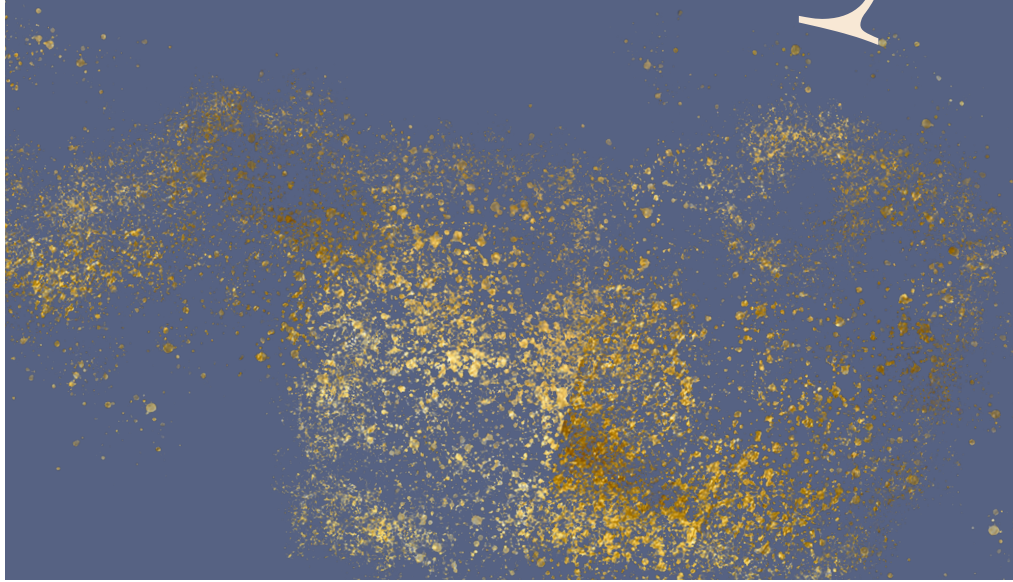


GLITTERING ILLUSIONS

Sloth



Sloth



SCRIPTURE

Galatians 5:1, 19-25 + Luke 6:43-45

“Sloth is a resistance to the demands of love.”

Unlike the image portrayed by real-life and cartoon sloths alike, sloth is not simply laziness or inactivity. Instead, sloth is relational—“an inner resistance to love, specifically the love of God which cannot but transform and sanctify us.” As with all the glittering illusions, sloth causes us to veer from the real toward the false. We become stuck between a self we cannot bear and a self we can’t bear to become, between our longing for love and our longing for ease. Sloth may appear as passivity—leaving things undone that we ought to have done—or as being overly busy—filling our lives with things we ought not to have done. The effect of both is the same: we avoid the hard, self-sacrificial work of love.

Long before our modern age of busyness and distraction, fourth century monk Evagrius of Pontus suggested that sloth “involves inner resistance and coldness toward our spiritual calling and its attendant practices.” *Ultimately, sloth resists God’s invitation into the work of sanctification and “resist[s] our identity in Christ and his Spirit’s presence in us.”* Whether that resistance takes the form of restless and weary denial of the gift of grace at work in us, or a conscious and resentful avoidance of the ongoing effort required on our part, sloth robs us of the “joy we should have over being united with God and committed to him in love” and results in our settling “for being less than what we truly are.”

Poet Devon Brough introduced us to the truth that we can “choose our hard.” By choosing spiritual ease and refusing the work of daily transformation, sloth chooses another hard: a heart hardened to spiritual growth and unable to receive the fullness of love from God and others. Another glittering illusion leading us in the opposite direction of what we truly long for.

So, what does it look like to step out of the ways we avoid the transforming work of God’s grace in us into a life of wholehearted love?

Practice

PERSEVERANCE
SILENCE + SOLITUDE

PERSEVERANCE

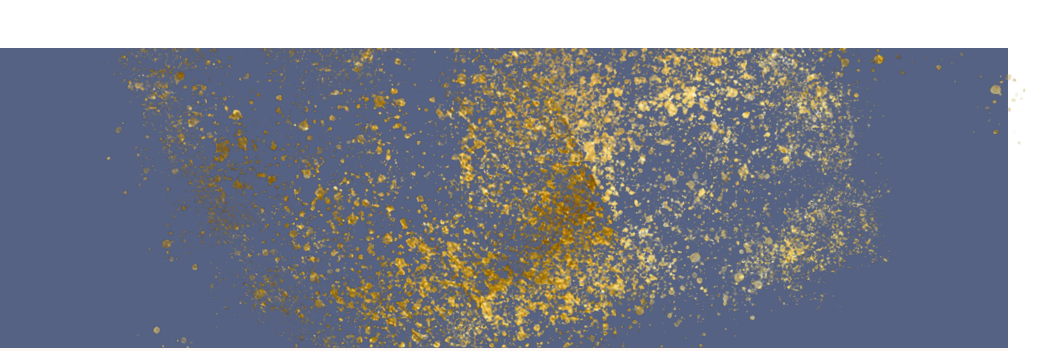
The Desert Fathers called the spiritual discipline to guard against sloth's desire to flee *stabilitas loci*—stability of place. In any relationship, love requires self-sacrifice and a commitment to stay in the meaningful work of knowing and being known. Resisting sloth requires choosing not to run from the struggle of daily discipline and the less-than-glamorous work of being transformed by God's love.

This week, ask God to replace the glittering illusion of ease—expecting spiritual disciplines to require little effort but always feel good—with a “glittering invitation” into a simple daily practice with Him. Accept His invitation, even if it feels daunting or demanding, unusual or unexpected.

Pay attention to what stirs in you when the practice feels uncomfortable or difficult. Are you more tempted toward quitting and disconnection or busyness and avoidance? Observe, welcome, and name (OWN) with God what you're experiencing.

Ask Him: Where has my desire for You or for the life You have given me grown dull? What do You want to awaken in me?

Choose to stay with the practice, offering your effort to the work God has begun in you. We don't persevere in order to make God transform us; we persevere by cooperating with the transforming work God is already doing in us. Allow the slow work of transformation to grow fortitude—the courage to stay—in you.



SILENCE + SOLITUDE

Create space to listen for the Spirit's direction as you commit to the daily work of transformation, remembering it isn't all up to you. Quiet the distractions of social media and other voices that compete for your attention. Ask God for His grace to be sufficient for you and His power to be made perfect in your weakness.

Pay attention to what stirs in you in the silence, when there is nothing to escape into. Do you feel restless and eager to escape the quiet? Does your mind busy itself with everything but being present with God? Choose to return your attention to Him when silence and solitude reveal your impulse toward disconnection.

Ask Him: "Where have I withdrawn from the life You are inviting me into?" Notice what He brings to mind and invite Him to meet you there.

REVIEW THE PRACTICES



Each week, you're invited to review the practices offered alongside other glittering illusions. Return to whichever practices help you reconnect with the truth of who God is and who you are. In addition, this week, consider meditating on the following scriptures: Psalm 119, Psalm 27:14, 2 Peter 1:3-7, Matthew 11:28-30, 2 Corinthians 12:9.

Pastoral Word

+ NEXT STEPS

Let's OWN sloth, with the Spirit's help, by asking ourselves questions like:

In what areas of life, or situations, am I most tempted to escape from the demands of life and love?

Why am I burying myself in _____ (fill in the blank)?

Do I constantly feel restless? Have I asked myself why?

Why can't I call them or text them back? Why am I avoiding this conversation?

Where do I run when I want to avoid? Should I give that up for a season?

Reject sloth's pull toward disconnection from yourself and others. Make the effort to check in regularly with a friend or family member who needs love right now. Stay in God's love for you and give that love away to others. Text, call, make dinner, and choose to be intentionally present in another's need, even if it requires self-sacrifice. If you are that friend in need, ask this of another trusted family member or friend. Together, with God's grace, we can resist the pull toward disconnection and choose to stay present to the transforming work of His love.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Do you have a trusted friend you can share with?
- Attend our Generational Healing Service November 15.
- Consider meeting with a Spiritual Director.
- Schedule a session with our Care and Prayer team using the QR code.



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*Quotes taken from *Glittering Vices: A New Look at the Seven Deadly Sins and Their Remedies* by Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung.



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