

*Respectable Sins* – by Jerry Bridges  
Synopsis by Luke Hoselton

*Respectable Sins* is a book about identifying and confronting the not-so-obvious sins in our lives. Such are the sins that are not regarded as the “bad ones” like murder, adultery or homosexuality, but are the more tolerable ones such as jealousy, anger, pride and impatience. Author Jerry Bridges beckons his readers to realize that all sin is heinous in God’s eyes and all sin, big or little, must be confronted and dealt with. The book discusses the high calling of Christians and how this standard has been lowered due to the decreasing emphasis on sin in churches. It then discusses the character of sin and its offensiveness to God. It proceeds to give advice on ways to confront and deal with sin biblically. The remainder of the book is dedicated to discussing a number of specific sins that often go overlooked. In each chapter Bridges gives practical advice from his own experience that has helped him in dealing with each sin. Jerry Bridges is one of the most trusted authors in Evangelicalism and is the best-selling author of many books such as *The Pursuit of Holiness*, *The Discipline of Grace*, and *The Practice of Godliness*. He writes from his fifty-plus years of ministry on staff with The Navigators.

Chapter 1—Ordinary Saints

This chapter deals with the identity of a saint—one redeemed by Christ—and how this identity should set a standard for how Christians live. However, Christians often don’t understand what it means to be a saint and set lower standards that allow many “small” sins to be tolerated.

Chapter 2—The Disappearance of Sin

Here, Bridges deals with the disappearance of sin in culture and much of Evangelicalism. Sin, when addressed, has been redefined to mean only the “big” ones and many Christians are more disturbed with the sins of society than those in their own lives. However, Bridges argues that all sin is a deliberate rejection of God’s rule and though it has disappeared from much of Evangelicalism, it has not disappeared from God’s sight.

Chapter 3—The Malignancy of Sin

Bridges discusses the ability of sin to grow and spread into every part of our lives and even the lives of others. Even small sins, when not confronted, can feed and produce bigger and more serious sin in other parts of our lives.

Chapter 4—The Remedy for Sin

Christians often view the gospel as being something for non-believers. This chapter shows how the gospel is actually for sinners in continual need of grace. Bridges argues that in order to deal with sin the gospel and its consequent forgiveness must be embraced and daily appropriated. Essentially, he argues that we must preach the gospel to ourselves daily because it helps in the following ways:

1. It plows the ground of our hearts so that we can more accurately see our sin.
2. It frees us to face sin by giving us the assurance that we are forgiven.
3. It motivates and energizes us to deal with sin because of the assurance it gives. This has a two-fold effect:

- A. It assures that God is with, not against, us in our battle with sin. We are not alone in it.
- B. It also produces gratitude because we know God no longer is counting our sin against us.

#### Chapter 5—The Power of the Holy Spirit

Sin has been dethroned in the Christian's life, but it is not dead. This chapter deals with the necessity of the believer to continually live under the control of the Spirit seeking the enablement to deal with sin. This chapter also summarizes the work of the Spirit in the believer's life in the following way:

1. The Holy Spirit works to convict and make us aware of our sins.
2. He works in us to enable us to put those sins to death.
3. He works in us to defeat sin in ways we don't know about.
4. He uses the circumstances of our lives to exercise us in the activity of dealing with our sins.

#### Chapter 6—Directions for Dealing with Sin

With the reminder that sin can only be dealt with in a gospel context, Bridges encourages his readers to remember that it is their responsibility to deal with sin. He gives specific advice from his own experience in fighting sin. Such advice includes:

1. Intentionally identifying areas where we have accepted sin.
2. Storing up Scriptures in our minds to guard against temptation.
3. Cultivating consistent prayer against specific sins.
4. Involving other believers in our battle with sin for accountability.

#### Chapter 7—Ungodliness

Ungodliness is defined as a non-responsive attitude toward God that is displayed in a life that gives little or no thought to God and shows a meager desire to know him. Bridges convincingly asserts that ungodliness is the basis for all other sins, even pride.

#### Chapter 8—Anxiety and Frustration

The author argues that anxiety is basically a display of distrusting God and frustration comes from a consistent bent toward living with anxiety. Both are sins and belittle God's sovereignty. So when tempted to be overcome with anxiety, try some of the following suggestions:

1. Try to view the bigger picture; God may have different plans than we do.
2. Memorize and pray over certain Scripture passages such as Matthew 5:25-34, Philippians 4:6, or 1 Peter 5:7.
3. Trust that God is infinitely wise and ask for the faith to believe his providential will when it is contrary to your plans.

#### Chapter 9—Discontentment

Discontentment flows from consistent anxiety and frustration. Bridges shows that though there is room for legitimate discontentment—such as discontentment over our spiritual growth or the injustice in the world—it is only in our acceptance of God's plans that peace can be found.

#### Chapter 10—Unthankfulness

Bridges argues that though our lives should be saturated with thanksgiving we often do not give thanks. It is argued that such conduct is an insult to the Giver of all good things and a violation of the greatest commandment. All circumstances in life properly deserve thanksgiving.

#### Chapter 11—Pride

Bridges discusses pride in the areas of self-righteousness, correct doctrine, achievement, and the independent spirit. He pleads for humble living and reminds his reader that God opposes the proud.

#### Chapter 12—Selfishness

Selfishness in the areas of personal interest, time, money, and inconsiderateness are discussed and shown to be common roots of other “acceptable” sins.

#### Chapter 13—Self-Control

Bridges examines subtle areas in the Christian life where a lack of self-control may not be perceived. Some such areas include eating and drinking, tempers, personal finances, and hobbies to name a few. Lacking self-control in small areas is shown to affect our ability to display self-control in more important areas.

#### Chapter 14—Impatience and Irritability

Bridges shows the sinfulness of impatience and irritability, how they are displayed and solutions for properly dealing with them.

#### Chapter 15—Anger

Bridges discusses the difference between anger and righteous anger and shows what is often at the root of anger. He shows how unjust anger is an affront to the character of God.

#### Chapter 16—Weeds of Anger

Since anger doesn't keep good company, Bridges shows how it often grows into resentment, bitterness and animosity. He discusses options for learning how to deal with a lifestyle of anger:

1. Look to the sovereignty of God. He does not cause bad things to happen to us, but He does allow it. He often allows us an opportunity to grow in Christlikeness. A trust in God's sovereignty in every situation is the first defense.
2. Pray that God might enable us to grow in love.
3. In light of Christ's forgiveness of you, seek to learn to forgive as God has forgiven. Consider Matthew 18:21-35.

#### Chapter 17—Judgmentalism

Judgmentalism is born when we equate our opinions with truth. Bridges shows that at its core judgmentalism causes one to assume the role of God.

## Chapter 18—Envy, Jealousy and Related Sins

Bridges shows the roots of envy and jealousy and offers practical advice how to biblically deal with them. Bridges states that “envy is born we become resentfully aware of an advantage enjoyed by someone else.” There are a couple of subtle roots to envy. First, we tend to envy those with whom we most closely identify. Second, Bridges shows, we tend to envy them in the areas we value most. Jealousy, on the other hand, is the intolerance of rivalry. It is rooted in pride and becomes sinful when we become afraid someone is going to become equal or superior to us. Bridges offers the following advice for dealing with envy and jealousy:

1. Turn again to the sovereignty of God. He is the one who gave us our talents and He will choose what blessing He will bestow upon them.
2. Remember that we are all of the same body in Christ. It is not a competition for we are working together for His glory.
3. Realize that if we spend emotional energy on envy or jealousy, we lose sight of what God might be uniquely doing in our lives.

## Chapter 19—Sins of the Tongue

Popular sins like gossip, lying and slander are well-known. Here Bridges illuminates other sins of the tongue like harsh words, insults, sarcasm and critical speech. He points to the biblical truth that the tongue displays the condition of the heart.

## Chapter 20—Worldliness

Bridges discusses attachment, engrossment and preoccupation with the current world. He discusses it specifically in terms of money, vicarious immorality, immodesty and idolatry.

## Chapter 21—Where Do We Go from Here?

The final chapter includes a review of the principles for dealing with sin and some encouragement from the Sermon on the Mount as to the blessings for sorrowing over sin and seeking righteousness.

*Respectable Sins* is a plea to Christians for holy living through dealing with the subtle planks in our eyes. The author calls for his readers to take an honest look in the mirror and identify the areas they have been too lenient with sin and offers practical, biblical advice for how to deal with it. All this is so that the Church might become more Christ-like and bring glory to God.

Questions for thought:

What sins addressed by the author do I think are most vital to deal with at this point in my life?

What Scripture passages directly address these issues?

What does it mean to train in godliness? How can I do it?