

CASE-BASED TEACHING: COMMUNITY SINS & SPIRITUAL DYSFUNCTION IN THE CHURCH

1. DISUNITY & GOSSIP

Definition:

Disunity and gossip involve relational fragmentation within the body of Christ, often expressed through slander, whispering, faction-building, and unresolved conflict over non-essential matters.

Scripture Foundation:

📖 Romans 16:17

📖 Ephesians 4:29–32

📖 Proverbs 16:28

Case Scenario:

A ministry team becomes divided over programming preferences. Instead of addressing concerns openly, members begin sharing frustrations in private conversations. Small cliques form, communication breaks down, and meetings grow tense. Eventually, attendance drops—not because of doctrine, but because of relational toxicity masked as “venting.”

2. INSTITUTIONAL PRIDE

Definition:

Institutional pride occurs when a church elevates its history, image, programs, or assets above its mission to serve people and glorify Christ.

Scripture Foundation:

📖 1 Corinthians 3:6–7

📖 Revelation 3:17

📖 Philippians 2:3–4

Case Scenario:

A historic church refuses to partner with a local outreach ministry because it fears losing recognition and control. Leadership prioritizes maintaining traditions, buildings, and budgets over meeting the growing needs of the surrounding community. While the church appears stable externally, it is spiritually stagnant and increasingly disconnected from its mission field.

3. BACKBITING & BACKSTABBING

Definition:

Backbiting and backstabbing involve speaking against others in their absence, undermining trust, and damaging reputations through covert hostility.

Scripture Foundation:

📖 Psalm 15:1–3

📖 2 Corinthians 12:20

📖 James 4:11

Case Scenario:

A ministry leader is praised publicly but criticized privately by team members who feel overlooked. Rather than addressing concerns directly, individuals subtly discredit the leader in conversations with others. Over time, suspicion replaces trust, and the ministry begins to fracture from internal sabotage.

4. JEALOUSY & ENVY

Definition:

Jealousy and envy arise from discontent with God's provision and resentment toward the spiritual gifting or recognition of others.

Scripture Foundation:

📖 James 3:14–16

📖 Galatians 5:26

📖 Proverbs 14:30

Case Scenario:

Two teachers serve in the same ministry. One begins to gain recognition for impactful teaching. The other, feeling overlooked, begins to withdraw emotionally and subtly critique the other's style. Instead of celebrating kingdom impact, comparison breeds quiet resentment that affects collaboration and unity.

5. GREED & STINGINESS

Definition:

Greed and stinginess reflect a heart posture that prioritizes accumulation and self-preservation over generosity and stewardship.

Scripture Foundation:

📖 Luke 12:15

📖 2 Corinthians 9:6–8

📖 1 Timothy 6:9–10

Case Scenario:

A church experiences financial growth but becomes increasingly reluctant to support missions or benevolence efforts. Leadership justifies withholding resources as “wisdom,” yet the congregation becomes inward-focused, losing its posture of generosity and trust in God’s provision.

6. GRUMBLING & COMPLAINING

Definition:

Grumbling and complaining express dissatisfaction rooted in unbelief, often undermining leadership, unity, and gratitude.

Scripture Foundation:

📖 Philippians 2:14–15

📖 1 Corinthians 10:10

📖 Exodus 16:8

Case Scenario:

After a leadership transition, members continually compare the new leadership to the former pastor. Conversations become filled with complaints about change, preferences, and discomfort. This ongoing negativity begins to influence newer members, creating a culture of criticism rather than encouragement.

7. “SALT SHAKER” MENTALITY**Definition:**

A “salt shaker” mentality describes believers who remain isolated within the church, failing to influence the world as Christ intended (keeping salt in the shaker rather than spreading it).

Scripture Foundation:

📖 Matthew 5:13–16

📖 John 17:15–18

📖 Acts 1:8

Case Scenario:

A church has strong internal programs but no outward evangelistic presence. Members attend services, studies, and fellowships but rarely engage their communities. Outreach opportunities are declined due to comfort and routine. The church remains spiritually active internally but ineffective externally.

Teaching Reflection Questions

1. Which of these patterns is most subtle yet most destructive amongst the people of God, ministry, and/or leadership?
2. How do these sins distort the witness of the church?
3. What biblical practices can restore unity and spiritual health?

Closing Insight

These issues are not merely behavioral—they are theological. Each reflects a distorted understanding of the gospel, grace, and community. Healthy churches are not sinless, but they are repentant, unified, and mission-focused.

Breakout Room Assignment Instructions (Select a Reader/Reporter)

1. **Begin with Prayer** – Invite the Holy Spirit to give wisdom, understanding, conviction, and unity as you study God's Word.
2. **Read the Assigned Scriptures** – Carefully read the assigned biblical passages, noting key themes, commands, and principles.
3. **Discuss the Scenario** – Work together to identify the spiritual issues, biblical truths, and practical applications presented in the scenario.
4. **Answer the Following Questions** – Support each response with Scripture whenever possible.
5. **Close with Prayer** – Conclude by praying together, confessing any revealed sins, thanking God for His grace, and asking Him to strengthen the class to live in obedience, love, unity, and faithful witness.

Discussion Questions

1. **Identify the sin(s)** presented in the scenario. What biblical principles reveal why these actions or attitudes are sinful?
2. How do these sin(s) distort the witness of the church?
3. What biblical practices can restore unity and spiritual health?
4. How may you pray regarding this matter?
5. What additional Scriptures can you use to find encouragement, wisdom, and guidance?

6. What personal application can you make from this lesson to strengthen your own walk with Christ and contribute to the health and unity of the church?

Goal: Demonstrate biblical understanding by accurately identifying sin, applying God's Word to real-life situations, and encouraging repentance, spiritual growth, unity, and Christ-centered living.

BREAKOUT DISCUSSION

EXAMPLE - Please be led by the Holy Spirit as you observe and provide clarity as needed. *(Encourage the students to engage with the text and scenario at least 90% of the time.)*

GREED & STINGINESS — Definitions

Greed is an excessive and selfish desire to acquire, possess, or control more—especially wealth, possessions, power, or resources—without being satisfied with what one already has.

- **Biblical perspective:** Greed reflects a heart that places possessions or personal gain above God and others.
- **Key Scripture:** *“Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”* — **Luke 12:15 (KJV)**
- **Heart issue:** “I want more.”

Stinginess is an unwillingness to give, share, or release what one has, particularly when there is a legitimate opportunity or responsibility to help others.

- **Biblical perspective:** Stinginess can reveal a lack of trust in God's provision and a reluctance to practice generosity.
- **Key Scripture:** *“He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.”* — **2 Corinthians 9:6 (KJV)**
- **Heart issue:** “I don't want to let go.”

The Difference

Greed	Stinginess
Desires more	Refuses to give
Focuses on acquiring	Focuses on holding onto
“I need more.”	“I can't give that.”
Can never be satisfied	Is reluctant to release
Often driven by covetousness	Often expressed through withholding

In simple terms:

Greed wants to accumulate; stinginess refuses to distribute.

Both can become **heart issues** when possessions, money, or resources become more important than obedience to God, love for others, and faithful stewardship.

The biblical opposite of both is **generosity rooted in stewardship**—recognizing that what we have ultimately belongs to God and that we are called to manage His resources faithfully.