

God is always unfailingly generous with us, even during adversity, for in adversity God is generously forming our character and giving us virtue. This is worth far more than gold, for it can never be taken away, only voluntarily relinquished and it survives the grave, blessing us for eternity. What are the virtues God wishes to give us and how are they formed? This week we will look at three virtues and two aspects of formation.

Day 1

Faith or Confidence

Verses: Philippians 1:3-11; Romans 8:26-30

We have faith or confidence in the trustworthiness of God. God is faithful to his covenant, so it is right, proper, and just to have confidence in his covenant and it is unjust to doubt him. God has promised to save us through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, to sanctify us and make us glorious, to bless us with all good things. In our lives we are tempted to doubt these promises as things in our lives do not turn out the way we wish. Our disappointment in our circumstances can soon turn into doubt in the goodness of God. Make a list of disappointments in your life currently or in the past. See if you can discern any reasons God may have allowed those outcomes and circumstances, and how he may desire to bless you in unexpected ways. Keep a running list, and as time passes and you gain new perspectives or circumstances change, see if you can update your list of blessings that come in unexpected ways. Be confidently expecting to see God bless you in unusual ways.

Day 2

Hope

Verses: Psalm 33:18-22

In our modern culture hope is like a wish, something we may want to happen but because it comes through chance it probably will elude us. The virtue in hope for our modern culture is the continuation of the wish in the face of the odds. In the bible hope is quite different. Biblical hope is the desire to seek our ultimate good and happiness in God's kingdom. It is not founded on chance, but on the abundant love and power of God. The virtue in biblical hope is to continue to be motivated in the face of apparent setbacks in the pursuit of our ultimate good and happiness. Sometimes it seems our ultimate good is getting farther away rather than getting closer to us. In these times it is easy to lose our motivation to continue to seek first God's kingdom, and we can start to be persuaded that the cheap imitation of our ultimate good that the world provides is the best we can hope for. We must not despair, for to despair is sin. We must continue to desire our ultimate good, the good that only God can provide, and we must continue our efforts to pursue God and his kingdom. Take stock of your motivation. Are you being tempted to pursue some earthly good in place of a heavenly good? Are there any areas of your life that you are being tempted to despair? What promises of God are relevant to you right now (there are many lists of God's promises on the internet to look at)? Which promises do you need to write out and memorize to rekindle your hope? Which sins or doubts do you need to put to death in your life?

Day 3

Love

Verses: 1 Corinthians 13

Biblical love is the desire to bless another with God's ultimate good and happiness. The question, as with hope, is how strong is that desire? Do you desire to have others blessed with the same strength that you desire your own blessing? What are you doing to make that real in their life? How can you make that desire stronger? The happiest people in the world are those that think more of others than they do of themselves. In fact, the surest way to misery is to spend your time thinking of yourself. Make a list today of the people in your life that you can pray for, starting with those nearest you ending with those farthest away. What practical things could you do this week to bless anyone on that list? Could you make praying through that list a weekly or even a daily habit?

Day 4

Community

Verses: Acts 2:42-47

Community is vital for the building of virtue for two important reasons. First, because most virtues involve actions toward those around us. Second, because it takes others to see in us what we cannot see. In our minds it's easy to see ourselves as loving, caring, sensitive as well as forthright and courageous—and humble. We look much different from the perspective of others. Their vantage point of being on the outside allows them to see things much more clearly, and they let us know what they see all the time. They might not come out and tell you overtly, but they give subtle hints if you have the eyes to see and the ears to hear. The problem is, with our suburban culture, we can live very isolated lives and miss out on the opportunities that others give us each day to be nudged toward virtue. Make a point this week to spend more time with others and to have your ears and eyes open when you are together, and give a prayer of thanks for the service that others provide to you in pursuing virtue.

Day 5

Our Jobs

Verses: Galatians 5:13-15

Our jobs are excellent places to pursue virtue. Not only do we get paid for it, but our bosses will be quite pleased we are using our jobs in this way, for it is a great benefit to them. Along with the virtues of faith, hope, and love, which are surprisingly useful in our careers, there are virtues like forthrightness, diligence, steadfastness, and courage which are extremely useful in our everyday jobs. Many times we think of our jobs as just something we do for money, but ultimately our jobs are places where we serve others in numerous ways, some of which are quite demanding and challenging. This is a perfect environment for the acquisition of virtue, if you can see it as part of the calling to serve one another in love. Focus this week on the most relevant virtue in your work, see if your place of business can also be a school for holiness.