

THE VICE OF SLOTH

The Christian Teachings of Virtue (Series 4, Part 4, Teaching #28)

Instructions: Watch video, read aloud, underline what stands out to you most, discuss

Leader Guide...
See the back page for detailed facilitator instructions.

The sin not just of idleness of body, but of sluggishness of soul—is sloth.

The vice of sloth is a disposition of laziness toward the pursuit of God and the good.

The inner voice of sloth mutters, “I don’t feel like it.” Rather than channel the focus and energy to do what you know you should, sloth urges you to waste time on things of far less importance.

Sloth makes you neglectful, regretful, and unfulfilled—creating the illusion that the demands of life, especially spiritual life, are undesirable because they are difficult, which sloth hates. So it turns your soul from properly pursuing the good, which is hard, to chasing pleasure, which is easy—leaving you in despair, knowing you are not living up to your potential nor doing God’s will.

Sloth is not always visible. It doesn’t always look like sleeping in or doing nothing. Often, it disguises itself as busyness. You can be active in everything that doesn’t matter and completely avoid what matters most. It is the avoidance of your higher calling, the dodging of discipline, the delay of duty. And the result? A soul that is bored, distracted, restless, and unfulfilled—haunted by the quiet ache of knowing you are not becoming who God created you to be.

It has been said, “Idleness is hell’s fishhook for catching souls” (St. Ignatius of Loyola). And how true it is. For sloth rarely works alone—it opens the door to other vices. When you stop pursuing what is good, you start chasing what is not. Gluttony, lust, and despair often walk hand-in-hand with sloth. In avoiding the narrow path of purpose, you wander into the wide fields of indulgence.

But there is a better way.

Defend against sloth with the virtues of discipline and diligence—discipline to do what you should, when you should; diligence to do it how you should, with careful persistence and a servant’s heart—no matter how you feel.

This is how you build a soul of strength—by choosing action over apathy, resolve over resistance, persistence over procrastination. As Scripture says, “Discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Hebrews 12:11).

God created you for a purpose, and that purpose takes work—not just in labor, but in love. The field of your soul must be tilled. The house of your character must be built. The race of your life must be run. Faith must be lived. Truth must be sought. Christ must be followed. Don’t just embrace it—glorify God in it. “In loving one another through our works we bring an increase of grace and a growth in divine love” (St. Mother Teresa).

(continues on next page...)

7 Chief Vices

Pride

Envy

Anger

Sloth

Greed

Gluttony

Lust



Watch Video: Scan the QR code to access the video for this teaching as well as additional resources such as related Scripture, quotes, and more.
Or, visit horseandchariot.com/the-vice-of-sloth

Sloth will tempt you to wait, to coast, to delay obedience and ignore grace. Don't. There is no neutral ground in the spiritual life. You are either moving forward or drifting backward. And while drifting feels easy at first, it always leads to despair. The burden of unused potential becomes a heavy chain.

So rise. Even when you don't feel like it—especially then. Pray. Serve. Create. Work. Take the next step, however small, in the direction of virtue. For God is not glorified in your comfort—but in your faithfulness. Not in your passivity—but in your pursuit.

Slay sloth with steady steps. Form discipline in the details. And you will awaken to find yourself becoming not just more productive—but more fulfilled. Not just busier—but holier.

Let the Spirit stir what sloth tries to silence. And walk forward—into the work God has set before you.

Sloth is not merely laziness of body—it is sluggishness of soul. It resists the pursuit of God and the good because they require effort. It whispers, “I don’t feel like it,” and lures you toward distraction, delay, and lesser things. Left unchecked, sloth drains purpose, dulls desire for holiness, and opens the door to other vices. But through discipline and diligence, the soul awakens and moves toward faithful pursuit.

1. Sloth resists what is good because it is hard. It avoids discipline and duty. → Where are you delaying obedience because it feels difficult?

2. Sloth disguises itself as busyness. You can avoid what matters most while staying constantly occupied. → Are you active in distractions while neglecting your higher calling?

3. Sloth steals fulfillment. Avoidance creates regret and restlessness. → Do you sense the quiet ache of unused spiritual potential?

4. Discipline overcomes delay. Doing what you should, when you should, builds strength. → What responsibility have you been postponing?

5. Diligence builds holiness. Faithful persistence shapes character. → Are you approaching your work and spiritual life with care and purpose?

6. Forward motion prevents drift. There is no neutral ground in the spiritual life. → Are you moving toward God daily—or slowly drifting away?

CHARACTERISTICS OF A DILIGENT & DISCIPLINED SOUL

Those who overcome sloth and pursue virtue exhibit these traits:

1. Purposeful. They live with intention and direction.

2. Disciplined. They act regardless of mood or comfort.

3. Diligent. They approach responsibilities with care and persistence.

4. Faithful. They follow through on what God has entrusted to them.

5. Energetic in Spirit. They cultivate zeal for the things of God.

6. Fulfilled. They experience peace that comes from faithful obedience.

Signs of Sloth Taking Root...

- You frequently say, “I’ll do it later,” especially regarding prayer.
- You avoid difficult conversations or responsibilities.
- You fill your time with distractions rather than purpose.
- You feel restless, bored, or spiritually stagnant.
- You chase comfort before completing duty.
- You often neglect things because you “don’t feel like it.”
- You sense unfulfilled potential but resist taking action.

Think: Sloth promises ease but delivers emptiness. It lulls the soul into drifting, while discipline awakens it to purpose. God has called me to move—to pray, serve, build, and grow. Faithfulness, not comfort, brings fulfillment. Each small act of diligence shapes my soul toward holiness.

Pray: Lord, stir my soul where sloth has made it sluggish. Strengthen me to do what is right, even when I don’t feel like it. Replace distraction with devotion, delay with discipline, and apathy with holy zeal. Help me to embrace the work You have given me—not reluctantly, but joyfully. May my daily faithfulness glorify You and awaken my soul to its true purpose. Amen.

SELF-EVALUATION & ACTION STEP																					
<p>Of the areas you underlined throughout this teaching, which stood out to you most and why? (Reflect, write down, discuss)</p>																					
<p>Rate yourself from 1-10 1 = I often avoid spiritual and moral responsibility 10 = I consistently pursue God and the good</p>	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">1</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">2</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">3</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">4</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px; text-align: center;">5</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">6</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">7</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">8</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">9</td> <td style="padding: 2px 10px;">10</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4" style="text-align: center;">←</td> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;"><i>(avoid 5)</i></td> <td colspan="4" style="text-align: center;">→</td> </tr> </table>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	←				<i>(avoid 5)</i>		→			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10												
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<p>Why did you give yourself this rating?</p>																					
<p>Where is sloth most present in your life right now —prayer, work, relationships, or personal growth?</p>																					
<p>What difficult but necessary action have you been postponing?</p>																					
<p>What daily discipline (fixed prayer time, focused work block, intentional service) can you commit to this week?</p>																					
<p>Daily Affirmation: Today, I will rise above sloth. By God’s grace, I will choose discipline over delay, purpose over distraction, and faithful action over passive comfort. I will move forward in the work God has given me.</p>																					

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS

Courageous Facilitator,

Your willingness to step forward and lead is a gift of grace to your community and a brave act of faith. God bless you for answering the call to inspire others to grow in virtue and pursue the character of Christ.

The Holy Spirit thrives in fellowship and community, working powerfully through the connections and shared experiences of small groups. That's why these lesson plans are designed to cultivate genuine relationships, inspire meaningful conversations, and foster a spirit of transformation through shared wisdom and grace.

Facilitating these lessons is both simple and impactful. While many forms of teaching rely on one-way communication, where one person speaks and others listen, true transformation happens through two-way communication. In this format, ideas aren't merely taught—they're explored together. You'll guide, but everyone will share and learn from one another, creating a rich environment where the Holy Spirit can move and grow each mind, heart, and soul.

These lesson plans succeed because they:

- **Encourage connection** in a collaborative small group setting that fosters action and accountability
- **Empower every voice** with opportunities for each participant to share and contribute
- **Inspire growth** through educational, inspirational, and transformational teachings

Your role as a facilitator is to:

- **Follow the instructions and trust the process**—the wheel is already built, you're here to guide it.
- **Honor the schedule** by being punctual and respecting the time of your group.
- **Lead with love** and rely on God's grace to inspire, guide, and uplift everyone in the group.

Your courage to create a space for growth and fellowship will not only bless others but will deepen your own journey of faith and virtue. Together, with God's help, lives will be transformed.

To God be the glory!

FACILITATOR CHECKLIST

1. Getting Started (5-10 mins)

- Give everyone a few minutes to join before getting started. Be friendly and greet people as they arrive. Get them talking! Come prepared with some good ice-breaker questions you can ask during this time.
- 3-5 minutes in, do quick introductions for anyone new to the group. What brought them to the group? Spend a moment getting to know them.
- Open with a short prayer (facilitator or volunteer).

2. Watch & Read the Teaching (5-10 mins)

- Watch the video of the teaching as a group.
- Have a volunteer read all of page 1. Have others follow along and underline what stands out to them most.

3. How it Applies (5-10 mins)

- Have a volunteer read all of page 2. Have others follow along and underline what stands out to them most.

4. Reflection & Discussion (20-30 mins)

- Have everyone quietly take 5 minutes to complete the "Self-Evaluation & Action Step" on page 3.
- Then, going around the group, have each person take a minute to share what stood out to them most about the teaching and why.
- If time allows, continue the discussion using the remaining self-evaluation questions as a guide.

5. Wrap Up (5 mins)

- Remind everyone to do the daily affirmation until you meet again next time.
- Ask for any prayer requests from the group.
- Close with a short prayer (facilitator or volunteer).