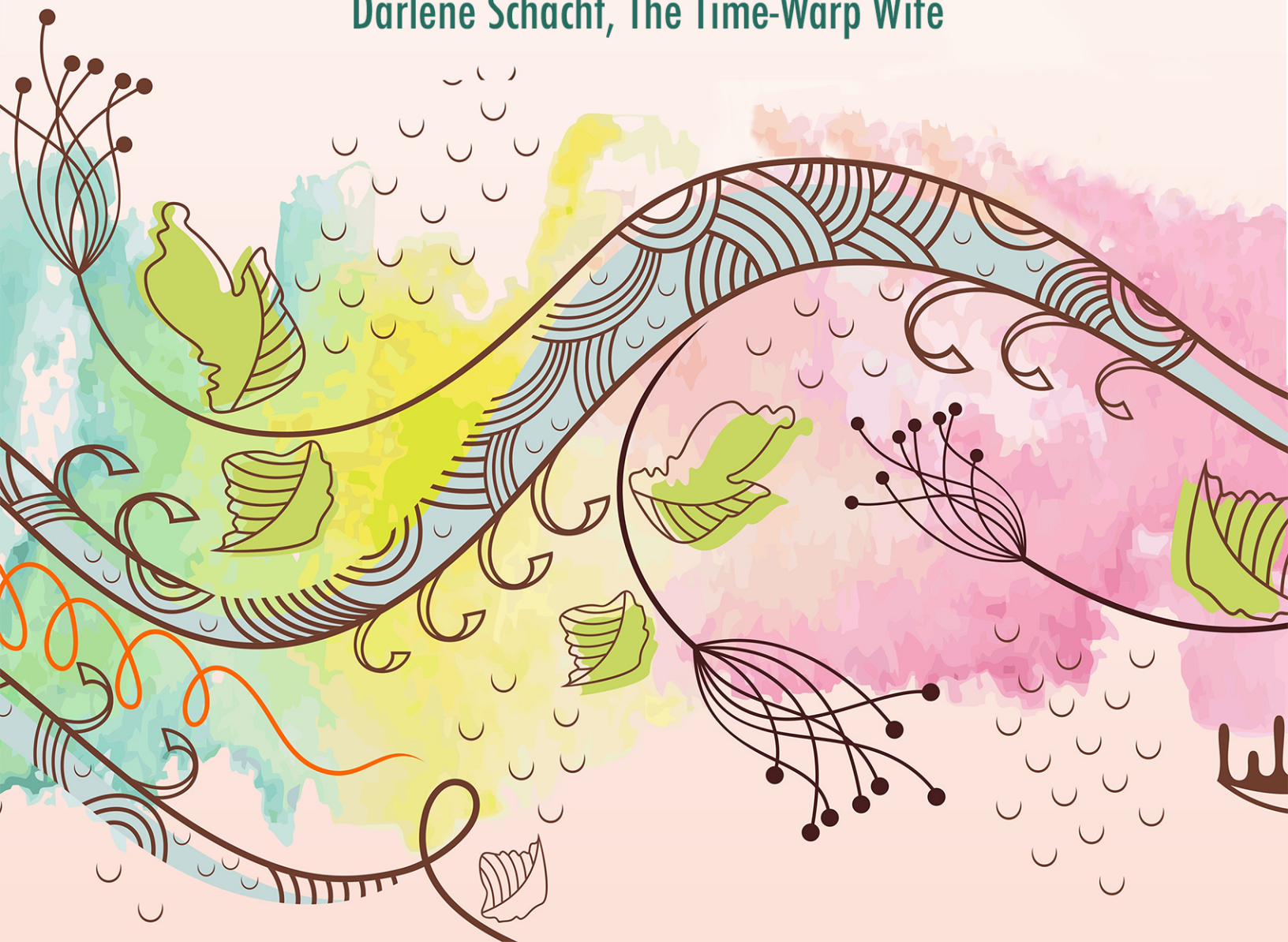




A Virtuous Life

FOUR-WEEK BIBLE STUDY

Darlene Schacht, *The Time-Warp Wife*



Introduction

The 4 Cardinal Virtues

In this study we'll examine 4 cardinal virtues, upheld by the Christian faith. The word "cardinal" in this context has nothing to do with the "Cardinals" of the Roman church, but rather it refers to important principles by which we live.

*The root of this word [cardinal] is the noun cardo, meaning "hinge." Since a hinge is the device on which a door turns, the noun cardo also came to be used for "something on which a development turns or depends," or in other words, "something very important." Following this, the adjective took on the meaning "very important, chief, principal."
- WordCentral.com (Merriam Webster)*

These are the four cardinal virtues we'll examine over four weeks:

Prudence – to be alert, cautious, wise

Temperance – self control, self-restraint, moderation

Justice – fair, righteous, honesty, integrity

Fortitude – strength, courage, endurance, grit

What is Virtue, And Why is it Important?

First and foremost, we're saved by grace. There's nothing that we can do to earn our salvation. Salvation has been imputed to us by God through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ.

The thing is however, those who believe in Jesus believe He is Lord—Lord of the universe and Lord of their lives. His wisdom exceeds ours; when it's both comfortable and uncomfortable, on the good days and bad. Those who love God are willing to give up every selfish ambition and every sinful desire to follow His will.

Virtue is all about our behavior. It's an act of yielding our lives to our principles, which is not always easy, but always rewarding. There's a will to do good in every one of us, but whether or not we choose to exercise and develop that goodness determines our character.

This doesn't mean that we walk perfectly by any means. That's where the grace of God is

vital to our faith. It's by the grace of God that we're saved through faith in Jesus Christ. So while I'm not perfect, I can rest in the knowledge that my Redeemer is!

We all struggle in this world. We all have good intentions, but our flesh keeps pulling us back. Have you ever made a decision to do something worthwhile? Maybe you wanted to change a bad habit or incorporate a new one. A few days in, you gave up. Even though you knew that this was a good decision for you, you messed up (again) and you're down on yourself because you're weaker than you hoped you would be.

It's called being human. Our flesh is constantly at war with our Spirit and there's a battle to be won. The important thing is that every time we fall, we have the opportunity to get back up again, leave the sin of the past behind, and focus on the road ahead.

We're growing in grace. We're learning what areas of our lives God is calling us to, and how to best set our sail.

Peter chapter 1 is key to this study. Here we see that we're called to glory and virtue:

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. - 2 Peter 1:3-8, KJV

You are loved by an almighty God,

Darlene Schacht
The Time-Warp Wife
www.timewarwife.com

————— *How to Use This Study* —————

Part 1 – Scratching the Surface

I've provided you with weekly reading schedules for Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. On these days, you'll read the assigned portion of scripture and write down your thoughts as they pertain to virtue.

Ask yourself these kinds of questions:

- What is the main concept, or what is God telling me here?
- How can I apply this to my life?
- Is there sin I need to examine?

Part 2 – Digging Deep into the Word

On the alternate days I want us to take a step deeper and dig into the Word.

Here are a few ways to do that:

- Look up the scripture in a commentary like *Matthew Henry's* or grab a different translation, and read it again. Is there anything that you missed the first time?

Is a commentary too much for you? Try *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary* which is an abbreviated version.

- Research the characters online. What else can you learn about them?
- Look for other verses in the Bible that talk about the same topic, or read a few chapters leading up to our scripture selection. What can you learn from them?
- Cross reference key verses that stand out to you. You can cross reference any verse online at: <http://www.openbible.info/labs/cross-references/>
- Look for life application principles. Ask yourself how you can improve in this area.

- Use the Blue Letter Bible at <http://www.blueletterbible.org> where you'll find interlinear Greek and Hebrew translations, as well as other awesome Bible study tools.

Part 3 – Quietening Your Heart

I believe that prayer is an essential part of studying the Bible. At the end of each day you'll see a reminder to grab your journal and quiet your heart.

A journal can be anything from a piece of paper to a pretty little book you pick up at the mall. It's a daily prayer journal that gets you into the habit of writing your prayer down in a book.

Some readers prefer to use the *Quietening Your Heart Journal: Prayer Journal – Virtue Edition* available at Amazon.com. It's a pretty little journal with images that you can color and scripture that you can meditate on: <http://amzn.to/25FivLR>

Part 4 - Encouragement

Visit my blog each week where I'll share encouraging thoughts on the topic as we go through this study. I'll also share printable resources to go along with the study!

You can find my blog at: <http://www.timewarpwife.com>

Part 5 – Fellowship

Visit my Facebook page where I share my thoughts on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays (during the month of the study), and join in the discussions:
<http://www.facebook.com/timewarpwife>

Join our Bible journaling group where you can share your journal entries:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/biblejournalingonline/>

Week 1 - Prudence

Friend, live near to the cross, and you will not sleep. Labor to meditate, with a deep sense of the value, about the place you will someday be going.

Charles Spurgeon

The word *prudence* is wisdom, foresight, and practical judgment.

It's important to study this virtue first because wisdom and foresight dictate the steps that we take or the ones that we don't.

We can study the Bible until we know it backwards and forwards, but if we don't have prudence we won't use the Word wisely.

The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit. – Proverbs 14:8

A good example of prudence is found in the story of Esther. She knew what needed to be done for her people, but instead of rushing in, she stepped forward wisely. She petitioned her people to fast and to pray before approaching the king.

This week we'll also study a portion from Ruth, where Boaz refers to her as a "virtuous woman."

And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman. – Ruth 3:11

Ruth counted the cost when she left everything behind to follow Naomi, and stepped forward wisely to win the heart of Boaz, her kinsman redeemer. She's truly an example of wisdom, and prudence, and strength.

The Bible instructs us to be as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves. It also instructs us to think ahead, and to count the cost before stepping in:

For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, "This man began to build, and was not able to finish."

Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?

Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. – Luke 14:28-32

The winds of doctrine are strong, and unfortunately some people are tossed back and forth, never really grasping what their faith means to them and what the Word of God has to say.

I urge you to prayerfully ask God for wisdom. Ask Him to shine light on His Word and to open up your mind to a deeper understanding of His will for Your life.

Some of you have been studying the Bible for years, while others might be opening your Bibles for the very first time. If that's the case, let me tell you that studying gets easier in time.

The Bible is like a jigsaw puzzle. You start putting pieces together, and the more pieces you lay down the more the picture starts to make sense. Soon you have a bunch of them connected together and you start to see a big picture. It can be intimidating at first, but the more you dig in, the more exciting it is.

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. – James 1:5

MONDAY

Read Esther 4:6-5:8 - “Esther is Prudent Under Pressure”

What is the main concept, or what is God telling you?

How can you apply this to your life?

Quiet Your Heart

If you have a “Quieting Your Heart Prayer Journal” don’t forget to fill it in, as you spend quiet time in prayer.

TUESDAY

Start Digging

Refer to the section “How to Use This Study Guide” and start digging deeper.

Have you learned anything new?

Quiet Your Heart

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WEDNESDAY

Read Ruth 3 - “Ruth and Boaz on the Threshing Floor”

What is the main concept, or what is God telling you?

How can you apply this to your life?

Quiet Your Heart

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THURSDAY:

Start Digging

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Have you learned anything new?

Quiet Your Heart

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FRIDAY:

Read Proverbs 31 - “A Virtuous Woman”

What is the main concept, or what is God telling you?

How can you apply this to your life?

Quiet Your Heart

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SATURDAY

Start Digging

Refer to the section “How to Use This Study Guide” and start digging deeper.

Have you learned anything new?

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Quiet Your Heart

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--- Week 2 - Temperance ---

We must have a spirit of power towards the enemy, a spirit of love towards men, and a spirit of self-control towards ourselves.
Watchman Nee

Throughout scripture we see the battle of self-control described as an ongoing war between the spirit and flesh. Here is one of many scriptures that describes that war:

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. – Galatians 5:17

Paul goes into great detail on the subject in Romans chapter 7. Here's a snippet:

For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. – Romans 7:19

The flesh is that voice in your head that tells you, "If it *feels* good do it." It tells us that we need things when we don't, and if we followed it we'd sleep too late, eat too much, and eventually come to poverty. That's where the *heart* wants to lead us.

The *Spirit* is the voice that leads you in truth. The closer you walk with God, and the more time that you spend in His presence the more that you become aware of His will in your life.

His covenant is written upon our hearts and our minds, but there's a

battle within each one of us, as Satan wants to pull us away from our faith.

And how does he do that?

Most of the time it's with arguments that make a whole lot of sense in the moment, but in the long run they always lead to destruction.

We'll study that a bit as we read the chapter on the temptations of Christ in the desert.

Another example is found in Genesis. Adam and Eve were given one commandment—only one. They could eat from every tree in the garden, but one was forbidden to them.

Satan is cunning. He came in the form of a serpent to tempt them to disobey God.

Eve said, "God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." (Gen. 3:3)

And the serpent said unto the woman, "Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." (Gen. 3:4-5)

Part of that appeared to be true—they didn't die a *physical* death that day. They went on to live for many years, but the real truth of the matter is that they experienced a *spiritual* death the moment they chose to disobey God.

God doesn't lie, but scripture can be distorted and it's often twisted to fit our agenda.

The minute that something doesn't make sense to us, we want to figure out why. It's good to be a deep thinker and to study the will of God. By all means, we should! But if we come to a cross road where we have to choose the wisdom of God over our ability to rationalize it, we must be

willing to follow the Spirit.

If we're only obeying God when it makes sense to us then we're living to serve ourselves, not the Spirit. God's laws don't always make sense to us, quite often they require us to step out of our comfort zone or to feel the sting of refinement.

We live in a modern, self-centered society that encourages people to be happy at any cost. We're fed this idea that people are strong and in control because they do what they want, they say what they want, and they live anyway that they want to.

Assuming that someone is strong because they do whatever they want to or whatever they feel like doing in the moment is foolish. It takes strength to bring your flesh under subjection to your spirit.

Whether we're getting up early to dig into the Word, controlling our appetite because it's the right thing to do, or breaking off a relationship that's detrimental to our life, we're going to feel the sting that comes with refinement.

The Bible compares the refinement of our faith to fire. It hurts. It stings. It's difficult to endure... But once you come out on the other side, you see that "joy unspeakable" is yours for the taking.

Temporal happiness could never compare to the inner peace that comes from serving the Lord.

There's an old Cherokee legend about two wolves at war. It's good food for thought on the topic of self-control.

One night a grandfather was teaching his grandson about life. "A fight is going on inside me," he said to the boy. "It is a terrible fight between two wolves. One is evil – he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego." He continued, "The other is good – he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy,

generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. The same fight is going on inside you – and inside every other person, too.”

The boy paused to think for a moment before looking up at his grandfather. “Which wolf will win?” He asked.

The wise man simply replied, “The one that you feed.”

Hearing that story, I’m reminded of the scripture that says,

And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. – Galatians 5:24

Those who walk in the Spirit walk according to the wisdom that they’ve been given. In other words, they make choices day after day to put away sin.

When we fall, we praise God for His unfailing grace, but we stand up again and get back in the race.

Putting away sin starts with a decision, and then it calls for self-control.

Scripture after scripture talks about the virtue of self-control. It talks about controlling our appetites, about greed, and how our bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost. It talks about crucifying the flesh and anything else that controls you.

Many of our habits are okay in and of themselves, but the overuse of them can be detrimental to our walk of faith.

Remember, a virtuous person isn’t ruled by their passions—they passionately pursue an incomparable God.

MONDAY

Read Daniel 1 - “Daniel’s Training in Babylon”

What is the main concept, or what is God telling you?

How can you apply this to your life?

Quiet Your Heart

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TUESDAY

Start Digging

Refer to the section “How to Use This Study Guide” and start digging deeper.

Have you learned anything new?

Quiet Your Heart

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WEDNESDAY

Read Matthew 4 – “Jesus is Tested in the Wilderness”

What is the main concept, or what is God telling you?

How can you apply this to your life?

Quiet Your Heart

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THURSDAY:

Start Digging

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Have you learned anything new?

Quiet Your Heart

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FRIDAY:

Read Galatians 5 – “Freedom in Christ”

What is the main concept, or what is God telling you?

How can you apply this to your life?

Quiet Your Heart

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SATURDAY

Start Digging

Refer to the section “How to Use This Study Guide” and start digging deeper.

Have you learned anything new?

[illegible]

Quiet Your Heart

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Week 3 - Justice

*Integrity is doing the right thing,
even when no one is watching.*
C. S. Lewis

As I got to writing this section of the study, I kept going back to Joseph. I've read about his life many times over, but I had never realized the depth of his virtue.

This man exemplified justice. He was a man of integrity. He was fair, and honest, and upright, and just. He looked past his circumstances to discover God's will.

For the sake of this study I had to pick and choose portions of his life to focus on, but I encourage you to take some time if you can, to read his story in its entirety.

Start at Genesis chapter 37 and read through to chapter 45. I guarantee that you'll be blessed by his goodness and grace.

He was dealt the most horrific hand by his brothers who sold him into slavery, but despite their effort to put him down, God blessed Joseph.

He prospered in the land of Egypt and was made an overseer of Potiphar's house. His integrity and loyalty however, was a snare to him. Because of it, he lost his job and was sent to prison.

Any one of us might have been bitter under such circumstances, but Joseph remained grateful and faithful to God Who raised him up once again.

As you read, you'll see how Joseph's compassion toward his brothers reflects the kindness of God Who offers salvation to a world that crucified Him.

Justice is a cardinal virtue on which many others branch out. If we're not honest and true and just, we fail to be light in this world.

It's easy to be holy and just when people are kind and considerate, but God calls us to be holy as He is holy, which means we offer grace to both the just and the unjust.

Because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." – 1 Peter 1:16

The minute we take our eyes off of the Lord we lose our perspective, and we lose our gauge for right living. Joseph kept his eyes on the Lord, which kept him grounded in faith.

As I'm reading the story of Joseph I get to the part in chapter 43 where he enters his chamber to weep, and I see that integrity doesn't come easy. It breaks us down to a place where the Master can build us back up.

MONDAY

Read Genesis 39 – “Joseph and Potiphar’s Wife”

What is the main concept, or what is God telling you?

How can you apply this to your life?

Quiet Your Heart

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TUESDAY

Start Digging

Refer to the section “How to Use This Study Guide” and start digging deeper.

Have you learned anything new?

Quiet Your Heart

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WEDNESDAY

Read Genesis 45 – “Joseph is Faithful and Just”

What is the main concept, or what is God telling you?

How can you apply this to your life?

Quiet Your Heart

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THURSDAY:

Start Digging

Refer to the section “How to Use This Study Guide” and start digging deeper.

Have you learned anything new?

Quiet Your Heart

If you have a “Quieting Your Heart Prayer Journal” don’t forget to fill it in, as you spend quiet time in prayer.

FRIDAY:

Read 1 Samuel 24 – “David Spares Saul’s Life”

What is the main concept, or what is God telling you?

How can you apply this to your life?

Quiet Your Heart

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SATURDAY

Start Digging

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Have you learned anything new?

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Week 4 - Fortitude

*Courage is not simply one of the virtues,
but the form of every virtue at the testing point.*
C.S. Lewis

C. S. Lewis wrote, “Fortitude includes both kinds of courage—the kind that faces danger as well as the kind that ‘sticks it’ under pain. ‘Guts’ is perhaps the nearest modern English. You will notice, of course, that you cannot practice any of the other virtues very long without bringing this one into play.” (Mere Christianity)

Life’s tough and let’s face it, an uphill battle is never pleasant, but here’s the thing, if you want to see change, and if you want to live a victorious life, be persistent, courageous, and strong.

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; – 2 Peter 1:5

Looking to this verse in its original context, we see the word ‘diligence’ translated from the Greek word *spoudē* which is an earnestness in accomplishing, promoting, or striving after anything.

Perhaps a modern translation of the word diligence might further add to its clarity: *constant and earnest effort to accomplish what is undertaken.* (Dictionary.com)

When I think of fortitude, I can’t help but think of Paul’s letter to the Philippians in chapter 3. He’s a runner in a spiritual race, leaving anything behind that might weigh him down. He gave all diligence to the race before him and threw aside anything that stood in the way.

When I look to Paul, I see a man of virtue. I see a man full of grit who exercised inner strength to win Christ.

He writes, “This one thing I do...”

This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. – Philippians 3:13-14

In Acts chapter 27 we read an interesting story about the apostle Paul and several other prisoners who were sailing to Italy under the supervision of Julius the centurion.

After making a stop and transferring ships, the winds were so rough that it was impossible to stay on course. They docked at the Island of Crete. By this time the stormy autumn weather made it impossible to continue on. Paul warned them that they should stay put, but they ignored him and continued the journey en route to a better harbor.

Here’s where the life lesson comes in. While out at sea, they lost control, and in order to survive, they had to lighten the ship. On the first day they threw out the anchors, on the second day the cargo, and on the third day they threw out their tackle and provisions.

And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away. – Acts 27:20

It wasn’t until they were fully reliant on God that they found a glimpse of hope. Hope was there all along, but sometimes we need to come to the end of our rope before we realize that we’re resting in the palm of God’s hand.

Paul advised them that God would rescue them, but that they must remain together. In a final act of faith, they lightened the ship yet again and threw their food into the sea. The ship and everything in it was destroyed, but every one of those men made it safely to shore.

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. – Hebrews 12:1-3

MONDAY

Read Philippians 3 – “Pressing Toward the Mark”

What is the main concept, or what is God telling you?

How can you apply this to your life?

Quiet Your Heart

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TUESDAY

Start Digging

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Have you learned anything new?

Quiet Your Heart

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WEDNESDAY

Read Exodus 17 – “Moses Lifts His Hands”

What is the main concept, or what is God telling you?

How can you apply this to your life?

Quiet Your Heart

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THURSDAY:

Start Digging

Refer to the section “How to Use This Study Guide” and start digging deeper.

Have you learned anything new?

Quiet Your Heart

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FRIDAY:

Read Matthew 26:36-56 - “Not My Will But Thine Be Done”

What is the main concept, or what is God telling you?

How can you apply this to your life?

Quiet Your Heart

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SATURDAY

Start Digging

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