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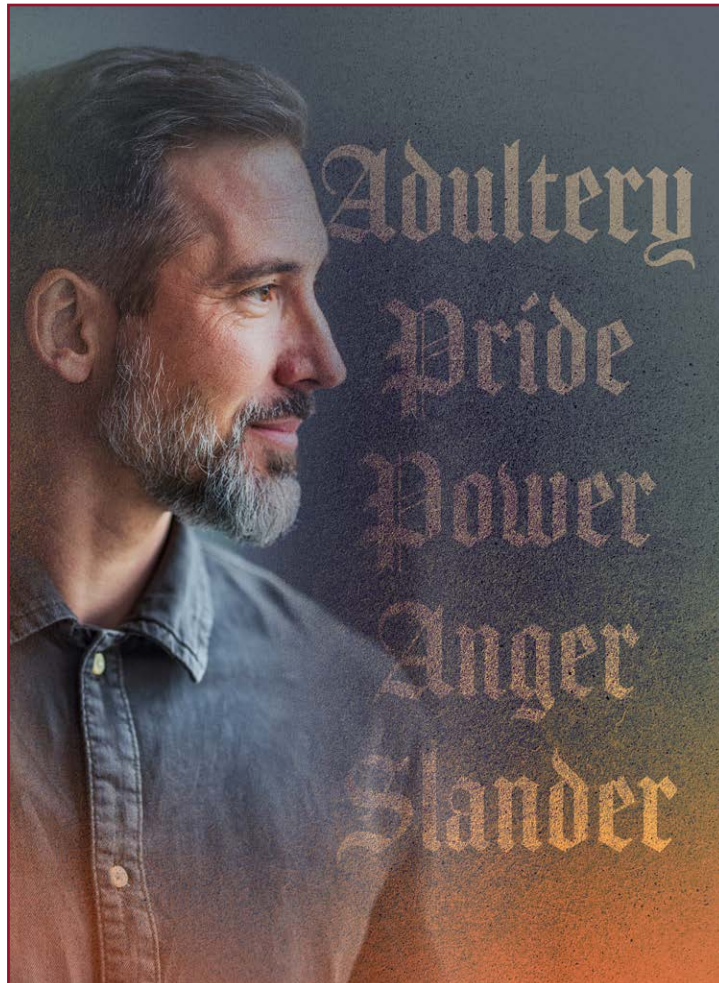


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FOCUSED ON THE WORD

Five Sins to Subdue Between Now and the Election [Proverbs]



Solomon's book of Proverbs has much to say to his son Rehoboam regarding governmental leadership. Teaching his son to recognize and avoid the most dangerous and tempting sins while in public service, the world's wisest man states, *Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people* (Proverbs 14:34).

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WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES

White House Cabinet and Governors: Wednesdays 8am (EST), light breakfast served

Senate Members: Tuesdays 8am, rotating offices, hot breakfast served

House Members: Thursdays 8am, Natural Resources, Longworth 1334, hot breakfast served



PUBLIC SERVANT QUOTE

Ben Baker

*Missouri Director for USDA
Rural Development
Former Missouri State
Representative*



“As a Christian legislator, it is vital to prepare your own heart, mind, and soul spiritually to be able to successfully navigate the minefield of politics. Capitol Ministries serves a vital purpose in helping to provide legislators and their staff another opportunity to be intentional about spiritual nourishment that is necessary for us to fulfill our role and responsibility to serve the great state of Missouri.”

Five Sins to Subdue Between Now and the Election [Proverbs]

Sin—in the lives of both a government’s leaders and its citizens—is the greatest threat to the well-being of any nation. This truth is more important than any policy. After all, what value is good policy in the hands of sinful people? Ultimately, the degree to which sin is eradicated is the degree to which a culture prospers; and where sin proliferates, it most assuredly cripples a country.

Rampant sin shreds and unravels the fabric of a nation. Government, Wall Street, the medical industry, transportation, the food industry (to name but a few), need self-governed righteous leaders in order to function; laws and rules are of little effect if the hearts of leaders are inherently shady. This all seems so fundamental and obvious, but it can become a lesser priority during the hoopla of an election. What follows is Solomon’s short list of sins that short-circuit the life of a leader.

I. INTRODUCTION

If it is true that *righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people*, then the question quickly becomes one of how a leader or a nation most effectively eradicates sin? How can a political leader best infuse righteousness into him or herself, and to a broader application, how can leaders infuse righteousness into their culture? The answer to this question is critical to the long-term health of a nation.

One historic answer has been the formation of a police state. But no one

wants to live in a police state (and it’s expensive too).

The other answer is a strong Church that is not tethered to the institution of Government. In this archetype, citizens are internally developed and weaned from sin via their individual, personal relationship with Jesus Christ in a composite, non-sacerdotal societal construct. Let me explain.

**In a composite society,
Church and State are
separate institutions that
esteem one another in
and for their respective
God-ordained positions
and purposes.**

Within these ideals lies the genius of America and the First Amendment. To contrast, in a sacerdotal state, the Church is tied to the State and under the State’s authority. Historically, whenever the Church is subjugated to the authority of the State, the Church soon loses its biblical doctrine and effectiveness in terms of changing individual lives.

Thus, in order to promote righteousness in the people, a government must uphold and honor the autonomy of the Church. Only independent-of-the-State, scripturally driven pulpits in biblically solid churches breed enduring righteousness in a citizenry. Our Founding Fathers demand-



ed the First Amendment because they knew that only this approach effectively maintains the quelling of sin and the longevity of cultural sustainability. Without strong independent churches, sin will mushroom to levels of disgrace.

The indwelling and empowering Holy Spirit in our lives germinates self-governance, stemming from the formation of our personal conviction of an omniscient God who will someday personally judge our behavior. Such an eternal perspective yields a present restraint. This is the Christian worldview.

A culture is no better than the sum total of its individuals. To use a parallel from sports, you will notice that the coaches who spend time developing the individual skills of their players tend to field stronger squads than those who emphasize team coaching only. So too, an emphasis on the growth of each individual's character must be the highest priority in society, higher even than education and legislation, as important as those things are to the fabric of society.

Rather than wax on about what makes for a great nation, consider King Solomon's wisely repeated focus on five sins most likely to derail you as a public servant. What sins are most apt to disgrace you?

II. A SHORT COURSE ON SIN

Before delving into those five specific temptations, it is important to refresh

our biblical understanding of sin. The Scriptures are clear that even though man was created in God's image, he is separated from God due to his sin. Most elementary Bible students know that sin entered the world in Genesis chapter 3 when Adam and Eve rebelled and disobeyed God's only prohibition. Perhaps the most important Greek word for sin in the New Testament is *hamartia*, and it means "to miss the mark." *All have sinned*, states Romans 3:23, *and fall short of the glory of God*. And sin leads to eternal separation from God, who in His absolute holiness and righteousness can have nothing whatsoever to do with it (see Romans 6:23).

Furthermore, because we are sinners, until each of us repents and receives Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord by faith alone, we remain in the state to which we were physically born: *dead in our trespasses and sin* (Ephesians 2:1–4). In this life, we need to make peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. This means people cannot think biblically nor be expected to perform righteous actions by their own doing (and even when they seem to achieve humanitarian ideals, they do so out of prideful, selfish motives rather than God's glory). To be *dead in sin* is a strong biblical indictment as to the realities of the consequences of the Fall. Until we are regenerated in Christ we are, spiritually speaking, a walking corpse.

Finally, sin dominates the unsaved, and they are addicted to its fruit. Galatians 5:19–21 lists these characteristics of

VERSE OF THE WEEK



Proverbs 14:34

Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people



Learn to recognize and avoid the most dangerous and tempting sins while in public service.



MINISTRY UPDATE

Opening God's Word with Alabama's State Leaders



For generations, Alabama has played an important role in preserving a strong Christian witness in America's public life. With its rich heritage of biblical faith and influential churches, the state continues to be a place where the Gospel shapes communities, leaders, and institutions.

Capitol Ministries is grateful to see that witness strengthened through the relaunch of the Alabama State Capitol Ministry in Montgomery under the leadership of Dr. Daniel Atkins, who stepped into this role following the faithful service of Pastor Keith Pugh.

Dr. Atkins serves as Senior Pastor of Taylor Road Baptist Church in Montgomery and brings many years of pastoral and teaching experience to this ministry. He holds a Doctor of Ministry in Biblical Preaching from Anderson University, a Master of Divinity

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Five Sins to Subdue Between Now and the Election [Proverbs]

sin:

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Note how the habitual presence of these characteristics will disgrace a nation. When the unregenerate overly influence a society, these fruits become its downfall. While the Scripture lists these as the general fruits of sin manifest in the lives of every unsaved individual, what follow are five of the most tempting ones that a political leader is most sure to face.

III. FIVE SINS THAT WILL LEAD TO YOUR DOWNFALL

A. THE DOWNFALL OF ADULTERY

His own iniquities will capture the wicked, and he will be held with the cords of his sin (Proverbs 5:22).

This proverb is in the context of adultery. Solomon spends chapters and chapters warning about the leader's need to guard against sexual fulfillment outside of wedlock. Here he is stating a sobering principle: when a leader gets caught up in the sensual appetite of illicit sexual fulfillment of

any type beyond the measure of marriage, that leader soon becomes locked in an immoral straitjacket that can forever rule his or her life. Nothing in the world can match the level of enticement and excitement of an illicit affair. Accordingly, all forms of sexual sin can be quickly habit-forming and addictive. This sin has cords that can hold you to it. Proverbs 29:6 states, *By transgression an evil man is ensnared.*

Fleshly lust must be mortified and strictly barred by anyone who would lead. When the familial integrity of an individual is destroyed through infidelity, he will have nothing to offer the public—nor will he possess the stability necessary to maintain effective public service which stems from a solid home life. Long-term effective public service requires a stable home life. Remember too in this regard, often, the contentious woman is man-made (see Proverbs 21:9, 19).

Once Satan can get you to compromise on your marriage, he's got you!

Those who have tasted the power of office know that power is one of the strongest aphrodisiacs. It is cliché that attractive members of the opposite sex throw themselves at elected officials, and this phenomenon is not limited to male legislators, but if you give in, it's only a matter of time; sooner or later things will begin to crumble. You *will*



be held with the cords of your *sin*. It's not worth it! Why trade your effectiveness in office for a moment's pleasure? With multiple days on the road during this election cycle, you will be bombarded with flattery, some of which will come from persons of the opposite sex who are attracted by the potential of your power. May these passing words of warning serve to fortify your heart; subdue this temptation, my friend! *Make straight paths for your feet*, states Hebrews 12:13.

B. THE DOWNFALL OF PRIDE

He who loves transgression loves strife; he who raises his door seeks destruction (Proverbs 17:19).

When Solomon writes *raises his door*, he is employing a Hebrew idiom which connotes pride. To *raise* your *door* was the practice of building an ostentatious home with an ornate entry. The idea of the proverb is that a person who entertains pride prepares the way for his destruction. In the Hebrew translation the clauses can be interchanged so as to better understand the meaning: he who loves strife loves transgression. Prideful people tend to find delight in quarreling because they are deluded into thinking they are always right. The problem, however, is that such prideful behavior leads to broken, transgressed relationships. A leader has enough legitimate problems with offending people because of the tough policy decisions he or she must make in office without offending people by the putrid aroma of personal arrogance.

Nothing on the Hill is as aromatically unpleasant as that which slithers out from under too many doors—the stench of self-importance.

Your pride can be your downfall. Proverbs 27:2 states powerfully a principle we should all memorize, meditate on and live by:

Let another praise you and not your own mouth, a stranger and not your own lips.

There is an old hymn titled, "How Great Thou Art." Keep in mind, my friend, that "Thou" is a reference to God, not you. With all the attention that will be afforded you in the coming months, remember that you gain office only because of the grace of God. Subdue this temptation.

C. THE DOWNFALL OF POWER

He who sows iniquity will reap vanity, and the rod of his fury will perish (Proverbs 22:8).

The phrase *the rod of his fury* represents the evil a leader inflicts on another by his abuse of power. This interpretation is informed by the previous stanza of the proverb: the Hebrew word for iniquity (*evil*) as used here means "perversion, a twisting aside from the path of righteousness." When a leader perverts a process, procedure,

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from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and a Bachelor of Science in Christian Studies from the University of Mobile.

Reflecting on the opportunity to serve lawmakers, Dr. Atkins shared: "Our church is strategically located just nine miles from the State House, and we see this as a providential opportunity. I am deeply grateful for the privilege to minister to Alabama's lawmakers with the backing and prayers of our entire congregation."

With renewed energy and vision, Dr. Atkins has relaunched the weekly Bible study for Alabama lawmakers at the State House in Montgomery. These gatherings provide legislators and public servants an opportunity to study the Word of God together and grow in their understanding of biblical principles for leadership and public service.

Dr. Atkins added: "It is a great privilege to open the Word of God with those who serve our state. My prayer is that through the faithful teaching of Scripture, the Lord will strengthen and encourage our lawmakers as they carry out the responsibilities entrusted to them."

Please join us in praying for Dr. Atkins and the continued fruitfulness of the Alabama State Capitol Ministry as it ministers to leaders who shape the future of the state.



MINISTRY LEADER PROFILE

Jari Paavo Portaankorva

Ministry Leader, Finland



Jari Portaankorva is an accomplished author, lecturer, researcher, and pastor. He currently serves as General Director of the Baptist Union of Finland and as senior pastor of Helsinki Baptist Church.

Born in Rovaniemi, Finland, Jari came to faith in Jesus Christ in 1975 while attending a Lutheran confirmation camp. Although raised in a Laestadian Lutheran family, he was also influenced by the local Pentecostal church during his youth. In 1985, sensing God's call to ministry, he enrolled in a Baptist Bible college to prepare for missionary service.

Jari pursued advanced theological and academic studies at the University of Helsinki, specializing in the study of religion. While there, he became a visiting student at the University of Oxford. His doctoral research focused

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Five Sins to Subdue Between Now and the Election [Proverbs]

or a policy, when he bends the rules, the end will be vanity (*aven*)—a net loss of power.

Like a baby in want, power-hungry people are furious when their will is thwarted. This proverb refers to the brandishing of power. And even though the wicked will sometimes prosper for a season—bullying their way through their abuse of power—eventually their injustices will find them out. In our democratic system with its hawkish media, this often happens sooner than later. Lastly, the Hebrew the word perish (*kala*) means “to fail; to be destroyed.” Your temptation to abuse whatever power you possess will ensure disappointment sooner or later. All of this is in contrast to the wise leader who bases his leadership in serving. They sow bountifully and reap bountifully (see 2 Corinthians 9:6); they give and it is given back (Luke 6:38); they humble themselves and are exalted (James 4:10). Taking advantage of your position, exalting yourself rather than others, and being power-hungry between now and the election will lead to your downfall. Subdue this temptation.

D. THE DOWNFALL OF ANGER

An angry man stirs up strife, and a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression (Proverbs 29:22).

In the Hebrew language the angry man spoken of here is literally “a man of nostrils” referring to a hot-tempered person whose nose flares during oft-recurring rages. While righteous indig-

nation is an honorable characteristic (Ephesians 4:26) when it comes to defending God's honor and His explicit precepts and fighting for justice, being given over to anger is indeed another matter. It is sin. Such fuming and gnashing of teeth will most assuredly cause strife (the state or condition of distrust or enmity: often bitter, sometimes violent conflict or dissension) within your marriage, family, staff, election staff, caucus, or floor members.

Learn not to quarrel over trifles. There is no reason for so much transgression when scriptural principles are not the issue. Your ideas apart from scriptural truths are really not all that important or eternal in nature. Noble individuals often do disagree on things that are not scripturally clear-cut, so don't be so arrogant as to think you are always right! Because anger stemming from selfishness could lead to your downfall, subdue this temptation.

E. THE DOWNFALL OF SLANDER

A man who is laden with the guilt of human blood will be a fugitive until death; let no one support him (Proverbs 28:17).

Since this proverb warns against assisting a guilt-burdened murderer, it may seem almost totally inapplicable to the capital community. But keep in mind what Jesus taught in Matthew 5:21 and 22:

“You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MUR-



DER.’ ... But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; ... and whoever shall say, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.”

The point is this: to slay someone in your heart or with your words is as evil in Jesus’ eyes as the outward shedding of blood! In full application of this proverb, not only should you abstain from murdering others with your words, but you must shun those who are given to slandering others. Let no one support those who are given to a habit of repeated, false, disparaging comments about others. In line with the principles of Matthew 18:15–20, if you have a problem with another, **go and show him his fault in private** (and for best results, quickly). These principles for dealing with the murderous sin of gossip and slander are especially important for leaders to observe and put into action. When you slander another, you grant permission for those around you to do the same—to you! Remember the biblical principle, that, **a little leaven leavens a whole lump of dough** (Galatians 5:9). To use another metaphor, you will soon reap what you have sown. Slander and gossip could lead to your downfall. Subdue this temptation.

IV. SUMMARY

Make sure these five sins do not creep up in your life, especially during the hoopla of the election when many will flatter you daily. It lowers your sensitivity to reality, giving way to license and a casual attitude toward sin. Flattery is false, insincere, and excessive adulation. Since it is based on lying, allowing someone to lie to your face is in no way healthy for either them or you!

Be proactive about shutting down flattery: when you sense it, make your response, “I will not tolerate flattery!”

This is a good principle to enact that will help you maintain objectivity and lower your susceptibility to the temptations King Solomon warns about.

Beyond the election, continue to subdue these sins of the flesh, and grow in righteousness!

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on religious diplomacy and conflict resolution, examining the role of faith communities in peacemaking during the Sierra Leone Civil War. He earned his doctorate in 2018, and his scholarly work has since focused on religion, peacebuilding, Christian-Muslim relations, and reconciliation in conflict zones.

Following his ministerial training, Jari and his family served for a short time in 1998 as missionaries in Sierra Leone, West Africa, with the European Baptist Mission. Their missionary assignment coincided with the final stages of the Sierra Leone Civil War, providing firsthand experience that would later shape both his academic research and his ministry philosophy.

After returning to Finland, Jari continued in pastoral ministry while assuming increasing leadership responsibilities within the Finnish Baptist Union. He has served as pastor of Helsinki Baptist Church and has led the Finnish Baptist denomination for many years, promoting biblical discipleship, evangelism, church planting, theological education, and cooperation among evangelical churches. In addition to his denominational leadership, he has contributed extensively to theological scholarship and educational institutions. He was a Visiting Research Fellow at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies

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Five Sins to Subdue Between Now and the Election [Proverbs]

MINISTRY LEADER PROFILE / **Jari Paavo Portaankorva**

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in 2019 and 2025 and a Visiting Research Fellow at the International Baptist Theological Study Centre in Amsterdam from 2023 to 2024.

Jari became involved with Capitol Ministries in 2023 after attending the International Training Conference in Washington, D.C. Inspired by Capitol Ministries' commitment to making disciples of political leaders through the faithful teaching of God's Word, he returned with a vision to establish the same ministry in Finland. Today, he partners with Capitol Ministries to establish and strengthen Bible studies for elected officials and government leaders. He is convinced that discipling public servants through systematic Bible teaching transforms lives and equips them to lead with biblical wisdom, integrity, and humility.



*Making Disciples
of Jesus Christ
in the Political Arena
Throughout the World*



Capitol Ministries® provides Bible studies, evangelism, and discipleship to political leaders.

Founded in 1996, Capitol Ministries has started ongoing ministries in more than forty U.S. state capitols and dozens of foreign federal capitols.

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Mail Processing Center
Post Office 30994
Phoenix, AZ 85046
661.288.2622
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