

respectable sins study guide

Introduction to the Respectable Sins Study Guide

respectable sins study guide offers a comprehensive exploration of Jerry Bridges' seminal work, delving into the subtle yet pervasive "respectable sins" that often go unnoticed in Christian life. This guide is designed to illuminate the author's central arguments, providing readers with the tools to identify, understand, and overcome these often-accepted shortcomings. We will examine the foundational concepts of Bridges' thesis, unpack the specific sins he identifies, and explore practical strategies for cultivating a more Christ-like character. Whether you are a seasoned believer seeking deeper spiritual growth or new to the concept of sin in its less obvious forms, this study guide will serve as an invaluable resource for a transformative journey. Our aim is to equip you with a robust understanding of this vital topic and empower you to apply these timeless principles to your daily walk with God.

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Understanding "Respectable Sins": The Core Concepts

Jerry Bridges' groundbreaking work, "Respectable Sins," challenges the conventional understanding of sin by highlighting those transgressions that are often overlooked or excused in everyday Christian living. The core concept revolves around the idea that while dramatic or overt sins rightly receive attention, more subtle, ingrained attitudes and behaviors can equally hinder our spiritual progress and damage our relationship with God. Bridges argues that these "respectable sins" are not insignificant; rather, they are attitudes and actions that, while not always outwardly scandalous, are deeply offensive to God and detrimental to the Christian life. He posits that we have become desensitized to them, treating them as mere personality quirks or unavoidable aspects of human nature.

A key tenet of Bridges' thesis is that these respectable sins are often rooted in a lack of trust in God and His sovereignty. When we are irritable, worried, or proud, it often stems from a belief that we know better than God, or that we are ultimately in control of our circumstances. This perspective fundamentally misunderstands the nature of God's grace and the power of His redemptive work. The study guide aims to unpack this foundational understanding, encouraging readers to re-evaluate their internal landscape and identify where these subtle sins might be taking root. By understanding the root causes, we can begin to address them with the same seriousness we would give to more obvious forms of sin.

Key Sins Explored in the Study

Bridges meticulously outlines several categories of respectable sins that commonly plague believers. These are not exhaustive, but representative of the subtle ways sin manifests in our hearts and minds. Understanding each of these specific sins is crucial for effective self-examination and spiritual growth.

Irritation and Impatience

This category encompasses the quick temper, the sharp word, and the general intolerance we may exhibit towards others. Irritation and impatience often arise when our expectations are not met, or when others do not conform to our desires. Bridges points out that these reactions betray a lack of grace and a focus on our own comfort and convenience rather than on reflecting Christ's love and patience. The internal grumbling and outward expressions of frustration are often normalized, making them a particularly insidious form of respectable sin.

Worry and Anxiety

While often dismissed as a natural human response to stress, worry and anxiety are presented by Bridges as a serious sin of distrust. When we fret about the future or obsess over potential problems, we are essentially declaring that we do not believe God is capable of handling our situations or that His provision is insufficient. This sin undermines our faith and robs us of the peace that Christ offers. Learning to cast our anxieties on God is a vital aspect of overcoming this pervasive temptation.

Unthankfulness

In a culture that often emphasizes entitlement, unthankfulness can easily become a default setting. Bridges argues that a lack of gratitude for God's blessings, both big and small, is a sin that dishonors Him. It suggests that we believe we have somehow earned what we have received or that God's goodness is less than it truly is. Cultivating a spirit of thankfulness is a conscious act of recognizing God's hand in all things.

Discouragement

Discouragement, particularly within the Christian community, is explored as a sin that can stem from a variety of sources. It can be a lack of faith in God's ultimate plan, a focus on personal failures, or a comparison with others. Bridges suggests that persistent discouragement can be a subtle form of rebellion, indicating that we are not fully trusting God's promises or His ability to bring good out of difficult circumstances. It can also impact our ability to serve effectively.

Pride

Pride is a foundational sin that underpins many other respectable sins. Bridges identifies various manifestations of pride, including self-sufficiency, arrogance, and a desire for recognition. This sin sets us up in opposition to God, as it places our own will and desires above His. Recognizing the subtle ways pride infiltrates our thinking and actions is a significant step toward humility and dependence on God.

Selfishness

At its core, selfishness is the idolization of the self. It manifests in prioritizing our own needs, desires, and comfort above those of others and, crucially, above God's will. Bridges highlights how selfishness can appear in seemingly minor decisions, such as being unwilling to serve, share, or inconvenience ourselves for the benefit of another. It is a direct contradiction of the self-sacrificial love that Christ exemplified.

Lack of Love

While overt hatred is clearly sinful, Bridges points out that a lack of genuine, active love for others is also a serious transgression. This can include indifference, a critical spirit, or a failure to extend

grace and forgiveness. The command to love our neighbors as ourselves is central to Christian discipleship, and a deficiency in this area, even if not expressed overtly, is a significant stumbling block.

Biblical Foundations for Addressing Respectable Sins

The principles discussed in "Respectable Sins" are deeply rooted in biblical teachings. Bridges consistently draws upon Scripture to underscore the seriousness of these seemingly minor transgressions and to provide a framework for their eradication. The Bible is replete with commands that directly address the attitudes and behaviors Bridges identifies. For instance, verses on controlling one's temper, trusting God in all circumstances, and living with gratitude are central to overcoming irritability, worry, and unthankfulness respectively. The concept of humility, so vital to combating pride, is a recurring theme throughout both the Old and New Testaments.

Furthermore, the transformative power of the Holy Spirit is presented as the ultimate resource for spiritual change. The Apostle Paul frequently discusses the "fruit of the Spirit," which includes love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). These are the very antitheses of respectable sins. The study guide emphasizes that overcoming these ingrained habits is not a matter of sheer human willpower but a process of reliance on God's grace and the indwelling Spirit working within us. The redemptive work of Christ on the cross provides the foundation for forgiveness and the empowerment to live a new life, free from the dominion of sin.

Practical Application and Spiritual Growth

Understanding respectable sins is only the first step; the true transformation comes through diligent application and a commitment to spiritual growth. This involves cultivating specific disciplines and embracing a mindset that actively seeks to honor God in all aspects of life. The goal is not perfection in this life, but a continuous movement towards Christ-likeness, marked by a growing awareness of sin and a deeper dependence on God's power.

Developing a Christ-like Character

Developing a Christ-like character is an ongoing journey of conforming our thoughts, attitudes, and actions to the example of Jesus. This requires intentionality, much like a gardener tending to a crop. It involves cultivating virtues that are the opposite of respectable sins. For example, actively practicing patience in frustrating situations, consciously choosing to trust God when faced with uncertainty, and making a habit of expressing gratitude, even for mundane blessings, all contribute to this development. The study guide encourages a daily examination of one's heart and a deliberate effort to reflect Christ's humility, love, and selflessness in every interaction.

Strategies for Overcoming Temptation

Overcoming respectable sins, like any other form of temptation, requires strategic engagement. This involves identifying personal triggers and developing proactive responses. For those prone to irritation, this might mean practicing deep breathing or reciting Scripture before reacting. For those struggling with worry, developing a prayer routine where anxieties are consistently handed over to God is essential. The concept of "mortification of sin," as described in various theological traditions, involves actively putting sin to death through deliberate acts of obedience and reliance on the Spirit. This is not about self-punishment, but about choosing life in Christ over the destructive patterns of sin.

- Develop a plan for prayer and Scripture memorization.
- Identify personal sin patterns and triggers.
- Seek accountability from trusted Christian friends.
- Practice confession and repentance regularly.
- Cultivate disciplines that counteract specific respectable sins.

The Role of Community in Spiritual Warfare

While personal spiritual growth is paramount, the role of Christian community in addressing respectable sins cannot be overstated. Fellow believers provide vital support, encouragement, and accountability. Being part of a church or small group allows for open and honest dialogue about spiritual struggles. When individuals can confess their respectable sins without fear of judgment, they create an environment conducive to healing and growth. Shared prayer, mutual admonishment, and collective learning from Scripture are powerful tools in this spiritual warfare. The Apostle Paul's epistles often highlight the importance of believers bearing one another's burdens and building each other up in love, which is essential for overcoming the isolating nature of sin.

Further Study and Resources

For those who wish to delve deeper into the topic of respectable sins, further study can be immensely beneficial. Jerry Bridges' original work, "Respectable Sins: Confronting the Sins That We Tolerate," serves as the foundational text and offers a more in-depth exploration of each sin and its implications. Numerous biblical commentaries and theological works can provide additional context on the nature of sin, God's holiness, and the path to sanctification. Many Christian authors and ministries offer resources, such as articles, podcasts, and sermons, that further unpack these vital concepts and provide practical guidance for application. Engaging with these materials can reinforce the lessons learned and offer new perspectives for continued growth.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the central thesis of Kent Nerburn's 'Respectable Sins'?

The central thesis of 'Respectable Sins' is that many behaviors and attitudes, while socially accepted and even praised, can actually hinder genuine spiritual and personal growth. Nerburn argues that we often embrace 'respectable sins' like busyness, perfectionism, and the pursuit of external validation, mistaking them for virtues, when in reality, they isolate us from ourselves, others, and the divine.

What are some examples of 'respectable sins' discussed in the study guide?

The study guide highlights several 'respectable sins,' including an excessive focus on busyness and productivity, the desire for control and perfection, the need for constant validation and approval from others, intellectual arrogance or 'spiritual pride,' and a tendency to judge or condemn others. These are often disguised as positive traits like diligence, responsibility, or faith.

How does Nerburn suggest readers confront and overcome these 'respectable sins'?

Nerburn suggests a multi-faceted approach. This includes cultivating self-awareness to recognize these ingrained patterns, embracing vulnerability and imperfection, practicing intentional stillness and silence to reconnect with one's inner self, fostering authentic relationships built on empathy and acceptance, and challenging societal pressures that promote these superficial values. The emphasis is on a shift in internal focus rather than outward performance.

What is the role of silence and stillness in the context of 'Respectable Sins'?

Silence and stillness are presented as crucial antidotes to the 'respectable sin' of busyness and constant distraction. Nerburn argues that in quiet contemplation, we can shed the layers of societal conditioning and self-deception, allowing for genuine self-discovery, a deeper connection to intuition and the spiritual realm, and a clearer understanding of our true needs and values.

What is the ultimate goal of examining 'respectable sins' according to Nerburn's study guide?

The ultimate goal is to achieve a more authentic and integrated spiritual life. By shedding the pretense and performance associated with 'respectable sins,' individuals can cultivate humility, embrace their true selves, build deeper connections with others, and experience a more profound and meaningful relationship with the divine. It's about living a life of genuine integrity rather than one of superficial compliance.

Additional Resources

Here are 9 book titles and descriptions related to the theme of a "respectable sins study guide":

1. *The Unseen Chains: Understanding Your Subtle Sins*

This guide delves into the everyday habits and attitudes that, while seemingly harmless, can create internal barriers to spiritual growth. It explores how common behaviors like perfectionism, gossip, or envy can subtly erode our connection with ourselves and others. The book offers practical steps for identifying these "respectable" transgressions and developing healthier patterns of thought and action.

2. *Quiet Desperation: Unmasking the Sins of Contentment*

This title focuses on the dangers of complacency and the sin of settling for less than God's best. It examines how a comfortable existence can sometimes mask a lack of spiritual hunger or ambition. Readers will find introspective questions and biblical insights to challenge a passive approach to faith and encourage a pursuit of deeper meaning.

3. *The Mirror's Deceit: Confronting Pride in Plain Sight*

Often disguised as self-confidence or ambition, pride is a pervasive "respectable sin." This study guide encourages honest self-examination to reveal the subtle ways pride manifests in our lives, from a desire for recognition to an unwillingness to admit fault. It provides strategies for cultivating humility and embracing a posture of dependence.

4. *When Nice Becomes Nuisance: Navigating the Sins of Passivity*

This book tackles the often-overlooked sins of inaction and avoidance. It explores how a desire to be agreeable can lead to a failure to speak truth, stand for righteousness, or engage in necessary conflict. The guide helps readers understand when niceness crosses the line into spiritual compromise and how to embrace courageous engagement.

5. *The Whisper of Worry: Conquering Anxiety as a Sin*

While worry is a common human experience, this study argues for its examination as a potentially sinful reliance on self rather than God. It unpacks the theological implications of chronic anxiety and its impact on faith. Through biblical wisdom and practical exercises, readers can learn to release their burdens and find peace in divine trust.

6. *The Politics of Pettiness: Overcoming Resentment and Bitterness*

This title addresses the subtle but destructive "respectable sins" of holding grudges and nursing resentments. It explores how these attitudes can poison relationships and hinder spiritual maturity. The guide offers pathways to forgiveness, reconciliation, and the freedom that comes from releasing bitterness.

7. *The Tyranny of the To-Do List: Finding Rest Amidst Busyness*

In a culture that often glorifies constant activity, this book challenges the sin of neglecting true rest and spiritual Sabbath. It examines how an overemphasis on productivity can lead to burnout and a disconnect from essential spiritual practices. Readers will discover how to reframe their understanding of work and find sustainable rhythms of life.

8. *The Illusion of Independence: Embracing Vulnerability and Connection*

This study guide explores the subtle sin of striving for excessive self-reliance, which can isolate us from God and others. It delves into the courage required to be vulnerable and the transformative power of genuine community. The book encourages readers to shed the facade of complete

independence and embrace their need for interdependence.

9. *The Echo Chamber of Agreement: Seeking Truth Beyond Comfort Zones*

This title addresses the "respectable sin" of surrounding ourselves only with those who echo our own opinions, hindering intellectual and spiritual growth. It encourages a disciplined pursuit of diverse perspectives and a willingness to engage with challenging ideas. The guide equips readers to critically evaluate their own beliefs and foster open-mindedness.

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