

Small Group Guide: Sloth

Sermon Summary

This sermon explored sloth (acedia) as more than just physical laziness—it's a spiritual condition that attacks our dedication to God and sabotages our sanctification. Acedia is an apathetic inertia: a lack of care that keeps us from moving toward love and obedience. It manifests as either desperate resignation (avoiding what's painful) or desperate escapism (busying ourselves to avoid dealing with what matters). Ultimately, sloth makes excuses to camouflage our disobedience to God's clear commands.

Discussion Questions

Understanding Acedia

1. The sermon described acedia as "laziness toward love" rather than just laziness toward work. How does this distinction change your understanding of sloth?
2. The sermon mentioned two forms of acedia: "desperate, despairing resignation" and "desperate escapism." Which one do you relate to more, and why?
3. Read Proverbs 6:9-11. How does our culture make slothfulness seem acceptable or even desirable? What are some ways we rationalize spiritual laziness?

Acedia's Attack on Our Walk with God

4. The sermon stated that "acedia attacks the fundamental dedication of our life to God." What are some specific ways you've experienced this attack in your own spiritual life?
5. Discuss the idea that sanctification is "a lifetime commitment of cooperation with God's Word and the Holy Spirit." What does daily cooperation look like practically?
6. The pastor said, "Acedia is looking for you to lay down and do something easy because it doesn't want to sacrifice." What sacrifices is God currently asking you to make that you've been avoiding?

Biblical Commands and Our Response

7. Review the commands from Matthew 6 mentioned in the sermon:

- Giving to the needy
- Prayer
- Fasting
- Forgiveness
- Not storing up earthly treasures

- Which of these commands do you find most challenging? What excuses have you made to avoid it?

8. The sermon included a powerful moment about physical expressions of worship (lifting hands, clapping, shouting, kneeling). Why do you think we often resist these biblical commands? What does our resistance reveal about our hearts?

9. Read Luke 9:57-62. Jesus confronted people making excuses about following Him. What modern-day equivalents do we use? ("When I retire..." "After the kids are grown..." "Once I'm more financially stable...")

Idols and Distractions

10. The pastor listed several modern idols: children, spouses, political figures, phones, entertainment, career plans, etc. Which of these (or others) have you placed before God without realizing it?

11. "We pour incredible amounts of energy and effort into distractions...to remove our mind away from the unhappiness of our real condition." How do you see this pattern in your own life?

12. The sermon mentioned Lot's wife looking back. What are you looking back at that God is asking you to leave behind?

Key Takeaways

1. **Sloth is not just physical laziness**—it's a spiritual condition that keeps us from loving God and others fully.
2. **Acedia sabotages our sanctification** by making us resistant to the changes the Holy Spirit wants to make in our lives.

3. **We make excuses to camouflage disobedience** rather than simply obeying God's clear commands in Scripture.
 4. **Rest is not the same as slothfulness**—God calls us to rest in Him, but acedia keeps us from the work of love.
 5. **God loves us too much to leave us where we are**—He calls us to surrender and promises His yoke is easy and His burden is light.
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Practical Applications

Personal Reflection

Choose ONE area where you will combat acedia this week:

Prayer Life

- Commit to a specific time each day (even 10 minutes)
- Try the practice mentioned: when you run out of words, visualize Christ on the cross and meditate on His sacrifice

Fasting

- Skip one meal this week and spend that time in prayer
- Fast from a specific distraction (social media, TV, etc.) for a set period

Generosity

- Give to someone in need (financially or with your time)
- Look for one opportunity to serve someone this week

Worship

- Practice one physical expression of worship you've been resistant to (lifting hands, kneeling in private prayer, etc.)
- Spend 15 minutes in worship music without distractions

Forgiveness

- Identify someone you need to forgive and take a step toward reconciliation
- Release a grudge you've been holding

Letting Go of Idols

- Identify one thing that has taken priority over God and create a plan to reorder your life

- Limit time spent on a specific distraction and replace it with Scripture reading
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Closing

Read together Isaiah 6:8 and Mary's response in Luke 1:38:

"And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Then I said, 'Here I am! Send me.'" (Isaiah 6:8)

"And Mary said, 'Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.'" (Luke 1:38)

Reflection: Take 2-3 minutes of silence. Ask God to reveal one specific area where He's calling you to respond with "Here I am, Lord, send me" or "Let it be unto me according to your will."

Closing Prayer: Take time to pray a prayer of surrender, either silently or aloud, offering God the area He revealed to them.
