



CLASSICAL CHRISTIAN VIRTUES

*7 VIRTUES TO CULTIVATE DURING
THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC*

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Titus Books

Classical Christian Virtues:
7 Virtues to Cultivate during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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eBook

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This eBook was adapted from a 264-page paperback book featuring sixty virtues and can be purchased at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). This free digital eBook may be copied for use in classrooms, Bible studies, or personal use but is not authorized for resale.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Whether we are young or old, experienced or inexperienced, immature or mature, we are often faced with difficult decisions. When faced with hard choices, we often ask ourselves and others, “What should I do?” Aristotle suggested that this is the wrong question. Instead, he advocated that we ask, “What kind of person do I want to be?” This is the guiding question and reoccurring focus of this book.

So, what kind of person do you want to be? Hopefully, you are already a Christian, and you want to be like Jesus. You were created *imago dei* – in the image of God – and as a Christian, you have the Holy Spirit living inside you. That is amazing and should be a great encouragement to you! Being made in God’s image, having Jesus as your living example, and with the power of the Holy Spirit to guide you, you can become a more virtuous and Christ-like person.

This book is a practical guide for understanding virtue formation and personal development in virtues. As you go through this study, you might be surprised at some of the virtues that made the list. First, contemplate each virtue on a macro-theoretical level and also on a micro-practical level. Next, think about the ways you have seen the virtue displayed in the lives of others from the Bible, history, literature, and film. Then, take time to contemplate each virtue and vice as they are exhibited in your own life. Finally, find ways to apply

each one practically to your life, and seek specific ways to improve and move toward a more virtuous life.

The table of virtues (listed at the end of this chapter) will serve as the road map of this study. It is inspired by Aristotle's "golden mean." Aristotle believed a virtue is found at the midpoint (the "golden mean") between excess (too much of a good thing) and deficiency (too little of a good thing). This is good guidance; however, please remember not to rely on the ancients for your final authority as you (or your study group) contemplate what it means to be virtuous. Instead, remind yourself and encourage the individuals in your group to look to the Ancient of Days for the final word of truth.

The table of virtues and questions throughout the book will help guide your discussions as you train yourself (or your students) to be more virtuous citizens. Remember, we are citizens of our family, teams, clubs, schools, tribes, local community, state, country, and, most importantly, citizens of the kingdom of Christ.

At this point, you might be excited to begin this journey toward becoming more virtuous. Your excitement might tempt you to rush through this book like a rock skipping over a pond. If this describes you, please resist this temptation. Take enough time to ponder and contemplate each virtue. Let yourself or your study group meander through each discussion like a winding country stream.

The process of questioning and contemplation as you discuss the following topics will allow the golden mean of each virtue to be planted in the most fertile soil deep within you - so that each virtue might grow strong in your life and provide cool water and a restful shade for you and others who encounter you.

Small Groups

This book is formatted to be most effectively used in a group setting. I would like to strongly encourage you to form a “Classical Christian Virtues Group” to discuss the virtues and vices presented in this book. Taking time to form a group (on Zoom or Facebook if needed) and contemplate “the good life” together with trusted friends will not only deepen your relationships with your life’s traveling companions, but it will also more deeply develop your commitment to becoming a more virtuous person through verbalizing the areas on which you will focus your development.

Leaders of a “Classical Christian Virtues Group” should not stand and present in a lecture-style format. Instead, sit in a circle with your group, and be a participant mentor and guide. You might want to have refreshments while you talk. Feel free to walk through nature or a neighborhood as you talk about the virtues. If you would rather sit to talk, consider gathering in an outdoor space or a beautiful room rather than in a classroom with rows of desks. If a classroom is your only option, arrange the desks or chairs into a circle to create a more relaxed and engaging environment. Encourage members of your group to write notes and ideas in this book or to use a commonplace book to record their thoughts and ideas during the discussion.

Finally, lead with questions to solicit participation before almost every quote, statement, definition, verse of Scripture, or statement presented to you in the following pages. Seek to lead yourself and your group to new discoveries rather than simply presenting information. By following this format, you might be surprised at the many great stories, examples, and ideas that are generated. Allow yourself and the group to

linger on the more interesting and thought-provoking ideas that seem to awaken curiosity and moral imagination.

Individuals

If you are not able (or ready) to contemplate and cultivate virtues with other individuals in your life, you might choose to use this book for personal development on your own. This private contemplation can be a special time of growth and formation toward becoming a more fully formed person. Cultivating virtues through self-examination is a very important part of achieving “the good life” but can sometimes lead to a wide range of emotions as you uncover previously unknown blind spots and weaknesses in your life.

You might need one day, one month, or one year to meditate on just one virtue. Allow yourself time to contemplate, explore, or research the quotes, verses, and ideas in this book rather than racing through each section. Then, seek to change your thoughts and actions as you encounter opportunities to be more virtuous each day. Becoming a person of virtue takes time, effort, and patience.

Table of Virtues

The following table of virtues can be used for quick reference as you contemplate virtue each day or during times that you are struggling with a difficult decision. This is not an exhaustive list of virtues but rather a starting point from which you can explore and enjoy cultivating virtue for the rest of your life. You should also take time to contemplate how each “vice of excess” and “vice of deficiency” flows from a deformed virtue. Feel free to develop your own ideas for virtues to be added to this list or vices of deficiency or excess that may fit better with each virtue.

(-) in deficiency	VIRTUE	(+) in excess
rigidness	Adaptation	doublemindedness
timidity	Bravery	recklessness
anxiety	Calmness	inactivity
cruelty	Compassion	permissiveness
irritability	Contentment	slothfulness
disagreeableness	Cooperation	groupthink
cowardice	Courage	impulsiveness
indifference	Curiosity	meddling
fickleness	Dedication	mania
unreliability	Dependability	stubbornness
debasement	Dignity	gloating
laziness	Diligence	workaholism
hardheartedness	Empathy	enablement
apathy	Endurance	obstinacy
skepticism	Faithfulness*	ruthlessness
rudeness	Friendliness	flattery
legalism	Forgiveness	leniency
hastiness	Foresight	indecisiveness
timidity	Fortitude	obstinacy
stinginess	Generosity	extravagance
anger	Gentleness*	detachment
evilness	Goodness*	perfectionism
crudeness	Grace	indulgence
churlishness	Gratitude	groveling
deceitfulness	Honesty	outspokenness
negligence	Honor	controlling
pessimism	Hope	naivety
aloofness	Hospitality	stifling
pride	Humility	degradation
laziness	Industriousness	workaholism
corruption	Integrity	legalism
apathy	Joy*	flamboyance
corruption	Justice	detachment

(-) in deficiency	VIRTUE	(+) in excess
hostility	Kindness*	foolishness
selfishness	Love*	permissiveness
treachery	Loyalty	thoughtlessness
arrogance	Meekness	timidity
cruelty	Mercy	shamefulness
shamelessness	Modesty	shyness
rebellion	Obedience	passiveness
anxiety	Optimism	naivety
confusion	Orderliness	nagging
restlessness	Patience*	laziness
anxiety	Peace*	impotence
negligence	Pensiveness	criticalness
passiveness	Perseverance	arrogance
apathy	Purposefulness	worry
disregard	Respect	idolatry
unreliability	Responsibility	workaholism
wastefulness	Resourcefulness	stinginess
irreverence	Righteousness	haughtiness
wildness	Self-Control*	stoicism
unfeeling	Sensitivity	anxiety
inconsideration	Servanthood	slavery
stubbornness	Teachability	naivety
carelessness	Thoughtfulness	withdrawn
prejudice	Tolerance	licentiousness
deception	Truthfulness	rudeness
ignorance	Wisdom	disdain
boorishness	Wit	buffoonery

* In Galatians 5:22-23, Paul teaches us that Christians should express certain virtues without reservation or limitation. When contemplating these virtues, be sure to read these verses and consider the idea that there is “no law” against the

virtuous characteristics that are a product of the Holy Spirit living inside of us.

*But the fruit of the Spirit is
love, joy, peace, patience, kindness,
goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control;
against such things there is no law.
Galatians 5:22-23*

Using this Book

There are several approaches you can use to contemplate the virtues presented in this book. You can read from front to back, for specific needs, or as a reference book.

Front to Back

Reading this book from front to back will open you up to surprising new discoveries of unexpected growth. Understanding that you might have blind spots in your life allows you to grow in new ways. Reading this book of virtues from front to back can add a necessary element of surprise and joyful discovery.

Specific Need

Targeting areas of specific need, improvement, and growth in your life will allow you to use this book as a valuable resource to help cultivate specific virtues. This personalized application is well suited for individuals seeking to target specific virtues.

Reference Book

Cultivating virtues, values, and spiritual formation is a daily part of the human experience. This book can be used as a reference guide for Bible verses or recalibration of thoughts

and actions. Keeping this book on your coffee table or an easily accessible bookshelf allow you to quickly pop it open to a virtue that comes to mind as you talk with a spouse, friend, child, or as you individually read and contemplate the virtues presented in great books.

Conclusion

Cultivating virtues ultimately leads us to a deeper appreciation and love for the only truly virtuous one, our Savior Jesus Christ. I pray that this study will help set the table for you to interact with the Holy Spirit to discover more about yourself, our triune God, and others.

Whether you are using this guidebook in a classroom, Bible study, small group, family devotion, or individually, start each of your readings with prayer, and let the Holy Spirit guide your curiosity and desire to become more virtuous as you think, believe, and act on what you discover.

CHAPTER II

Cultivating Virtue

Before continuing to the focus of this study, take time to prepare your heart, mind, and body to gain new wisdom that will influence your actions. Your actions, in turn, determine your level of virtue or vice in a particular area of your life. After contemplating a virtue, make prayerful and intentional choices to improve your level of virtue by taking new action in small ways each day in your life. This will help you to become a person of virtue.

You will gain the most benefit from the following guided contemplations by focusing on each quotation, definition, Scripture, and question. Pondering each section and making yourself physically write a response to the questions in the spaces or margins provided will help to clarify your reasoning and assumptions in your life. Clarifying your own mental models and habits will reveal areas of potential personal growth.

Finally, seek to understand why the author chose each vice of excess or vice of deficiency. Some of them might not be easily understood and seem unrelated; however, taking time to seek the connections will help you dig into a wider range of emotions, life experiences, and empathic understanding. Then, seek to “argue” with the author or debate with your virtue group to develop your own vices related to the virtue you are studying. This will help you uncover deeper areas of virtue and vice as you seek a Christlike life of virtue.

Cultivating Virtue

Contemplation #1

(-) in deficiency	VIRTUE	(+) in excess
rigidness	Adaptation	doublemindedness

“The measure of intelligence is the ability to change.”

Albert Einstein

ADAPTATION

Definition: change or the process of change by which a person becomes better suited to a situation or environment

Individuals who adapted quickly to the changing guidelines during the COVID-19 outbreak remained mentally strong and emotionally healthy. However, rigidness and doublemindedness lead to difficulty in personal relationships and preparation for the home quarantine that most people experienced.

In Luke 5:17-39, we read about Jesus adapting what He was doing to help a man who was lowered down through a roof in front of Him while He was teaching. He did not send the man and his friends away. Instead, He adapted to the need in front of Him, healed the man, and used the situation to complement what He was already doing.

On one of those days, as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with him to heal. And behold, some men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they were seeking to bring him in and lay

him before Jesus, but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith, he said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" When Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them, "Why do you question in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" - he said to the man who was paralyzed - "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home." And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God. And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, "We have seen extraordinary things today."

Luke 5:17-39

Guiding Questions

What person in the Bible, history, literature, or film needed to adapt?

When, why, and how should we (or should we NOT) adapt to new ideas, circumstances, or surroundings?

Vices

Adaptation can be a virtue in its best and most pure form, but it can quickly become a vice in its extreme form (doublemindedness) or when it is lacking (rigidness). Continue contemplating adaptation by looking at these two misrepresentations of this virtue.

(+) Doublemindedness

Definition: wavering in thought to the point of indecision and appearing to be two-faced or spineless

*A double-minded person is unstable in all his ways.
James 1:8*

(-) Rigidity

Definition: unable to change or consider new ways to interact with people or tasks

*Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."
Luke 10:38-42*

Guiding Questions

When have you experienced a person being doubleminded or rigid?

What situations cause you to be doubleminded or rigid?

When have you experienced adaptation from someone in your life?

How can you cultivate the virtue of adaptation in your life?

Circle a number to rate yourself in this virtue:

(-) rigidness			Adaptation			doublemindedness (+)		
1	2	3	4	5	4	3	2	1

What kind of person do you want to be?

I am doubleminded when...

I am rigid when...

I am adaptable when...

I want to be...

Cultivating Virtue

Contemplation #2

(-) in deficiency	VIRTUE	(+) in excess
anxiety	Calmness	inactivity

“The true strength of a man is in calmness.”

Leo Tolstoy

CALMNESS

Definition: a state of tranquility or peace; typically, free from agitation, excitement, or anxiety

During times of great stress, it is easy to fall into the vices of perpetual anxiety or inactivity resulting from a paralyzing fear. Reports of the COVID-19 virus have caused many to allow these vices to grow within them. It is important to resist these temptations by intentionally cultivating the virtue of calmness during times of change and fear.

Sheep are nervous creatures. They are easily scared and need a great deal of guidance and supervision. If they lose their way and wander from the flock, they will often struggle to find their way back home. David, the author of the book of Psalms, was a great shepherd and knew about the similarities between sheep and people from firsthand experience. In Psalm 23, he reminds us that we can have a calm confidence in the perfect Great Shepherd who will always provide for our every need.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley

of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Psalms 23:1-6

Guiding Questions

What person in the Bible, history, literature, or film exhibited calmness?

When, why, and how should we (or should we NOT) be calm when facing new ideas, circumstances, or surroundings?

Vices

Calmness can be a virtue in its best and most pure form, but it can quickly become a vice in its extreme form (inactivity) or when it is lacking (anxiety). Continue contemplating calm by looking at these two misrepresentations of this virtue.

(+) Inactivity

Definition: not engaging in or involving any or much physical movement or action

He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap. As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything. In the morning sow your seed, and at evening withhold not your hand, for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good.

Ecclesiastes 11:4-6

(-) Anxiety

Definition: a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:6-7

Guiding Questions

When have you experienced a person being inactive or anxious?

What situations cause you to be inactive or anxious?

When have you experienced calmness from someone in your life?

How can you cultivate the virtue of calmness in your life?

Circle a number to rate yourself in this virtue:

(-) anxiety			Calmness			inactivity (+)		
1	2	3	4	5	4	3	2	1

What kind of person do you want to be?

I am inactive when...

I am anxious when...

I am calm when...

I want to be...

Cultivating Virtue

Contemplation #3

(-) in deficiency	VIRTUE	(+) in excess
cowardice	Courage	impulsiveness

*“Success is not final; failure is not fatal:
it is the courage to continue that counts.”*

Winston S. Churchill

COURAGE

Definition: the ability to do something that is frightening or the strength to persevere in the face of grief, pain, or danger

Reactions to the COVID-19 virus were varied. Some individual exhibited impulsively and entered dangerous areas of known hot spots for the virus. Others fell victim to the vice of cowardliness when confronted by the possibility of contracting this deadly virus. The golden mean of courage is very difficult to cultivate but can have lifelong value if you are willing to honestly reflect on your own personal vices of impulsivity and cowardice as you cultivate courage in your own life.

Before going into battle, Joshua tells his men to have courage. He could have told them anything, but he said, “Be strong and courageous.” Life, and specifically “the good life,” is not easy and requires courage in public and in private.

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have

good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

Joshua 1:8-9

Guiding Questions

What person in the Bible, history, literature, or film demonstrated courage?

When, why, and how should we (or should we NOT) be courageous?

Vices

Courage can be a virtue in its best and most pure form, but it can quickly become a vice in its extreme form (impulsiveness) or when it is lacking (cowardice). Continue contemplating courage by looking at these two misrepresentations of this virtue.

(+) Impulsiveness

Definition: reaction or action taken without thinking through the consequences or implications for oneself or other

Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore, let your words be few.

Ecclesiastes 5:2

(-) Cowardice

Definition: a trait wherein excessive fear prevents an individual from taking a risk or facing danger

The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But as for the cowardly, the

faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.

Revelations 21:7-8

Guiding Questions

When have you experienced a person being cowardly or impulsive?

What situations cause you to be cowardly or impulsive?

When have you experienced courage from someone in your life?

How can you cultivate the virtue of courage in your life?

Circle a number to rate yourself in this virtue:

(-) cowardice			Courage			impulsiveness (+)		
1	2	3	4	5	4	3	2	1

What kind of person do you want to be?

I am impulsive when...

I am a coward when...

I show courage when...

I want to be...

Cultivating Virtue

Contemplation #4

(-) in deficiency	VIRTUE	(+) in excess
churlishness	Gratitude	groveling

*"Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues,
but the parent of all the others."*

Cicero

GRATITUDE

Definition: a strong feeling of appreciation for something or to someone for something done for you

If there is one thing the COVID-19 virus has caused us to remember, it is gratitude for the little gifts that God has given us in our daily lives.

While I do not agree with Cicero that gratitude is the parent of all other virtues, I do believe he was making a good point. Gratitude should continually spill out of us in our actions and flow out of us in our speech. We need to recognize that all we have and everything we are is a gift from God. He created us, provides for us, and cares for us in both visible and invisible ways every day. If you know a person who is constantly grateful, most likely you know a person who understands the greatness of God.

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts

to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:15-17

Guiding Questions

What person in the Bible, history, literature, or film expressed gratitude?

When, why, and how should we (or should we NOT) be grateful?

Vices

Gratitude can be a virtue in its best and most pure form, but it can quickly become a vice in its extreme form (groveling) or when it is lacking (churlishness). Continue contemplating gratitude by looking at these two misrepresentations of this virtue.

(+) Groveling

Definition: to behave with too much respect or to act in fear and without self-worth compared to the situation or person being addressed

I will not show partiality to any man or use flattery toward any person. For I do not know how to flatter, else my Maker would soon take me away.

Job 32:21-22

(-) Churlishness

Definition: rude, unfriendly, or unpleasant behavior

Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man.

Proverbs 22:24

Guiding Questions

When have you experienced a person groveling or being rude?

What situations cause you to grovel or express rudeness?

When have you experienced gratitude from someone in your life?

How can you cultivate the virtue of gratitude in your life?

Circle a number to rate yourself in this virtue:

(-) churlishness			Gratitude			groveling (+)		
1	2	3	4	5	4	3	2	1

What kind of person do you want to be?

I am groveling when...

I am churlish when...

I am grateful when...

I want to be...

Cultivating Virtue

Contemplation #5

(-) in deficiency	VIRTUE	(+) in excess
anxiety	Optimism	naivety

*“Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement.
Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.”*

Helen Keller

OPTIMISM

Definition: an inclination to put the most favorable construction upon actions and events or to anticipate the best possible outcome

The COVID-19 virus has exposed vices of naivety and anxiety that often hover just below the surface on many modern Christians. Naivety can develop from a lack of exposure to, or avoidance of, hard things. It can also be cultivated by being overly optimistic about the plans we have made and the ability to control our own lives.

Optimism comes from hope, but it also inspires hope. A deep and pure understanding and belief in the attributes and actions of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit yields confidence and hope that all things in life will work together for our good. So, even in our darkest hour, we can be optimistic and not fall into the vice of anxiousness. At the same time, we should not be naive to the evils or imperfections around us. As we make plans and take actions, our optimism should also be tempered with wisdom.

*The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the defense of my life; Whom shall I dread?
When evildoers came upon me to devour my flesh, my
adversaries and my enemies, they stumbled and fell. Though
a host encamp against me, my heart will not fear; Though
war arise against me, in spite of this I shall be confident.
Psalm 27:1-3*

Guiding Questions

What person in the Bible, history, literature, or film needed optimism?

When, why, and how should we (or should we NOT) be optimistic?

Vices

Optimism can be a virtue in its best and most pure form, but it can quickly become a vice in its extreme form (naivety) or when it is lacking (anxiety). Continue contemplating optimism by looking at these two misrepresentations of this virtue.

(+) Naivety

Definition: a belief that life is simple and fair, that intentions of people are generally good, and a willingness to believe a person is telling the truth

Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature.

I Corinthians 14:20

(-) Anxiety

Definition: extreme uneasiness resulting from fear, worry, or nervousness

And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?
Matthew 6:27

Guiding Questions

When have you experienced a person being naive or anxious?

What situations cause you to be naive or anxious?

When have you experienced optimism from someone in your life?

How can you cultivate the virtue of optimism in your life?

Circle a number to rate yourself in this virtue:

(-) anxiety			Optimism			naivety (+)		
1	2	3	4	5	4	3	2	1

What kind of person do you want to be?

I am naive when...

I am anxious when...

I am optimistic when...

I want to be...

Cultivating Virtue

Contemplation #6

(-) in deficiency	VIRTUE	(+) in excess
ignorance	Wisdom	disdain

“When anger enters the mind, wisdom departs.”

Thomas A Kempis

WISDOM

Definition: the ability to use your knowledge, belief, and experience to make good decisions, give good advice, or make right decisions

Not wanting to engage in knowing anything about the COVID-19 outbreak is an example of cultivating the virtue of ignorance while speaking with absolute authority comes from being “too wise.” Did you, or anyone you know, fall into the vice of disdain toward leaders during the COVID-19 outbreak? “If they would just...” “I think we should...”

Some ancient philosophers believed that wisdom was the root of all other virtues, but we read in Scripture that there is something that comes before wisdom. Proverbs 9:10 and Psalm 111:10 teach us that “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.” This “fear” is a respect and awe of who He is and for His attributes and characteristics that set Him apart from humanity. There are many great portions of Scripture about wisdom and the importance of cultivating wisdom in our lives. The well-balanced virtue of wisdom in your life should lead to understanding and rightly ordered actions as you seek to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

James 3:13-18

Guiding Questions

What person in the Bible, history, literature, or film needed wisdom?

When, why, and how should we (or should we NOT) be wise?

Vices

Wisdom can be a virtue in its best and most pure form, but it can quickly become a vice in its extreme form (disdain) or when it is lacking (ignorance). Continue contemplating wisdom by looking at these two misrepresentations of this virtue.

(+) Disdain

Definition: dislike of someone or something that you have determined is not worthy

A righteous man knows the rights of the poor; a wicked man does not understand such knowledge.

Proverbs 29:7

(-) Ignorance

Definition: lack of knowledge, understanding, or information about something

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance.

1 Peter 1:14

Guiding Questions

When have you experienced a person being disdainful or ignorant?

What situations cause you to be disdainful or ignorant?

When have you experienced wisdom from someone in your life?

How can you cultivate the virtue of wisdom in your life?

Circle a number to rate yourself in this virtue:

(-) ignorance			Wisdom			disdain (+)		
1	2	3	4	5	4	3	2	1

What kind of person do you want to be?

I am disdainful when...

I show ignorance when...

I show wisdom when...

I want to be...

Cultivating Virtue

Contemplation #7

(-) in deficiency	VIRTUE	(+) in excess
boorishness	Wit	buffoonery

“Wit, without wisdom, is salt without meat.”

George Horne

WIT

Definition: the ability to see the humor in a situation and use words in an intelligent and amusing way

Do you remember seeing memes or hearing jokes about the COVID-19 virus before it was known to be a worldwide pandemic? This is an example of taking wit too far or applying it at the wrong time. However, it is important to cultivate wit and keep a spirit of levity during hard times. Without it, we could fall into the vice of boorishness.

Comedians, court jesters, and fools often have the opportunity and ability to speak the truth to a leader or a society that others are too scared to say. Sometimes they are witty, but other times they are buffoons or boorish with their words and actions. Seeking to cultivate the virtue of wit can sometimes be difficult because there are so few good examples for us in modern society. Great books from authors such as Shakespeare and Twain often give us good examples of wit. Wit is smart, subtle, and clever without being rude, unkind, or malicious. Sarcastic comments toward a person are often quick and clever but lack the wisdom or sensitivity to strike the perfect balance to be witty.

Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first, for you are many, and call upon the name of your god, but put no fire to it." And they took the bull that was given them, and they prepared it and called upon the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, "O Baal, answer us!" But there was no voice, and no one answered. And they limped around the altar that they had made. And at noon Elijah mocked them, saying, "Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened."

I Kings 18:25-27

Guiding Questions

What person in the Bible, history, literature, or film needed to be witty?

When, why, and how should we (or should we NOT) be witty?

Vices

Wit can be a virtue in its best and most pure form, but it can quickly become a vice in its extreme form (buffoonery) or when it is lacking (boorishness). Continue contemplating wit by looking at these two misrepresentations of this virtue.

(+) Buffoonery

Definition: a person that does thoughtlessly silly things to make other people laugh

When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

I Corinthians 13:11

(-) Boorishness

Definition: behaving rudely

Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Guiding Questions

When have you experienced a person being a buffoon or boorish?

What situations cause you to be a buffoon or boorish?

When have you experienced wit from someone in your life?

How can you cultivate the virtue of wit in your life?

Circle a number to rate yourself in this virtue:

(-) boorishness				Wit	buffoonery (+)			
1	2	3	4	5	4	3	2	1

What kind of person do you want to be?

I am a buffoon when...

I am boorish when...

I am witty when...

I want to be...

CHAPTER III

Conclusion

So, what's next? Make it a habit to ask yourself, "What type of person do I want to be?" Revisit this list of virtues often and continue to contemplate and cultivate a deeper understanding of yourself and ways that you can be more like Christ. A list of virtues is a fantastic opportunity to practically focus on ways to mirror our Savior.

In the 1990s, there were wrist bands that read WWJD and symbolized "What Would Jesus Do?" You could answer the question in the following ways:

"Jesus would be _____ *fill in the virtue* _____."

or

"Jesus would not be _____ *fill in the vice* _____."

Again, this is not an exhaustive list of virtues, and Jesus is much more than just a moral guide or perfectly virtuous human. He is our LORD and Savior, and we have no hope to be good or develop in virtue apart from Him. If you are not already a Christian, pray to God and ask Him to save you. If you are a Christian, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you and convict you of ways you can be more virtuous.

Find a community such as a classical Christian school, church, small group study, or a few friends that want a flourishing life focused on living to the glory of God alone. May God bless you and keep you as you seek to live for Him!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr. Timothy Dernlan is a speaker, consultant, author, and visionary Christian school leader. He is passionate about advancing Christian community and culture through education. He taught theater, math, rhetoric, physical education, personal finance, leadership, communication, and systematic theology before turning his focus to school leadership.

Much of his early life was influenced by the sport of wrestling. He won All-American honors while at Purdue University, represented the United States as an athlete at the Pan American Championships, and competed in the 2000 and 2004 final Olympic Trials. He coached at Purdue, Ohio State, Penn State, Lehigh, and Ashland University and was named the NCAA Midwest Region Coach of the Year in 2008.

Dr. Dernlan has served as headmaster, head of school, and superintendent of Christian school systems ranging in size from 200 to 1300 students. Dernlan and his wife were married in 2000 and have four children.

MORE INFORMATION

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