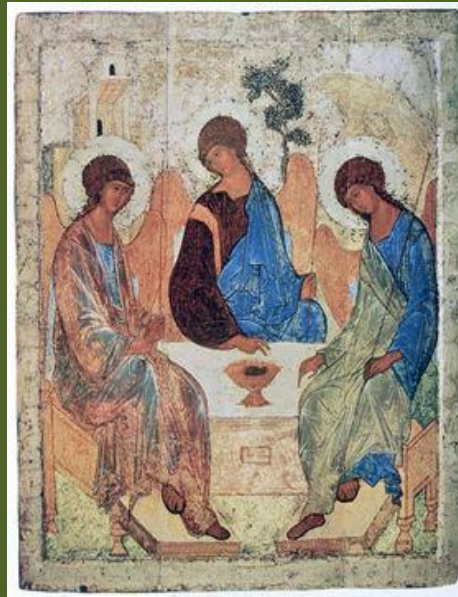


Guidebook on Virtues

Diocese of Belleville

Safe Environment Program



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Introduction

This Guidebook on Virtues has been written in order to offer specific reflections about human growth in virtue and to develop character. It is important to begin with an admission that all virtue and growth in Christian character has its source in the Lord, Who is Love. All virtues, ultimately, are designed to help us to love one another and God more deeply, more intensely and more predictably.

We appreciate witnessing and experiencing human excellence such as demonstrated when we pause to watch an Olympic gymnast, smile while we watch a child playing the violin and think with wonder and awe about heroes and their self sacrifice and dedication to a vision, mission or cause. When a baby is born we envision them as having virtue. When we grieve the death and loss of persons we knew, we reflect upon and remember their virtues. Virtues teach us that we are, and can become, in God, more than we had previously dreamed we could ever be. We see our potential in love, which is the highest and most important actuating principle for the human person. All virtues outside of love simply assist in living a love-focused Christian life, not only patterned after Jesus Christ, but actually in the grace of Jesus Christ.

Virtues are simply relatively stable and strong, good habits. They tend to grow, with the Lord's help, over time and with practice. God initiates, perfects and gives abundant grace. And, as we learn virtues, we offer our freedom and cooperation. There is a type of mystery here. We can desire to grow and accept the ways we can grow, but we fall more deeply in love with God along the way and recognize that whatever is good in us is a gift from Him to us, and to those around us.

All comes from God. In fact, we participate in God's life, light and love when we live charity, as well as the other virtues, which are to be permeated *with* charity to really flourish.



Virtues tend to bring communion, or rich relating and giving, to others. They bring healing and strength and offer a foretaste of the joy of Eternity, which pours through our hearts in deep rivers of grace. As a comparison, vices are relatively fixed habits of evil, or the lack of goodness for ourselves and others. Vices tend to isolate human persons and bring darkness, pain and loneliness. They do not beget life.

We have experienced, over the course of two thousand years, what God, in His superabundant mercy can do, in and through us, to form our virtues and character from within and from without. No part of our lives should be walled off from virtue. Let's not dare sell ourselves short, as human persons. **We can grow and flourish in amazing ways. We can do and be more, in God.** God delights in healing and transforming us. Through the practice of virtue, we are truly happy. Virtues bring deep pleasure to those who practice them over time. During our daily care activities, work, play, socialization, leisure and education we can see an array of possibilities each day in which to grow in virtue.

Virtue works at all levels of our being: body, mind, soul, heart, habits, roles, routines and behaviors. Our brain, neurochemistry, history, family relationships, temperament, culture and ethnicity will each be important areas of impact on this growth process and God delights in working at all of these levels. He is with us. He is in us. He is for us. He loves us for who we are, as we are. He also loves us too much to let us remain exactly as we are in this moment. God delights in our formation into His likeness, more deeply each day. **To grow in virtue, is to grow in Jesus Christ, who makes all things new.**

The way of virtues is our way, as human persons redeemed and sanctified in Christ. The way of virtues takes us on a journey deep into the areas of our lives we would like to strengthen and develop.

This Guidebook on Virtues suggests areas of focus to look at over time. Virtue knowledge is not “head” knowledge, but is meant to transform our entire life and lead us to a deeper levels of human flourishing.

Using this Guidebook

The guidebook and reflection questions for each of the virtues may be useful in your own personal study, when working as a group or within family discussion.

Please use these reflections as you see fit: classrooms, counseling, family discussion, and bible study and as a stimulus for artwork and other projects.

Each person is unique. It is best to avoid a “cookie cutter” approach to virtue. Know that each person has a special, individual growth path and that one does not need to have all of these, in order to flourish in virtue. Charity is the most important. Regular and gentle self-reflection, in silence and prayer, is a good way to self-assess. The scripture passages provide sources to review and study, as well as to memorize and pray.

A developmental approach is absolutely vital. I recommend use of a source text which points out developmental (including moral development) needs of children. A child does grow gradually in virtue, and they tend to grow best while observing and encountering virtues being lived out in their relationships and family life, more so that by rote memorization or categorization. Please role-play these, develop art and craft ideas, sing songs and make the learning as multi-modal as possible. Use many senses: taste, touch, smell, hearing, seeing, moving. Children have abundant virtue and can learn and often teach adults! It is important to know where a child is developmentally before initiating virtue development. For example, a child of two is not lacking charity when they are self-centered. This is where they are supposed to be, at this point in life. A teenager will struggle with obedience for good reasons-they are trying to differentiate from parental control and develop their identity. A developmental table has been included with special reference to what children can comprehend of virtues at various ages.

Virtues are not values-which are firmly held beliefs. Virtues spring from the core of who we are and color each part of our daily experience. It is important to not confuse mental health needs with a lack in virtue. Virtue grows with freedom. There are many challenges and conditions which would make particular virtues challenging, at points in life. Therapy, medications and environmental changes and supports can offer necessary healing. It is very important to go gently with virtues, as they are a lifetime of work-in progress. Timing is important. Discern with care

the areas we can approach today and know what we need to set aside for possible later development. God knows best our needs and loves us beyond all of our understanding. Virtues are not empty works, but are formed in Christ.

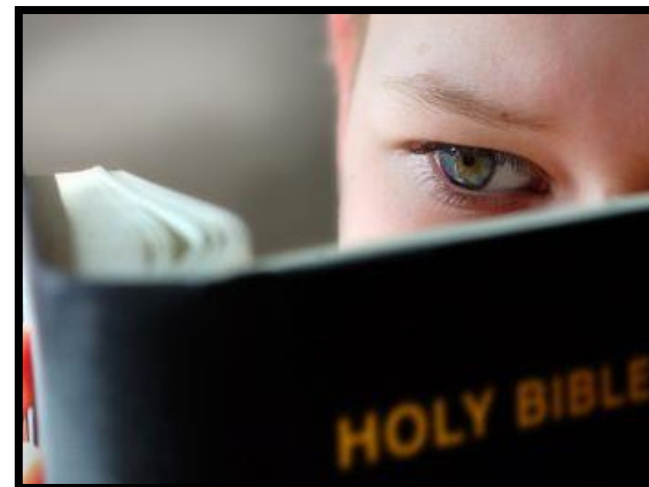
Reflect often on the Preeminence of Charity and Strive for Clarity. It is important to offer children a safe, loving atmosphere: wherever they are. Emotional and physical safety is necessary for them in order to develop virtue. Where there is abuse, neglect, or emotional deprivation, virtue development can be challenged significantly. When a child feels and knows that he or she is loved, and when there is consistent bonding and nurturance, he or she can connect well with others. It is also vital for parents to acknowledge the feelings of children and not to discredit or argue them out of their feelings. Emotional, spiritual and relational boundaries are important to have clarified, nourished and maintained with children.

There are many lists of virtues and virtues can overlap. For instance, we can speak of brotherly love, which focuses on habits of love for another person in the every-day moments of life. This actionable aspect of charity allow human persons to ultimately grow in charity. God is love. The virtues are habits which allow us to grow stronger in loving through patient practice and in cooperation with the Lord.

With Children

Human persons, beginning in childhood, experience life, and virtue, from the perspective of sensory input, concrete occurrences and, later, from analytical and systemic perspectives. Virtues, as ever-growing habits can be observed by the child first, within supportive, attached relationships. The touchable, sensory aspects of habits, displayed in sensory, then concrete-ways, need to come before language and abstract thinking is deployed to describe virtues. Reason comes later. The heart is alert and alive in the child from the first wonderful moments of relational experience.

Egocentrism is natural in children. It is a mechanism to help assure that they flourish, that they are not forgotten in families and in a wide and changing world. Virtue does not grow where there is shame and guilt. It is good to allow children to be who they are; to have their fundamental needs met. Virtue is taught as something good, done for its own sake and for the goodness of the virtue, and not as self sacrifice, especially not before the child is able to understand such concepts. Virtue brings pleasure and happiness. The simplicity of virtue is appealing to children. Our Lord Jesus Himself lifted up the child and said we are to become like the child.



Approach

Developmental researcher, Chip Wood believes that “**children’s developmental needs should be the foundation for every choice we make in teaching.**” He bases this recommendation on these assumptions:

- Children’s growth and development follow reasonably predictable patterns.
- Growth is deeply influenced by culture, personality and environment.
- Development and intelligence do not proceed at the same rate.
- Growth is uneven.

When sharing the Guidebook on Virtues with children it is essential to consider the approach. Children develop morally, in ways that are similar by comparison to physical or neurological development patterns. There is no need to fixate on exact years to match with stages or levels. Children will move from more simple pleasure/pain understandings of morality, to approval/disapproval of others, followed by a law and order type focus before deepening into a morality which is universal and based upon the rights and dignities of each person.

It is encouraging to when virtue is taught in a child-centered manner, taking into account the dignity of each person and considering where they are developmentally. The chambered nautilus grows from a small chamber to a larger one, in an ever-widening circle of development. Moral development is potentially dynamic and ever-growing, offering cause for great hope for each human person.

Reflection Guide

Click on the print icon and use these questions as a resource when considering any of the virtues in this guidebook.

A Pattern for Virtue Reflection

Love, or Charity, is the mother of all virtues and, in fact, it is the only relational reality that will last with us into Eternity, according to Scripture (cf 1 Cor 13: 8-13).. Please reflect upon Christian charity throughout each virtue reflection. Charity bundles and ties everything together. Without love, other virtues do not flourish. Christians focus on the Greek word for self-donating love, which is agape love.

Reflections upon the Virtue of: _____

How have you witnessed this virtue in your life? Who is someone alive, or who has lived before you, who represents this virtue best? Explain?

How did the virtue of charity guide this virtue in the person you have in mind? How did they love others, and love God through practicing this virtue?

Where would you like to have more practice with this virtue?

What type of supports would you need in order to grow this virtue or to nourish this virtue in your life?

What does it feel like in your body and heart to practice this virtue? Does this virtue make me happy?

Do people want to be with people who practice this virtue? Why?

What would life be like if more people practiced this virtue? Explain.

What do you think the opposite of this virtue is? Have you seen an example of this anywhere?

What is one thing you can do, with God's help, to practice this virtue today?

Signs that God loves us.

He may act in one, some or all of these areas, on any given day:

God answered prayer.

God comforted me.

God provided my basic needs.

God protected me.

God healed me.

God guided me.

God taught me new ideas.

God empowered me to apply new ideas to my life.

God burdened me for others.

God calmed me.

God helped me sense His presence.

Circumstances worked out that would not have worked out any other way.

God convicted me (NOT condemned me) when I was off course.

VIRTUES

The virtues included in this Guidebook are drawn from theological tradition and not the only categories of virtues worthy of consideration and practice.

THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES: *Faith*, *Hope* and *Charity* given to us when we were made anew in Christ. They are **the foundation of other virtues**.

Love, or Charity, is the mother of all virtues and, in fact, it is the only relational reality that will last with us into Eternity, according to Scripture (cf 1 Cor 13:8-13). Please reflect upon Christian charity throughout each virtue reflection. Charity bundles and ties everything together. Without love, other virtues do not flourish. Christians focus on the Greek word for self-donating love, which is agape love.

CARDINAL VIRTUES: *Prudence*, *Justice*, *Fortitude* and *Temperance* are pivotal and from a word which can mean “hinge.” The **other virtues hinge or hang like a door, so to speak, on these significant ones**.

PRINCIPAL VIRTUES: *Humility*, *Generosity*, *Chastity*, *Meekness*, *Brotherly Love (charity in action)*, and *Diligence* are the **opposites of the principal vices:** Pride, Covetousness, Lust, Anger, Gluttony, Envy, and Sloth. Vices are habits of brokenness, sin.

MORAL VIRTUES: *Responsibility*, *Optimism*, *Orderliness*, *Zeal*, *Obedience*, *Sincerity*, *Patience*, *Joy*, and *Self Control* have been drawn from biblical foundations, such as fruits of the Spirit, (cf. Galatians 5: 22-28) as significant in the Christian life.

Professionalism

Professionalism is rooted in the reality of "faithfulness" or "fidelity" in the life of the Christian. Further, the professional was known and trusted to be a person who evidenced ongoing habits of goodness called "virtues."

The term "virtue" means habits or strong inclinations toward and for the "good" of persons. The professional not only promises certain actions and behaviors, but promises to keep growing in virtue or excellences of character.



Cardinal Virtues

The professional is one who strives patiently to acquire virtues, particularly the four **cardinal virtues**: *prudence, justice, temperance* and *fortitude*. An ongoing commitment to the development of virtue allows for the professional to grow in the image and likeness of Christ. The Gifts and Fruits of the Spirit enable the professional to truly promise to not only act with charity, but to be transformed in charity. Think for a moment about these attributes of the professional: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

Saints, philosophers and theologians have offered lists of virtues over the centuries. In Latin, the word "cardinal" means "hinge" as in the hinges of a large, ancient door. The four "hinges" of the door to the many other virtues has classically been thought of as the cardinal virtues. **These are powerful and extremely important virtues which are developed with practice and which should be the foundation of the other acquired virtues in the life of the professional.**

Note that the **theological virtues** of faith, hope and charity are infused into the life of the Catholic Christian through sanctifying grace received at Baptism.



Catechism of the Catholic Church

The Catechism of the Catholic Church offers some powerful insights related to the **Cardinal Virtues**:

"Prudence is the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it; "the prudent man looks where he is going." "Keep sane and sober for your prayers." Prudence is "right reason in action," writes St. Thomas Aquinas, following Aristotle. It is not to be confused with timidity or fear, nor with duplicity or dissimulation. It is called *auriga virtutum* (the charioteer of the virtues); it guides the other virtues by setting rule and measure. It is prudence that immediately guides the judgment of conscience. The prudent man determines and directs his conduct in accordance with this judgment. With the help of this virtue we apply moral principles to particular cases without error and overcome doubts about the good to achieve and the evil to avoid." (paragraph 1806)

"Justice is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor. Justice toward God is called the "virtue of religion." Justice toward men disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and to the common good. The just man, often mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures, is distinguished by habitual right thinking and the uprightness of his conduct toward his neighbor. "You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor." "Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven." (paragraph 1807)

"Temperance is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods. It ensures the will's mastery over instincts and keeps desires within the limits of what is honorable. The temperate person directs the sensitive appetites toward what is good and maintains a healthy discretion: "Do not follow your inclination and strength, walking according to the desires of your heart." Temperance is often praised in the Old Testament: "Do not follow your base desires, but restrain your appetites." In the New Testament it is called "moderation" or "sobriety." We ought "to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world." (paragraph 1809)

"Fortitude is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. The virtue of fortitude

enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in defense of a just cause. "The Lord is my strength and my song." "In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (paragraph 1808)

Guiding Principles

With the hope and commitment, our actions as professionals are guided by the following principles.

Beneficence

In every appropriate way, we do the good to benefit the person served. We can apply this principle when seeking what is truly best for persons. The ultimate beneficence for the Catholic professional is to love each person practically and in deeds, as God loves them, with God's own love.

Autonomy

In every appropriate and authentic way, we respect the autonomy of others, respecting their freedom. This principle assures that we do not attempt to coerce, manipulate, shame or push people in any way.

Justice

Avoiding judgmental thoughts and unfair treatment. We will pay persons a just wage, grade students with justice and respond to persons with goodness and justice so as to avoid partiality or favoritism, as each person has equal dignity.

Non-maleficence

We avoid causing harm or abuse in any way (physical, sexual, emotional or fiscal). The professional serving the Church serves the people of God with great care and rigorously avoids causing suffering to others.

Among God's special graces, the *graces of state* accompany the exercise of the responsibilities of the Christian life and of the ministries within the Church as according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church: **Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.** (paragraph 2004).

FAITH

“The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!” (Luke 17:5).

What is Faith? Faith is the generally considered to be the virtue by and through which we believe all the truths which God has revealed, on God’s Word and because God cannot deceive, nor be deceived. Faith is closely tied to belief, which is a free acceptance and assent of the intelligence and will, despite a lack of absolute certainty based on sensory evidence. Further, through faith, we give our entire gift of self to God. Faith is a movement away from unbelief and doubt. A supportive biblical virtue is confidence.

Why practice Faith? When we are faithful, we anchor ourselves lovingly to God’s truth. We are persons who abide in trust and who do not easily loose heart. We do not give up our faith to fear or deception, though we may seek greater understanding and deeper penetration into the content of the faith we profess.

James 2:20

Matthew 16:16

Matthew 17:20

Hebrews 11:6

Acts 3:16

Romans 1:17

1 Corinthians 13:13

Galatians 5:6

Ephesians 2:8

1 Timothy 6:12

2 Timothy 4:17

Hebrews 11:1

Living It Every Day

One way to grow in faith is by small acts of faith each day. That is, we intend to put our faith and trust in God. We live fidelity or faithfulness by remaining trustworthy to our commitments. Other people can count on us as a source of reliability and strength. God Himself is ultimately faithful and offers us a moment by moment invitation to put our faith in him, not also in the small things, but especially in the seemingly small experiences of life.

Evidence that I am living in Faith every day may include...

When I get up in the morning, my first thoughts and words become a prayer and commitment to the Lord, in faith. I open my heart to the Trinity of Love.

When I labor at tasks throughout the day, especially the more boring or difficult ones, I offer them to the Lord, or invite Him into the experience.

There are times when I recollect myself, or pause, during play, leisure and games and give the Lord an act of my faith by letting Him know I believe, I adore, I trust and I love Him.

I remain faithful during challenges at school, in friendships and at work.

I live as though God can and does work through everything, even suffering.

My faith is something that molds and shapes my heart and which permeates by life, versus being a collection of types of data, far from my daily experiences with others.

Signs Growth May Be Needed

Growing in virtues takes practice and we need God's grace. We need patience, careful assessment of our areas of need and honest self-identification of our challenges. Take some time to review the following possible signs that growth may be needed in this particular virtue.

We regularly stop living our faith when we are away from Church, Christian friends or when we are alone.

Our fears grow with increased energy and life, and our faith life begins to wither.

We nourish our self less with God's Word than with other sources.

We spend little time around someone or others whose faith can nourish and strengthen ours.

We are made in God's image and likeness. We do not come back to this truth very often. We do not meditate upon our dignity as in the likeness of God.

God is with us and for us. We add to and form an image of God which is not based on Who God actually is, as He has revealed Himself to be.

We look at the brokenness of those in the Body, or who lead the Body, and focus on this rather than upon the Lord of Mercy who calls us to rest in Him.

HOPE

“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful...”(Hebrews 10:22-23).

What is Hope? Hope is the virtue by which we trust God who is faithful to His promises. We trust and believe that God is all powerful and all good and will, in His abundant mercy, give us eternal happiness and life as well as everything necessary to obtain and live the life of grace. To hope is, ultimately to desire heaven and to trust in Jesus Christ to form and to transform our person and our experiences. Hope is a movement away from despair. Hope sharpens our vision and purpose.

Why Practice Hope? We have a Lord who loves us. We are fashioned in His image and we have goodness surrounding us, in spite of pain and sorrow. We long for eternity with the deepest desires and longings of our heart. We long for love, beauty and goodness that does not end or disappoint. We want the good things which come our way; gifts, celebrations and times with those we love. These moments both of waiting, and encountering the expected with joy-remind us of hope.

Romans 12:9
1 Peter 2:17
1 Peter 4:8

John 13:1
John 15:9-12
Romans 13:8-10

Romans 5:10
Matthew 25:40, 45
Galatians 5

1 Corinthians 13
Luke 10:27-37
Mark 9:37

Living it Every Day

We give each day to God. In our conversations we can give simple and gentle assurances that there will be better days. We can give gestures of hope to those in despair and sadness. We can reach out to those in brokenness, rather than recoil. We can remain hopeful that our brokenness and vulnerabilities can, in and through hope, be means for us to grow in relation to the Lord.

Evidence that I am living in Hope every day may include...

I care about looking presentable and nice.

I can walk confidently with my chin up, and not stooped over.

I monitor the time I spend having gloomy conversations and with people who do not evidence hope.

I listen to music, read books and involve myself with games which are more hopeful than sad and dark. Is television giving me images of hope?

I appreciate and enjoy my friendships as a sign of hope.

My work offers something about it which we can remain hopeful for.

I have a vision or mission for myself regarding my roles or vocation in life and this vision or mission gives me hope. I can write my vision statement.

Signs Growth May Be Needed

Growing in virtues takes practice and we need God's grace. We need patience, careful assessment of our areas of need and honest self-identification of our challenges. Take some time to review the following possible signs that growth may be needed in this particular virtue.

My days are more or less just random, unintentional and unexamined. I could not articulate a vision for the kind of person I would like to be.

I habitually watch television shows which are focused on violence, murder, suffering or pain, and seldom reflect upon what I watch and its impact. The lyrics to the music I enjoy are seldom hopeful, nor are the images created by the music.

My thinking seems almost reflexively negative and may be cynical.

I can create instant “worse case scenarios” when I plan or consider the future.

I tend to get stuck in the past and do not consider the future as able to bring the joys of the past. I carry resentments buried in my heart.

I cling to the present moment, and the things or people of it, and have difficulty seeing the nature of passing things.

I do not derive support or encouragement from my ethnicity, culture, faith life or hobbies/ skills.

CHARITY

“As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love” (John 15:9).

What is Charity? Charity is the virtue by which we love God above all and love our neighbor as our self. God is charity. The Trinity of Persons is a communion of love. When we dwell and abide in Christ, this love of the Trinity, through grace, flows into and through us, and touches our experiences of daily life. There is no human relationship which love cannot touch. Love unites us to others and bonds us in communion with others. Love on earth is a foretaste of what heaven will be like. Charity is a movement away from hatred. A corresponding biblical virtue is compassion. A word for love which is also appropriately used when referring to self-donating love is agape.

Charity guides, perfects and unites all of the virtues. It is the mother of all virtue.

Why Practice Charity? There can always be more charity in hearts, in families, in relationships, among people and nations. Charity draws people together, while sin alienates, isolates and divides people. Charity brings joy of deep sharing in life, while sin brings loneliness. Charity brings light and goodness into the world, in our seemingly insignificant acts throughout the day and night. We are Christians and this means not only imitating Jesus but also letting Him live and love in us. We grow in union with who we really are, and are less alienated from our true dignity as a person made in God’s image. We grow in communion with others. Our work habits, leisure pursuits and activities of daily living take on a different meaning when love animates and transfigures them, one act at a time.

Romans 12:9
1 Peter 2:17
1 Peter 4:8

John 13:1
John 15:9-12
Romans 13:8-10

Romans 5:10
1 Corinthians 13
Luke 10:27-37

Mark 9:37
Matthew 25:4-45
Galatians 5

Living it Every Day

We love God because He is God, and wants our love more than anything else. We think of moments, or points during the day whereby we can offer the Lord small acts of love. We pick up a paper, open a door, smile, and offer a drink-as an intentional act of charity. We decide to love and choose to love others-especially those we do not enjoy being with. Charity wants what is the best, that which is good for others and does not need to be something we feel at all times. We love with our intelligence and will, with our bodies manifesting charity when possible. The feelings are not always the best indicator of charity, though we should love from the heart and respect our feelings, as they come.

Charity guides, perfects and unites all of the virtues. It is the mother of all virtue.

Evidence that I am living in Charity every day may include...

I love God for how He has designed me.

I donate my time, talent and treasure. I can sacrifice with joy.

I share my belongings and give gifts to others.

I let my desires and loves in life be purified and transformed by God's love.

While I learn things in my education, I am filled with wonder and awe as each truth points me back to God.

I am able to respond to hurting people in my life, with care and love.

I am able to let my whole person love God; mind, heart, soul, will and body.

Signs Growth May Be Needed

Growing in virtues takes practice and we need God's grace. We need patience, careful assessment of our areas of need and honest self-identification of our challenges. Take some time to review the following possible signs that growth may be needed in this particular virtue.

I am selfish and tend to focus on my needs most of the time. I cannot love even unto sacrifice for others.

I hold onto my hurts and may not be willing to forgive others.

I tend to work my needs in my relationships and see people as a means to my purposes. I habitually gossip or criticize the motives of others.

I talk about religious matters but walk by those around me, in my family, school or workplace, who are experiencing poverty or brokenness of some kind. My Christian life dwells in my mind and not my walk in life.

I hate a specific person or have hatred in my heart toward someone of a specific race, ethnicity, denomination, world religion or class.

My words do not build up the dignity of others and may erode the dignity of others. I do not look at certain people or intentionally withhold words or comments which would bless others if I said them.

I am fearful and do not attempt to appropriately manage fears.

PRUDENCE

“The end of all things is at hand. Therefore be serious and sober for prayers. Above all, let your love for one another be intense, because love covers a multitude of sins.” 1 Peter 4:7-9

What is Prudence? Prudence is the virtue by which a person is disposed to discern the good and best action(s) and also select the means to accomplish such outcomes. It is simply selecting good means toward good ends or purposes. Prudence allows a person to know just what to do and how to put this knowledge into right action. Corresponding biblical virtues include contentment, confidence and self-control.

Why Practice Prudence? It is important to consider growth in practical wisdom. Through such practical wisdom, we make wise choices and execute the right action in the best way we can. Prudence helps us to plan our time and resources rightly. It helps us to balance our choices of leisure and self-care. Prudent persons are not “prudish” or distant. They are wise and able to judge their daily life decisions in light of Eternity and they consider the impact of their actions upon the future.

Daniel 1:4
James 3:1-7
Proverbs 1:4

Ephesians 1:8
1 Samuel 16:18
Proverbs 14:8

Proverbs 1:7
Matthew 11:25
Isaiah 52:13

1 Peter 4:7
Psalm 111:10
Isaiah 11:2
Matthew 10:16

Living It Every Day

Like the other virtues, prudence often grows when there is a decision to foster its growth. Our Savior spoke of prudent persons who built their homes on a solid base, planned for battle, managed their financial affairs wisely. The book of Proverbs is an exploration of the virtue of prudence, in many ways. We can honestly examine the consequences of our behaviors and actions-especially how they impact others.

Evidence that I am living in Prudence every day may include...

I can save money and manage it wisely. I can save for future needs.

I can select not to participate in an event which is immoral, even when others are pressuring me to participate.

I arrive at work, school or church on time and am punctual with others.

I see connections between my work performance, school and leisure plans upon my vision of myself, in God's plan for me.

I can delay immediate pleasures for deeper or greater long-term successes and joys.

I can solve problems in my life, without always needing to be rescued by others.

I have boundaries with others and with myself. I know how my relationships work and I can say "no" and "yes" when I need to.

Signs Growth Might Be Needed

Growing in virtues takes practice and we need God's grace. We need patience, careful assessment of our areas of need and honest self-identification of our challenges. Take some time to review the following possible signs that growth may be needed in this particular virtue.

I have very troublesome relationships with others in my life.

I tend to get into arguments often and may need the last word frequently.

I make God into my image, rather than recognizing, in wonder and awe, that it is I who am formed in His image. I am a coin stamped with His image.

I speak words of gossip about others. This means I share stories which may be only partially true and which are shared for the wrong reasons.

I speak words of detraction about others. This means I share the truth about others for reasons which are not good. This erodes the good name of others, which is their right. I withhold giving encouragement.

I disregard the rules or teachers, law enforcement officers and others responsible for justice in our relationships.

I hurt others with my body or words or by what I do not do-and do not feel guilty. I may even suggest that it is the fault of others that they were hurt or injured.

JUSTICE

“Rather let justice surge like waters, and righteousness like an unfailing stream.” (Amos 5:24)

What is Justice? Justice is the virtue by which we give to others that which belongs to them. Justice safeguards the rights of others, which are based upon the reality that each human person is made in the image of God. Our dignity is derived from our nature. A corresponding biblical is forbearance.

Why Practice Justice? Justice assures harmony in our relationships: family, society, work, church and others. We are equal in dignity and this dignity is deeper and richer than our ethnicity, heritage, culture, race and economic background. At the core of our being, we desire to be treated fairly and equitably. Justice is necessary in order to respect the order and dignity of societal and personal relationships.

Romans 13:7

Leviticus 19:15

Colossians 4:4

Genesis 18:19

Psalm 33:5

Psalm 82:3

Psalm 101:1

Matthew 23:23

Amos 5:24

Exodus 23:2

Isaiah 59:9

Isaiah 42:1

Living it Every Day

Each person has the right to life, freedom, home and property. Each person has the right to worship God. Each person has dignity and the right to their good name. When our actions in daily life recognize and provide for these rights, we live justly. When we give God that which is His due—namely our worship, adoration, obedience and entire life, He accepts this oblation as a sweet fragrance. It is enough to love God and follow His commandments and ways, seeking Eternal love with all our heart, without feeling entitled to get things in return from the Lord. In justice, God has a right to everything we have and are. He values our love, which is given in freedom, the most. We are just when we treat others with dignity and strive to honor and work for justice in family and social life.

Evidence that I am living in Justice every day may include...

I tell the truth at all times, even when it is difficult.

I draw in others who are left out of games, conversations and plans.

I may be tempted to cheat or steal, knowing I will not be caught, but decide to be just and honest.

I respect the space, time and boundaries of others. I do not use others, or anything about others, for my pleasure or satisfaction.

I repair or replace anything I break or loose.

If I hurt someone's feelings, I ask for forgiveness.

I am aware of, and practically concerned for, anyone who is abused, neglected, exploited or used.

Signs Growth May be Needed

Growing in virtues takes practice and we need God's grace. We need patience, careful assessment of our areas of need and honest self-identification of our challenges. Take some time to review the following possible signs that growth may be needed in this particular virtue.

I have very troublesome relationships with others in my life.

I tend to get into arguments often and may need the last word frequently.

I make God into my image, rather than recognizing, in wonder and awe, that it is I who am formed in His image. I am a coin stamped with His image.

I speak words of gossip about others. This means I share stories which may be only partially true and which are shared for the wrong reasons.

I speak words of detraction about others. This means I share the truth about others for reasons which are not good. This erodes the good name of others, which is their right. I withhold giving encouragement.

I disregard the rules or teachers, law enforcement officers and others responsible for justice in our relationships.

I hurt others with my body or words or by what I do not do-and do not feel guilty. I may even suggest that it is the fault of others that they were hurt or injured.

FORTITUDE

“The Lord, my strength and might, has become my savior.” Psalm 118:14.

What is Fortitude? Fortitude is the virtue by which we are able to remain strong, to make sacrifices and to not be intimidated by ridicule and threats. Fortitude allows us to withstand difficulties, but also enables us to move forward with strength and to undertake great plans and purposes. A corresponding biblical virtue is courage.

Why Practice Fortitude? Fortitude helps us refrain from giving up from reasonable and just causes, even when we may want to. We can tap into and access a quiet strength, deep down in the rivers of living water which flow within us, during various storms of life. Our character can be formed to be “anchored” and we can conquer or overcome the impact of all fears-even fear of death.

John 16:33

Baruch 4

Joshua 1: v. 6-9, 18

2 Corinthians 5:6-8

Philippians 1:20

Lamentations 1:16

Deuteronomy 31:6-7

Acts 23:11

Mark 15:43

Ezra 7:28

Matthew 17:7

Psalm 84:5

Living it Every Day

We can think of the word itself: “fort”. A fort is a place of safety and strength. We live fortitude when we develop prudent decisions and remain with these, even with difficulties and challenges come. Fortitude is not to be confused with stubbornness-which is an inflexibility, even when prudent and reasonable alternatives are offered.

Evidence that I am living in Fortitude every day may include...

I resist temptations to let society, media and consumerism tell me what to do with my money, my body and my life. I have a vision and plan for my future, which is open to the lead of the Lord.

I avoid complaining about negative aspects of my experience.

I carry out my duties and tasks, in charity and with enthusiasm.

I can solve my problems, with appropriate support and connection with community life. I address conflicts with others directly and gently.

I can see projects through, until completion. I do not dwell upon others’ appraisal of me. I do not seek excessive recognition.

I can peacefully let my “no” mean no and my “yes” mean yes. I do not let my social group determine my life choices or identity.

I can be brave in my decisions and will stand up for causes which are just, good and right in the eyes of the Lord. I can fight the good fight in faith.

Signs Growth May be Needed

Growing in virtues takes practice and we need God's grace. We need patience, careful assessment of our areas of need and honest self-identification of our challenges. Take some time to review the following possible signs that growth may be needed in this particular virtue.

I often quit plans, projects or pursuits at the first signs of discomfort or pain.

I experience excessive fears regarding criticism or lack of approval from others.

I passively accept the growth of moral evil in my life, my family or in the relationships around me. I am indifferent to evil in the world.

I have adopted an attitude and style of communicating which communicates to others that nothing really matters to me.

My social groups define my character and decisions.

I complain when I suffer or get mean or irritable when I am sick.

My emotions, impulses and opinions guide most of my decisions.

TEMPERANCE

“For the grace of God has appeared, saving all and training us to reject godless ways and worldly desires and to live temperately, justly, and devoutly in this age, as we await the blessed hope, the appearance of the glory of the great God and of our savior Jesus Christ...” (Titus 2:11-13).

What is Temperance? Temperance is the virtue by which we make use of temporal good things as necessary, with a gaze toward the truth that we are made for Eternity and that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. For example, temperance guides us to eat and drink that which is necessary to promote and sustain health and human flourishing, but does not lead us to overeat, or eat less than we need. Sensory pleasure pursuits and thrill-seeking behaviors are prudently assessed and scrutinized with vision formed with the light, love and wisdom of God. The good things of life should not be misused: food, drink, sexual relations, procuring things through shopping, adventure and discovery and relationships. There can be addictive behaviors attached to such as these. Temperance strengthens and guides, in charity. Temperance is a movement away from gluttony. A corresponding biblical virtue is contentment.

Why Practice Temperance? We use what we need and what we have, using the virtue of prudence for practical, guiding wisdom. Temperance helps us to not allow our emotions (passions) or desires (appetites) to drive us to always need, seek or consume more and more-without ever really being satisfied. We view our home life, leisure time pursuits, work times/schedules, church life as in a balance. Is it proportioned?

1 Thessalonians 5:6
1 Peter 1:13
Romans 12:3

1 Timothy 3
Hebrews 13:5
Joshua 7:7

Luke 3:14
Proverbs 23:21
1 Peter 4:3

Galatians 5:20-21
Luke 21:34
1 Corinthians 7:31

Living it Every Day

We can live temperance by and through striving for balance in our lives. We can look at our strongest desires and see if they are within honorable limits. We absolutely need sufficient amounts of the good things God has made and provided for our consumption. Temperance gives us discretion and really allows us to remain free so that we are not bound by our appetites and desires. It protects others from suffering regarding the impact of our potentially problematic or excessive appetites or desires. We may need a support group to help us.

Evidence that I am living in Temperance every day may include...

I have a sufficient amount of appropriate clothing and am able to budget or plan for replacement clothing or daily care items.

I am able to have meaningful conversations with others at work, but do not spend inordinate amounts of time visiting with others, interrupting work progress or slowing the completion of others' duties.

My leisure pursuits are given reflection as to the amount of cost in time, travel and finances invested, as well as the impact upon my family life and communion.

I can use the computer, television or telephone without excessively relying upon them and without there being a negative impact upon my relationships and time given to others.

I do not frequently over-eat. I do not become intoxicated. I know what to use in moderation and what to completely abstain from in my life. I stick to my boundaries. The foods which I eat are generally healthy and nutritious and I avoid items which have negative impacts upon me.

I exercise frequently and also perform manual work, labor or leisure as a way to honor my body and derive pleasure from completion of such tasks.

I am not as impulsive as I am reflective.

Signs Growth May be Needed

Growing in virtues takes practice and we need God's grace. We need patience, careful assessment of our areas of need and honest self-identification of our challenges. Take some time to review the following possible signs that growth may be needed in this particular virtue.

I am frequently indulged by, or indulge others with, permissiveness, gifts or privilege.

I feel entitled to what I want and tantrum or become angry when I do not obtain what I want immediately. I get so much of what I want that sometimes I am desensitized to, or cannot easily experience, real joy.

I frequently misuse food or drink and experience the impact of such misuse through a body image that is not wanted or healthy, or through pain and illness or through the recognition that I am spending too much money on such misuse.

I use illegal or controlled substances or drugs.

I experience increasing debt as a result of spending on that which is wanted, but not truly needed.

I feel driven or compelled by an inordinate desire for more and more of something or some experience. I am addicted to a person.

I become defensive, evasive or may deny concern when I am confronted about any of the above areas. I may also fall into despair and assume that I cannot change, even if I wanted to.

HUMILITY

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves” (Matthew 11:29)

What is Humility? Humility is the virtue by which we acknowledge that God is the source of all beauty, goodness and truth. Humility allows us to acknowledge the infinite majesty of God and the fragile and limited nature of everything we experience. Humility is not being filled with shame or a kind of false humility, whereby we excessively posture and communicate as if we are worthless. Humility is a movement away from pride.

Why Practice Humility? Humility helps us to consider beauty, goodness, health, wealth, skills, gifts, talents and blessings as from the Lord. We cannot brag about anything, though we can experience joy, gratitude and pleasure in these things. People enjoy humble people and tend to, even at an early age, distance themselves from people who brag, tell countless stories about themselves, or place themselves at the center of focus at play, work or during conversations.

Psalm 15:2
Philippians 2:3
Luke 14:10

Romans 15:28
Luke 1:49
Luke 18:13

Matthew 8:7
Matthew 23:11
Luke 17:10

Matthew 18:4
Matthew 11:29
Matthew 5:3

Living it Every Day

We can form our intelligence and understanding. We can express our humility by acts of the will: to want to be more humble. Jesus is our ultimate way of developing humility. We can live like He did, by letting Him live in us. We can rejoice often in the blessings God has given. We can live simply. We can abound in the mercy of the Lord, during the quiet moments of prayer in our travel and during the down-time of daily experience. We can adore God throughout several points of the day.

Evidence that I am living in Humility every day may include...

I do not brag about myself. I do not share the faults of others, unless I am obligated to. I do not “one up” the stories of others.

I credit God for my talents or blessings. I compliment others regularly.

I smile and say “thank you” when complimented or given something.

I esteem others as worthy of the same or greater dignity accorded than myself.

I can accept a rebuke, redirection, correction or “slight”, without wishing for, or expressing revenge.

I am not anxious or disturbed by the experience of not being able to have all of my questions answered about life. I am comfortable with mystery.

I am a good listener and would rather listen than be listened to.

Signs Growth May be Needed

Growing in virtues takes practice and we need God's grace. We need patience, careful assessment of our areas of need and honest self-identification of our challenges. Take some time to review the following possible signs that growth may be needed in this particular virtue.

I interrupt others often. I am pushy and intrusive with others.

I hold, carry or nurse grudges.

I am certain that I am not prideful.

I have an inordinate desire to be esteemed, noticed or praised and feel unhappy when others around me are noticed, complimented or praised.

I consider myself a “completed work” and see no need for, or feign despair of, any kind of change in virtue or character development.

I have difficulty being obedient to authority-such as teachers, parents, supervisors and civil leaders. I do not like to be obedient.

I cannot express genuine sorrow for hurting others and may feel entitled to all my actions or emotional expressions.

GENEROSITY

When he looked up he saw some wealthy people putting their offerings into the treasury and he noticed a poor widow putting in two small coins. He said, “I tell you truly, this poor widow put in more than all the rest; for those others have all made offerings from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has offered her whole livelihood.” (Luke 21:1-4).

What is Generosity? Generosity is the virtue by which we are ready and willing to offer specific support for and to persons in need, out of love. We freely give and are generous when we live this virtue. We donate our specific support, and in this way, we imitate the Lord who gives his mercy to us. We do not give out of a desire to be noticed by others. Generosity is a movement away from covetousness.

Why Practice Generosity? We can practice generosity by giving our time and resources to those with specific needs, such as to those who experience poverty. Jesus said that when we give to persons who are poor, we are giving to Him. Generosity builds upon love for the dignity of each human person as a unique gift of God. We are especially willing and ready to give to the elderly, the sick and to children. We care for those who are most vulnerable. We give alms and do not leave this to others to do.

Matthew 6:2-4
Acts 10:2
Mark 10:21

Matthew 5:3
Psalm 9:18
2 Corinthians 6:10

Luke 21:1-4
Luke 14:12
Matthew 14:16

Matthew 6:2-4
Luke 12:33
Mark 10:21

Living it Every Day

We can set aside money each week or during special times of the year in advance to donate to a worthy cause and to tithe. We can donate to shelters, make a sacrifice of something we would want, in order to give to another person. All that we have received is a gift and we can give freely to those in need. We are not far from someone who needs generosity.

Evidence that I am living in Generosity every day may include...

I can volunteer my time at a soup kitchen, fund-drive or at a church mission.

A part of my allowance goes directly to give support to missions and worthy causes.

I offer clothing or support to someone in need.

I go to the hospital or care facility to bring hope and care to someone.

I give an item to my brother or sister at home.

I do not count the cost of an act of giving or serving.

I do not expect praise for generous acts. I tithe. I work for free sometimes.

Signs Growth May be Needed

Growing in virtues takes practice and we need God's grace. We need patience, careful assessment of our areas of need and honest self-identification of our challenges. Take some time to review the following possible signs that growth may be needed in this particular virtue.

I get moody or sullen when asked to give of my time or treasure.

I seldom reach out to others and serve them by meeting their immediate needs.

I have a hard time being aware of the real needs of those around me.

Deep down in my heart, I tend to think people who are poor do not deserve being given anything because they are probably responsible for their situation.

I cannot or will not lend items to others or, if I do, I tend to worry about whether someone will return or injure the items.

I cannot easily give things away.

I cannot listen to others when they are struggling or in pain. I tend to avoid them or change the topic.

CHASTITY

“...so that through them you may come to share in the divine nature, after escaping from the corruption that is in the world because of evil desire.” (2 Peter 1:4).

What is Chastity? Chastity is the virtue by which we reverence and respect God’s gift to us of sexuality, in the way He wishes this gift to be honored. It means we use our body in accordance with God’s design for human sexuality. Purity often refers to the gift and virtue of chastity, whereby the person is able to live with a clean heart, filled with the Holy Spirit. Sexual activity is a kind of language and communication between a husband and wife, which renews their covenant bond and is open to new life. Sexuality is a deep part of who we are, as male or female and integrates the spiritual and bodily aspects of who we are. Sexuality is not simply our gender, but our genders are definitely distinct, significant and complimentary. Chastity is a movement away from lust. A corresponding biblical virtue is purity.

Why Practice Chastity? Chastity is a virtue whereby we experience mastery over our gift of self to others. The hormonal, biological and emotional drives and forces of attraction are real and, at some points in our lives, it may seem that self mastery is not possible. There are those in society who laugh at the prospect of self mastery and, instead, encourage self-indulgence. Through God, we have been fashioned wonderfully and magnificently. Our fertility and sexuality are wonderful gifts to us from God, for the sake of our union and communion with our spouse and for the generation of life. The unitive and procreative aspects of covenant-renewing sexual love are holy and not dirty, shameful or perverted. Chastity keeps the beautiful in sexuality and does not allow it, or ourselves to accept a fake, counterfeit or dishonest image, practice or habit of sex.

Proverbs 6:25

Matthew 5:28

Romans 1:27

Galatians 5:16

2 Peter 1:4

1 Corinthians 6:18

1 John 2:16

Romans 13:14

Ephesians 4:22

1 Peter 2:11

Genesis 39:9

1 John 2:16

Proverbs 22:11

1 Corinthians 2:14

Galatians 6:8

Living it Every Day

Chastity is not celibacy, which refers to a person who is not married and therefore not sexually active. Married persons as well as single persons live chastity. For single persons, chastity means waiting to say, “I love you always and completely” with one’s body until there is the safety and bond of the marriage covenant. Married persons live chastity by their fidelity to their spouse and through the hallowed encounter of sexuality, rather than utilizing it as a means to their own exclusive satisfaction. Chastity cannot be lived meaningfully and joyfully without a rich and abiding life of union with God in prayer and adoration. In some cultures and time periods, persons were married at a relatively young age. At present, in America, persons will likely remain single well into their adult years. Therefore, there are all the more reasons for practical and spiritual steps to maintain purity over time.

Evidence that I am living in Chastity every day may include...

I may have friendships with the opposite gender and such friendships flourish, but with care, vigilance and emotional boundaries. I do not expose myself to occasions, resources, places, or persons whereby I can be tempted to fall into lust or sexual sins.

My words about sexuality are shared only with respect and reverence, and I am careful regarding whom I talk to about sexuality.

My imagination and emotions are opened up to, and infused with God’s light, love and purposes for sexuality.

I do not intentionally carry sexual shame and guilt into my relationships. I seek support if I have concerns in this area.

I have peace, in prayerful waiting, for the person whom God has chosen for me to marry. I have honest and rich friendships with others.

I have peace, in grateful acceptance and appreciation of the person whom God has brought me into covenant with, in marriage.

Energy is derived from my being masculine or feminine, and this energy impacts my relationships positively. I do not have compulsive control needs.

Signs Growth May be Needed

Growing in virtues takes practice and we need God's grace. We need patience, careful assessment of our areas of need and honest self-identification of our challenges. Take some time to review the following possible signs that growth may be needed in this particular virtue.

I react to, instead of respond to my desires and impulses. I feel entitled to my sexual satisfaction, apart from recognition of God's purposes for sexuality.

I tell sexually provocative jokes, view pornography, use swear words with sexual meaning or look lustfully at another person's body.

I look at persons as objects or means to my sexual pleasures and satisfaction, versus gazing reverently upon persons as made in the image and likeness of God.

My sexual needs are probably my strongest and most persistent needs. I feel empty and unlovable when I think of sex.

I live a hidden sexual life of fantasy and immaturity and give energy to this life through magazines, books, telephone calls and materials which perpetuate this hidden habit. Song lyrics I listen to give distorted and false views of sex.

I may experience sexual shame and guilt and use religious experience to neutralize this shame and guilt. I cycle through acting out behaviors, shame, soothing through religion, fantasy then act out again. I have compulsive sexual behaviors.

I enter into relationships with others based on sexual union and experience the real pain and agony when the relationship ends, because in some ways, my heart has deeply bonded with this person through physical union.

MEEKNESS

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land” (Matthew 5:5).

What is Meekness? Meekness is the virtue by which a person, in the love of God, does not show anger or irritation when a wrong is inflicted upon them. It is also a character trait which allows one to be gentle of speech, action, thought and behavior. There is no virtue, however, in a cowardly or timid character trait. Meekness is a movement away from anger.

Why Practice Meekness? Meekness helps us to remain polite, dignified and peaceful, even when the brokenness of others or difficulty of circumstances impact us directly. God Himself is infinitely long-suffering and patient; slow to anger and rich in mercy. Jesus came to us, and to others, in meekness. We can, through meekness, attain a deep and abiding peace and strength. We can develop meekness through practicing manners and courtesies.

James 1:21

Matthew 5:5

Jeremiah 11:19

Proverbs 15:1

Matthew 10:16

James 3:13

James 1:21

Psalm 37:11

John 10:1

John 21:15

Matthew 5:3-12

2 Corinthians 10:1

Colossians 3:12

Ephesians 4:2

Psalm 10:17

Isaiah 29:19

Living it Every Day

We can begin to practice meekness toward those who are in legitimate authority over us, and with those we exercise authority over. We can begin to practice mildness of manners where we see ourselves being rough, course or crass. We can consider how we carry and use our body and voice. Are we meek? Jesus is the Lamb of God, the gentle Lord walking to Calvary. The Holy Spirit came gently in the form of a dove. We live meekness by wanting to cultivate a perspective regarding meekness. The virtue of meekness does not mean we are afraid to be direct, decisive or bold. Jesus was not, in any way, indecisive, timid or fearful.

Evidence that I am living in Meekness every day may include...

My meekness builds relationships with others.

People tend to listen to me, as I frequently express my views, plans and ideas with meekness and clarity.

I am gentle with the faults of others, but do not allow myself to be abused or manipulated.

I accept food or gifts, which are not my favorites, without complaining.

When I am agitated or angered, I remember my plan to respond and go to a calm area, breath deeply with cycle breaths, go to my interior safe place or positively and healthily express my anger feelings in ways which do no harm.

I can assert my needs and views without aggression. I am merciful.

I do not aggress toward the good name and dignity of others by verbal violence toward them, in their absence.

Signs Growth May be Needed

Growing in virtues takes practice and we need God's grace. We need patience, careful assessment of our areas of need and honest self-identification of our challenges. Take some time to review the following possible signs that growth may be needed in this particular virtue.

I frequently become impatient and agitated. I stomp, throw items or swear. I express hurtful gestures to others or posture aggressively to those who are unpleasant in my view.

I break items or wound others with my tongue, when I am stressed out. I feel entitled to rage toward my family and may have a pattern of building up, raging then making up with others, but have not taken actionable and decisive steps to leave the cycle behind and to grow in virtue.

I over-talk others, stop others in their sentences, counter other's ideas without listening to them and do not listen deeply and reverently to others.

I am not aware of or appreciative of other's personal space needs-or other boundary needs they might have. I am rude to waiters, waitresses and customer service personnel.

I am quietly aggressive and may ignore, avoid or withhold from others but pretend to be meek and gentle. This allows me to be aggressive without ever having to encounter the reality of my emotional violence toward others.

I have difficulty with others being as good as me, and tend to compete unnecessarily and frequently.

I continually nourish and foster images of justice being served to someone who has hurt me or someone I love.

I cannot be pacified with the recognition that vengeance is the Lord's and he is ultimately, the final judge.

BROTHERLY LOVE

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

What is Brotherly Love? First of all, brotherly love can also be called “sisterly love.” It is not specific to one gender or another. The virtue of brotherly love is based upon the commandment to love one’s neighbor as oneself. We relate to others as brothers and sisters, with regard to respectful, caring behaviors and habits. Brotherly love is a movement away from envy. Corresponding biblical virtues include gentleness and hospitality.

Why Practice Brotherly Love? Our neighbor, or someone in our daily experience, is created and sustained by God. God wants the good for this person. The good can be many things: safety, nourishment, shelter, health, freedom, justice, charity, instruction, truth-as well as other goods. We love others, in God, and God loves through us. This forms what we can call a communion of persons, whereby we are joined in bonds of union with others. The Holy Trinity is the ultimate communion of Persons in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Heaven is communion with the Trinity, in the Love that never ends. We commune with others as we love them-now, in time. Not people in the abstract but-this person, now.

John 15:9-12

Matthew 22:40

Romans 5:10

John 15:13

1 Corinthians 13

1 John 4:19

Matthew 22:39

1 John 3:18

James 2:15-16

Matthew 6:3-4

John 13:34

1 Corinthians 4:13

1 Thessalonians 5:15

Living it Every Day

We live love in practical ways. We love because God has loved us in practical and real ways. We can love by letting go of always realizing the cost in time, emotional sacrifice, and money. So long as we count these, we do not love completely. We can live brotherly love by praying for those who hurt us. Christianity is the only world religion which calls its followers to love their enemies, bless those who persecute them and do well to those who do violence to them. This does not mean we contribute to our own harm, foster it or even avoid justice-but it does mean we love everyone with the intellect and will, even if we cannot experience the emotional component which comes with the pleasure of a loving friendship.

Evidence that I am living in Brotherly Love every day may include...

I recognize that love is not ultimately a feeling or emotion-but that I love principally with my will, heart and intelligence. Love is, by its nature, expressed and communicated. I sense loving supports in my relationships.

I seek to give best and most needed by others, in the way they ultimately need to be loved. I do not shrink from sacrifice.

I can love others until is hurts, because of my peaceful recognition of the image of God in them, and because God surrounds me and transfigures me with His love.

I can love an enemy of mine or of someone I love.

When appropriate, I can initiate and complete a prayerful activity of forgiveness, with my intellect and will, even when my emotions are not completely ready.

I take revenge on no one. I love my family members and in-laws.

I love myself. I love who I am and who I can become, in God.

Signs Growth May be Needed

Growing in virtues takes practice and we need God's grace. We need patience, careful assessment of our areas of need and honest self-identification of our challenges. Take some time to review the following possible signs that growth may be needed in this particular virtue.

I do not extend support to those deserving of my mercy and care.

I omit concrete opportunities to meet the needs of others.

I make fun of someone or people in general.

It is pleasurable for me to judge others and mock them when I am with my friends. I circulate pictures or stories which can hurt others.

I may share pious words, gestures and behaviors-but do not really love others as manifest in deeds. I am jealous of others' blessings and gifts.

I do not have a particular love for my Christian sisters and brothers and, in fact, I might secretly compete with, resent or be envious of them.

I may serve a material need of a person, but do not respond to their deeper spiritual hungers and needs for God.

ZEAL

“Go to the ant, O sluggard, study her ways and learn wisdom;” (Proverbs 6:6).

What is Zeal? The virtue of zeal is closely related to the virtue of diligence. By it we live fervently and with energy, in the Lord. The zealous person lives each day as if it is the first day they have begun to serve the Lord. They live with passion, zest and genuine vigor. The zealous person is often ablaze with energy and enthusiasm. Zeal and diligence are movements away from sloth.

Why Practice Zeal? The zeal to serve the Lord with all our energy and being begets more zeal. This often grows with diligence or sustained mental or physical labor. Diligence and zeal build the foundations of family life, enliven the Body of Christ, transform society for the good and advance the Kingdom of God.

Proverbs 6:6-11
Matthew 7:19-21
Matthew 25:30

Revelation 3:16
Luke 18:35
1 Corinthians 9:24

Matthew 11:12
Galatians 6:9
Matthew 13:29

Genesis 3:19
Psalm 69:9
John 2:17
Romans 10:2

Living it Every Day

Zeal is lived in union with God. God is the source of all grace. We rise early for prayer and adoration. We render deep and quiet appreciation to the Lord throughout the day and evening. We carry and nourish God's living Word within our hearts and bodies, as we are a tabernacle of the Lord. The zealous person has no time to worry, but looks forward to the future and embraces the present moment. Zeal makes us willing to witness to the Gospel at all times of the day, in all places, with whoever we are with, and with our whole body, mind and soul.

Evidence that I am living in Zeal every day may include...

I recollect my thoughts to prayerful contemplation and adoration, as soon as I wake up in the morning.

My evening routines evidence prayer, songs of praise and family devotion of some habitual kind. I have a rule or plan of daily prayer that does not fluctuate, even though the types of devotion and worship will naturally develop over time.

It is evident that I love the Lord with zeal and this zeal spills over into my bodily life: songs, hymns, prayer posture and countenance.

I express genuine interest and concern regarding the conversion of others, and am growing in my interior transformation in Christ.

I deter the sinning of others, as much as I am able through example, counsel, prayer, and self-sacrifice. I strive to build others in Christ and long to see Him formed in them. I approach others with a heart which is soaked in mercy and humility and derive no pleasure in other's wrongdoing or brokenness.

My life in the Lord is not pretentious, showy, attention-seeking, fake, superficial or merely a series of habits done without an interior life. Charity enlivens my zeal.

Nothing in my life is excluded from the grace, glory and life of the Lord who wishes to transfigure everything about me.

Signs Growth May be Needed

Growing in virtues takes practice and we need God's grace. We need patience, careful assessment of our areas of need and honest self-identification of our challenges. Take some time to review the following possible signs that growth may be needed in this particular virtue.

I experience habitual sloth, laziness or distaste for labor. I shrink from hard labor and perhaps make excuses.

A tepid, lukewarm state fills my heart and mind regarding things of the Lord. I blame my state on the opinion that Christians are hypocrites, or cite a Christian leader as a reason why I am not interested in the Lord.

I am idle and often waste my time on fruitless pursuits.

In my inactivity and idleness, I experience and follow the temptations offered.

My body and emotional life manifest my slothful lifestyle. I do not schedule my day.

I consistently do not achieve the potentials of my skills, aptitudes and abilities.

I have a fund of excuses for the reasons why I am not diligent in pursuit of hearty labor, zeal for the Lord and for transformation in grace.

RESPONSIBILITY

“And the Lord replied, “Who, then, is the faithful and prudent steward whom the master will put in charge of his servants to distribute the food allowance at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master on arrival finds doing so. Truly, I say to you, he will put him in charge of all his property.” (Luke 12:42-44).

What is Responsibility? The virtue of responsibility positions individuals to accept the consequences of their actions, and to also respond, in obedience, to the legitimate demands of others. A corresponding biblical virtue is kindness.

Why Practice Responsibility? Responsibility allows us to accept ourselves as free, moral persons who can act with decisiveness. Our responsibilities may start in the home environment with a chore or task and then extend throughout our whole life, as we develop habits, routines and roles.

Acts 10:22
Proverbs 12:6
Luke 17:10

Luke 19:17
Luke 12:42
Matthew 24:45

Proverbs 14:5
Genesis 42:18
Genesis 39:4

Nehemiah 13:13
Psalm 11:7
Psalm 112:4
Psalm 33:4

Living it Every Day

God made us to be, and to remain, free, in spite of such influences and factors as genetics, family, society, health and culture. Our freedom calls us toward a duty to choose that which benefits the ultimate good of others as well as ourselves. Our responsibilities secure and procure that goodness flourishes in our relationships. Sometimes we encounter negative consequences flowing from our actions or inactivity. We live responsibility by accepting and admitting our responsibilities prudently, clearly and honestly with a desire to repair and restore whatever is broken.

Evidence that I am living in Responsibility every day may include...

I know which sources, people and information to explore and consult when I am preparing to make decisions or completing projects.

I can make my own decision, when able, and accept the consequences. My parents allow me to make my own decisions, when appropriate.

I can think of the pros versus cons, and benefits versus burdens related to choices, before decisions are made.

I listen to wise advice and to authority, but do not depend excessively upon the emotional support and opinion of others when making significant decisions in my life.

I am obedient to my parents and to those in authority over me, as well as to the Lord.

I can review successes and challenges with someone whom I can trust, someone I am transparent and open to.

After making a decision, I do not agonize or become angry at the outcome.

Signs Growth May be Needed

Growing in virtues takes practice and we need God's grace. We need patience, careful assessment of our areas of need and honest self-identification of our challenges. Take some time to review the following possible signs that growth may be needed in this particular virtue.

I blame others for my actions or excuse my faults.

I accept or take the praise which justly belongs to others.

I tell lies-even small ones. I tell lies to off-set the experience of suffering involved with admitting responsibility.

I experience little desire to fulfill responsibilities related to my life roles and vocation and prefer not to think about them or to blame my family, illness, supervisor or life situation rather than look at my responsibilities.

I am overly critical of teachers, supervisors, leaders, law enforcement officers or clergy and tend to blame them for societal or other problems.

I am overly responsible and tend to take too much responsibility for others and for their responsibilities. I take on more than I should.

I do not practice responsibility in small matters in my daily life.

OPTIMISM

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” (Philippians 4:8).

What is Optimism? The virtue of optimism is based upon reason and is grounded in reality. Optimism is actually a practical expression of hope, in the midst of the experiences of daily life. Optimism involves much more than just seeing a glimpse of good or in sharing a positive perspective, in a given moment. It involves the habit of choosing to encounter and see the good in others and in the situations at hand. It involves seeing the supports from which to draw in order to achieve good purposes. A corresponding biblical virtue is gratitude.

Why Practice Optimism? Optimistic persons create and discover a vision for their life roles, goals and for their future. Optimistic persons tend to be healthier overall and may experience less physical and emotional suffering. Optimists see possibilities and encounter within themselves and energy and zeal necessary to move forward with life.

Psalms 23:6

Psalms 27:13

Psalms 130:7

2 Corinthians 1:10

Hebrews 6:9-20

Job 11:19

Romans 15:13

Ephesians 2:12

1 Peter 1:21

Daniel 13:60

Philippians 4:8

Psalms 101:2

Living it Every Day

Optimism is, in some ways, part of our temperament and makeup, but can be developed and enhanced. We can begin by removing negative, depressing and depleting influences, as able, from our experience. If we cannot remove such influences, nor remove ourselves-then we can re-structure and re-determine how much of this influence we are going to internalize and make our own. We need to consider newspapers, news, television, music lyrics, friends, conversations and places we spend our time, and assess for optimism or pessimism. We make choices with our intellect, desire with our will and feel with our passions (emotions). However, we “image” with our imagination and create thousands of images a day. We can take some time to reflect upon our conscious life and decide to infuse a bit more optimism where there is little or no optimism. Where there is no optimism, plant optimism and we will harvest optimism.

Evidence that I am living in Optimism every day may include...

I trust my capacities and skills. As a parent, I offer children many experiences through which they can encounter their skills and gift. I allow children to be successful and to grow in their self-efficacy (what they can do) as well as self-esteem (how they appraise themselves).

I trust others and can offer trust.

When I experience sufferings and set-backs, I find a positive re-frame or at least accept that the Lord is sovereign and loving, even and especially when I can hardly trace His mysterious designs with my finite mind.

I am able to smile and laugh. I am able to laugh at myself and my shortcomings.

I can find something good in those around me.

I can recall and savor in my heart, times when the Lord has sustained me with the daily bread of Himself, during times of trial in the past. I can look at God loving me through others and through unforeseen blessings.

I choose to recognize and appreciate one good thing about a family member today. I can love myself.

Signs Growth May be Needed

Growing in virtues takes practice and we need God's grace. We need patience, careful assessment of our areas of need and honest self-identification of our challenges. Take some time to review the following possible signs that growth may be needed in this particular virtue.

I complain and grumble, more than I offer blessings and thanksgiving.

I frequently stuff feelings which are not pleasant or clear in order to pretend to be optimistic, when I am not.

I frequently over-focus on awful topics, or spend conversation time ruminating or sharing about how bad things are.

My fears and anxieties control most parts of my life and I have not tried to respond to them with an actionable, ongoing plan.

I generally live in the past and do not anticipate anything good in the future.

I believe people are mean and not to be trusted, and seek out evidence to support this belief.

Life just happens to me and I am passive.

ORDERLINESS

“For even if I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing as I observe your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ” (Colossians 2:5)

What is Orderliness? Orderliness is the virtue by which we use our time, materials and resources toward goal-directed behavior, governed by the virtue of prudence. Orderliness is manifest in tidiness and punctuality. There is logic, consistency and safety borne of orderliness, but it is not a virtue to demand or to need orderliness for the sake of order. Order must emerge from and flow back into, a loving communion of persons-God and the relationships of those around us. Peace is a corresponding biblical virtue.

Why Practice Orderliness? Orderliness makes living, working and recreating with others more efficient, joyful and fruitful. Orderliness helps us to organize our schedules, arrange our living and workplaces as to maximize ease, efficiency and safety. Order in our interior life and in our life mirrors the order in the universe and nature.

1 Corinthians 14:40
Colossians 2:5
Ecclesiastes 7

1 Corinthians 3
Proverbs 6:4
Matthew 7:24

Psalms 128:2
Proverbs 2
Psalm 111

Psalms 51
Proverbs 20:24
1 Corinthians 12:18

Living it Every Day

We cannot only order our time, workplace and living spaces: we *can* use items the way they were meant to be used. We exercise care when we are orderly. A neat, orderly area bespeaks an intentional person who cared to order it. Orderliness is not compulsivity, and is a service to the dignity of the persons involved. Order is related to charity and aids the expression of charity.

Evidence that I am living in Orderliness every day may include...

I use calendars and/or assignment planners. I document important information. I plan my days.

I can use my time, travels and finances with goals, vision and outcomes in mind.

My purse, wallet, book bag, briefcase, drawers and other compartments express order and tidiness, versus chaos, mess, clutter and inconsistency.

I pick up my toys, games, papers and tools. I return items promptly after I borrow them.

I plan trips and excursions with a plan in view and use maps and directions.

I take care of and maintain my leisure items, vehicle, home and work supplies. I also exercise care of my clothing and daily living supplies.

I present myself as clean and neat and use good hygiene skills. I use soap, deodorant, comb my hair, wear clean, matching and season-appropriate clothing. I complete oral care at least twice daily.

Signs Growth May be Needed

Growing in virtues takes practice and we need God's grace. We need patience, careful assessment of our areas of need and honest self-identification of our challenges. Take some time to review the following possible signs that growth may be needed in this particular virtue.

Others often have to pick up after me. I leave my desk, work areas and play areas cluttered.

I have trouble finding where I put certain folders, forms, papers or documents.

I frequently arrive late to church, meetings or appointments. I cause others to be late, or require people to wait for me.

I do not use a grocery list, reminders or planners when I, in fact, know that I could benefit from them.

I use tools and equipment carelessly, leading to breakage, shortened life of the item or loss.

My need of orderliness causes me to hurt the feelings of those around me.

I do not set daily goals for myself.

OBEDIENCE

“Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered...” (Hebrews 5:8)

Do everything without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine like lights in the world...” (Philippians 2:14-15).

What is Obedience? Obedience is the virtue by which we experience joyful submission to the authority of God, Who is revealed in His Word and Who continues to communicate his love and care for us. Jesus was obedient even unto death and gave us an example to follow. To obey is to listen and to give ear. God’s Word is guaranteed, as He is Truth. Obedience is due the Lord, simply because He is God. Obedience is also due to parents, legitimate civil authority and to supervisors in the workplace. The fourth commandment requires us to honor, respect and care for our parents.

Why Practice Obedience? Our obedience pleases God and pleases those who are in loving authority over us. The virtue of obedience is noble and gives us life, protection and peace. By obeying, we can be more assured that we are on the right path and not in error. We may not always be completely clear or feel comfortable with the goodness of other peoples’ directions for us but, over time, we can see the strength and blessings we derive from our assent and gift of obedience.

Romans 1:5; 16:26
Proverbs 6:20-22
Proverbs 13:1

Colossians 3:20
Ephesians 6:1
Romans 5:19

Deuteronomy 4:30
Deuteronomy 15:5
Romans 1:5

Hebrews 5:9
Genesis 12:1-4
Philippians 2:8

Living it Every Day

Practicing obedience means that we freely choose to accept the direction of another person. It is good to obey legitimate laws, civil authority, signs and rules of establishments. We spend time daily listening to and being formed by God's Word. We obey with our body, heart and mind. We experience pleasure when we obey and can more freely love God and others, under obedience. Obedience increases our freedom.

Evidence that I am living in Obedience every day may include...

I practice small acts of obedience in areas I am not always inclined to obey. I say "yes" to a directive I'm inclined to say "no" to.

I obey God, because He is God and has a right to my obedience, not because I want to benefit from an act of obedience.

I respond quickly most of the time to directives of those in authority over me.

I am obedient to rules, directives and policy, even when no one is watching.

I trust that obedience is for my own good and for the common good of others, even when I want to rebel.

I can prayerfully accept and obey my teachers, parents and spiritual leaders regarding matters they have legitimate authority over, in goodness.

I generally surround myself with people who also live obedience.

Signs Growth May be Needed

Growing in virtues takes practice and we need God's grace. We need patience, careful assessment of our areas of need and honest self-identification of our challenges. Take some time to review the following possible signs that growth may be needed in this particular virtue.

I obey out of routine, not thinking about the aims or purposes of the person requesting obedience.

I focus on doing the absolute minimal amount in order to fulfill a certain obligation.

I give the appearance of an obedient response, but inside I grumble and remain angry.

I appeal to someone in authority by offering excuses and expect to be released from obedience.

I frequently “forget” my duties or neglect tasks.

I command others to be obedient, without a heart and intention which is merciful and charitable.

I find the verses in the scripture I like best and tend to avoid the passages and teachings which demand obedience in areas I am not comfortable giving obedience.

SINCERITY & VERACITY

“Therefore, putting away falsehood, speak the truth, each one to his neighbor, for we are members one of another” (Ephesians 4:25).

What are Sincerity & Veracity? Sincerity is the virtue by which we offer appropriate and truthful disclosure to the right people, at the right time and for the right reasons. Sincerity means that prudence and charity govern the information disclosure habits which we have. The gentle, directness of sincerity corresponds to the biblical virtue of holiness.

Why Practice Sincerity & Veracity? Sincerity governs what we share of, and about, ourselves and others. It allows us to share and reveal experiences carefully and in a dignified way. Veracity or truthfulness assures that we are truthful, accurate and honest at all times. Sincerity and veracity are virtues which build up communion and trust in relationships.

James 4:12
Proverbs 22:1
I Corinthians 6:10

Romans 1:32
Matthew 5:22
Isaiah 5:20

Matthew 23:27
Genesis 27
Proverbs 13:3-5
Romans 3:8

John 14:6
John 1:47
Proverbs 10:9
1 Thessalonians 5:22

Living it Every Day

We speak the truth to others. We can have a sense of integrity in our conversations. We do not lie or try to lie using the truth, either in conversation, written reports or with numbers. Our habit and purpose is to be accurate and direct with others. We will not want to destroy the dignity of other through detraction, gossip or slander. We are not hypocritical, which is to act differently than the way we really think and feel, for the sake of keeping appearances.

Evidence that I am living in Sincerity & Veracity every day may include...

I speak truthfully even when sharing the truth is uncomfortable, provided I pause to reflect on the best way to share the truth, in charity.

I do not flatter anyone, which is to praise someone immoderately for the sake of advantage.

I guard my speech from being habitually excessive, inaccurate, grandiose, distorted or exaggerated.

I communicate the good things, which others need to hear.

I can encourage others and coach them by offering loving support.

I exercise healthy boundaries regarding the topics I speak about and can exercise prudence regarding topics I speak about, given the company of persons present.

My non-verbal communication matches my words.

Signs Growth May be Needed

Growing in virtues takes practice and we need God's grace. We need patience, careful assessment of our areas of need and honest self-identification of our challenges. Take some time to review the following possible signs that growth may be needed in this particular virtue.

I have a habit of disconnecting my feelings from my thoughts, for the purpose of hiding my feelings.

I tell lies and exaggerate at times.

I do not always share the truth with those who seek and deserve the truth.

I am interested in blackening the social reputation and good name of someone who has hurt me.

I make promises to others, but do not follow up on these promises.

I cheat on a test or copy the work of someone else without giving them credit.

I appear one way in public and another way in private.

PATIENCE

“In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22-23).

What is Patience? Patience is the virtue by which we bear the difficulty or negative aspects of another person’s attitude or behavior. It also allows us to bear with difficulties without complaining or reacting harshly. Hardships and sufferings can actually foster the growth of virtue and deepen our union with God.

Why Practice Patience? Almost every part of our daily lives is increasing in speed. We want that which we want-now-not in time, not eventually and not later on. There will be, and are, points in our lives when we experience suffering, frustration, inconvenience and set-backs. We need this virtue desperately in order to remain peaceful and stout-hearted, as well as compassionate and charitable toward those around us.

Jeremiah 18:18

James 3:6

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Ephesians 4:2

Galatians 5:22-23

Luke 18:8

Proverbs 17:6

2 Timothy 1:5

Luke 21:19

Romans 15:4

1 Timothy 6:11

Luke 8:15

Living it Every Day

We need to practice patience first with ourselves. We can pause to ponder God's purposes, especially when we do not comprehend His time frames. We examine what we have learned from parents and loved ones about patience. We can imagine stressful situations and inventory ones which can trigger or upset us. We can anticipate these in advance. We can pray during times requiring waiting. We can respond, versus react, to difficult experiences and take time to breath deeply.

Evidence that I am living in Patience every day may include...

I can not only manage, but accept a long line by reading, praying or contemplating a verse of scripture over in my heart.

I plan my travel to anticipate the possibility of traffic jams and bad weather.

I wake up early enough to have time to have a good breakfast, perform my activities of daily living and pray.

I can post-pone gratification in some small way regularly. I can wait for a package to arrive or for a plant to grow.

I can develop a talent or skill which takes time to develop.

I can bridle and control my tongue most of the time, instead of raising my voice or verbally wounding others.

I can gently, but directly assert myself to let others know if they are in error and seek to remedy the situation.

Signs Growth May be Needed

Growing in virtues takes practice and we need God's grace. We need patience, careful assessment of our areas of need and honest self-identification of our challenges. Take some time to review the following possible signs that growth may be needed in this particular virtue.

I cannot handle a time gap between that which I want and that which I have.

I am seldom able to control the expression of my emotions of anger, frustration and anxiety. I feel I am entitled to expression even if the quality and type of expression habitually hurts others.

I frequently give up on a project or game, or become explosive if things do not go the way I would like to have them go. I tantrum if a game or play is lost.

I attempt to deal with frustrations by fighting, breaking things or disrupting harmony in my relationships.

I complete the sentences of others, when they are speaking with me.

I push my own timeframes and timetables and am not flexible regarding set-backs.

I expect God to work changes in the hearts of those I love quickly and do not wait for God's timing.

JOY

“You will show me the path to life, abounding joy in your presence, the delights at your right hand forever.” (Psalm 16:11).

What is Joy? Joy is the virtue by which one experiences deep, abiding joyfulness, often in spite of the challenging experiences of life. It is also a feeling aroused and enkindled by the goodness we either possess in our life, or expect from the Lord. While joy is encountered and expressed in our body or countenance, it is principally active within our heart and soul-beneath the places where emotional storms might touch.

Why Practice Joy? Sadness can gradually incapacitate the activity and life of joy within our heart and drain us of zeal. Scripture exhorts us to be of good cheer. The fresh springs of joy within our heart can be ever living, fertile and healing. Joy enlivens others and draws others to union with us. It elevates hearts, ignites vision, enriches hope, solidifies patience and heals hearts.

Proverbs 25:20
Nehemiah 8:10
Psalm 30:5

Psalm 67:4
Romans 14:17
Romans 15:13
Revelation 21:4

Luke 1:14
Luke 2:10
John 16:20
Acts 20:24

Galatians 5:22
1Thessalonians 1:6
James 1:2
1 Peter 4:13

Living it Every Day

We have the life and promises of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is with us and for us. We have abundant life in Jesus and we live out our hope and promise of Eternal life. We, therefore, have enough cause for joy, in spite of the challenges that form us. We will mourn loss, grieve the wounds of sin and feel homesick for the homeland of Heaven while we are on this sojourn and pilgrimage. Every tear will one day be wiped away. We can live joy by casting our cares upon the Lord. We can place our thoughts, attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and physical work and leisure directly into the heart of Jesus, whose burning love will always transform. We can spend time with joyful persons and frequent places and contexts wherein there is joy. We can also build communion with others who are lonely.

Evidence that I am living in Joy every day may include...

I can laugh and express joyous praise.

When I wake up, there is a spark of joy as I am aware that this is the day that the Lord has made.

I make efforts to reduce my worries.

I can comfort and assist those who are in pain.

I have a hearty leisure life and am able to be playful. I contemplate and meditate daily.

I can sing as a person in love does.

My posture and walking style evidences joy and confidence.

Signs Growth May be Needed

Growing in virtues takes practice and we need God's grace. We need patience, careful assessment of our areas of need and honest self-identification of our challenges. Take some time to review the following possible signs that growth may be needed in this particular virtue.

I am inclined to compete unnecessarily with others and am not content with the power, honor or riches I presently have available to me.

My worries and cares about life often entrap, ensnare and trouble me.

I have forgotten what it feels like to experience joy.

I have so many of the privileges and possessions which I want, that I really do not feel joy.

I do not feel enough safety in my world to smile and experience joy.

I think joy is an emotion and therefore cannot find it.

The complexity of all my responsibilities and obligations leaves little time for simplicity, silence and communion with the Lord and those I love.

SELF-CONTROL

“Therefore, gird up the loins of your mind, live soberly, and set your hopes completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 1:13)

What is Self-Control? Self-control is the virtue by which we are in the habit of having our desires and behaviors under the governance or control of our will. Our will is guided by our intelligence and, while we feel emotions and acknowledge their importance, we are not usually controlled by emotions. We are usually in control of ourselves. It is possible to monitor our thoughts, feelings, attitudes and behaviors and to enjoy exercising increased possession of and leadership over these areas of our being. We are human and this means we have emotions. Emotions are good. They generally direct us to that which is good in life and move us away from that which is evil. We may cry, laugh, shout with glee, worry, rage and grieve. There are hundreds of possible emotions we can feel in a given day and we may experience well over forty distinct ones in a days time. Whether we are male or female, we feel them-though we may express them differently.

Why Practice Self-Control? Self-control is a discipline whereby we grow in our ability to govern our interior life and also govern our responses in life. It grows one act of self-control at a time. It also grows with our practical knowledge of options for us. It allows us the dignity of emotional continence, but does not stifle genuine human expression. We actually become more free and real with our feelings and behaviors. It is not putting on an emotional strait jacket. We become proud of being able to access our true feelings, exercise our intelligence and reverence our bodies in their natural goodness.

Job 7:1

1 Peter 1:6

1 Corinthians 7:5

Galatians 5:22

2 Corinthians 12:9

1 Corinthians 7:5

2 Timothy 4

1 Timothy 1:18-19

2 Peter 1:6

1 Corinthians 10:13

Acts 24:25

Mark 9:23

Luke 17:5

Matthew 26:4

Living it Every Day

Self-control begins with a desire to live with increased self-control. We set short and long term goals for ourselves. We cultivate and nurture a vision for our vocation and roles in life, versus simply reacting to the stimuli of existence. We can self evaluate or ask for help evaluating areas of life which we would consider ourselves having little self-control. We set reasonable goals for ourselves and gradually replace harmful habits with virtues. We can express anger and frustration-even rage-to a safe expression such as to a pillow, soft sponge ball, gross muscle exercise or labor. We realize it takes time to grow in self-control.

Evidence that I am living in Self-Control every day may include...

I am usually in control of what I want to communicate with others.

I accomplish my tasks and duties without coercion from others.

I can refrain from verbal or physical acting out behaviors.

I do not seek revenge upon anyone.

I know the actual temptations, occasions of sin and triggers in my life and know how to avoid or process these. I build internal and external boundaries, which I put in writing to remind my self about.

I am in charge of my tongue, rather than my tongue being in charge of me.

I move forward when I fall short and do not dwell or mire down in shame about loosing control.

Signs Growth May be Needed

Growing in virtues takes practice and we need God's grace. We need patience, careful assessment of our areas of need and honest self-identification of our challenges. Take some time to review the following possible signs that growth may be needed in this particular virtue.

I hurt others' feelings frequently.

Others are concerned about my temper or other areas where I do not seem to have control-such as impulsive spending.

I get into fights or conflicts with others frequently.

I do not have empathy for others and have difficulty knowing what another person might think or feel regarding my actions.

I feel entitled to loose control and may even experience a type of "high" from it.

Others avoid me or fear having me around.

I loose or quit jobs frequently. In school I get into trouble frequently.

Virtues as Strengths

Virtues as Strengths across Cultures

Strengths of Wisdom and Knowledge

Creativity (Originality, Ingenuity)
Curiosity (Interest, Novelty-Seeking, Openness to Experience)
Open-Mindedness (Judgment, Critical Thinking)
Love of Learning
Perspective (Wisdom)

Strengths of Courage

Bravery (Valor)
Persistence (Perseverance, Industriousness)
Integrity (Authenticity, Honesty)
Vitality (Zest, enthusiasm, Vigor, Energy)

Strengths of Humanity

Love
Kindness (Generosity)
Nurturance, Care, Compassion
Social, Emotional Intelligence

Strengths of Justice

Loyalty, Social Responsibility
Fairness
Leadership

Strengths of Transcendence

Awe, Wonder
Gratitude
Hope
Humor
Spirituality, Purpose

Strengths of Temperance

Forgiveness and Mercy
Humility
Modesty
Prudence
Self-Regulation (Seligman)

From Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification

by Christopher Peterson, Dr. Martin Seligman 816 pages Publisher: Oxford University Press, USA (April 8, 2004) ISBN: 0195167015

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