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# sample

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# Superheroes

- SPIDERMAN (from X-men)
- STORM
- CAPTAIN JACK
- BATMAN
- WONDER WOMAN
- WOLVERINE
- ELASTIGIRL (from The Incredibles)
- SPIDERMAN

My favorite superhero:

If I could have one superhero quality, I would choose . . .

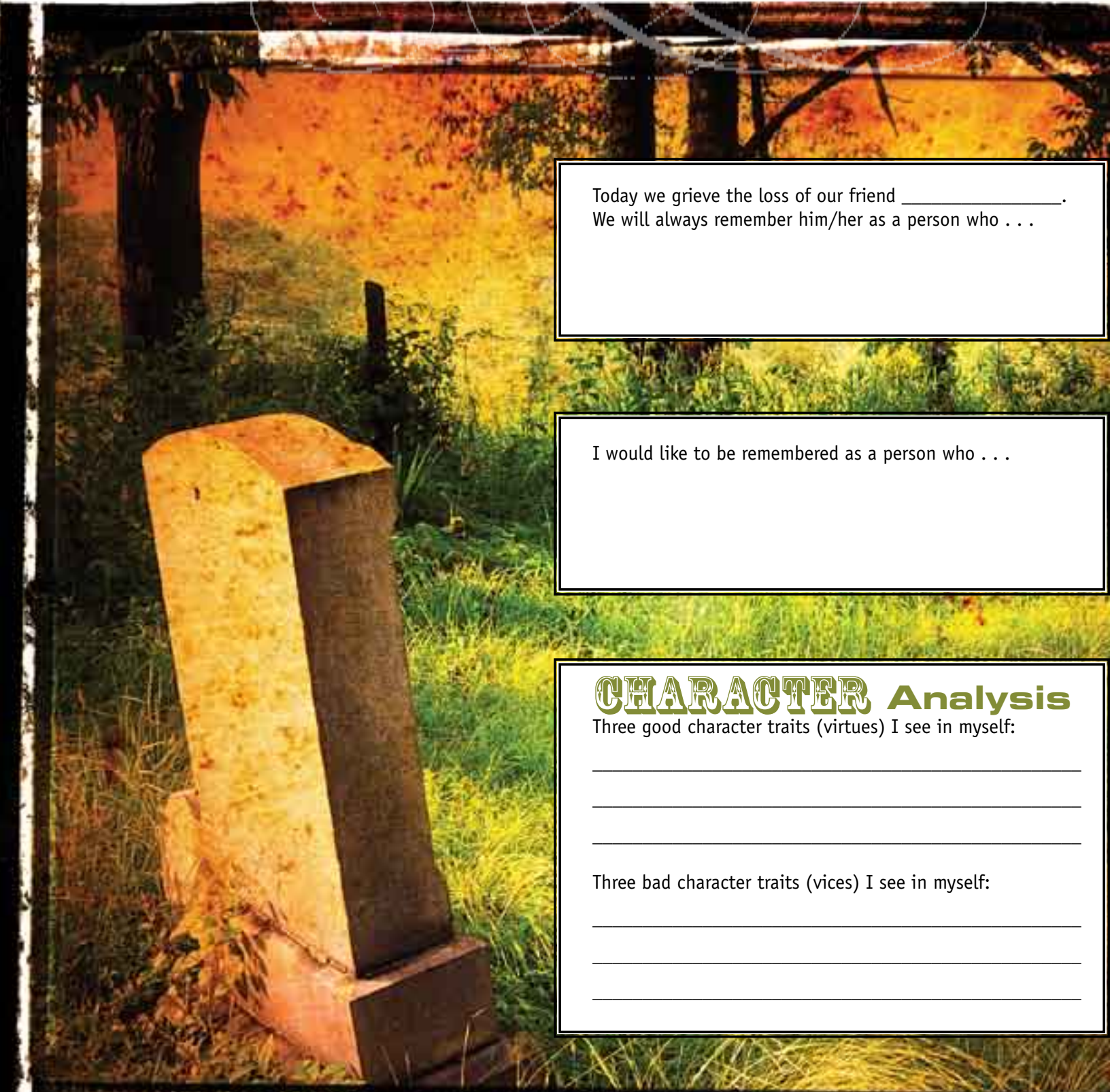
### Build Your Own Superhero!

Create the ultimate superhero by combining any five superhero traits from the superheroes listed or any other traits you wish to use. Draw a rough sketch of your superhero with a list of his/her traits.





# In Memoriam



Today we grieve the loss of our friend \_\_\_\_\_.  
We will always remember him/her as a person who . . .

I would like to be remembered as a person who . . .

**CHARACTER Analysis**  
Three good character traits (virtues) I see in myself:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Three bad character traits (vices) I see in myself:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Building Christlike Character

**for-ma-tion** (fôr-mā'sh n)—the deliberate cultivation of character traits. Often referred to as “spiritual formation,” “moral formation,” or “character formation.”

Our characters are formed over time, whether we are intentional about it or not.

Moral formation = taking off the “old self and its practices” (the vices) and putting on the “new self, created to be like Christ” (the virtues).

## GOAL and MEANS VIRTUES and VICES

Moral and spiritual formation—becoming a certain sort of person—has two major components: the *goal* and the *means*.

**The goal:** We usually begin by finding or identifying a role model—someone who embodies and lives out our moral or spiritual ideal. For Christians, this model is Jesus Christ. Forming our character to be like his is called *imitatio Christi*—the imitation of Christ. This is the goal of every Christian life—to become the sort of person who is like Jesus, inside and out.

**The means:** This is the how-to part. Our character is formed by practices and patterns of behavior in our *inner thoughts and feelings* and our *outer*

Virtues and vices are character traits formed and strengthened by our choices and practices.

*Virtues* are good habits or character traits formed by repeated patterns of thought, feeling, and action.

*Vices* are bad habits or character traits formed by repeated patterns of thought, feeling, and action.

**THOUGHT STARTER:**  
What determines which traits are considered virtues and which are considered vices? What determines which virtues (or vices) are seen as more important than others?

**“To flee vice is the beginning of virtue.”**

—Horace

## Getting PRACTICAL

Scripture has a lot to say about character formation.

Here are just three examples from Paul’s letters:

- Ephesians 4:22-24; 5:1
- Colossians 3:1-14
- Romans 12:2, 9-21

If Paul were leading a workshop on character formation, how would he describe it?

## Name That Vice

Match the vice listed at the right-hand side of the page with the appropriate quote.

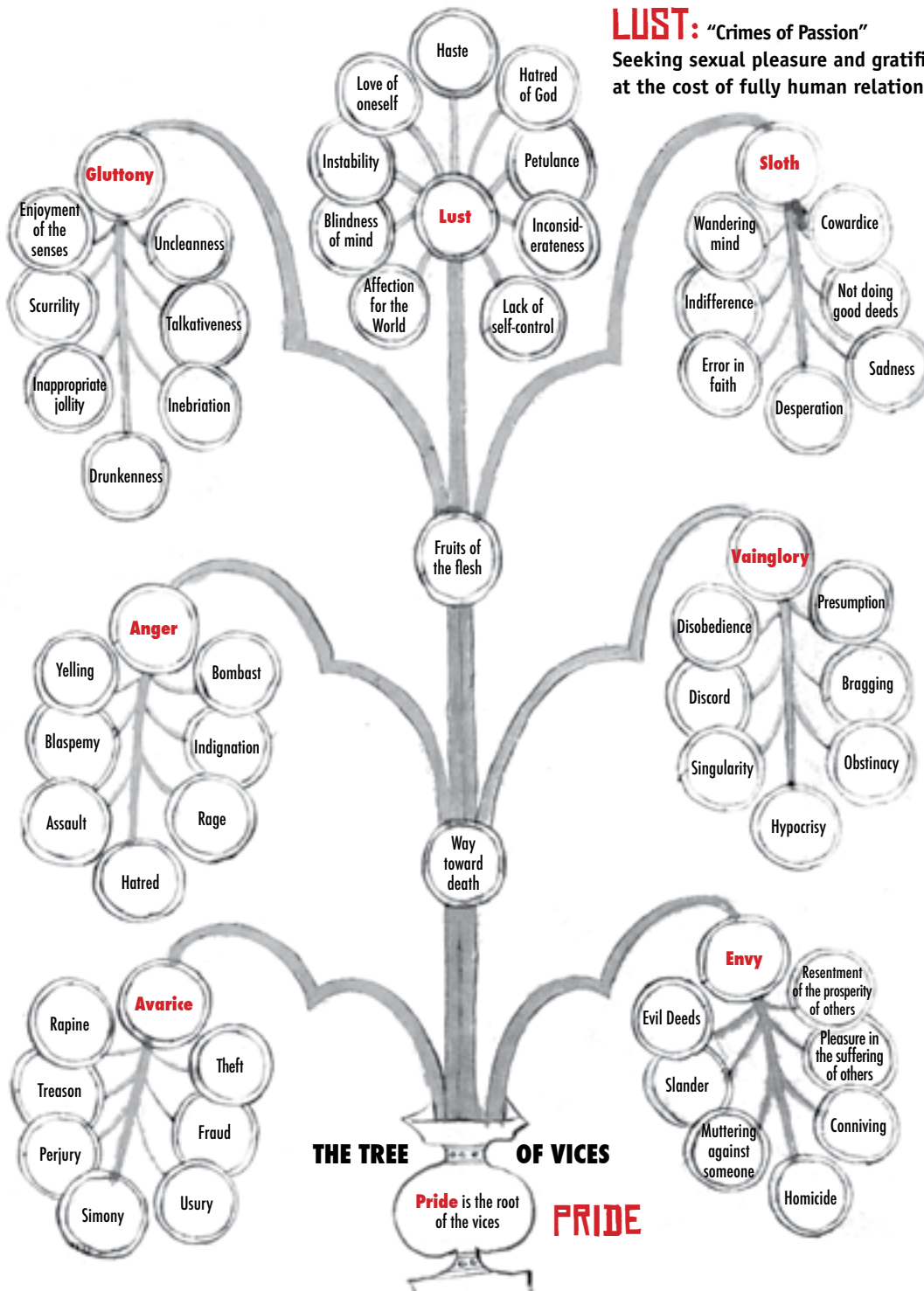
- The love of justice perverted into the desire for revenge.  
—Fairlie
- Lord, give me chastity . . . but not yet.  
—Augustine
- The consuming desire to have everyone else [be] as unsuccessful as you are.  
—Buechner
- It is the hungry one's bread that you hoard, the naked one's cloak that you retain, the needy one's money that you withhold. Wherefore as many as you have wronged, you might have aided.  
—Basil the Great
- I lust after recognition, I am desperate to win all the little merit badges and trinkets of my profession, and I am of less real use in this world than any good cleaning lady.  
—Garrison Keillor
- The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself, "God I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get." But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner."  
—Luke 18:11-13
- Raiding the icebox for a cure for spiritual malnutrition.  
—Buechner
- The demon of \_\_\_\_\_, also called "the noonday demon" is the most oppressive of all. . . . First he makes the sun appear sluggish and immobile, as if the day had fifty hours. . . . He presents the length of [the monk's] lifetime, holding before the monk's eyes all the hardships of his ascetic life. Thus the demon employs all his wiles so that the monk may leave his cell and flee. . . .  
—Evagrius of Pontus

**Gluttony**  
**Sloth**  
**Avarice**  
**Lust**  
**Anger**  
**Vainglory**  
**Pride**  
**Envy**

# Seven Deadly Sins

## GLUTTONY:

“Feeding Your Face and Starving Your Heart”  
Trying to use the pleasure of eating to attain spiritual fullness and satisfaction.



## LUST: “Crimes of Passion”

Seeking sexual pleasure and gratification for myself at the cost of fully human relationships with others.

## SLOTH:

“Lazy About Love”  
Being unwilling to be or do all God wants from us because that would take effort and we want the easy way out. Accepting love only if it's comfortable for me.

## ANGER: “Holy Emotion or Hellish Passion?”

Perverting the passionate pursuit of justice into a quest for personal revenge.

## VAINGLORY:

“Image Is Everything”  
Trying to appear better than we are to win recognition and approval from others.

## AVARICE:

“I Want It ALL”  
Wanting to be able to provide for our needs by ourselves without having to depend on God. Treating money or possessions as the ultimate security blanket.

**ENVY:** “Feeling Bitter When Others Have It Better”  
Resenting others' gifts from God because they appear better than ours.

“The wages of sin, we have come to learn, can add up to seven figures.”

—R. Solomon



# Seven Virtues

## The Call to CHRISTLIKE CHARACTER

"I hold that virtue is nothing other than the perfect love of God. . . . We may, therefore, define these virtues as follows: temperance is love preserving itself entire and incorrupt for God; courage is love readily bearing all things for the sake of God; justice is love serving only God, and therefore ruling well everything else that is subject to the human person; prudence is love discerning well between what helps it toward God and what hinders it."

—Augustine, "The Moral Teaching of the Fathers of the Church"

**Faith:** The habit of believing in God and trusting what he reveals as true.

**Justice:** Giving to others what they are owed; respecting the rights and needs of others; contributing what we can to the good of the community.

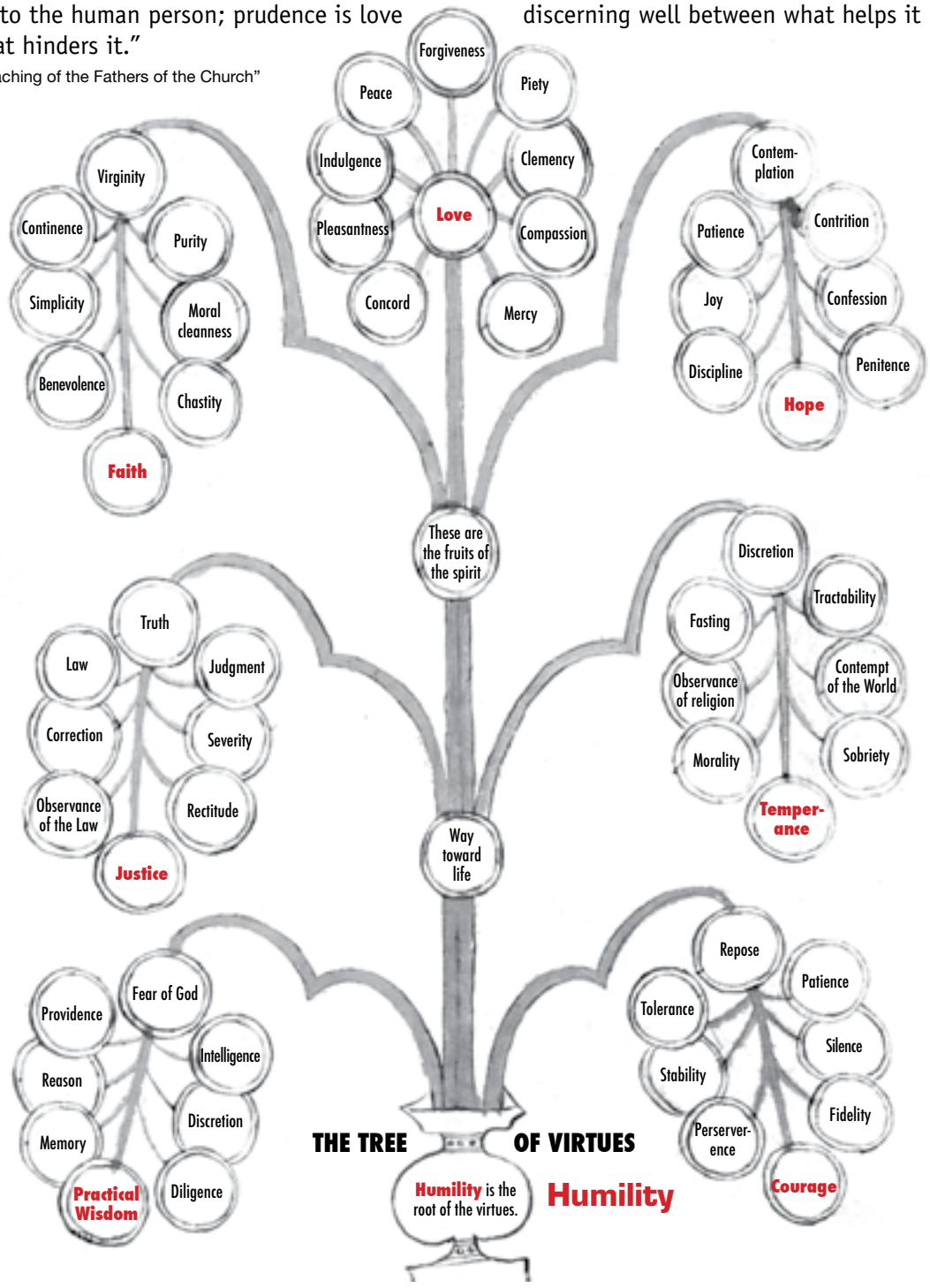
**Practical Wisdom:** Discerning with the help of others and prayer what is the best plan of action toward a good goal and then sticking to that decision when temptations or obstacles arise.

**Love:** Self-giving friendship with God and others; a sincere desire for the good of another, which is the way we find true fulfillment.

**Hope:** Longing for kingdom shalom in our own lives and for the world and confidently trusting that it is possible through God's help.

**Temperance:** Disciplining our bodily desires for pleasure in order to preserve our ability to appreciate true beauty and goodness. Letting good judgment rule passion, rather than letting passion rule judgment.

**Courage:** Standing firm in the face of fear and difficulty for the sake of a good cause. Courage can show itself in suffering and endurance as well as in fighting back.



# Pride: The Root of Vice

## HOMEMADE RECIPES FOR HAPPINESS



“Ninety-nine percent of us are addicted to something, whether it is eating, shopping, blaming, or taking care of other people.”

The simplest definition of an addiction is anything we use to fill the empty place inside of us that belongs to God alone.”

—Barbara Brown Taylor, *Home by Another Way*

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“My sin was this, that I looked for pleasure, beauty, and truth not in God but in myself and other creatures, and the search led me instead to pain, confusion, and error.”

—Augustine, *Confessions*

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“You made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you.”

—Augustine, *Confessions*

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“We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea.”

—C. S. Lewis, “The Weight of Glory,” *The Weight of Glory*

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### Defining PRIDE

Pride = telling God, “I’m in charge.”

Pride is the desire to take God’s control over our lives and claim that control as our own.

At the heart of pride is the desire *not to be dependent on God*—not to accept

- God’s vision of what is good for us,
- God’s care and provision of gifts, and
- God’s idea of who we ought to be and how we ought to live.

Sometimes pride shows itself in outright resistance, other times in denying God or not listening to him.

#### The Two-Fold Pattern of Pride: Goal and Means

Pride is a pattern evident in *all* sin, but especially in the seven deadly sins or vices.

1. Proudful *goal*: wanting to determine what my happiness or my own good looks like for myself (= my own goal)
2. Proudful *means*: wanting to provide and acquire that happiness or good for myself, on my own terms (= my own means)



## Slide into Pride

### THOUGHT STARTERS

After each case study, discuss the following questions:

#### Prideful goal:

- What is happiness, according to the main character? How does the main character resist or ignore what God wants (God's goal) in order to get what s/he wants (his/her goal)?

#### Prideful means:

- How does the main character try to achieve his/her self-defined picture of happiness?

### SCENE 1

**A** young boy growing up in a poor, hard-working family once received a candy bar for his birthday from his sister. Not the smaller "fun size" candy bar (What's fun about a smaller size anyway?), but a real, whole Three Musketeers. He looked at the chocolate bar in his hand, hardly believing it was real. What a contrast from the plain oatmeal he usually had for breakfast—cereal was too expensive—and the stale bread he had for lunch—stale because it always came from the day-old bakery outlet where things were usually a lot more than a day old. Candy was an unheard-of luxury, something to be treasured and savored. So treasure it he did. He carefully stored it in his dresser drawer, saving it for later, enjoying the thought of having it, his very own candy bar. Months went by and still he saved it—that beautiful, full-size Three Musketeers. More time passed. Finally, after more than a year, the boy decided the time was right. He dug beneath the sweaters in his dresser drawer for his precious treasure. There it was, still wrapped in shiny paper. He opened the brittle packaging only to find that the chocolate had whitened with age and the creamy nougat was now as hard as a rock. The candy bar was no longer fit to eat. He had hoarded his treasure so long that it had lost its value. He threw it away, disgusted.

### SCENE 2

**A** guru had a disciple and was so pleased with the man's spiritual progress that he left him on his own. The man lived simply in a little mud hut, begging for his food. Each morning after his devotions he washed his loincloth and hung it out to dry. One day he came back to discover the loincloth had been eaten by rats. He begged the villagers for another, and they gave it to him. But the rats ate that one too. So he got himself a cat. That took care of the rats, but now when he begged for his food, he had to beg for milk for his cat as well. "This won't do," he thought, "I'll get a cow." So he got a cow and found he had to beg now for fodder. So he decided to till and plant the ground around his hut. But

soon he found no time for contemplation, so he hired servants to tend his farm. But overseeing their labors became a chore, so he married to have a wife to help him. After a time, the disciple became the wealthiest man in the village.

The guru was traveling in the region and stopped in. He was shocked to see that where once stood a simple mud hut there now loomed a palace surrounded by a vast estate worked by many servants. "What is the meaning of this?" he asked his disciple.

"You won't believe this, master," the man replied, "But there was no other way I could keep my loincloth."

—Traditional Indian parable

### SCENE 3

**I**n this excerpt, one devil is giving another advice on how to tempt a human being:

Your patient's mother . . . is a good example [of gluttony]. She would be astonished . . . to learn that her whole life is enslaved to this kind of sensuality, which is quite concealed from her by the fact that the quantities involved are small. But what do quantities matter, provided we can use a human belly and palate to produce [quarrelsomeness], impatience, uncharitableness, and self-concern? . . . She is a positive terror to hostesses and servants. She is always turning from what has been offered her to say with a demure little sigh and smile, "Oh please, please . . . all I want is a cup of tea, weak but not too weak, and the teeniest weeniest bit of really crisp toast." . . .

Her belly now dominates her whole life. The woman is in what may be called the "All-I-want" state of mind. *All* she wants is a cup of tea properly made, or an egg properly boiled, or a slice of bread properly toasted. But she never finds any servant or any friend who can do these simple things "properly"—because her "properly" conceals an insatiable demand for the exact, and almost impossible, palatal pleasures which she imagines she remembers from the past. . . .

—Extract from *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis, ©1942 C.S. Lewis Pte Ltd, reprinted by permission.

### SCENE 4

**A** high school girl moves to a new city and starts attending a new school. The first day she is shy and afraid of what others will think of her because she is so different. To earn the approval of her new classmates, she carefully observes others and changes her image accordingly—dressing in cool clothing, doing her hair differently, hanging out with certain people and scorning others, and listening to only the "right" music. Suddenly people notice her in the hallways and invite her to parties. She has won herself popularity with the "in crowd," and she gets the boyfriend she wants.

# New Root—New Fruit

Much of Mother Teresa's life expressed humility and its rootedness in love. She cared for the world's poorest and most rejected on the streets of Calcutta for years, asking for nothing but the chance to serve them and see the face of Jesus Christ in them.

Humility is the virtuous habit of always depending on God for all that we are and strive for. It can be summed up in these two ideas:

"Without God, I can do nothing."  
 "With God, all things are possible."

**"In this life we cannot do great things. We can only do small things with great love."**

—Mother Teresa

**"I AM A LITTLE PENCIL IN THE HAND OF A WRITING GOD WHO IS SENDING A LOVE LETTER TO THE WORLD."**

—Mother Teresa

"The word 'mine' in its fully possessive sense cannot be uttered by a human being about anything. In the long run either [Satan] or [Christ] will say 'mine' of each thing that exists, and specially of each [person]. They will find out in the end, never fear, to whom their time, their souls, and their bodies really belong—certainly not to them, whatever happens. At present [Christ] says 'Mine' of everything on the . . . ground that He made it: [Satan] hopes in the end to say 'Mine' of all things on the . . . ground of conquest."

—Extract from *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis, ©1942 C.S. Lewis Pte Ltd, reprinted by permission.

**"DO NOT THINK THAT LOVE, IN ORDER TO BE GENUINE, HAS TO BE EXTRAORDINARY. WHAT WE NEED IS TO LOVE WITHOUT GETTING TIRED."**

—Mother Teresa

**"I DO NOT PRAY FOR SUCCESS, I ASK FOR FAITHFULNESS."**

—Mother Teresa

**"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls."**

—Jesus (Matthew 11:29)

**I AM NOT MY OWN, BUT BELONG—  
 BODY AND SOUL, IN LIFE AND IN DEATH—  
 TO MY FAITHFUL SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST.**

—From the Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 1

**"Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies."**

—Mother Teresa

## Making HUMILITY a Daily Spiritual Discipline

Each day this week, begin by reading one of the quotations from this page. Try to be intentional about living it out during the rest of the day.

### Try These Tips:

- Cut out the quotations so you can carry one with you in your pocket each day. You will likely need to remind yourself of your daily discipline several times throughout the day.
- Looking to go deeper?
- Keep a journal for a week including the quotations you find meaningful and your daily reflections on living them out.