacy make these defenses more effective?



#### **SMALL GROUP REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- 7. What are some things we can do to connect with God during a normal day? Why is this daily connection important?
- 8. What are the three long-term defenses against temptation? For each defense, explain how it can help us make a good choice when we are tempted to sin.
- 9. How do we encounter the cosmic battle between good and evil in our "normal lives"?

Give an example of small, everyday choices that can lead to a major negative effect.

Give an example of small, everyday choices that can lead to a major positive effect.

10. How can spiritual direction and confession help someone who is suffering and lost?

How can therapy and counseling help?

How can connecting with God by talking and spending time with Him help?

What are the ways our healing can be helped or hindered by the people we spend our time with?

Prayer is just talking to God.

It can be as simple as saying the name of Jesus, the way you'd call out to a friend. Whether we're checking in to talk about how we spent our day, or just asking for help in a moment of struggle, talking to God is an important part of contending with evil.

# Spontaneous Prayer – In Moments of Temptation



We might tend to think of prayer as something formal or complicated, but some of the best prayers are spontaneous—a few words from the heart, spoken

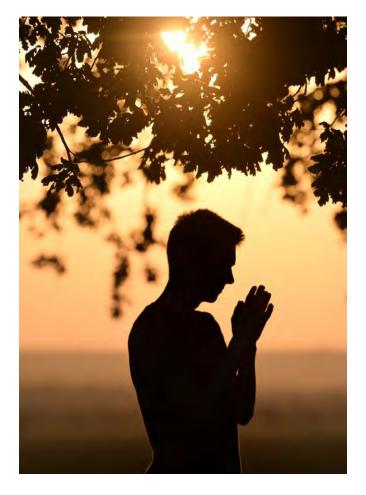
in the moment. Here are some spontaneous prayers that can be used when we're confronted with a temptation.

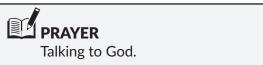
### 1. Invoking the name of Jesus

When we call on the name of Jesus, we are reminding ourselves of his love and calling him into our presence. Embracing this loving presence is the opposite of choosing sin—we can resist the Tempter's appeal by a prayer as simple as "In the name of Jesus who loves me, leave me."

"By faith in the name of Jesus, this man you see and know has been made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through Him that has given him this complete healing."

- St. Peter (Acts 3:16)

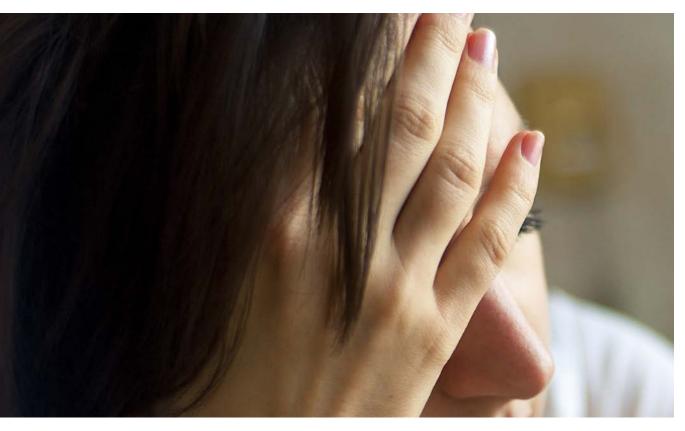




# NOTES

#### 2. Asking for Help

"Help me, God" — directly asking God to protect us in that moment can be all we need to say. We can similarly ask for help from our Blessed Mother, Mary, or from a saint or angel we feel connected to, like St. Michael the Archangel (a traditional defender against the tempter).



#### 3. Making a Statement of Will

Temptation draws us in gradually—the strategy with these quick, simple prayers is to stop the temptation early, before this process can take hold. When we find ourselves imagining or planning something sinful, don't engage with the temptation. Instead, address your own free will by saying "I don't want to have anything to do with this."



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NOTES	A daily check-in				
	Like spontaneous prayer, contemplative prayer helps most if we can get used to doing it as a habit, part of our normal routine. So we want to find a routine that we'll want to do regularly—maybe start by just save five minutes at a reliable time where you can talk to God for a daily check-in. Below, we'll explore a technique for briefly reflecting on our day and sharing our progress and our setbacks with God—a daily examination.				
	<ul> <li>prayers found in the rosary:</li> <li>The Lord's Prayer or 'Our Fathe</li> <li>The 'Hail Mary', connecting us</li> <li>The Doxology or 'Glory Be', a set of the set of</li></ul>	ayers that can help us raise our thoughts to God, such as the simple er', given to us by Jesus himself as guidance for how to pray to the Blessed Mother through scripture and a petition for her help hort act of praise that helps us reflect on the goodness, the power, <i>v</i> ingly invoke each name of the Trinity			
	(or 'mystery') is reflected on v the Our Father, the Hail Mary Five decades are typically pra Jesus' early life (the 'Joyful m	er popularized by St. Dominic. An episode of Jesus' life while praying a set of prayers called a 'decade': ⁄ (ten times), and the Doxology. ayed in a rosary, focusing on a set of episodes to meditate on: ysteries'), public ministry ('Luminous mysteries'), Il Mysteries'), or resurrection ('Glorious Mysteries').			
	Prayer giving glory to God (from the Greek doxa—glory) A common version used in the Rosary is: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen."	A traditional prayer which draws on the greetings given to Mary in the gospel of Luke by the Angel Gabriel ("Hail, full of grace") and by St. Elizabeth ("Blessed are you among all women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb"). It closes with a petition asking Mary to pray for us in our own lives. "Hail Mary, full of the grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death. Amen."			

# **Case Study:** The Lord's Praver

Episode Timecode 7:12

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Traditional prayers can sometimes become so familiar that we start to gloss over the words, so it helps to pause and take a closer look at what these ancient phrases really mean. This is especially rewarding for the Lord's Prayer (or 'Our Father'), since its words were crafted by Jesus personally to teach us what to talk to God about.

"Our Father, who art in Heaven" — We may take this for granted now, but it was a significant teaching of Jesus that we shouldn't be afraid to call God our Father, illustrating with the Parable of the Prodigal Son that God is our unconditionally loving Abba, 'Daddy', who invites us to the celebratory feast of Heaven.

"Hallowed be thy name" — More than just a way to call out to somebody, a name traditionally captures the whole essence of someone. We are really saying: how beautiful, how loving, how wonderful is the reality of God Himself.

"Your Kingdom come" — We want the kingdom that Jesus brought to be more present on the earth, and volunteering 'what can do to make your kingdom more present'? We are also expressing our own desire for God's Kingdom—our desire to go to Heaven.

"Your will be done" — We express our trust in God's love. His will for us is never going to be bad for us or 'out to get us'—on the contrary, everything God does is to bring about more goodness, love, and salvation. Because of this, we can always pray with confidence, "Your loving will be done."

"Give us this day our daily bread" — "Our daily bread" is a cultural shorthand representing 'everything we need in the world'. Give me what I need for my job, what I need for school, the basic things that I need to survive, the friendships and faith that I need to flourish—with one phrase, Jesus encourages us to raise all these requests to God.

"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" - In one beautifully connected prayer, we ask God for forgiveness of our sins and for help in our own resolve to try to forgive others from the heart.

"Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil" — In the cosmic battle, suffering and temptation can often feel overwhelming, so we are calling on God's support as we contend with evil and darkness: "Put us not to the trial or test, but deliver us from evil/from the evil one."

NOTES

# NOTES

# **Prayers When We Fall**

Episode Timecode 12:37

### You Can Always Turn Around: God's Unconditional Love

We also need prayer in those times when we fall and make the sinful choice. The same Tempter that told us the sin would be harmless now tries АВВА

"Father" in Jesus' native Aramaic, and the term Jesus used in teaching us that we should not hesitate to call God our Father.



to trap us with shame, despair, and fear into thinking the sin is too terrible, that we're too far gone. Don't listen to these lies—turn to God, whose unconditional love is there to help us come back to the light, just like in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Talk to Him in these moments—you can't go so far into the darkness that His love can't rescue you.



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# Case Study:

#### The Parable of the Prodigal Son

One of the key teachings of Jesus on God's unconditional love is found in the story he told, the Parable of the Prodigal Son. This is Jesus' consummate revelation of who God the Father is (whom he called "Abba" affectionate and understanding "Daddy"). Notice that the father in the story is Jesus' image of God the Father.

The story concerns a son who demands his share of his father's wealth and then leaves home and recklessly spends it all—betraying and shaming his family, country, religion, and God himself. In first-century Jewish terms, this son is about as bad as anyone could be. Driven to starvation, he resolves to go home, beg his father's forgiveness, and be consigned to the status of a slave.

The father—who represents God the Father—sees him coming, and instead of

renouncing him for his conduct and betrayal, he rejoices and rushes to embrace him. Before the son can finish his speech, the father orders the servants to get a cloak and put it on him (indicating that he wants his son to be treated as royalty). He then asks them to bring his son sandals (to take care of his temporal needs), and then to bring the family ring. The ring is very important, because it contains the signet or sign of the family, indicating that his son belongs to the family 100 percent—no conditions, qualifications, or reservations. He then orders that the fatted calf be killed, and a celebration begins.

For Jesus, this is how God welcomes and restores every single person—even the most gravely sinful—if they but return to the Father and ask for his forgiveness.

NOTES

# NOTES


## Specific Prayers in times of trouble

As with moments of temptation, there are simple quick prayers we can learn to use in moments when we have fallen.

#### "I know I've been sinful, please help me"

We can pray the prayer of the publican from Jesus' parable. Filled with remorse for his sinful lifestyle, the publican stood in the back of the temple and prayed simply: "Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am a sinful man."

#### "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom"

Another gospel prayer, spoken to Jesus in his last moments on the cross by the good thief. Instead of bitterness or despair, the thief chose trust in God's loving mercy. Jesus' response? "I tell you this day you will be with me in Paradise."

#### "Lord, make good come out of whatever harm I might have done"

Our wrong decisions create harmful effects; God's providence can often work to find the good that can be brought out of these bad situations.

#### "Lord, I accept your forgiveness"

We don't want to talk ourselves out of the forgiveness God is offering us. Toxic impulses—whether from shame, avoidance, fear, doubt, despair, etc.—may urge us to withdraw from God, but healing will come always from embracing the unconditionally loving mercy of God. Remember that he is going to forgive us, and, if we have a serious fall, embrace his absolution through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.



Father Bill Watson, S.J.

Teacher

A priest and educator in the Society of Jesus, Fr. Bill Watson has developed several programs using the teachings of St. Ignatius, including the Sacred Story Institute which teaches and promotes the Examen prayer for modern life.

# Listening to the Heart: how a single prayer can unlock your happiness for life

#### Ignatius of Loyola has an epiphany

At 31, Ignatius was lying in a hospital bed, slowly healing from a battlefield wound, with nothing to do but daydream and reread the only two books

on hand. He grew up in a lifestyle of immorality, violence and pride, so his daydreams were selfish fantasies of chivalric glory and marrying the princess. But the books happened to be old religious books, the Imitation of Christ and the Golden Legends (stories about saints), which opened another narrative storyline and different daydreams about doing what the saints did.

Ignatius made a surprising discovery—the vain, narcissistic fantasies and the holy, idealistic fantasies were both entertaining in the moment, while daydreaming. But there was a difference afterwards: setting aside the vain fantasies, the afterglow left him feeling dissatisfied and dry. The holy fantasies were equally engaging in the moment, but Ignatius realized that when he set them aside, he still felt peaceful and content.

This was the secret—the daydreams that left the peaceful feelings afterwards were pointing him in the right direction. They resonated with who he was really was. Following these daydreams, Ignatius started moving his life in a completely new direction.



**St. Ignatius of Loyola** (1491-1556)

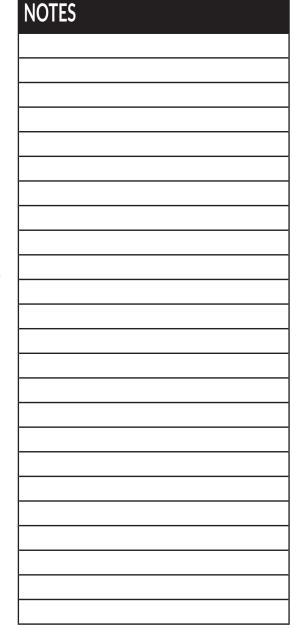
Priest and Theologian Founder of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), a religious order focused on a mission of evangelization and education.



A sudden revelation or insight.

# Episode Timecode

17:59



# NOTES

### A million plotlines – Only two directions

Many people get the job of their life, everything they're supposed to want, only to find themselves in a moment of reflection realizing they feel hollow, unhappy despite their success. We need to listen to the movements of our heart-there are a million plotlines a life can take, but only two directions to go.

With each choice, we are either moving toward the light or away from the light into darkness.



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#### The afterglow: peace or anxiety?

We all carry a story in our heads about our own life, about how it's going and where we want it to go. If we take time to slow down and pay attention to our own daydreams about the future, we can apply Ignatius' technique—listen to the afterglow to see which fantasies leave us feeling peaceful and content and which leave us dissatisfied or anxious.

The revelation can surprise us: sometimes a strongly appealing fantasy—more exciting, ambitious, glittery—will unexpectedly leave that unsettled feeling in the afterglow, while a fine but seemingly less thrilling choice preserves the peaceful and content feelings afterwards. There are only two directions: the peaceful afterglow reveals the choices that will move us toward the light.

# Afterglow feelings

# **Positive: Toward the Light**

- Happy
- Peaceful
- Content
- Calm
- Joyful
- Trust
- Increasing faith, hope, love

# Afterglow feelings

# Negative: Away from the Light

- Unhappy
- Anxious
- Dry and Dissatisfied
- Turmoil
- Empty, Hollow
- Fearful
- Panicked
- Decreasing faith, hope, love

NOTES

# NOTES

### Discernment in calm, not in panic

Oftentimes, we can fall into unhappiness because when we make choices in life, we are not able to listen to our hearts and hear these deeper feelings pointing us towards or away from the light. Discernment and listening requires calm, so we want to avoid making decisions in a time of turmoil when we are anxious, upset, or confused. Even good resolutions can lead to poor choices when we put ourselves under pressure and guilt to fix everything now, urgently, in a state of anxiety.

Ignatius imagines crossing a stream by stepping across stones in the stream: when a storm floods the stream and submerges the stones beneath the churning and muddied waters, it isn't possible to find the stones and cross safely. We must wait for the waters to calm. Discerning the right path in our hearts requires the same calm.



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NOTES

# The Sacred Story: listening to the direction of your life, day-by-day

If we want to change our lives so we are choosing happiness, we need to be able to listen to our heart every day, seeing how our daily choices form a sacred story with each choice moving towards the light or away from the light. We want to work this self-examination into our daily check-in of talking to God. This way, we can embrace the choices that are taking us down a good path and identify the choices we need to change from day to day.



### Moving toward the light: our lost connection with God

Sin alienates us from who we are meant to be—it is harder to listen to our hearts so we act against our own feelings, and it is harder to feel connected to God. Prayer and discernment are an attempt to restore that connection and get back to God, to recover the harmony that humanity was originally created for in paradise. Prayer opens us up to experience a relationship with God and to feel his presence in our day-to-day life, lighting the way for us to move towards Him in our daily choices.

# NOTES

# "I don't know who I am": Conversion can transform the scary part of us

Finding a new path can be challenging and scary—even if we feel like something is wrong in how we are currently living, we can come to identify with our choices. They become our personality, and if we stop doing those things, we don't know who we are anymore. This is often the case with addictions that we rely on as coping mechanisms—even if it's something clearly harmful like smoking, we instinctively feel on the surface that we need the addiction to feel good, despite the 'dry and dissatisfied' afterglow we feel more deeply. As a result, we may try to hide some things from Jesus when we set out to change—we invite Him in to transform our lives but make exceptions for these scary areas we don't want anyone to touch.

It's terrifying at first, but when are able to surrender all of our lives for God to change, giving up that anxious control, we can experience his love. We realize that God is not trying to slap a false identity on us or make us do something we don't want—he's trying to heal us so we can become our truest selves and follow the deepest needs of our hearts.



"I have come that you may have life, and have it to the full"

- John 10:10

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"Now is the time to wake from sleep" — **St. Paul** (Romans 13:11)

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### THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS

A book by C. S. Lewis reflecting on the challenges of spiritual life in modern society. It is told through the fictional lens of a series of letters by a demon advising another demon on strategies for temptation.



### To hear our hearts, we must slow down

We are surround by distractions in life. Living in a noisy world can drown out those deeper, quieter feelings in our hearts. It can be all too easy to ignore disquieting feelings or forget our deeper desires and goals when we let the noise and stimulation overwhelm us, sweeping us along from one distraction to another. To hear our hearts, we must slow down. Setting aside time for daily prayer, examining our sacred story, will require stepping back for a few minutes from these distractions. Find a technology-free zone, slow down, and reconnect with your own spiritual nature.

Now that we are ready to begin, what specifically do we do?

# NOTES

### The Examen Prayer



We call this daily self-examination the Examen Prayer, adapted from the techniques developed by St. Ignatius, and it starts with a contemplative pause, stepping away from the distractions and tasks of our life. If we can

literally step away and encounter the beauty of nature—go for a short walk, look at a sunrise, listen to birdsong or flowing water—that's ideal. If not, try to simply seek some quiet and reflect on the beauty we encounter in life.

We then experience gratitude, thanking God for these gifts. And in this mood of gratitude and connection to God's presence, we can now reflect on what happened in our heart this past day or half-day:

-I see movement *away* from the light here and here; forgive me, Lord, for this choice, that thought, etc.

- Here I see movement *towards* you, towards the light;

move me, Lord, in the direction of these thoughts, words and deeds.

-Reset my heart, Lord, and now I'm going to go back to my work or my homework, back to my regular day with my heart reset and with awareness of who you are, of who I am.

And we just do that daily—a few minutes of reflection to guide our day.



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NOTES

### Focusing on the light, not on the darkness

The purpose of this daily reflection is to keep our life focused on moving towards the light.

Things that are going wrong tend to naturally demand our attention while we may ignore the good-evil can exploit this by drawing our focus away from the goodness and beauty in life and keeping us fixated on the evil.

So we often make the mistake of focusing too much on our faults and sins-we think we are doing something spiritually helpful but the afterglow in our heart is discouragement, depression, unhappiness.

As a result, we start to see ourselves simply as that sin, instead of as a child of God who has been redeemed and loved by God. We focus on guilt and blame-we're hopeless, we've been given too many chances already-instead of recognizing that God's mercy covers all and that God loves us and wants only to heal us.

Ignatius advises us to never dialogue with darkness-only talk to Christ. Don't focus on the darkness we want to leave, focus on the love of God beckoning us toward the light.

# "Never dialogue with darkness. Only talk to Christ."



Theologian Bishop of Lyons (in present-day France) and an influential writer in the early church, authoring several works on Christian doctrine.



St. Francis of Assisi (1181/2-1226)

Preacher Founder of the Friars

Minor (Franciscans), a religious order focused on a mission of charity in a life of simplicity and poverty (as Jesus lived).



St. Dominic (1170 - 1221)

Priest Founder of the Order of Preachers (Dominicans), a religious order focused on a mission of preaching and intellectual study.

# NOTES





### Spiritual discernment is for all of us

Listening to our hearts is an important practice to develop at any age, for every stage and occupation of life. We are spiritual beings, destined for transcendent happiness with God, and we want to be attuned to the feelings that help guide us toward the light and away from the darkness. We want to recognize how the countless choices we are making, big and small, every day of our life, is moving us in one of these two directions. We want to learn how to step back from the noise and make a quiet, sincere connection with our loving God.

The importance of the Examen can be distilled into this simple prayer, accessible at any age:

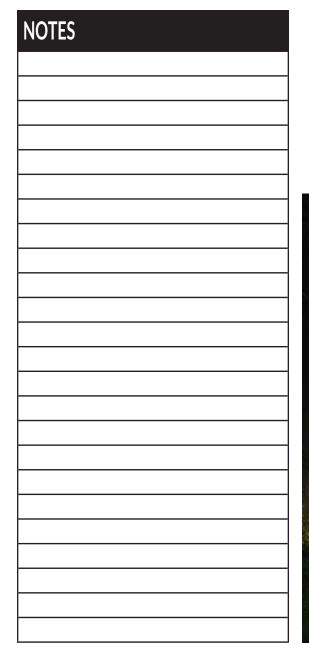
"Jesus, help me to slow down. Help me know what makes me joyful and what makes me sad. I know you will always be with me."

# The steps of the Examen Prayer

- Step away from distractions
- Think about the gift of beauty and goodness in creation (choose a setting where you can encounter this beauty and goodness, if possible)
- Be grateful to God for the gift, for His Love
- In His presence, think about your day every experience and encounter, every action, every desire, every choice
- Examine the afterglow of feelings each one now brings: listen to your heart to see which steps you took moved you closer to the light, and which steps moved you away from the light
- Ask God's forgiveness for the things you did wrong and His help for the positive steps you wish to continue
- Reset your heart and return to your day with renewed awareness and resolve

Note: We want to plan to set aside a few minutes out of our day to commit to this prayer. People have different rhythms so it is important to find a time you can fit *regularly* into your own daily life. (Studies indicate it's often easier to stick with the practice when done earlier in the day—i.e., not at bedtime)

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"Jesus, help me **slow down** and hear you in my heart. Help me know what makes me **joyful** and what makes me **sad**. I know you will **always be with me**."



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### **SMALL GROUP REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- 1. How can spontaneous prayer disrupt the planning process of a temptation? Why is it important not to let temptation start engaging our imagination?
- 2. What can we do to make God's kingdom more present on this earth?
- 3. What does God want for us? What should we expect if we tell God "Your will be done?"
- 4. When do you feel connected to God in prayer?
  - When do you feel disconnected, e.g. just going through habitual motions, talking to a wall, etc?
- 5. What should we do if we feel too far gone into darkness to turn back around? Does God ever reject or give up on us?
- 6. Why can it be difficult to accept God's forgiveness?
- 7. Why is it possible to chase success and then feel dissatisfied and unhappy after we get what we wanted? What can these feelings tell us?



### **SMALL GROUP REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- 8. What are the two directions we can move in life, in every choice we make?
- 9. What is the story of your life so far? Where is your life headed?
- 10. What are examples of things that can become part of a person's identity even though they are harmful? Why is it hard to let go of those things? How is letting Jesus into all of our life different from holding onto those darker attachments?
- 11. What are examples of distractions that can made it too noisy to listen to our deeper feelings in our hearts?
- 12. Where, among the places of your daily life, can you best find the gifts of beauty and goodness in creation?
- 13. What is a time you could reliably "step away" in the course of your day for a brief Examen, as a sustainable daily practice?
- 14.What is an example of a habit you have successfully added to your life? What was different about this process, compared to other attempted habits that did not persist as a sustainable practice?

15. How can a focus on our faults and sins make it harder to change for the better? How does God see us when we have fallen?

As we saw in the last lesson, contending with evil must have a positive goal to be successful. We are not simply avoiding the darkness—we are moving towards the light.

If we are frequently tempted to a sin, the best way to break that bad habit is not merely resisting the temptation, but actively replacing it with a good habit. For example, if you want to break a habit of always looking for faults in other people, you start by focusing on their positive qualities. We gain freedom from sin through developing virtues.

# Virtue – A Habit of Doing Good

Centuries before the birth of Christ, Aristotle talked about the power of habits: "We become builders by building, and harpists by playing the harp" We can acquire skills we don't have simply by repeated effort: someone who has never lifted weights may struggle to lift a small barbell, but after weeks of practice that same person will have worked up to much larger weights and will effortlessly lift that first small barbell without even thinking.

By repeatedly doing a good action—thinking about how our action will affect others, pausing daily to be grateful for the gifts of God's creation, being kind to someone even when we don't feel like it—we make these actions easier to do and more automatic. In other words, we develop a virtue—a habit of doing good.

Virtues don't remove all temptations, but they make it easier for us to resist the temptation and make us more inclined to make the right choice. Since we fight bad habits by actively replacing them with the opposing good habit, we can identify many "counter-virtues" that help replace tendencies to specific sins.



# 

A habit of doing good.

Over time, good behaviors become second nature to us and change who we are. E.g. by responding patiently when someone is annoying us or speaking courageously when we see someone being mistreated, over time we build up those habits and develop the virtue of patience or courage. Having the virtue means we will keep doing those actions more easily and naturally.



"We become builders by building houses, harpers by playing on the harp.

Similarly we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts."

- Aristotle (Nichomachean Ethics, Book 2)





# COUNTER-VIRTUES

Virtues that help us pursue the specific good that a particular sin threatens. It works as a "counter" to that sin: by developing the virtue, we develop habits that go against the sin and make us less vulnerable to temptation.

E.g. As we develop the habit of being generous, we will naturally find it harder to act greedily or even want to—hence, generosity is a "counter-virtue" to greed.

# **Counter Virtues for the Seven Deadly Sins**



NOTES

### Sloth – Declining to engage with the world around us

Sloth is commonly recognized in the form of physical laziness, but sloth can also be a mental listlessness or boredom (what the French term *ennui*) and even a spiritual state, acedia, where we are closed off from engaging in wonder with the goodness and beauty of God's creation.

### **Counter Virtue: Diligence**

Making an effort to keep active can train us to stay active as a natural habit: exercise makes it easier to be physically active, and a busy, eventful life keeps us engaged with others and less likely to encounter boredom.

### **Counter Virtue: Gratitude**

Thinking about the gifts we have received—especially God's gift of our existence and all the good things surrounding us in creation—helps motivate us to live the life we have been given and to encounter God and his creation. With that sense of gratitude and motivation awakened, we are less likely to experience apathy.



### Dr. Kevin Vost

### Author and Speaker

Dr. Vost has served as a professor at the University of Illinois at Springfield and at several colleges, teaching psychology and gerontology. The author of twenty books, his writing and lectures incorporate topics of traditional philosophy, contemporary psychology, and Catholic spiritual teaching.

# ORA ET LABORA

Latin expression meaning "Prayer and Work." It is the traditional motto of the Benedictine order, founded in the 6th century.

NOTES

Envy — Pain at another's good fortune, desiring that they suffer because they have what we want

# **Counter Virtue: Kindness**

With kindness, we actively work to do good things for someone, we pray for their wellbeing, we show them brotherly love. It's hard to feel envy towards a person—sadness that something good comes their way—if we ourselves are working to bring more goodness into their lives.



# JEALOUSY

Concern / sadness that we might lose something good.



Concern / sadness that someone else *has* something good.

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Giving to another what is truly theirs, what is owed them.



Giving to another what is truly ours, a free and generous gift that goes above and beyond our obligations.

# Greed — Grasping for more than we need or are entitled to (such as wealth/possessions)

### **Counter Virtue: Liberality (Generosity)**

Liberality goes beyond the virtue of justice. Justice is to give a person what's *truly theirs*. Liberality goes above and beyond, giving the person what is *truly ours*.

Unlike justice, which is owed, this generosity is actually a gift, and it's the perfect habit to oppose greed (taking for ourselves what is not ours).



NOTES

# NOTES

# Pride – Making ourselves God

Every sinful choice starts with an empty promise that we can find a better shortcut to our own happiness, even if it hurts people, betrays our integrity, or goes against God's plan. Every sinful choice thus begins with Pride, where we put ourselves ahead of God and give ourselves permission to choose every other sin.

## **Counter Virtue: Humility**

Humility, from the Greek for "earth", recognizes that we are mortal, created beings—recognizes that we are dependent on God. This view contradicts pride and opens us to submit to God's guidance and help, which makes it possible to grow in all the other virtues. (Just as pride closes us off from spiritual growth and leads to all the other vices)

# **Counter Virtue: Charity**

Love is incompatible with selfishness. Where pride says that the self is the only thing that matters, charity moves us to reach outside ourselves to love God and share His love with others.



"Dust you are, and unto dust shall you return"

- Genesis 3:19 used in Ash Wednesday ceremony

# Gluttony — Excessive consumption or overindulgence of appetites, especially for food/drink or wealth/luxury

### **Counter Virtue: Temperance**

Self-control that moderates our passions for the things that we want. At first, we may need to struggle when these excessive appetites kick in and actively restrain them—a "stepping-stone" virtue we call continence. With practice, fortunately, this struggle gets easier and fades away as we retrain our passions—self-control becomes the habit.



# Sins manifest in different ways

# Gluttony is overeating, but gluttony is also:

- Eating too greedily, without restraint
- Ignoring proper manners
- Eating too hastily, ignoring fasts or constantly snacking
- Being too picky, making unnecessary requirements
- Excessive luxury, only eating gourmet foods/rejecting simple foods

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# NOTES

Lust – Objectifying ourselves or others through inappropriate sexual desires or acts

# **Counter Virtue: Chastity**

With chastity, we invoke God's help to see each person in their totality—a child of God, with their own thoughts and choices, with dignity and meaningful relationships (someone's friend, someone's child, parent, sibling, spouse, etc.). This moves us to treat that person with respect. It counteracts the false perspective of lust which reduces a person to an object, ignores their full personhood to focus only on an attribute that attracts our desire, and tempts us to exploit them for pleasure. We'll explore this shift in perspective in more depth in the next section.



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# Wrath - Violent, hateful, or irrational actions motivated by anger

Anger is an emotional response to something we experience as wrong, such as a threat or an injustice. While anger can prompt us to take needed actions (like speaking up for ourselves or others), it can also frequently inspire destructive behaviors. We may act without thinking, escalate a conflict, retaliate excessively, fixate on grudges or revenge, etc.

# **Counter Virtue: Patience**

Wrath is sometimes misinterpreted as toughness—the person who vents their anger is praised for "saying it like it is". But this is in fact a failure of self-restraint. Contrast this with the patient person, who has the capacity to endure hardship without complaint, to enduring trying things from another person without lashing out at them. Hence, patience is related to the cardinal virtue of fortitude (the strength to endure hard things).

# **Counter Virtue: Meekness**

Meekness moderates our anger—we are able to separate injustices or problems that need to be responded to from the angry feelings that might push us to overreact or attack people. We can "hate the sin but love the sinner," and when we do have to punish someone, it will be expressed the right way.

## **Counter Virtue: Clemency**

This is a related virtue focuses on the question of punishment. If we are in a position of responsibility, we may at times need to point out someone's wrongdoing and redress it. With clemency, we do not indulge our anger or seek to be vindictive or punishing—instead, we take steps that try to correct and help the person.



**St. Thomas Aquinas** (1225-1274)

Philosopher and Theologian

Best known for his encyclopedic works of theology, *Summa Theologica* and *Summa contra Gentiles*. Aquinas was a leader in exploring the interface of faith and reason, working to integrate classic philosophy (primarily through Aristotle) with Christianity's teachings on God and religious questions.

NOTES		

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Episode Timecode 15:08

# The Theology of the Body: A Positive Counter to Lust

As mentioned above, dealing with the temptation of lust requires a fundamental shift in perspective. It can be challenging to find guidance for this—to figure out how to live out our sexuality within our Christian faith, especially if we want to move beyond fighting temptation to a positive virtuous experience.

# A future Pope seeking answers

Back in the 1940's and 50's, a young Polish priest who was ahead of his time interacted with many young couples—discussing and learning all the struggles, hopes and challenges they were experiencing in dating and married life. He reflected on what he learned from them in light of scripture, Catholic tradition and philosophy, then shared his insights in a book, Love and Responsibility. In God's providence, this priest Karol Wojtyla went on to be elected Pope John Paul II (now a Saint). And in his first few years as pope, he continued his reflections in his weekly addresses, teaching on what he called "the Theology of the Body."



Pope St. John Paul II (1920-2005)

Pope and Theologian

Karol Wojtyła lived through Nazi and Soviet occupations of his native Poland before he was elected Pope John Paul II in 1978.

His 26-year papacy was the third longest in history and left a wide-ranging legacy: his travels and outreach spanned the globe (including visits to an unprecedented 129 countries), and his extensive writings included numerous encyclicals, multiple works on the Theology of the Body, and direction of the first updates in generations to fundamental church texts like the *Code of Canon Law* and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.



# NOTES

# What Does God have to do with the body?

The Theology of the Body illustrates teachings about God's plan for men and women, sexuality and marriage. These teachings have always been present in the scriptures and in Church teaching, but their meaning has sometimes been obscured by cultural trends, so the Pope developed a new and original presentation to make these teachings more accessible.

We can see the need for this new presentation in the name itself. "Theology of the Body" connects two concepts that we may gotten the impression shouldn't fit together. Theology is about God—what does God have to do with the body?

Everything, according to Saint John Paul II. The human body, in its created form, reveals the mystery of God, and of who we are as being created in the image of God. Understanding this gives us a deeper sense of our dignity, of the beauty of God's plan, and of the destiny we are created for.

NOTES

### Episode Timecode 19:59 We are designed for relationship

We see an important truth, for instance, in the sexual differentiation of our bodies—we are not self-sufficient in isolation, but are created as complimentary human beings designed for relationship. On a fundamental level, our bodies, male and female, are designed to come together in a spousal union that is the outward expression of a profound union on every level of the person—physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual. In the revelation of scripture, this union is even meant to be a covenant, a bond of faithful self-giving love—each giving themselves as a gift to the other, forming a communion of persons so powerful that a new human life can come out of it.

This fruitful relationship is significant for God's creative plan for humanity, but it also reveals a profound mystery about God Himself. John Paul II notes that God's creation of humanity in Genesis uses a mysterious plural: "Let us make man in our image . . . male and female He created them." In light of the New Testament, we can see here a foreshadowing of God's nature: God himself is a communion of persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in an eternal exchange of love. The Father gives everything—His almighty power, glory, wisdom—to the Son in a gift of self. The Son receives that gift with infinite love and gratitude and reciprocates with his own gift of self. The love between them, this mutual self, is so great that it is itself the third person, the Holy Spirit.

Thus, to create His image in the world, God does not create a series of isolated human individuals. God makes a married couple, so that, in their communion of love, God can be fully reflected in the world.

"Then God said 'Let us make man in our image."

... In the image of God he created them,

male and female he created them"

- Genesis 1:26-27

# A mutual gift

This human destiny of a mutual gift of self is illustrated in Genesis 2. When first Adam is created, God says "It is not good for man to be alone". Each of the animals is brought before Adam, but as Adam recognizes, none are a suitable companion for the human being. Having taught Adam this human uniqueness, God completes his creation by fashioning the woman, Eve, from the side of the sleeping Adam. Eve is Adam's equal, and a person like him, but not simply a copy of him—there are complementary differences designed for union. Unlike the animals, these two persons can receive each other's gift of self, and make a gift of self in return. Adam is filled with joy when they meet—he intuitively realizes now that the deepest purpose of his existence is to love.

By this mutual gift of self, "the two are made one flesh" and prepare to share in the eternal exchange of love that is God himself—our destiny in God's beautiful design.



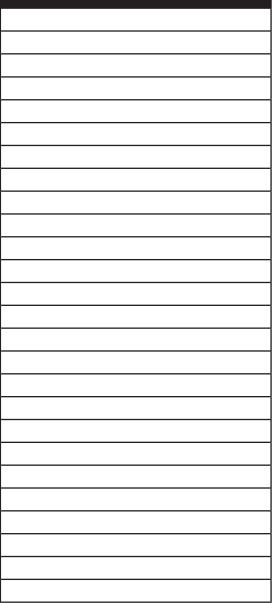
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A sacred promise that makes a deep personal commitment, often unconditionally. God makes a covenant with his people multiple times in the Bible, culminating in Jesus' gift of himself (see Luke 22:20). "The future of humanity passes through the family"

> - Pope St. John Paul II (Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio)

### NOTES







### Self-mastery vs. repression

Episode Timecode 27:18

Understanding how our sexuality is intended for this covenant of self-gift, a participation in the mystery of the Trinity and a preparation for our eternity destiny of love, we can see why we are called by Jesus not to lust. Lust divorces sexual desire from this deeper purpose, and it moves us to engage in sexual activity that is grasping for self—reducing any person involved to an object of self-satisfaction—rather than a gift of self.

As we discussed earlier, it's important to focus on the virtuous behavior we are pursuing, not simply fight temptation. So when we struggle with lustful desires, our goal isn't to try to just repress those desires. We want to direct our desires to their meaningful purpose, and in moments of temptation we'll want to invoke God's help to redirect our thoughts and desires into a more authentic reality. The goal is to have mastery of our desires, and not be held captive by them, and God is there to help us attain this goal.

So for instance if you see a person and have a lustful thought, don't just say "I've got to repress that thought"—instead, bring it to the Lord. We can pray in words like these: "Lord, forgive me. I have this lustful thought toward that person—help me to see their true inner beauty as a person created in your image. Thank you for the beauty of that person. Lord, I pray you bless that person. Purify my heart. Help me to see that person as you see them."

### Liberation from the bondage of lust

Dealing with temptations of lust in this way can feel like a constant struggle, but it can eventually liberate us. We become more capable of an authentic gift of self in all of our relationships: able to affirm others in who they are, able to recognize their needs. able to discover how our personality and abilities can be a gift to build up those around us. The more we do all this, the more we become who we really are.

The struggle may be discouraging—we may feel like we keep bringing the same sins to confession and somehow aren't getting anywhere, but God appreciates the value of our efforts and perseverance. Every time we get up again is a victory, and Jesus is always present to help us continue.



# NOTES



### DELIVERANCE MINISTRY

A ministry of prayer focused on principles that help people to progress beyond spiritual obstacles into a life of connection with God. Following a holistic approach to healing (as mentioned in lesson one) the goal is to deliver people oppressed by darkness into the liberation of a life free from the captivity of sinful or evil influences, reclaiming their authentic selves and moving towards the light.

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### THEOLOGY OF THE BODY

Teachings on the meaning and role of the human body as it relates to God and to our spiritual life and eternal destiny.

The Theology of the Body was researched and laid out in several works of Pope St. John Paul II. It draws on teachings found in Scripture and Catholic tradition to illuminate connections between human relationships and the image of God, and to explain the significance of sexuality and marriage in our fundamental destiny of eternal love.

NOTES

### Episode Timecode 35:53

# **Psychological Aids for Growing Our Virtue**

The goal of contending with evil is positive change. It's choosing a life where we are freely moving towards the light, building habits of virtue and freeing ourselves from the captivity of sinful habits. The more we understand what's going on inside ourselves when we make choices, the more power we have to make the right choices and develop good habits. We've talked about the need for an integrated approach, and here is an area where that is useful: psychology can give us techniques that will help us develop habits of virtue and avoid sin.

### **VICE** A habit of doing bad. A practiced tendency to sinful or unhealthy behavior that can influence us to move toward the darkness more readily, similar to how virtues influence us in moving towards the light.

# PSYCHE

The Greek term for 'soul' or 'spirit'. Used broadly by ancient philosophers to describe the animating principle of a living being.

Today it can also be used more specifically to refer to a person's consciousness.



# 3 levels of psyche

- Vegetative growth, reproduction, nutrition (plant, animal, human)
- Sensitive movement, the five senses (animal, human)
- Rational abstract concepts, reasoning and judgments, free will (human)



### Understanding our general nature: The three levels of the psyche

Psychology comes from the Greek *psyche*, meaning the soul, i.e. the animating principle of a living being. Living things have powers that can be generally categorized into three levels:

The **Vegetative** Soul – basic life functions like growth, reproduction, nutrition (found in plant, animal, human life)

The **Sensitive** Soul – the power to interact with the world through movement and through our five senses (found in animal, human life)

The **Rational** Soul — the power to think in concepts, reasoning and making judgments, and to use this higher thinking to control our more basic urges and passions (found in human life)

The first tool Psychology gives is helping us understand our own general nature as human beings. One significant principle we can see here is the unique ability we have, because of our rational soul, to be aware of our own urges and to reflect on them. We have an intellect that can judge our urges; we have a will that can choose what path to take and whether to act on that urge or not. Many profound lessons and guidance from psychologists, philosophers and theologians explore how we can use this power: we can rein in our impulses and instinctive desires and redirect them through building good habits so they will be aligned with where reason guides us that we want to go. Instead of drifting with each impulse that pushes us to one appetite or addiction or passion after another, we can develop virtues and chart our own course purposefully towards the light.

NOTES

# NOTES

# Understanding our unique temperament

Psychology can also help us develop virtue by giving insight into our unique individual temperament. As human beings, we all have passions and the power to guide our passions rationally, but we are each different in how particular passions affect us. It's helpful to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of our individual temperament.

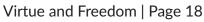
For instance, we can look at our tendencies to the different deadly sins, so we know what areas we need to be more careful in working on. Some people may have a hair-trigger temperament when it comes to wrath and will need to put more effort in developing counter-virtues and strategies, while other people are naturally more placid and will probably have other areas that better need their attention instead.

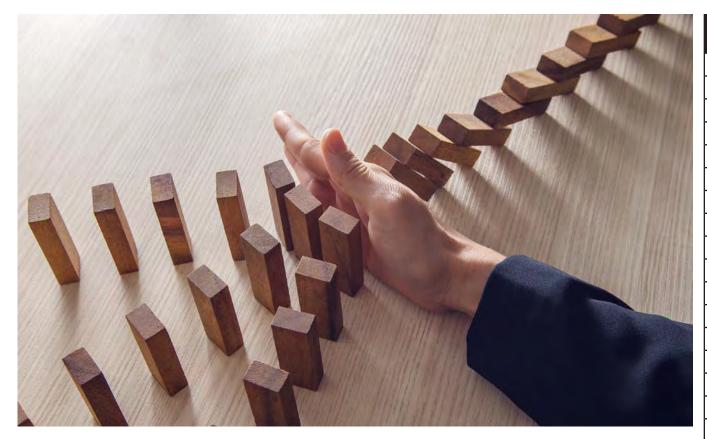
We also want to be aware of our individual strengths and gifts—what virtues come more naturally to us? What abilities is God calling us to use for others?











### Understanding the moment of temptation: Psychological "steps towards sin"

Even more specifically, psychology can help us focus on the process of temptation itself, the imperceptible steps that take us from the initial desire all the way to a sinful action. If we are aware of these steps, we have the power to anticipate them and interrupt the process with our reason.

Often, the initial desire is coming from positive capacities (e.g. nourishment, reproduction) that are going awry without the proper guidance of reason (e.g. gluttony, lust). When we recognize these desires and what is going off-course, we can redirect them positively before th sinful choice.

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# NOTES

## NOTES

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# Breaking the chain: particular strategies to redirect negative events

In fact, we can detect patterns in how temptations unfold for us in our particular lives, and identify psychological strategies to help break the chain in those recurring temptations. For instance, if we struggle with anger by taking offense at perceived snubs, we may discover a pattern that we tend to jump to conclusions to quickly, assuming that people's actions are intended to insult us when in reality we are sometimes reading too much into innocent events. This gives us the power to stop and reflect the next time we feel slighted—we can consider the possibility that we are jumping to conclusions and break the chain before that feeling takes us down the path to anger.

We can also use this technique to identify useful counter-virtues to develop to help prevent the specific temptations in future. In the above example, we may already recognize the need for counter-virtues like patience when we struggle with anger. But when we notice the pattern in what triggers the anger, it gives us another strategy: we can also begin looking for ways to develop humility, so that the experience of slights and insults will have less tendency to draw us into anger.

With these strategies, we can find new ways to break the chain of temptations; we can begin to find a path of liberation from bad habits and addictive behaviors. Change is always possible, and God is always present to help us along the way.



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### SMALL GROUP REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. What will happen if we try to suppress a bad habit without giving ourselves something positive to replace it?
- 2. What are examples of thoughts that can redirect lust to empathy, recognizing a person's body as "the body of a person"?
- 3. Why does patience require strength?

When is acting with patience tougher than acting on anger?

4. When a person does something wrong, how will your response be different if the goal is to correct/help the person vs. punishing them/satisfying your own anger?

How will a parent's response be different?

A teacher's?

A court of law's?

5. Think of examples of skills or habits that you've developed. What were the small steps that grew this skill bigger?



### **SMALL GROUP REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- 6. What are examples of things that can tempt us to sin?
  - Can any of these things make you sin? Explain.
- 7. How does a married couple who love each other with a total gift of self reflect God?
  - Why does chastity make us more authentic in all our relationships (i.e. not just regarding marriage)?
- 8. How do you identify your strengths and weaknesses?
  - Who do you trust to help you see them clearly?
- 9. For each deadly sin, what is the positive capacity that is going awry / isn't being managed by our reason?
- 10. What is a reflexive reaction, and how can it lead toward sin?
  - How can we interrupt the chain reaction so that a reflexive reaction does not lead to sin?

# Lesson Six – Positive Change through Happiness & The Six Categories of Cultural Discourse

# The Four Levels of Happiness

Episode TimecodeWe've talked a lot about contending with evil, and now we0:17want to move on to the positive goal—happiness.

But what exactly is happiness? There isn't one clear answer, because many different things can make us happy—from a tasty meal to a lifelong friendship, from succeeding in a career to experiencing transcendent wonder. Great thinkers have identified four basic kinds of happiness, which are all connected to form a natural hierarchy: the four levels of happiness.

### Level 1: Pleasure and Material Goods

Level 1 happiness comes from external things that appeal to our biological and physical needs and desires. It can include pleasures stemming from food and drink, warmth and shelter, sexual gratification, stimulants like alcohol, etc. as well as comfort and satisfaction from owning or consuming material goods.

The happiness that comes from pleasure and material goods is real, but it is limited. As we move up the levels, the happiness involved becomes more pervasive (affects more people), enduring (lasts longer), and deep (engages us more fully). Level 1 happiness is the most limited on all three qualities—it only affects the self, it gives an immediate gratification that doesn't last long, and it only engages a part of us by addressing our physical needs and desires. It's not enough to live for—if we seek fulfillment through level 1 alone, we can get trapped in a cycle of repeating superficial pleasures that fail to address our deeper needs as human persons.



# Lesson Six – Positive Change: Happiness & the Six Categories of Cultural Discourse

# NOTES

# Level 2: Ego-Comparative Happiness

Level 2 happiness comes from a sense of success and achievement. It can value things like winning at sports, having the most attractive partner, getting the highest grades in school, earning awards/ recognition for a talent or career, etc.

The happiness of this level has real value—it's good to want to make the most of ourselves, and it's good to have self-esteem and the esteem of others. As with level 1, however, this level has limitations that make it unsatisfying if it becomes our dominant goal. If we strive for success, our achievements may have a deeper impact and longer-lasting effects than Level 1 pleasure, but the happiness is still largely limited to the self. In fact, we can easily view others as competition—being "the best" means being "better than" everyone else.

# THE COMPARISON GAME

The competitive dilemma that people get trapped in if they are focused on Level 2 happiness. In the comparison game, one's personal worth comes from being the best at something, so life becomes a constant and ultimately unwinnable competition against everyone else: either you feel unhappy because someone is better, or you feel pressure to keep proving yourself as the best and to stay vigilant against the day a new champion inevitably comes along to dethrone you.

Nobody wins the comparison game, which makes both "winners" and "losers" defensive, jealous, stressed, lonely, insecure, and disappointed.



# Lesson Six – Positive Change: Happiness & the Six Categories of Cultural Discourse

# The Comparison Game

Focusing on ego-comparative happiness can thus trap us in the Comparison game. Our self-worth becomes very fragile, tied to our sense of success which can be overthrown at any time if someone better comes along. We start looking around distrustfully, judging and comparing everyone—who has more power, more status, more popularity, more talent, etc.? Who has less? Am I a winner or a loser? This comparison game traps us in a cycle of negative emotions: jealousy, fear of failure, insecurity, pride, selfish frustration and rage, loneliness. To escape the Comparison game, we must expand our view of happiness further, to levels 3 and 4.



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# Lesson Six – Positive Change: Happiness & the Six Categories of Cultural Discourse

### NOTES

# Level 3: Contributive Happiness

Level 3 happiness comes from trying to make a positive difference to somebody or something beyond myself. Instead of focusing inward like level 1 and 2, we now engage with the world around us and find meaning in giving of ourselves to other people. Instead of the Comparison game where we view others as competition and a threat, we are now free to appreciate others and to find happiness in contribution, working to make their lives better.

Contributive happiness is truly more pervasive, as we work to improve the lives of our family, our friends, of our community and of people we encounter in need. Its effects can be more enduring, even life-long in many cases if we transform the lives of those around us. It engages us more deeply, as contributive happiness gives us the key to unlock our need for a life's legacy: we want to know that our life has meaning, that the world is better off for our having lived, that we invested our life in making our community, our little corner of the world a better place.



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### Level 4: Transcendent Happiness

Level 4 happiness comes from our encounter with transcendent reality, from being in connection with God. Even the good things in this world fall short in some way—we have a desire for perfect love, for perfect truth, for perfect justice and fairness, for perfect goodness and a perfect home where we belong. These transcendental desires point us to our destiny, for God has created us to be in relationship with Him, the source of these perfections and the only One who can give us ultimate fulfillment in an eternal life with Him.

We will never be content with anything less—the most pervasive, eternally enduring, and deeply fulfilling happiness is found in our connection with God. If we're going to live for something that's truly worthy of us, we must not stop short but continue the journey upwards through all the levels of happiness to reach our full destiny and meaning in life.



NOTES

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NOTES	The Four Levels of Happiness: Effects	<b>Pervasive</b> (How widespread is the effect?)	<b>Enduring</b> (How lasting is the effect?)	<b>Deep</b> (How much of the person is affected?)
	Level 1: Pleasure and Material Goods	Oneself	In the moment	Engages our physical senses
	Level 2: Ego-Comparative	Oneself (sometimes our success may incidentally benefit others)	Can affect one's lifetime	Engages our intellect and emotions
	Level 3: Contributive	Both ourselves and the other people we help	Can change people's lives, even having effects for generations	Engages our ability to love and be loved, our sense of worth as a member of the human family, our need for a meaningful legacy and purpose in life
	Level 4: Transcendent	Our relationship with God and with all his creation	Beyond our lifetimes into eternity	Infinite — engages our deepest yearnings for the perfect goodness, truth, love, beauty and home, found in God Himself



### Beyond the Individual: How the Four Levels shape our Culture

"The heart of a society" – What culture do we want?

Episode Timecode 14:34 NOTES

Culture is the heart of a society, the animating force that guides the ideals we pursue and value as a group. It's a powerful influence that defines the virtues and vices we focus on, the people we see as heroes and villains, the goals we work toward.

Our individual lives are shaped by our understanding of happiness—a life limited to seeking pleasure or struggling in the comparison game will look very different from a life that reaches out by helping others and working towards eternal life with God. In the same way, a culture is shaped by its understanding of happiness, which in turn shapes how our culture defines its ideals.

Just as there are four levels of happiness, there are similarly four levels of success and quality of life. We can also identify four levels of love, of freedom, of ethics, even of suffering. A culture that gets stuck on a lower level in any of these six areas (what we call "categories of cultural discourse") will set the wrong goals and end up frustrated and unfilled, encountering inevitable problems just like a person stuck on a lower level of happiness.

### NOTES

### The six categories of cultural discourse

Just as there are four levels of happiness, there are four levels of:

- Success/quality of life
- Freedom
- Love
- Ethics
- Suffering

What we think about these categories, in other words, is going to control the kind of culture that we have. Do we want a society of compassion, or one where the person with the most toys wins? Do we want a society that is fundamentally good, or do we want a society of survival of the fittest?

If we want to make a positive difference in our community, we will need to engage with our culture at whatever level we find it and find ways to build it up.

We thus need first to understand the four levels as they impact all these categories of cultural discourse.



### Culture focused on lower levels

- Focused on gaining wealth
- Focused on gaining possessions
- Focused on success
- Focused on power
- Focused on recognition
- Hard to find shared principles
- Hard to live in community
- Hard to encourage virtue
- "Every man for himself"
- Decadence
- Radical individualism
- Personal dissatisfaction

# Culture focused on higher levels

• Compassion for others in society

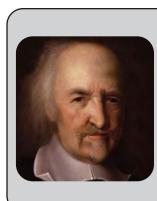
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- A culture of giving
- A culture of contribution
- A culture of transcendence
- Shared principles
- Shared ethics
- Cooperation within the community
- Social justice and order
- Communal idealism
- Personal sense of dignity
- Personal sense of shared, higher purpose

### 

The set of values, norms, and traditions that guide the behavior of people living in a social group. We naturally (even unconsciously) learn the customs and ideas of our culture simply by living in it.

#### NOTES



**Thomas Hobbes** (1558-1679)

Philosopher

An influential philosopher, best known for his political theory. In his book *Leviathan*, Hobbes argues that people enter into a social contract to live in governed societies so they can avoid the chaos of an every-man-for-himself "state of nature" where life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."

### The Four Levels of Success



### Our view of success flows from our view of happiness

Who do we consider a successful person? A successful person has become what we want to be, so success will look differently if our goals are focused on level 1 happiness than if we are striving for the completeness of level 4 happiness. Our culture will define success depending on the level of happiness it prioritizes.

A culture focused on level one or two happiness will strive to accumulate wealth and possessions, power and recognition. Since these are self-centered and competitive goals, it will be difficult to grow community in this culture. People will judge their quality of life by how successful they are in gaining wealth and fame. Inevitably, as in the Comparison game, they will fall short and face a crisis of unhappiness: feeling that they are failures, they are missing out, they aren't living up to their potential. They will look down on people in need as "losers"—instead of empathy and cooperation, we experience bitterness and conflict.

Only when we have the deeper goals of level 3 and 4 happiness can we build a culture that envisions a less selfish idea of success. A culture that holds real principles and values the cultivation of virtues. A culture that brings people together to work toward a just, ordered, and ethical society.

### Level 1 Success: Wealthy and Healthy

Success based on level 1 happiness means having a lot of material positions and the physical health to enjoy them. This view of success is reinforced in cultural messages in advertising, film and television, and social media.

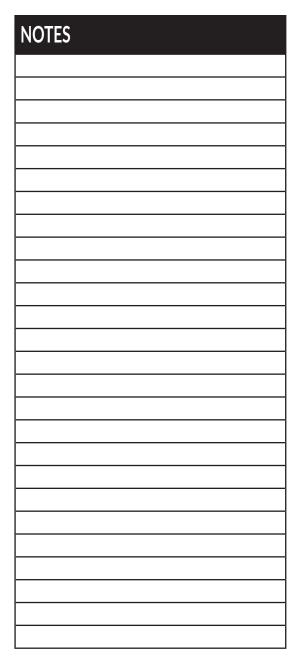
Success on this level can be valuable when used for good, but it is fragile at best—any injury or financial trouble can take away this sense of achievement and leave us feeling like a failure. We can under-live our lives if we focus here—we are meant for so much more.



### Level 2 Success: Admired and Accomplished

On level 2, we are successful when we are admired—people notice and respect us. We are competitive and winning. We get awards and recognition for our accomplishments.

Of course, this also means that when someone beats us at the comparison game, we feel like a complete failure—our entire sense of self is tied to our accomplishments.



### NOTES



### Level 3 Success: Making a difference for others

We reach beyond the self with level 3 success—on this level, we are successful when we are doing good with our lives, making a difference for other people. This can involve having good relationships with our family and friends, showing compassion to people we encounter who are sad or suffering, and volunteering to help those in need or help make our community better.



#### Level 4 Success: The Divine Perspective

Success on level 4 recognizes the Divine perspective—how does God view my life? When does He think I'm being most successful? We know God doesn't care how popular or wealthy we were. He cares about what we did with what we were given. Were we able to give our lives to something bigger than ourselves, to pour our energies into helping others and building up the community of God? Were we able to let go and entrust our lives to God, giving him our successes to use as He deemed best?

### Our view of success changes how we experience life

We all judge ourselves every day—our sense of our quality of life comes from the idea of happiness and success we hold, consciously or not. If we have a level 1 view of success, then when we don't have the wealth to measure up, we won't just feel the discomfort of poverty, we will judge that we ourselves are worthless. Our expectations of success can prevent us from reaching our full potential—we may achieve the level 1 one wealth or the level 2 fame and talent and find ourselves feeling unexpectedly dissatisfied. We don't know what to do, because we already have everything we've defined as success. There are numerous examples of celebrities whose lives are full of misery—relationship troubles, abuse, addiction—despite having reached the level 1 and 2 success the culture told them would bring happiness.

On the other hand, if we enter into a level 3 and 4 perspective of success—doing good for others, living for God, making a difference with our lives—it becomes possible to find a high quality of life no matter our circumstances. A person lying ill in a hospital has little opportunity for level 1 comfort or level 2 accomplishments, but can still offer love, forgiveness, wisdom. These deeper values can't be appreciated with a lower perspective of success; if we don't broaden our perspective, we risk undervaluing our own worth and losing out on what is most important in life.

#### Our view of success changes how we treat others

Similarly, if we emphasize level 1 and 2 success in our culture, we risk devaluing the lives of many people who don't have enough wealth or power to "count". We will tend to push people to the margins of society when they are too weak, too old, too ill. They become invisible, and receive the message that their lives are worthless and a burden. At its worst, they may indeed feel pressure to end their lives altogether.

Again, we must move beyond this perspective to the higher levels. We won't marginalize and devalue people if we live in a culture that values contribution to others, in a culture that sees us the way God sees each of us—capable of love and preciously valuable.

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# Famous people in society can still:

- Become trapped in addictions like drugs or alcohol
- Struggle through breakups and divorces
- Suffer in abusive relationships
- Commit abuse to others
- Succumb to corruption
- Fall into disgrace
- Feel empty and unfulfilled and question why they are unhappy



### Camille Pauley

### Author and Educator

President and co-founder of Healing the Culture, a foundation that applies the four levels of happiness to cultural issues, producing educational programs and other resources to evangelize, change hearts and minds, and build a culture of life.

# A terminally ill "nobody" in a hospital can still:

- Discover their self-worth in love, with an eternal perspective that transcends "achievements"
- Practice forgiveness and teach forgiveness
- Share wisdom with others, imparting ideas from their life experience.
- Creates opportunities for love in those they reach out to for assistance
- Bond with others in an exchange of generosity, experiencing the deeper meaning of life
- Positively impact their culture, their family, and their community

### The Four Levels of Love

#### Love: The most important word(s)

Love is probably the single most important word in the English language. Before looking at the different levels of love, we'll actually want to unpack the meaning of this word further by looking at different words which identify various forms that love can take. These words come to us from Ancient Greek writings: Storgē, philia, eros, and agapē.

### What is Agapē?

Agapē is the most profound form of love, in which our empathy with another person connects us with them in a bond of unity, so that we desire to do good for them just as easily as we desire to do good for ourselves. It involves self-sacrifice, compassion, kindness, and forgiveness. Jesus taught Agapē love (e.g. the Golden Rule) and he demonstrated it himself in his passion and death for our salvation. Agapē love empowers us to embrace the intrinsic dignity of all people no matter our differences. It empowers us to love people who can't pay us back.



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### Jesus showed us agapē love means:

- Loving everyone (not just those who can love us back)
- Embracing the intrinsic dignity of the other (even those 'not like me')
- Empathizing with the other
- Helping another for their sake
- Self-sacrifice
- Compassion
- Generosity
- Kindness
- Forgiveness

### Four kinds of love

- Storgē affection
- Philia friendship
- Eros romantic intimacy
- $Agap\bar{e}-Christlike\ charity$

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### Storgē

Storgē is simply affection. A positive feeling of delight in another, like we might feel when we see a laughing child or a cute puppy. There's no deeper attachment bound up with it—we aren't necessarily going to do anything for that person, but we experience a good feeling toward them. We can feel affection in our relationships as well (indeed, God has affection for us).

It's good, but we need stronger forms of love as well—affection is not going to enable us to forgive our enemies, for example.



### Philia

Philia is a friendship love. We bond with someone over something shared in common—being interested in the same hobby, living in the same neighborhood, belonging to the same team or school class, etc. It's a mutual love with an expectation of reciprocity—making time for each other, celebrating each other's birthday, listening to each other's problems.

As with storge, philia is good but we also need other forms of love. Philia will help us be generous to a friend, but it won't motivate us to donate to a charity for people in need in another country, people who will never pay us back and won't even know we exist.



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#### NOTES

#### Eros

Eros is a romantic love. More than philia, it requires deep intimacy, so it is reserved as a mutual, exclusive relationship, often incorporating sexuality. Hence, the idea of exclusivity in marriage (contrasted with philia, where we can have many friendships at the same time).



Of the four, Agapē is a far more powerful, deeper kind of love than storgē, philia, or eros. (Even romantic feelings can fall short at times in a relationship, requiring the more universal love of Agapē). Agapē can include these other forms, but it can also act on its own, recognizing the goodness and dignity of the other as a person made in the image and likeness of God (who himself loves them eternally).

Now that we've explored the meaning of love in more detail, how does love change as we move through the four levels?

### Level 1 Love: Focus on self-satisfaction

We first learn love as babies, and at this stage we experience love simply as someone satisfying our needs and giving us what we want: hugs, toys, playtime, fun. As we mature, we learn how to give as well as receive. However if we instead get stuck at level 1 and don't progress beyond this it's-all-about-me perspective, we will misunderstand love. As a result, we will hurt and be hurt by others and fail in relationships because our "love" is selfish. Sex on level one is going to be lust, for instance, focusing only on using the other to make us feel good.



#### Level 2 Love: Focus on approval

For level 2 love, we want others to love us because they respect and admire us. This desire to be liked is deeper than Level 1, but it is still limited by its focus on ourselves. Sex on level 2 will be possessive, controlling, and ultimately a negative experience that fails to recognize the other person for their own self.

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#### NOTES



### Level 3 Love: Recognizing the other is worthy of love

Level 3 love brings in Agapē. Love is now a desire to do a good for someone for their own benefit. We want to see the other person thriving, successful, healthy not because we'll feel good about ourselves but because we'll be glad that they are well, because they should be well, because they are good. To keep from drifting into Level 2 ("I'm helping you which makes me respectable") we will need the perspective of Level 4...



#### Level 4 Love: We are all created for eternal love

Level 4 love says "I love you because God made you"—we recognize that God has created each of us for eternal love, destined to enjoy perfect goodness with Him forever. Agapē now means we want to do good for the other because we want to help them attain their eternal good. Even if we have to make sacrifices, even if it means we have to let them go at some point along the earthly journey to this eternal destiny.

Agapē love at the height of level 4 can transform us, perfecting our love in all its forms and empowering us to be capable of compassion, forgiveness, generosity, care, and self-sacrifice as we become the person we are meant to be and live the life that God has called us to. This is where real happiness and fulfillment are found.

### The Four Levels of Freedom

Freedom is yet another ideal whose meaning can shift dramatically depending

on how far we progress through the four levels. And once again, these different meanings can have significant consequences for a culture.

### Level 1 Freedom: No constraints – Pleasure without pain

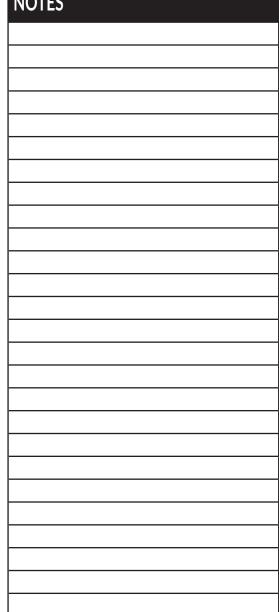
If our goal is pleasure, then freedom means being free from any constraint or obligation that will limit our pursuit of pleasure. We want to be free to do whatever we want, so we can maximize pleasure and minimize pain.

We won't be willing to sacrifice for anything greater than ourselves. We won't put limits on our own behavior to benefit others-these things bring us pain, and thus must be avoided.





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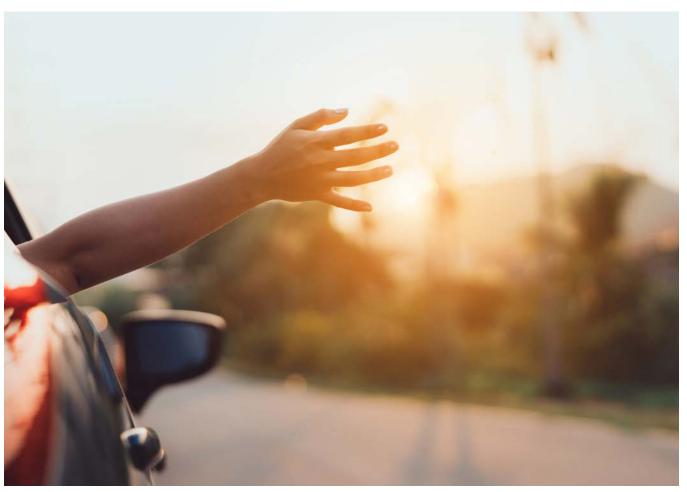
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### Level 2 Freedom: Keeping all your options open

If our goal is ego-comparative success, the focus is still limited to the self, so freedom is still concerned with avoiding commitment or sacrifice for something outside ourselves. We want to be free to keep our options open, always on the lookout for what will give us an advantage.

Commitments are incompatible with this—they mean we are willing to work towards an outside goal that will benefit others, even when it isn't the most convenient for ourselves.



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### Level 3 Freedom: The power of commitment

With level 3, we finally reach beyond ourselves, recognizing there are things in the world outside us that are just as or more important than we are. They may be worth sacrificing our own time and effort for, even enduring pain for. Suddenly freedom isn't just about being free from constraints, it means having enough strength that we are free to do what we need, empowered to make the world a better place.

Commitment isn't a threat anymore; instead now it's something we value. Of course we want to commit ourselves to something greater than us. That's how we build a meaningful legacy. That's what makes life worth living.



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### Level 4 Freedom: "He Leadeth Me" – Transcendent perspective

Freedom reaches the ultimate commitment in level 4. When we recognize that God is guiding us and he knows what's going to lead to the most good for the world, we realize that if we commit ourselves to following the loving will of God, we can trust that he will guide our lives to do the most good we can in this life and find happiness eternally with Him. We can see how liberating this surrender is—trusting God to lead our life down the best path, no matter the sacrifices along the way—in the joyful lives of the saints.



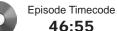
### The Four Levels of Ethics

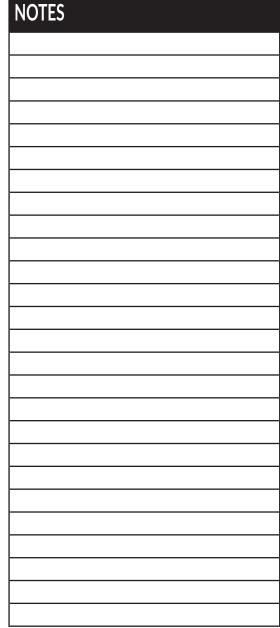
Ethics is the search for the good-determining a moral code of what is good that can guide us so we can do the good as we live our lives.

### Level 1 Ethics: Radical Pleasure Utilitarianism – "Anti-Ethics"

At level 1, ethics isn't really possible. If our goal is maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain (what we call "Radical Pleasure Utilitarianism"), we are ignoring any responsibility to others. We don't care about anything or anyone. We only believe in this one self-centered pursuit. This is the absence of any moral code, basically "anti-ethics".







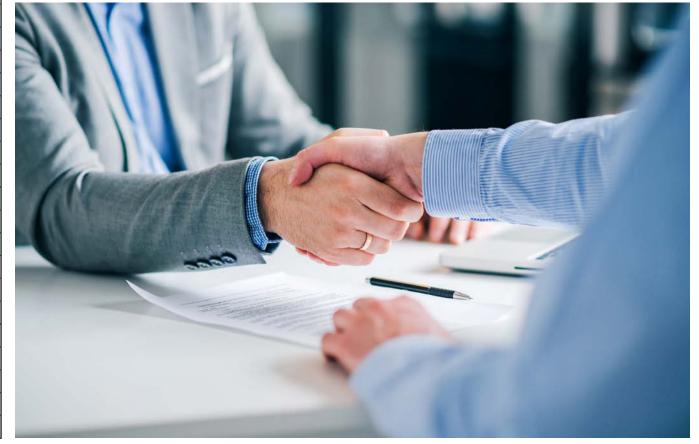
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### Level 2 Ethics: Conditions-attached ethics

Success on level 2 requires personal effort. We need to be strong to build up the necessary abilities to win competitions, excel in school or rise the corporate ladder. We need to do good things to gain the approval of others and to avoid society's penalties for bad behavior.

So there is a kind of stoic code of ethics at level 2—we are willing to make some sacrifices to be strong, we are willing to do good things that will result in benefits for us. The good we do always has conditions attached, focused on "what will we get out of it?" At the root, we are still thinking only of ourselves.



### Level 3 Ethics: Seeking the good for itself

As with freedom, ethics makes a key shift at level 3 as we gain the power to reach beyond ourselves to a greater good. We want to do things that will help others. We want to contribute to our families, to our communities, to the kingdom of God. We want our lives to leave the world a better place, and we want to leave this legacy not so we will win approval, but because it's good in itself and is the purpose of our lives.

Now that we want to do good, we are in the realm of ethics. Now we must examine our actions, questioning if they will make a contribution to the world or instead undermine the contribution we could make. We want principles that will guide our actions towards good—be honest, be just, don't steal, etc. We want virtues, good habits that enable us to do the right thing consistently.



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### NOTES

### Level 4 Ethics: Following God's path to goodness

Level 4 builds on Level 3—we are seeking what actions are good, and with Level 4 we recognize that God knows what is good, so we are interested to learn from Him and be guided by Him. Indeed, his perspective sees more that we do and can lead us to surprising discoveries. We may be nervous at first to follow the Beatitudes or to avoid our own impulses like greed and lust, but the more we open ourselves to God's guidance the more we can begin to see through his eyes. Love and virtue and ethics take on new meaning as we follow God's path to goodness.

### **ETHICS**

The search for the good. An ethical or moral code seeks to describe the rules by which we can act rightly and do good rather than evil in our lives.

### 

A central principle of ethics and political philosophy going back to Plato and Aristotle, the Common Good is the goal that people work together to build by living ethically in a society. It is the shared well-being and flourishing of a community where all its members receive the rights and dignity they are owed and work together for a shared, higher purpose.

### PLEASURE UTILITARIANISM

A Level 1-focused ethical system that says we should always choose whichever action that will produce the maximum amount of pleasure.



### The Four Levels of Suffering

Our final idea in the categories of cultural discourse is a challenging and important one: suffering. As we'll see, the meaning of suffering is deeply transformed as we move up the four levels.

### Level 1 Suffering: Utterly Meaningless

Suffering is the very thing we are trying to avoid if our goal in life is pleasure. So at level 1, suffering is utterly meaningless – our worldview doesn't recognize value in anything greater than ourselves and our immediate comfort, so the only thing we can do in response to suffering is try to reward ourselves afterwards with more pleasure. We may fall into a pattern of indulging addictive behaviors to numb the meaningless pain.



NOTES



Something to be rejected and avoided utterly. From an older religious term for something accursed, set aside for sacrifice/destruction, or excommunicated.



#### NOTES

### Level 2 Suffering: Stoic Strength

As we just saw in the levels of ethics, a Level 2-focused lifestyle values strength to help achieve our personal goals. The stoic worldview at level 2 therefore sees a value in suffering since it can make us stronger. This is a real and legitimate value. However, this stoic worldview is ultimately limited since it is focused only on the self. If all we value is our own strength and accomplishments, we will inevitably face disappointment as we lose our power or are beaten in the Comparison game. If you are a good Stoic, don't grow old...



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### Level 3 Suffering: Love and Compassion

At level 3, when our focus expands and we care about others outside ourselves, we discover new potential value for our suffering. Suffering can purify our love as we make sacrifices to help other people. It can also make us more compassionate—we better appreciate and recognize the struggles other people are dealing with when we have suffered ourselves. This capacity for love and compassion gives meaning to our suffering.



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"And He said to me: "My grace is sufficient for you; for my power is made perfect in weakness". Therefore I will happily glory in my weakness, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. That is why I am happy in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions and distresses for the sake of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am powerful."

- St. Paul (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)



### Level 4 Suffering: Ultimate Meaning in the Resurrection

At level 4, suffering is transformed through Jesus' Resurrection and finds its ultimate meaning. Our sacrifices, following the example of Christ, have an eternal goal—we are not just doing good for others here and now but working toward the good of salvation and eternal life.

Suffering not only purifies our love but can open us more to being transformed in Christ. We are confronted with our own frailty and learn to trust and rely on God. Suffering helps detach us from the things of our temporary life and from our own self-centered preoccupations, guiding our focus on our eternal goal. Jesus' Resurrection shows us our eternal destiny and encourages us to follow the path toward that salvation, no matter the struggles we face on the journey. St. Paul captures the encouragement of this new perspective on our life: "I count all the sufferings of this life as mere refuse when compared to the glory of God that awaits us at the end of time."



### **Reaching Beyond Ourselves**

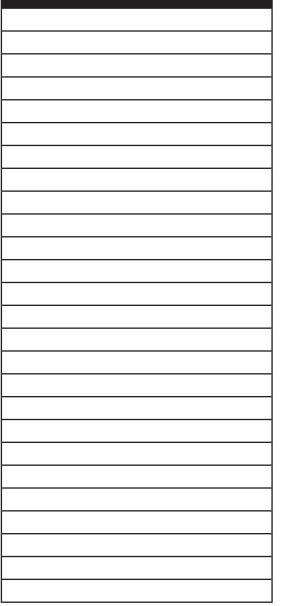
Throughout these categories of cultural discourse, we see a pattern emerge of the importance of reaching beyond ourselves. Our true calling is one of engagement with those around us, of relationship, of love. So many of these values, like freedom or ethics or suffering, become meaningful only in the higher levels where we are no longer trapped in a exclusive focus on ourselves. Indeed, this outreach beyond ourselves is what moves us to engage with our culture, to make our society better in whatever way we can.

And these values are just as significant to the culture at large. A culture trapped in the lower levels will produce self-centered citizens that don't help each other—"I got mine, you get yours, it's everyone for themselves." It will likely be a decadent culture of personal indulgence, weakening the bonds that connect us until society essentially implodes.

On the other hand, a culture that views these categories of cultural discourse through the higher perspective of levels 3 and 4 will be able to work together in pursuing the common good for everyone It will be able to teach citizens to value giving, justice, compassion, contribution, transcendence. We can build a joy-filled culture that reaches to the highest ideals, dignity and destiny of humankind.

NOTES

#### NOTES





"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that will be revealed to us."

— **St. Paul** (*Romans* 8:18)



#### **SMALL GROUP REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What things come to mind when you think of happiness?

Where does each of these examples fit into the four levels of happiness?

2. What should be the goals of a good society?

Where does each goal fit into the four levels?

- 3. What examples of success do we find in our society?
  - What does it take to be successful, judging by these examples?

4. What are the characteristics of Agapē love?



#### **SMALL GROUP REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- 5. Why might Agapē love be challenging or difficult?
- 6. What are specific ways we could make our community better with acts of Agapē love?
- 7. Why is commitment a burden in lower-level views of freedom?
  - Why is commitment meaningful in the higher-level views of freedom?
- 8. For each of the four levels, how would someone's level of ethics affect how much you trusted that person? Explain.
- 9. How can suffering change the way we treat other people?

10. Why does Jesus' Resurrection change the meaning of suffering?

# Lesson Seven – Ethics for a virtuous life and community

We've talked about the importance of virtue so that we can live the full life God has called us to, creating a meaningful legacy and following the path to eternal happiness in the kingdom of God. We'll conclude by looking at some specific principles to guide us on this path, principles that will help us to lead virtuous lives ourselves (personal ethics) and to build up our communities (social ethics).



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### **Personal Ethics: Principles for** virtuous decisions in a happy life

Ethics gives us the principles that help us make virtuous decisions. When we have difficult choices to make, especially if temptation is pressuring us, these ethical principles can guide us in moving towards the light and making the choice that will bring us closer to real happiness.

We'll look first at some intuitive rules—basic moral ideas that we can recognize almost automatically without needing to be explained.

Then we'll lay out some general principles that we can use in decision-making in different situations.

### THE PRINCIPLE OF NONMALEFICENCE

One of the foundational principles of ethics, this principle directs us to "do no harm" in our dealings with others.

Often stated in the form of the Silver Rule: Do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you.



### Lesson Seven — Ethics for a virtuous life and community

### NOTES


### Six intuitive rules

### The Silver Rule - The Principle of Nonmaleficence

Avoiding harm is one of the most basic guides for behavior—we don't want to harm anyone unnecessarily. This principle, called the Principle of Nonmaleficence ("not doing evil") is often phrased as the Silver Rule: "Do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you." This is the foundation of ethics, found in cultures and religions throughout human history. We must treat everyone with the respect they deserve, giving them what they are owed and not taking from them anything that is rightfully theirs. This leads to the principles that follow.

### Don't harm someone's reputation (unnecessarily)

One of the things we must not wrongfully take from another is their good name, by spreading gossip, rumors, lies, etc. There are situations when justice does call for us to speak the truth even if it reflects badly on someone: a witness testifying in a court of law, a whistle-blower alerting people to an abuse of power, a person speaking out when someone's bad example is causing scandal and leading people astray. Outside necessary situations like these, however, we must take care not to harm anyone's reputation, just as we would not want our own reputation harmed.



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### Lesson Seven — Ethics for a virtuous life and community



#### Don't cheat

Cheating violates the fundamental principle of justice. We must deal fairly with others, just as we want to be treated fairly.

#### Keep your promises/Don't lie

Trust is an essential component of fair and respectful interactions. We want to keep our promises, and we don't want to intentionally deceive others for our personal benefit.

#### Don't steal

Like cheating, stealing violates the principle of justice.

We must not take that what rightfully belongs to another, including their ideas and intellectual property as well as their material property.

#### Be faithful

We want to be truly faithful to people. We don't want to use others as if they were a thing to fulfill my own needs: we don't want to selfishly take what they give us in a relationship without giving them the same commitment in response. This becomes particularly significant in the exclusive intimacy of Eros love—we don't want to enter into or cause another to enter into sexual infidelity so as to cause a rupture in a marriage/family.

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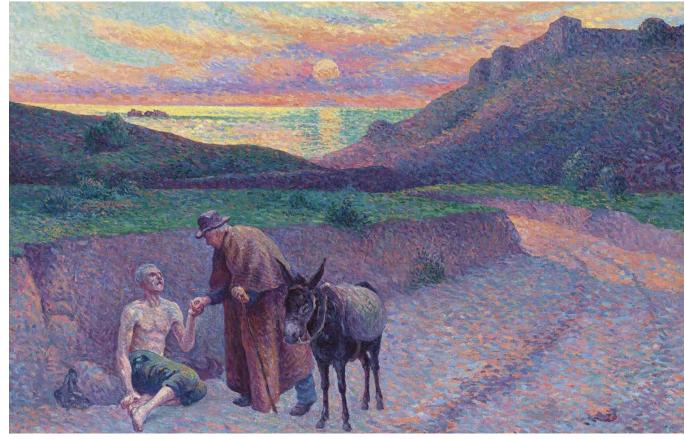
### Lesson Seven — Ethics for a virtuous life and community

### **Four General Ethical Principles**

The Silver Rule (see previous section)

#### The Golden Rule - Do Unto Others

Jesus goes beyond the minimal justice of the Silver rule (*Don't do* unto others what you *wouldn't* have them do unto you) by giving us the Golden Rule: "*Do* unto others what you *would* have them do unto you". He calls us to go the extra mile, to approach our lives with a new mission of love and contribution. We want to do more than avoid harm—we want to actively do good for others.



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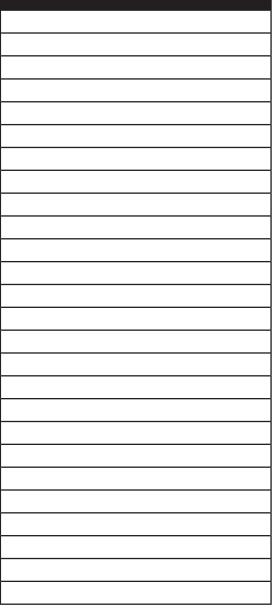
### NOTES



THE SILVE	ER RULE	NOTES
"Hurt not others in ways that you yo	ourself would find hurtful."	
	— Early Buddhist Text (Udānavarga 5:18)	
"What you do not want done to you	rself, do not do to others."	
	– Confucius (Analects XV.24)	
"Do to no one what you yourself dis	like."	
	- <b>The Old Testament</b> ( <i>Tobit 4</i> :15)	
THE GOLD	EN RULE	
"Do unto others what you would ha	ve them do unto you."	
	— <b>Jesus</b> (Matthew 7:14)	
The End Does Not Justify the Means		
We cannot use an evil means to get to a good end. If we violate our code of ethics so that we can achieve something good, we are undermining that very goodness we're pursing by the illegitimate evil means we're using and the harm they bring to others. (For example, we can't justify killing someone because it will lead to the good end of inheriting their fortune to donate to charity).		

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### NOTES



### The Principle of Double Effect

We can sometimes do a good action in order to produce a good effect, even though the action may cause both that good effect and a secondary bad effect that was not intended. For example, suppose a doctor administers morphine to a terminally ill patient to relief their pain. The morphine is intended to be relieving their pain, but sometimes it happens that the morphine results in a cessation of respiration, killing the patient. This bad effect was not intended when the morphine was administered. (Unlike in the previous example, the doctor at no point is trying to kill the patient or hoping to kill the patient.) The principle of double effect says actions of this kind are not immoral you can do something which had a double effect and did in fact cause harm, but you are doing it in order to produce the positive effect and not to cause the harm.



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### Social Ethics: Building the Common Good



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Making the commitment to follow these ethical principles helps us focus on a life of contribution. We've seen throughout this series how growth in virtue depends on this outward shift in focus: opening ourselves up to others instead of closing ourselves off, love instead of isolation, self-gift instead of lust, contribution instead of competition.

So it makes sense that our ethical worldview will be concerned with social ethics as well as personal ethics. We want to understand how to practice justice within a community, not just between individuals but also between an individual and a group, or between groups.



### NOTES

### PERSONAL ETHICS

The set of principles guiding our individual behavior, so that we will give other individuals what they are due in justice. The goal of personal ethics is a virtuous life.

### SOCIAL ETHICS

The set of principles guiding the interactions between groups, as well as our individual behavior towards groups, so that we all give each group of people what they are due in justice. The goal of personal ethics is a just society that is achieving the common good.

### What is a human being? Individualism vs. Community

Our culture tends to focus on individual experience more than shared community experience, and it can be difficult to make connections in our lives today that make us feel part of a community. Our very understanding of what is means to be a human being can be affected by whether we see ourselves as individuals pursuing happiness on our own or as participants in a community working towards a common good.

Right now there are two competing ideas about what makes you a person. In the first view, every person is defined by their own goals for self-fulfillment, and we're all basically in competition with each other. In the second view, our meaning as a person comes from being made in the image of God, and we exist in a community of "reciprocal indebtedness"—in other words, we're called to work together because none of us can make it on our own.



O. Carter Snead

International bioethics expert

A professor at Notre Dame University and author of numerous scholarly publications, O. Carter Snead has served as a bioethics consultant for various committees, including ones appointed by the United Nations, the U.S. government, and the Pope.

### Personhood in a world of individual wills

According to the radical individualism of this first view, what makes each of us a person is that we have will and desire—we find our highest fulfillment by constructing our own future, deciding what we want and pursuing it. Any structures outside the self—government, religion, tradition, even nature—are a potential threat restricting our freedom to do what we choose.

Relationships with other people are sometimes possible to the extent that they benefit our own goals, but the moment they become an obstacle to our desires we can end the relationship and move on. In general, we encounter each other as adversaries, competing individual wills each pursuing our own individual plans.



**Francis Bacon** (1561-1626)

Philosopher and Statesman A prolific writer who also served as Chancellor of England, Francis Bacon promoted the role of experimentation in scientific inquiry and was an influential figure in developing the scientific method.



# **René Descartes** (1596-1650)

Philosopher and Mathematician

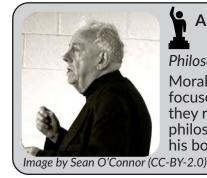
A transitional figure between classical and modern philosophy, Descartes is perhaps best known for the quote from his *Meditations*, "I think, therefore I am." He also contributed to innovations in mathematics and science, including his invention of analytic geometry (combining algebra and geometry) and the Cartesian coordinate graph (in which points are plotted on the x-axis and y-axis). **NOTES** 

### NOTES

### Personhood in a world of "reciprocal indebtedness"

In the second view, what makes each of us as a person is that we are made in the image and likeness of God – we belong to the same human family and we have obligations to God and to each other, and we are intrinsically worthy of love, dignity, and justice within those relationships. We begin life not as an isolated will that can pursue individual goals, but as a vulnerable and powerless baby in need of love and assistance. We live in a community of 'reciprocal indebtedness'—we are all vulnerable at different times and so we depend on one another to flourish. We're all in this together.





### **Alasdair MacIntyre**

Philosopher

Moral philosopher whose work has focused on the virtues, exploring how they relate to questions of modern philosophy and life, most notably in his book After Virtue.

### The social consequences of Radical Individualism

Society looks very different if we're a collection of self-interested individuals seeking personal gain or we're a group of caring individuals seeking good for all the members, especially the vulnerable ones. Radical individualism, instead of giving us all freedom to do what we want, will ultimately produce a society where only the strong and privileged and powerful flourish. Anyone with needs—the young, the old, the sick, the poor, the outsiders, the vulnerable—are devalued and pushed to the margins. Instead of participating in the mutual support of reciprocal indebtedness, these persons in need will often be actively targeted by society for being burdensome—neglected, oppressed, discriminated against, even killed (euthanasia, assisted suicide, abortion).



# 

Involving the study of humanity.

Anthropology is a scientific discipline examining human development through biology, language, culture, archeology, and more.

## PLURALISTIC SOCIETY

A society in which multiple groups with different beliefs, cultures, or backgrounds coexist.

# NORMATIVE

Defining the standard of what is judged acceptable or unacceptable within a group or culture.



### NOTES

### How can we build a better culture?

If we want to build up our culture, what should we do when we encounter all these forms of systemic injustice? It is important to have trust in God, and recognize that we are part of a larger mission—we may only play a small role in a much bigger and longer campaign, but we still strive to do our part in God's plan. We want to engage with our culture and with our laws and policy; participating in voting and the political process, working to persuade in a peaceful way. We also must speak out against unjust laws that target the vulnerable, and we must advocate for the protection and human dignity that everyone is entitled to. More personally, we must work to educate people, to work on our own character and virtue, and to remain vigilant in prayer. We all have a role to play.



### **Everyone matters**

We may sometimes make the same mistake of radical individualism in our own lives—thinking that we have to justify our worth by being strong enough, successful enough, or we don't count. But of course, God doesn't see us that way. Everyone is part of the human family, no matter how weak or useful or burdensome or esteemed they are. Everyone matters. That's how God sees you, and that's how we should see each other, and see ourselves.

## Social Justice: Five principles for a community worth living for

We've seen some of the dangers that arise in our society when we think of persons only as individuals and forget we need to exist in community. Let's look now at some fundamental principles of social justice which can help fix those dangers and help us build the right kind of community.

### 1. Justice means giving each person and group their due

The same justice principle which governs our personal dealings with other individuals also governs how the society we live in must treat all the groups within the society. We cannot make ethnic distinctions, religious distinctions, etc. that would deprive any group of their life, liberty, property, or pursuit of happiness. We must also take action against such injustice in the many forms it takes all around us: from genocide to unjust incarceration and death to marginalization and discrimination, as well as our own unexamined biases.

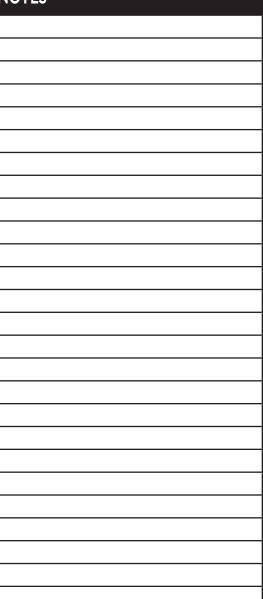


# **GENOCIDE**

Acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such. It can include types of targeted oppression as well as outright killings.

Episode Timecode 24:15





# NOTES

### 2. The principle of Unjust Law

Justice is the standard that governs law—hence, as St. Augustine says, an unjust law is no law at all. Any positive law (a specific law enacted by a governing body like a legislature, constitution, judicial court, etc.) must serve justice, Justice is a higher standard than any political system, so a positive law that is unjust does not deserve the name of law and need not be obeyed, even if it has been legitimately enacted. This is the principle behind all civil disobedience. We can justifiably protest against unjust laws—there are many examples of unjust laws that were met with such opposition by people of conscience, both in history and in the present day.

# "An unjust law is no law at all"

- **St. Augustine** (De Libero Arbitrio, I.5)



**St. Augustine** (354-430)

Philosopher and Doctor of the Church One of the most influential of the early Church Fathers, St. Augustine wrote extensively on philosophy and theology. Notable works include The City of God, On the Trinity, On Free Will, and his autobiographical Confessions which recount his conversion to the faith.

# MITOCHONDRIAL DNA

A form of DNA that humans have been found to inherit only through the maternal line (unlike other forms of DNA that are inherited from both parents in combination). This makes Mitochondrial DNA useful in tracing human ancestry back many generations.

### 3. The principle of Personhood

We must be sure that we define personhood properly so that we do not deprive anyone of the rights they deserve as a person. Put simply, every human life is a person. There have been many attempts to deprive groups of people of their rights by declaring some human beings to be inferior than others, on various pretexts. Recent examples can be found in the eugenics and genocidal programs of the Nazis, in modern slavery, in the colonization and subjugations of native peoples, and in the many attacks on the vulnerable of society today as we've previously discussed. If we apply the respect of personhood to every human being and oppose such injustices, we will not only have a more just world but we'll be able to prevent the horrible cruelties that still beleaguer human history.



Seemingly plausible but false, due to flawed reasoning and/or failure to conform with the underlying facts.

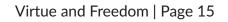


### Bartolomé de las Casas (1484-1566)

Historian and Activist

Though originally a colonist and enslaver himself, Bartolomé de las Casas underwent a conversion and dedicated his life to fighting the widespread abuses of the indigenous people in the Americas by European colonists.

He chronicled these abuses—which included enslavement, hard labor, torture, and murder and led to the extermination of the majority of the population—in published historical accounts. He also advocated (with partial success) to change the laws of Spain to prevent such abuse.



NOTES	

# **NOTES**

### 4. The principle of Inalienable rights

The basic rights of justice, such as life, liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness, are owed to every person because these rights belong to us by our very nature, by our very creation as human persons. As the Jesuit priest Francisco Suarez put it, these are inalienable rights. This is important because it means it is not in the power of any government or positive law to take these basic rights away from anyone. It prevents the tyranny of the majority, where a majority of the people can deprive a minority group of their rights by a legislative vote or action, even if they are following proper legal procedures—these legal powers cannot take away your rights, because they did not give you those rights. They belong to you and are inherent to you by your nature—they are inalienable rights.

"Man is by his nature free and subject to no one, save only to the Creator"

> - Francisco Suárez (De Legibus III, 1.1)



Francisco Suárez (1548 - 1617)

Philosopher and Theologian

A Jesuit priest and university teacher, Francisco Suarez authored many works on law, theology, political theory and metaphysics. His work also produced a comprehensive survey of the philosophical schools of his day, and he would subsequently influence many future thinkers.



Intrinsic to a thing; inviolable; cannot be removed or taken away.

### 5. The Necessity Criterion for rights

There is a priority among inalienable rights. The necessity criterion is used to judge a rights dispute, when one right seems to conflict with another's right. The necessity criterion determines priority in this way: if one right is necessary for the very possibility of another right, then the right which is necessary for it is the more fundamental and important right.

Thus, life is a more fundamental right than liberty (if you're dead, your liberty rights are really a moot issue) and liberty is a more fundamental right than property. The necessity criterion helps to identify injustice—it clarifies why slavery is immoral, for instance, because the very idea of treating another human being as property unjustly claims one person's property rights as a priority over another person's liberty rights.



All these principles of social justice are what protect us and make our culture worth living in. We must not turn a blind eye to injustice in our society. With these principles, we can work to build a better culture that can flourish and prosper in justice for all its members.

# DRED SCOTT DECISION

Infamous 1857 decision by the United States Supreme Court decreeing that people in America of African descent were not afforded the rights and protections of citizenship. This racist decree gave legal support to enslavement and related human rights abuses, provoking widespread outrage and intensifying a national moral conflict that would shortly become a civil war.

**NOTES** 

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# **Ethics: Six Personal Principles**

- 1. The Silver Rule The Principle of Nonmaleficence
- 2. Don't harm someone's reputation
- 3. Don't cheat
- 4. Keep your promises Don't lie
- 5. Don't steal
- 6. Be faithful

## **Ethics: Five Social Principles**

- 1. Justice means giving each person and group their due
- 2. The principle of Unjust Law
- 3. The principle of Personhood
- 4. The principle of Inalienable rights
- 5. The Necessity Criterion for rights

### **Conclusion – The path ahead**

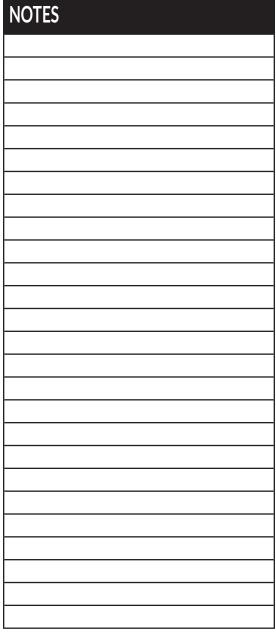


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Every single person on earth has been called by name to a destiny of endless joy by the Creator of the universe. At the same time, we must also confront the many temptations and evil forces that work to prevent us from reaching that destiny. Our lives are ground zero in a cosmic battle between good and evil with higher stakes than any fantasy or epic you've ever read. So let's make them count.

Hopefully you have found something in these lessons that touches the struggles in your own life, something that can help you find the path to happiness that God wants to give you. We started by looking at the cosmic struggle in all those stories. We looked at the reality of evil, the drama of possession and the quiet damage of temptation, and the seven deadly sins. We've talked about the different ways we can fight evil—all the help that God gives us in the Church, especially the sacraments. The quick prayers for God's help in a crisis. The more thoughtful prayers of reflection, taking a few minutes every day to listen to God and listen to our own heart. The self-examination so we can check in on where we are every day in that cosmic battle—are we moving towards the light, or turning away?





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NOTES

We've talked about virtue, the habits that make it easy to choose good, the habits that free us from our addictions to sin and all the guilt and shame. We focused on the virtues that mend each of the seven deadly sins by replacing them with something positive. We introduced the Theology of the Body, a new way of understanding love and sexuality that can lead us out of lust to something truly amazing.

We learned some useful principles for the path to happiness. The four levels of happiness and how to move out of the comparison game into an open and giving life. The six categories of cultural discourse, applying the four levels to the ideas that shape our community. The four principles of personal ethics—the silver rule, the golden rule, the end doesn't justify the means, double effect. The five principles of social ethics, how to extend justice to every group and fight unjust laws with higher principles of rights and personhood.

But most important for the path ahead is hope. Maybe you're deeply unhappy. Maybe you feel crushed by guilt. Maybe you feel trapped by addiction and by sin. Maybe you're afraid this virtue thing is too hard and you're going to fail. No matter what it is: God hears you, right now, feeling those fears. And you don't have to be afraid. His help, his forgiveness, and his love are there for you, today—let Him in, and you can be free.



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### **SMALL GROUP REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- 1. What are some examples of reciprocal indebtedness in your life?
- 2. What are some ways that young people need help from the old?

What are some ways that old people need help from the young?

3. We want to live by the principle that "everyone counts" but we often exclude groups in practice, like the example given of the "non-viable". What are other examples of ways people can be "invisible" to us and treated like they don't count?

4. What are things you do to promote justice and help those in need?

What is something new you can do?

5. What are examples in history of injustices wrongfully promoted by the law?

What are examples of injustices wrongfully promoted by the law in our society today?



### SMALL GROUP REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 6. What are some differences between a life where you need to justify your worth through your abilities and a life where you have worth as a member of the human family and you always matter to God and others?
- 7. How should we respond to unjust laws?
- 8. Give your own example of a situation in modern life where different rights can come into conflict. How could the necessity criterion help resolve this conflict?
- 9. Give three examples of tools we can use to help us fight temptation in ordinary life.
- 10. Give three examples of tools we can use to help us move towards the light.
- 11. What is one starting change you can make today to follow the path to happiness?