

Virtues

What is a virtue?

A virtue is a good quality that belongs to your character and to the kind of person you are. It is a tendency to act in good ways. It is more enduring than a behavior. It is not so much about doing a kind thing once, or following a rule, but more about becoming a kind person, the type of person who tends to do kind things. If we are that sort of person then we will tend to be kind whatever the context. Virtues are settled habits that help guide all of our actions.

How do we gain virtues?

Because virtues are part of our character, we do not grow in them just by understanding them, but by practicing them in our life with others over time in reliance on God's grace. 2 Peter 1:5-8 says: "...make every effort to add to your faith excellence, to excellence, knowledge; to knowledge, self-control; to self-control, perseverance; to perseverance, godliness; to godliness, brotherly affection; to brotherly affection, unselfish love. For if these things are really yours and are continually increasing, they will keep you from becoming ineffective and unproductive in your pursuit of knowing our Lord Jesus Christ more intimately." (NET) This passage says that effort is needed if we are to grow into the image of the Christ who saved us. We grow in gentleness as we practice doing gentle things and we grow in courage as we practice doing brave things, and so on.

What do virtues have to do with faith?

For Christians, virtues are the fruit of a faithful life. They are not what achieves a relationship with God for us, but they flow out of an active relationship with God and his people. Faith leads us to grow in Christ-like character and to be people who are characterized by love, gentleness, humility, patience, etc. Living the virtues in every context is part of our response to God.

What are the main Christian virtues?

Key Christian virtues can be drawn from descriptions of Christ-like character in Scripture, such as 2 Peter 1:5-8, Galatians 5:22-24, and Colossians 3:12. Some central Christian virtues include:

faith	joy	humility
hope	courage	gentleness
love	faithfulness	goodness
wisdom	peace	compassion
self-control	patience	faithfulness