

SUMMER OF SIN: SLOTH

July 12, 2026

Michael Swartzentruber, Senior Minister



Matthew 22:34-40

³⁴When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, ³⁵and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him.

³⁶“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” ³⁷He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” ³⁸This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase, or image stands out to you?
2. What immediately comes to mind when you hear the word “sloth”?
3. **See the note *Defining Sloth* (below).** How does shifting the definition of sloth from “laziness” to “*acedia*” (a lack of care or apathy) change how you view this deadly sin?
4. *Acedia* can hide behind a frantic, busy, and successful lifestyle. Where do you see this “busy apathy” showing up in our culture today?
5. Jesus modeled an ethic of love that requires deep “heart work.” In the parable of the Good Samaritan (following this same teaching in Luke’s gospel, see Luke 10:25-37), this love required time, money, and personal risk.

Why is this kind of “heart work” so exhausting? What specific modern distractions tempt us to look the other way and just mind our own business?

South Elkhorn Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

4343 Harrodsburg Road, Lexington KY 40513

859-223-1433 southelkhorncc.org

6. Why might slowing down—rather than speeding up—be just the thing that’s needed to counteract *acedia* and cultivate a more loving life?
7. Conventional culture labels rest as “laziness.” How does holy Sabbath rest differ from *acedia*?
8. What specific practices or types of rest actually restore your capacity to love God, yourself, and others?
9. The ancients considered *stabilitas loci* as an antidote to *acedia*. Stability of place—a commitment to “stay put”, not run away or distract ourselves, but have the hard conversations and do the difficult work.
 - a. When has “staying put” through a difficult situation taught you something vital?
 - b. What does “stability of place” look like for you right now?

DEFINING SLOTH

The word sloth developed the same way as words like length, breadth, width, etc. It meant “slow-th” (or the state of being slow). Of course, it developed with other connotations, too: sluggishness, indolence, and laziness. The vice sloth is now perceived as laziness, like a general lack of effort. But the deadly sin “sloth” actually translates the word *acedia*, meaning without care (think apathy). To the monastics and theologians who diagnosed it, it meant turning away from the call of divine love and neglecting the disciplines for a flourishing spiritual life.

Importantly, then, *acedia* is not a lack of activity or slowness of pace. Indeed, one can be busy and frantic doing many things (even appearing industrious and successful) *and still* neglect the demands of love and the disciplines of a spiritual life.