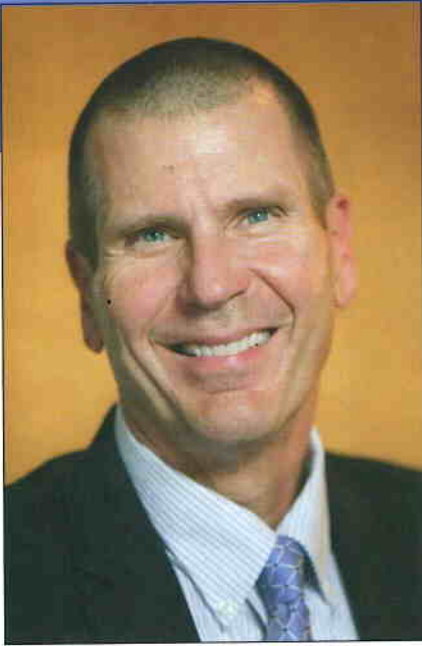


THE EIGHTH DEADLY SIN



DR. JAMIE MITCHELL
GDA Editor

Phone 706.202.9307
jamitchelldmd@bellsouth.net

**We must set
the bar high
and embrace
the virtue of
integrity to avoid
falling prey to
mediocrity.**

The seven deadly sins, also known as the capital vices or cardinal sins, are well known in Christian teachings as a group of severe offenses that, interestingly enough, are not specifically mentioned in the Bible. According to the standard list, they are pride, greed, wrath, envy, lust, gluttony, and sloth, which are contrary to the seven heavenly virtues.

The history of these vices stems back to pre-Christian Greek and Roman philosophies. Aristotle, the famous Greek philosopher, reasoned that each positive quality represented a middle ground between two extremes, each of which is a vice. For example, courage is the virtue of facing fear and danger; excess courage is recklessness, while deficient courage is cowardice. Aristotle lists virtues like courage, temperance, generosity, greatness of soul, measured anger, friendship, and wit or charm. Roman writer Horace cited virtues while listing and warning against vices. His first works say that “to flee vice is the beginning of virtue and to have got rid of folly is the beginning of wisdom.” Many others have broached the subject in the mediums that played to their strengths. In 590 AD, Pope Gregory I revised the list from his influential position, while Dante wrote works of art such as *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*.

If I had the ability to alter the list of the seven deadly sins, I would add the vice of mediocrity which is defined as settling for low or poor quality. Mediocrity can occur through conscious decision making or when the demands of life predicates that we settle for less, perhaps due to lack of sufficient time or the burden of financial stresses. This topic came to light for me when my son was graduating from high school. Our church had a special breakfast to honor the graduates and the speaker that morning talked about the “sin of mediocrity.” The point she was driving home was this; we all possess God-given talents that, if not used to their full extent, is settling for much less of ourselves, and therefore a sin. She was challenging these young minds to become self-motivated; to strive for their very best in all aspects of their lives no matter what the circumstances. I’m not sure how many of the seniors took this powerful message to heart, but it struck a chord that still resonates with me.

Take my word; no one is immune to this tempting pitfall. When the darkness of mediocrity begins to creep into our lives, we need to pause and hit our mental reset button and evaluate where we are and if we’ve been swallowed up by it. Mediocrity can happen in any or every one of our lives, from personal to professional. When we become too busy to do our best, we have settled for something less than we are capable of and simply going through the motions. We have to rise above that mentality.

When I was a student in dental school, one of my favorite professors, Dr. Jimmy Rivers, would say, “Every day at work is not going to be an A+, but what separates a good dentist from a poor one is how we deal with our mistakes.” He was warning us; don’t settle for mediocrity! We must set the bar high and embrace the virtue of integrity to avoid falling prey to mediocrity. We must always strive to do the right thing, even when nobody else is watching.

Years ago, Horace echoed what the Yin Yang symbol suggests in Eastern philosophy. To some extent, opposites such as good and evil exist within or next to each other. This logic drew me to the realization that the opposite of integrity is mediocrity. I consider integrity as one of society’s most important, and often disregarded virtues, and it deserves a new found place in our world. Despite what you believe, as cerebral human beings *all of us* are faced with great temptations to do the wrong thing or take the easy way. We cannot change the fact that we are inherently destructive. What we can change is our approach to the events of everyday life by being diligent in our efforts to thwart vice and to cultivate virtue.

Let me leave you with a stinging quip a friend of mine uses for disappointing experiences: “they strove for mediocrity, and failed.” Let’s all be mindful and strive to do our best to avoid all of the deadly sins, mediocrity included!

Cheers. 🍷

P.S. I sincerely hope that you didn't find this editorial...mediocre!