

## The Seven Virtues and Their Fruit

**Prudence:** The disposition to order and direct one's life to Christlikeness in everyday existence, distinguishing between those things which help it and those which hinder it.

Prudence is *discernment* and *action* in light of how our souls best conform to Christlikeness.

Prudence compels us to ask: *How can I order and direct my daily life so as to avoid those things which hinder Christlikeness and to embrace those things which help it?*

Prudence is opposed to **sloth, lethargy in spiritual discipline, obsession with work and daily chores, mindless activity.**

Passages of Scripture: "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." (Philippians 4:8).

"Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." (Galatians 5:19-24)

**Justice:** The disposition to look to one's relationships in light of God's demand for equity, fidelity, and honesty as the truly happy way to live.

Justice is ensuring that all our relationships are being carried out in *righteousness* and *honesty*.

Justice compels us to ask: *Do I live an honest, upright life? Do I have a genuine concern for "paths of righteousness" in how I go about life?*

Justice is opposed to **deceit, slander and gossip, neglect of those under our care, infidelity, sowing of discord, violence, abuse of the environment.**

Passages of Scripture:

“There are six things that the Lord hates,  
seven that are an abomination to him:  
haughty eyes, a lying tongue,  
and hands that shed innocent blood,  
a heart that devises wicked plans,  
feet that make haste to run to evil,  
a false witness who breathes out lies,  
and one who sows discord among brothers.” (Proverbs 6:16-19)

“Whoever is righteous has regard for the life of his beast,  
But the mercy of the wicked is cruel.” (Proverbs 12:10)

“But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” (1 Timothy 5:8).

**Fortitude:** The disposition to recognize the costliness of living Christlike lives and yet choose to do so for the love of God.

Fortitude is the call for courage in the face of often daunting circumstance based on our love for God and his love for us.

Fortitude compels us to ask: *Where do I shrink from God's calling because of cowardice and fear? How can the love of God strengthen me in these areas?*

Fortitude is opposed to **cowardice, avoidance, fear, self-reliance, appeasement.**

Passages of Scripture: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm...” (Ephesians 6:10-13).

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad,

for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matthew 5:10-12).

“Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. For,

‘Yet a little while,

and the coming one will come and will not delay;

but my righteous one shall live by faith,

and if he shrinks back,

my soul has no pleasure in him.’

But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.” (Hebrews 10:35-39).

**Temperance:** The disposition to remember the goodness of God’s created world and how he created us to interact with it, refusing to dishonor it or ourselves by abuse or exploitation.

Temperance is *engaging* with God’s world according to how he designed it to work for our good and his glory, i.e., with *chastity, purity, and honor*.

Temperance compels us to ask: *Do I receive the things of life as gifts from God’s hand? To I cherish them rather than abuse and exploit them? Do I enjoy them in line with God’s design, or do I consume them?*

Temperance is opposed to **lust, greed, exploitation, abuse, gluttony, sexual immorality, adultery, cruelty, false ascetism**.

Passages of Scripture: “Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.” (1 Timothy 4:1-5).

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong [Gk. *Pleonekteō*, “defraud, exploit”] his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you

beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.” (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7).

**Faith:** the disposition to view and order all of life in light of the truth which has been divinely revealed, both in the Scriptures as a whole and principally in light of Christ’s appearing. The summary of “faith” is the Apostle’s Creed. Faith *believes* that what God has said about the world, his work, and us is *true*.

Faith is right *belief* and *action* in light of what God has revealed.

Faith compels us to ask: *What do I actually believe about who God is and what he has done? Is that reflected in how I live my daily life?*

Faith is opposed to **unbelief, forgetfulness, ignorance.**

Passages of Scripture: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible... And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.” (Hebrews 11:1-3, 6).

“truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.” (Matthew 17:20).

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;  
Fools despise wisdom and instruction.” (Proverbs 1:7).

**Hope:** the disposition to view and order all of life in light of the goodness of that which God had revealed shall come to pass and our place in it. The summary of “hope” is the Lord’s Prayer. While faith believes that what God has said is true, hope rests in that what God has said is and will be *good for them*.

Hope is *resting* in God’s promises and our part in them, refusing to trust other things in their place.

Hope compels us to ask: *What am I looking forward to? Where do I place my true hope?*

Hope is opposed to **idolatry of worldly powers, spiritual despair, self-sufficiency, lethargy in worship.**

Passages of Scripture: “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”  
(Romans 5:1-5)

“See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven. At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, ‘Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.’ This phrase, ‘Yet once more,’ indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.” (Hebrews 12:25-29)

“Pray then like this:  
‘Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.’” (Matthew 6:9-13).

**Love:** the chief of all the virtues, love is the disposition to order one’s life around the reality that the good life is about perfecting the love of God and neighbor. The summary of “love” is the Ten Commandments. Love could be said to be the essence and hallmark of all the virtues, the driving force behind all our action. Love describes our *motive*.

Love is *the internal motivation for all activity*. It is the central virtue of the good life.

Love compels us to ask: *What motivations do I have besides love? How can I work to perfect love of God and neighbor in my daily life?*

Love is opposed to **hatred, selfishness, meanness, pride, cruelty, apathy.**

Passages of Scripture: “Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet’ and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.” (Romans 13:8-10)

“Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” (Colossians 3:12-14).

“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).