

Identifying Root Sin

A. **PRIDE:** Basing our security and self-esteem on ourselves.

Expressions:

1. **Control.** Problems with trusting others, even God. Feeling threatened if not in control because it could cause failure. Trying to control others (kids, spouse) and not accepting them as they are. Difficulty in delegating. Impatience with others.
2. **Rationalization.** We become the criteria for right and wrong. We are never wrong. Don't accept things through faith. I need to always see them.
3. **Judgmental.** We are critical of others especially when we are mad at ourselves. We don't want others to be better than ourselves. We put a mask on and have a false, elevated idea of ourselves.
4. **Always proving one's self.** Driven to accomplish goals. This forms who I am. Never being satisfied with doing enough. Having higher expectations of myself than God does. Not accepting myself as I am. Putting my self-esteem in my work.
5. **Self-pity.** Getting down when I am not perfect or I fail in anything.
6. **Independence.** Not wanting to depend on anyone; they might let me down. Not depending on God through prayer. When things get busy, prayer is the first to go.

B. **VANITY.** Putting our security in others (in what others think of us).

Expressions:

1. **Wanting others to admire me.** Thinking that I'm the best when others recognize my talents. Being dominated by "human respect" as with shyness, when this shyness is in great measure because I'm afraid others won't like me. Two-facedness or hypocrisy in the attempt to make myself accepted; abandoning or silencing my principles in order to "fit in." Easily judging others when they don't agree with me, and speaking openly of their "errors." Desiring to have "intimate friendships" in order to appear popular. Breaking confidences. Stretching the truth or lying outright in order to make myself admired and loved. Always talking about myself and my accomplishments.
2. **Always seeking to be the center of attention.** Severe disappointment when others don't appreciate my things. Seeking to be accepted even if I have to compromise my principles. Having a real fear of rejection. Rejoicing in others' failures and an inability to rejoice in their successes (I'm too jealous).

C. **SENSUALITY:** Putting our security and self-esteem in things. Seeking instant gratification or avoiding "pain" or difficulty.

Expressions:

1. **“Feels Like it Syndrome.”** Giving primacy to my feelings such that my daily work depends upon my emotional state - whether I feel like it, whether I like the person I'm dealing with, if I like my task. Avoiding service when I don't feel good. Always accomplishing my responsibilities at the last minute just to finish them, without concern for perfection in what I do. Wasting time easily, and when I'm not under deadline, working only on what I like most. Fleeing anything which exacts a bodily mortification of me. Complaining about everything; if I'm a little under the weather, everyone knows about it.

2. **Materialism.** Always wanting the newest, the most up to date item on the market. Never wanting to throw anything out. Being attached to any personal possession. Excessive worry about things and about money. To NEED THINGS to feel good about oneself. Excessive time shopping at the mall, especially when I am down.

3. **Life of Pleasure.**

- a. Comfort. Always looking for the most comfortable, that which requires the least effort, the easiest for me, the most comfortable postures.
- b. Escapism. Daydreaming, not controlling my thoughts; constructing castles in the air in which generally I play the hero or center.
- c. Food. Not controlling my appetite, overeating at meals, eating only what I like.
- d. Misuse of TV, Movies, Alcohol, Internet.
- e. Impurity. Looking at sex for selfish pleasure.

Expressions of the root sin.

This should only refer to the root sin and only the one root sin you have chosen. It is important to work only **on one at a time**. The more concrete the Expressions, the clearer the enemy becomes so that you can be more focused on eliminating it. Start by listing 5 or 6 expressions.

Choose an opposite virtue.

We have to focus on practicing the virtue instead of just avoiding the sin. In this way, we turn towards “saying yes” to Jesus and we remain in the positive instead of focusing on our negative habit/sin. A virtue is a habit that is formed through the repetition of single acts that eventually become second nature (we hope). If a person is working on patience, the more acts of patience they make, the easier it is to be patient in difficult circumstances.

4. **Pick an opposite virtue** from the root sin you have identified. Then focus on this one virtue for 6-12 months. We're doing a marathon, not a sprint.

Examples of opposite virtues:

PRIDE: Humility, Simplicity, Supernatural spirit, Meekness, Compassion, Docility, Service of others, Dependence on God through prayer.

VANITY: Purity of intention, Love for Christ, Seeing Christ in others, True acceptance of oneself, Purity.

SENSUALITY: Discipline for love of Christ, Focus on the person of Christ, Abnegation and self-denial for love of Christ, Hope, Spirit of loving sacrifice, Patience, Purity.