

SEVEN CAPITAL SINS

Among other things, the adjective capital means “grave,” that is, having serious consequences. It also means principal, that is, “comprising the highest category.” The list of seven capital sins fits both of these definitions.

What follows is a brief description of each of the capital sins. To determine how well you are striving to fight these basic sinful attitudes and habits, rate yourself on the statements that reflect a virtuous counterpart to each sin. Use this scale:

- A** = This statement describes me quite well.
- B** = This reflects my basic approach most of the time.
- C** = I’m so-so on this.
- D** = I have a long way to go.

Pride: an unlimited appreciation for one’s own worth; arrogance; excessively high opinion of oneself

- I realize that God is the source of all gifts that I have. Without him, I would be and have nothing.
- I am grateful for all my talents, gifts, and possessions and use them for the benefit of others.

Greed (Avarice): immoderate desire for earthly goods; love of money or possessions rather than loving God and others

- I am relatively content with what I have.
- I exercise delayed gratification to strengthen my will against the temptations of consumerism.

Envy: sorrow over another’s good fortune; covetousness; jealousy over another’s possessions or characteristics

- I refrain from comparing myself to others.
- I make an effort to praise the accomplishments of others, especially siblings, classmates, coworkers, and teammates.

Anger (Wrath): intemperate desire for revenge; hostile and wrathful feelings toward others

- I cultivate a forgiving heart toward those who have harmed me.
- When I have negative feelings toward others, I try to find peaceful ways to deal with my feelings.

Lust: inordinate, unrestrained craving for pleasure, especially sexual pleasure

- I treat others as persons with dignity, not as objects for my own gratification.
- Because the sexual appetite is so easily aroused, I avoid situations that will tempt me sexually.

Gluttony: unrestrained, immoderate consumption of food or drink

- I stay away from drinking alcohol.
- I eat healthy foods, exercise reasonably, and get sufficient rest.

Sloth: laziness in keeping the faith or practicing virtue; neglecting to do one’s duties out of lethargy

- I take the time to do what God expects of me, for example, I pray every day and make sure I get to Mass every Saturday night or Sunday.
- I commit myself to complete essential tasks, for example, my studies or chores around the house, no matter how boring they can be at times.

- Pride is often called the root of all sin. Discuss how pride gives rise to the other six capital sins.

NAME: _____

WHAT IS SIN?

All of the following situations may be sinful. Rank them in order from 1 to 10 with 1 being the most sinful in your opinion, 10 being the least sinful.

- ___ refusing to help a little sister with her homework
- ___ ignoring a classmate who obviously wants to befriend you
- ___ lying to your parents about when you got home from a party
- ___ drinking at a party when you promised your folks you would not do so
- ___ arousing your sexual passions by reading pornographic material
- ___ taking the Lord's name in vain
- ___ governmental programs that cut back welfare payments for unwed mothers
- ___ governmental policies that encourage women to have abortions
- ___ littering
- ___ wasteful use of water

- In your judgment, are any of these options not sinful? Why or why not? If you said no, what would make them sinful?

- What makes something a sin?

- For you, what is the most serious sin a person could commit?

NAME: _____

THE BIBLE AND MORALITY

The Bible is a rich source of moral knowledge. Listed below are some moral issues. Look up the Bible references given and briefly summarize what the Bible teaches about these issues.

| MORAL ISSUE | BIBLE REFERENCES | SUMMARY |
|--------------------|---|----------------|
| Divorce | Mt 5:31-32 Mk 10:1-12 Lk 16:18 | |
| Justice | Lv 19:9-10 Ps 146:5-8 Lk 12:32-48 | |
| Drunkenness | Prv 23:31-32 Eph 5:18 | |
| Lying | Dt 5:20 Eph 4:24-25 | |
| Obedience | Lv 19:3 Sir 3:1-16 Mk 7: 9-13 | |
| Sexual Morality | Lv 18:22 Col 3:5, 6 1 Cor 3:16 | |

Questions

- What role should moral teaching from the Bible play in the formation of our consciences?

- Can a person justifiably act contrary to an explicit moral teaching from the Bible? Why or why not? Give examples.

- Are these teachings as relevant today as in biblical times? Explain.

NAME: _____

THE NEW TESTAMENT ON SIN, JESUS, AND FORGIVENESS

Using the text on pp. 149–151, write your answers to the following questions:

- What are other descriptions of sin used in the New Testament?
- What is Jesus' essential message related to sin?
- What are some examples of sin that Jesus strongly condemned?
- What is the heart of the Christian message related to sin?
- Share at least two specific occasions when Jesus forgave sin.
- What is Jesus' three-step message of conversion?

MORE OR LESS SINFUL?

Judge which of the following probably constitutes “grave matter,” thus constituting mortal sin (**M**), “less serious matter” that would ordinarily constitute venial sin (**V**), or no sin at all (**N**).

- ___ 1. lying under oath
- ___ 2. not stopping at the scene of an accident you caused
- ___ 3. verbally abusing a person with a disability
- ___ 4. cheating on income taxes
- ___ 5. torturing political prisoners
- ___ 6. playing favorites among two parents
- ___ 7. suicide
- ___ 8. refusing to forgive someone who asks for forgiveness
- ___ 9. child pornography
- ___ 10. refusing to go to Mass
- ___ 11. carrying a concealed weapon
- ___ 12. intoxication
- ___ 13. performing medical experiments without patient consent
- ___ 14. refusing to help a stranger who needs life-preserving first-aid
- ___ 15. having sexual feelings toward a member of the same sex
- ___ 16. saying you love someone in order to gain sexual favors
- ___ 17. selling drugs to support an addiction
- ___ 18. wanton killing of animals for the fun of it
- ___ 19. routinely disobeying traffic laws
- ___ 20. committing adultery

- What is other information you would need to know about any of the items to make a decision about the gravity of the moral object?

- Give examples to show how a person’s blameworthiness for a particular act might be lessened for something you judged to be grave matter.