

Get Ready!

The Value of Virtue

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Text

Matthew 15:29-39, 2 Peter 1:3-8

Key Quest Verse

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things. Philippians 4:8 (NIV)

Bible Background

A virtue or being virtuous has many definitions, but one is doing what is right and avoiding what is wrong. To examine those who possessed good virtues through the scriptures would be an impossible task for one lesson, but it is possible to look at a few and discover how we can recognize the positive virtues of Bible characters and emulate them.

I have often heard of the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31. There are songs and poems written about her. What characteristics did she possess? In modern translations she is called a woman of noble character. Among her many virtues she brings good to her spouse (v. 12), has a good work ethic (v.13), she reaches out to the community (v.20), she takes care of her own household (v. 21), she uses wisdom and reacts in a timely manner as a woman of business (v.24), but most importantly she is a woman who **fears the Lord** (v.30).

This fear or respect of God brings God delight. As Psalm 147:11 states, “the Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love”. As followers of God we do what is right to please God because of our respect and love for Him. This results in His people possessing godly virtue.

The New Testament records much of the life of Jesus showing many virtues through his behavior. “Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.” (Matthew 4:23)

Christ’s behavior always showed love for God and others. He showed the virtue of honesty and truth through his teachings. He demonstrated the virtue of compassion and love for his disciples, his mother (John 19:26&27), his friends (John 11:33-36 Mary, Martha & Lazarus), the crowds that followed him and even his enemies (Luke 23:34).

By following Christ’s example Peter displayed positive virtues including courage, discipline and perseverance (2 Peter 1:5-8). The writers of the New Testament instructed us to also develop and practice positive, godly qualities (1 Peter 2:12). As our Key Quest Verse instructs us we must think about true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy things. When those ideas become part of us and we act on them—we have virtue. Through God’s spirit working in us we will live a life that demonstrates virtues.

Get Ready!

Lesson Quest



What I want my students to:

Know: God has established right, proper guidelines for their behavior which are in the scriptures

Feel: Confident that their behavior can be positive and controlled by God

Do: Develop positive character traits and put them into practice in their daily lives

Leader's Devotion

A virtue is a commendable quality, the conformity to a standard of right and morality.

Teaching virtues to teens in today's world can be challenging. Most of the messages they get from the media teaches anything but being a virtuous person.

Our hope is that through our teaching and example that our students will strive for a life that is always guided by what pleases God. We know that a life of high moral standards and ethical behavior is more difficult, but God assures us that this type of life holds His blessings and a future hope.

Christ was the ultimate example of a person that possessed every positive virtue. Among these virtues was his compassion. Compassion is defined as a sympathetic feeling. Having compassion for others means that you have experienced the feelings that they are feeling and you can understand and sympathize with them. In our text (Matthew 15:29-39) we see that Jesus felt compassion for the crowd. He healed and fed those who were following him.

The fact that you are teaching a class shows that you have compassion, too. You see the needs of your youth for direction, guidance and love and you want to fill those needs. We have compassion and love for our teens and want to help them grow stronger in the Lord. Our prayer is that God will use us to direct our students. We can help them find every good quality in His Word and help them see these qualities in the Bible characters and in the lives of those living a Christian life now. As teachers can create an atmosphere with opportunities for them to put into practice the positive virtues that they discover.

How exciting that God allows us to show our students the wonderful virtues contained in His Word and help our students develop and implement those into their everyday lives.

Get Set!

Option A

Materials: watch with second hand or stop watch

Procedure: We are going to take our shoes off and place them in a pile in the middle of the room. When I say go all of you should go to the pile and try to get two shoes and place them on your feet as fast as possible. They don't need to match and they don't need to fit. They can not be your own shoes. When you have your new pair of shoes, walk around the room once in a single file line.

Time the students as they do the shoe swap. Ignore those students who do not want to participate because they do not want to wear another student's shoes. They will get the point. Announce to the class how long it took them to complete their task.

Now that you have tried walking, you can honestly say that you have walked a few steps in someone else's shoes. You may have heard this phrase before. It is expressing compassion. Compassion is defined as a sympathetic feeling. Compassion is a virtue. Having compassion for others means that you have experienced the feelings that they are feeling and you can understand and sympathize with them. So think of this game of trading places the next time you need to consider the feelings of others.

Jesus was a compassionate person. Let's look at the way he felt compassion for and helped the crowds of Galilee.



GO TO THE BIBLE STORY

Option B

Materials: 1 package of Ramen noodles

Procedure: Today I have this pack of ramen noodles. Let's see how many pieces we can divide from this one pack. Break the block into pieces for each student. Have each student break their noodles into as many small pieces as possible. After the students have discovered how many pieces they can make. "Guesstimate" how many pieces you were able to make. **How many people would you be able to feed and what portion size would they receive?** Pass around a basket (lined- to keep those small pieces from falling through) to gather up the pieces. **We have just re-enacted our version of the miracle of Jesus feeding the 4,000. Jesus asked the disciples how much food they had to share with the people. He took what they had. Seven loaves of bread and a few fish. He increased it and satisfied everyone's hunger.**

Jesus saw the need of the people and he did something about it. He felt compassion for them. When we see needs and offer our talents, we may be surprised by the increase of that. If we are willing to offer our lives to Jesus, we will be amazed by the many ways he will increase what we give him.

GO TO THE BIBLE STORY

Get Set!



Bible Story

Materials: Dry Erase board with markers or chalk board with chalk.

What are some of the character traits you respect in others and why? For example, honesty is a good character trait, because if a person is honest you can trust what that person tells you.

Accept answers. Write some of the traits on the board and discuss why these are good for a person to have.

Many character strengths like honesty, compassion, courage, self-discipline, loyalty, responsibility and perseverance are called virtues. There are many more virtues, but we are going to focus on some of these. Here are some of the definitions used to describe virtue - quality of doing what is right and avoiding what is wrong, merit, any admirable quality or attribute, ability or strength and moral excellence.

There are many examples of people throughout the scriptures that had good character. We are even told in many passages of the Bible how to develop good character. The greatest example of the person who possessed every positive virtue was Jesus. He also sets the example of the results of having good character and being a virtuous person.

How was he rewarded? (God approved of him, he was given immortal life, he was allowed to sit at God's right hand, etc.) In the gospels, the first four books of the New Testament, we have the written account of Christ's life. We see so many wonderful characteristics revealed through Christ's actions. In the book of Matthew chapter 15 verses 29-38 we have the written account of the miracle of the feeding of the 4,000. Jesus had performed a similar miracle by feeding 5,000 earlier in the book of Matthew (14:13-21).

Read Matthew 15:29-39

Jesus always showed compassion to the crowds looking for his healing and this resulted in the people praising the God of Israel. When Jesus saw the crowds of sick and hungry people, he felt compassion for them. He wanted to make sure that their physical needs were met. Imagine yourself in this situation. The disciples and Jesus were probably tired and hungry and a long way from a hot meal. But Jesus gives us an incredible lesson. He takes the focus off of himself and has compassion for others. He realized that the people's immediate physical needs had to be satisfied. It is important to put ourselves in Jesus' place when we think of compassion. They came to him in large crowds and begged for his healings. Jesus put his own needs aside and focused on the sick and hungry people that needed him so desperately

He could not have sent them away. He took what the disciples had, which seemed insufficient, but in his hands became more than enough for the 4,000.

Jesus can take whatever we give him and increase it as well, whether it is our talents,

Get Set!



Bible Story

time, money or our character. It is when we give them to Jesus that our resources can be increased. So looking at our story we can see the great example of showing compassion for others. Just like Jesus we want to show others compassion and concern.

This is one of the character strengths or virtues that Jesus possessed.

When we read our Bibles we should note the virtues that followers of God had and ask God to help us imitate them in our daily lives. As we are told from the book of Hebrews, “Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith”. (Hebrews 13:7 NIV)

We learn about virtues from the New Testament writers as well. Remember that Peter lacked courage when Jesus was arrested. He denied Christ three times to avoid being condemned with him. Yet, later we see his courage displayed as he spoke boldly to large crowds about Jesus Christ. They put him in prison, but he would not be silenced. He continued to spread the message of Jesus Christ. Just like Peter, each of us can develop good character traits with God’s help.

How do we develop virtue?

Our Key Quest Verse reminds us that we should get our minds thinking about what is good. It is from **Philippians 4:8**. Read verse together. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things. **Philippians 4:8 (NIV)**

When we start thinking about the good and acting on it then we are living a life that is filled with character strengths or virtues. Peter gives us a place to start. He tells us to make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. (2 Peter 1:3-8 NIV)

How great to be a person that others think of as having sound judgment, being responsible, honest, having courage and showing caring and concern for others.

These virtues are results of living a life that follows Christ’s teaching of loving God and others.

Under Construction*Drama activity continued*

Conscience: Remember when Bob helped you get ready for the Math test. You did really well, but when he needed help with Basketball you just left him hanging. And there was the time that Sharon asked you to help her clean up after the festival at church. You said you would, but then you didn't because your friends were going to the movies. I bet it took her hours to finish. Then there was the time that the youth group had that fundraiser. Everyone else was working hard, but you took off with Mary and forgot why you were even there.

Person: Yes, yes, I remember keep going. (Conscience pulls out file and uses it on person.) Boy you sound just like my Mom.

Conscience: No respect for authority. We'll have to strengthen that! (takes out putty spatula)

Person: I must admit. It feels good to deal with some of this stuff.

Conscience: Whoops. Here is a hole. I'll just patch that. Put some joy in there.

Person: (starts talking with excitement) You know I am really glad to be a Christian! After all, Christ is always with me, no matter what. Someday he will come and I will have a place in His Kingdom. Isn't that wonderful?!

Conscience: (concerned) Maybe that was too much joy? (Looking at patch) Maybe I should remove some of that. (Starts to take some away, person stops him)

Person: Hey leave it. Leave it. I like it.

Conscience: Ok. I think that is all for today.

Person: Great. Hey what a minute. There is still something here on my arm.

Conscience: Oh yeah. Well, that's a scar.

Person: A scar? Where did it come from.

Conscience: Sometimes those are left from sin.

Person: When did I get that?

Conscience: You remember the time you were on the internet, and you entered those sites you weren't supposed to enter and ...

Person: (interrupts) Yes, I remember. I'm really sorry I did that. But if God forgives me, why the scar?

Conscience: He does forgive. But your mind is not a computer, you can't just delete the file of your memory. You will still remember.

Person: Yeah, I've learned that sin has consequences.

Conscience: That is why God has given me to you. To help you stay away from sin to keep you from the pain that sin creates. But remember the most important thing -God is the only one who can change us for good. He fills us with His Spirit. He gives us His power and His love. We become His children.

Person: You know I'm glad that God gave me a strong, hard working conscience, but you're in for a real workout with me.

Conscience: Ok, I'll see you bright and early in the morning.

Quest Connection

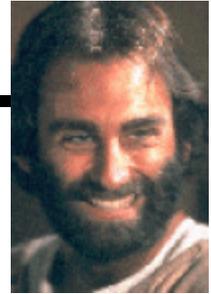
This Drama helps us understand that our character needs to be developed and examined. We need to take an honest look at ourselves and let God work on those areas of our character that may be lacking.

Close

Read Ephesians 2:19-22 as a class.

Go!

If We Are the Body



MUSIC

Materials: CD If We Are the Body and CD player, copies of If We Are the Body Worksheet for students

Artist: Casting Crowns **Title:** Casting Crowns (Beach Street Records)

Quest Connection

Mark Hall sings lead vocals for the Christian group Casting Crowns. If you have ever listened to the band, you will notice that Mark is very talented. He is a great songwriter and singer, but there is probably something that you don't know about this gifted musician. He has dyslexia. Dyslexia is a learning disability. It may cause difficulty in accurate word recognition, spelling and decoding abilities. Mark said that he could relate to the writings of the apostle Paul. Paul said that he had a thorn in his flesh. Paul had a problem, perhaps physical, with which he had to deal. Mark understood that because he has to deal with his disability, too. He said that it made him feel different, like he sometimes did not fit in. I am sure that all of us have had that feeling. Because Mark has experienced this feeling, he can emphasize with others who might be feeling this way. He was able to capture that emotion when he wrote his favorite Casting Crowns song, If We are the Body. This song helps us understand what it is like for a new person to attend a church. If you have a visitor attend, are they welcomed? Do you make an effort to introduce yourselves and learn their name? As the church we should be doing the same things that Christ would do. In our story today we learned about Jesus having compassion for the crowds that followed him. He healed, fed and taught the people who followed. He showed them love. We need to do the same.

Pass out the worksheet which has the song lyrics. Play the song. When the song is over, give students an opportunity to share their feelings about the song.

Close

Mark Hall has been a youth pastor for several years. When he wrote the song If We are the Body he said I was just trying to say, "Look, you've been in church all your life, but you need to understand what the church looks like when the world comes in. They've never been here before and it looks like a big old happy circle that they're not a part of." This week imagine that you are a visitor at your church. How can your church make visitors feel more welcomed and to make them feel a part of the group? What will you personally do to make that happen?

Go!

Soup's On



FOOD

In this service opportunity, your teens will experience making soup for homebound or elderly members of your church. Just as Jesus did, they will make a meal to show caring for others.

Preparation: This activity takes some planning ahead, but it is worth it. Talk with family members of homebound or elderly members to set up dropping off the soup or having the family members take it to the recipients.

Materials: Ingredients for a pot of soup. Containers to deliver the soup-Mason Jars with lids work well.

Recipe: Chicken broth, water, onion, carrots, green beans, celery stalk, potatoes, pasta or quick cook rice, cream of celery soup, onion powder, dash of pepper

Optional ingredient: milk

Quest Connection

Before class bring some water and chicken broth to a boil in a large stock pot. As students arrive have them wash their hands and begin cutting up vegetables. In a large stock pot add carrots and green beans. Let them cook while you cut other vegetables, add chopped onion, chopped celery, and potatoes. Add pasta or quick cook rice (follow package directions). Cook vegetables until tender and soft. Add cream of celery soup, a dash of onion powder and pepper to taste. If you desire a thinner soup add more water and/or milk.

We learned that Christ showed compassion to the people in his community. We have some people that we want to show compassion to as well. Share information with the students about the recipients of the soup. Explain that the soup and note will brighten their day and reassure them that people are thinking about them and care. Have the students write notes to these individuals. When the soup is done, put into containers and deliver.

Let's read Matthew 25:31-46 together.

Close

Jesus tells us that "whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." Matthew 25:40 He represents the King in this parable. We want to do good for those who need our caring and concern. We are going to pray for the recipients of our soup.

Pray for the individuals who will receive the soup. If the soup can not be delivered right away, it can be frozen and delivered later.

Go!**Jesus****VIDEO**

**Materials: The Visual Bible Video of Matthew
or another Video of Christ**

Paper and pens for students

Note: The Visual Bible of Matthew is a word for word presentation of the gospel of Matthew from Visual International, Inc. It is available in Bible bookstores or online.

**Quest Connection**

Watch a portion of the video as a class. Have students write down some of the characteristics that Jesus displayed or that they know to be true of Jesus. Some suggestions would be caring/compassion for others, courage, perseverance, self-discipline, responsibility, friendship, honesty, etc. Discuss how those characteristics are displayed through Christ's actions.

All the actions of Christ were motivated by his love for God and others. How can we show our love to others this week?

The book of Luke tells us that "Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." (Luke 2:52 NIV) Let's make sure that we are allowing God to help us grow in wisdom and in all the good virtues that we should have.

Close

Have each student choose one characteristic of Christ that they most admire. Allow students to share that characteristic with the class, if they wish.

Go!**Mosaic****ARTS & CRAFTS**

Materials: Any material to use for a mosaic—broken egg shells, torn tissue paper (in assorted colors), or construction paper

Glue or Modge Podge

You can use any object you like to turn into a mosaic— a paper picture frame, cardstock to make a greeting card, a shoe box, etc.

Quest Connection

The word mosaic means a variety, mixture, a montage, etc. Today we want to make a mosaic piece. As you put all the pieces together, think about how God works with us just like our piece of artwork. He places the characteristics that we need together. As long as we follow and obey Him, he continues to form us into a work of beauty under His loving hands. Our character contains many necessary virtues.

In the same way, the church brings together many individuals for one purpose. We are different people, but we are all working toward the same goal. We are committed to live by faith, have our actions guided by love, and be a voice of hope. As 1 Corinthians 12:12 states, “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.”

Becoming an active part of the church is wonderful because we are meeting together with others who are trying to become the best Christians they can be. We all share the same goal.

Close

Let’s review our Key Quest Verse. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things. **Philippians 4:8 (NIV)**

How does thinking about these positive things help to make our character better?

Go!**Building Blocks of Character****GAME****Materials: Jenga Game**

A game with stacked rectangle shaped blocks. Each player must remove a block and move it to the top. The first one to remove a block that causes the tower of blocks to fall loses the game.

Quest Connection

This tower is made up of many pieces, yet when they are all in place it is stable. Let's see how many blocks we can remove before it falls. Each of you can take a wooden block from the tower and place it gently on top. Each player takes turns until the tower finally comes crashing down. The last one to put a block on without making it fall is the winner.

Play game.

Each person is made of many thoughts, beliefs, feelings and virtues that drive our behavior. They are the basis of our character. In everyone there are positive character traits and some character traits that need to be strengthened. A real problem can develop if we neglect an area of our character that needs some improvement. Just like our game if there is a hole in our character, it will cause problems. If a person has a problem with honesty and he never develops this virtue, someday his dishonesty will manifest itself somehow. When we see weak spots in our character, we need to work on them.

How do we recognize what areas need improvement or are weak? You will find the answers in the scriptures. God has given us the Bible to guide our actions. Read the advice that Paul tells Timothy. Read 2 Timothy 3:10-17.

When you see that an area of your character needs work, ask God to help you make it right. Determine that you are going to work on that area so you can be more like Jesus Christ our Savior .

Close

This week take some time to look honestly at your own character and ask God to help you correct any flaws that you see there.

Father,

Thank you for the opportunity to met with each other. Thank you for loving us. We pray that we will see the areas where we need to strengthen our character. Please fill us with your power. We want to do your work and be the people that you have called us to be. In Jesus Name, Amen.

If We Are the Body

It's crowded in worship today
As she slips in trying to fade into the faces
The girls teasing laughter is carrying farther than they know
Farther than they know

Chorus:

But if we are the body
Why aren't His arms reaching?
Why aren't His hands healing?
Why aren't His words teaching?
And if we are the body
Why aren't His feet going?
Why is His love not showing them there is a way?
There is a way

A traveler is far away from home
He sheds his coat and quietly sinks into the back row
The weight of their judgmental glances
Tells him that his chances are better out on the road

Jesus paid much too high a price
For us to pick and choose who should come
And we are the body of Christ



Jesus is the way

Artist: Casting Crowns Album: Casting Crowns

Virtuous Woman *Name* _____

There are many stories and descriptions of individual in the scriptures that had good character. Let's look at one of these individuals.

Proverbs 31 contains a description of a virtuous woman. In modern translations she is called a wife of noble character. Read Proverbs 31:10-31

What characteristics did this woman posses that made her noble?

You may have noticed that among her many virtues she brings good to her spouse (v. 12), has a good work ethic (v.13), she reaches out to the community (v. 20), she takes care of her own household (v. 21), she uses wisdom and reacts in a timely manner as a woman of business (v.24), but most importantly she is a woman who fears the Lord (v.30).

This term of fearing the Lord means having respect for God. As Psalm 147:11 states, "the Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love". As followers of God we do what is right to please Him out of our respect and love. This results in His people possessing godly virtue.

In verse 26, it states that "she speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue. Have you ever instructed others in how to do something? Sports, games, playing an instrument? How could you imitate her by speaking with wisdom and giving others faithful instruction?

Do you ever get overly concerned about your appearance, notice verse 30? God praises us because of our inward beauty, not what we look like on the outside.

Notes: _____



HOW DO YOU RATE

WORKSHEET

There are many virtues. Here are a few. Rate yourself on how well you have mastered this virtue in your daily life. Be honest. Keep a dictionary handy to explain any virtues with which you are not familiar.

Scale	Poor 1	Needs improvement 2	Fair 3	Good 4	Excellent 5
Compassion	1	2	3	4	5
Confidence	1	2	3	4	5
Consideration	1	2	3	4	5
Contentment	1	2	3	4	5
Cooperation	1	2	3	4	5
Courage	1	2	3	4	5
Courtesy	1	2	3	4	5
Determination	1	2	3	4	5
Dignity	1	2	3	4	5
Diligence	1	2	3	4	5

Did you have any areas that may need improvement? All of us do. Remember that God will always help you.

Here are some verses that give us great advice. Romans 12:9-13

The Value of Virtue

1. How would you define virtue? _____

2. Do you see a need for virtue when you interact with others? _____ Why? _____

Find a Bible verse to support your answers. _____

3. What virtues do you see in other individuals that you admire? _____

4. **Name a person** from the New Testament excluding Jesus, that you would say exemplifies one or more virtues. What are the virtues they possess? An example would be Mary the mother of Jesus. She had the virtues of being responsible and caring, she took on the responsibility of raising Jesus seriously and followed God's instruction.

5. Read 2 Peter 1:3-8. According to verse 3, what has His divine power given us?

What should we add to our faith? _____

Notes: _____



Journal Page

Righteous Ruth

Ruth was called a virtuous woman, a woman of noble character. The Old Testament book of Ruth tells the story of Ruth and Naomi. Ruth was a widow and a foreigner who showed great caring for her elderly mother-in-law, Naomi. Ruth showed devotion to her by leaving her own country and moving with her to Bethlehem. Read these 4 chapters of the beautiful love story of Ruth and Boaz. This virtuous woman is the outsider who becomes one of the most famous women of Israel's history. She became the ancestor of King David and Jesus Christ.

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

First Rate Traits !

Define the following traits. Why would it be good to have these characteristics? If you are uncertain of the meaning of any of these traits use a dictionary to define them.

Fairness

Flexibility

Forgiveness

Friendliness

Generosity

Gentleness

Helpfulness

Honesty

Hopefulness

Humility

Integrity