

## The Seven Virtues

1. (John 1:1-4; Hebrews 4:12) We have the Word of God, Jesus, with us, not because we are special or wonderful but because HE is, and he has promised us his presence.
2. Jesus is our primary companion, our primary resource, and our primary weapon (but a weapon that works through love, not attack). Anyone who has taught how to handle a firearm will tell you that the mere possession of a weapon is not necessarily a positive; you must know how to use it. The writer of Hebrews agrees as does Paul when he tells Timothy to learn how to handle scripture.
3. God did not leave us with just a list of rocks to avoid (last week's lesson). He also gave us things to aim toward. Think of these as bowling pins. Each day, we can measure our progress by asking if we got to these places, these waypoints. Early Christians called them the Seven Virtues.
4. As early as the 300s, Christians gave each other these seven navigational aids for life. Remember, they didn't have the Bible in their homes and most would never hear more than a few books read in public. They needed something to make sure they were facing Jesus. Jesus told all of us that we didn't have to solve all mysteries or know all things to be saved; it is all about facing the right direction. (Luke 11:9,10)
5. CHASTITY: there is nothing as purely powerful as purity itself. Chastity is not just about not having sex. No, it means dealing with sex honorably throughout your life. It is about having a pure heart and a pure mind as well as a pure body. As we end each day, we can ask ourselves if we kept ourselves clean – heart, mind, body.
6. In ancient Christianity, the virtues are linked to other character traits. Chastity was linked to purity, of course, but also wisdom, knowledge and honesty.
7. TEMPERANCE: this is self restraint. We live on a planet with hundreds of thousands of laws and regulations. Some of them are so complex and contradictory that, like the American tax laws, it is well

known that you cannot fail to break the law every time you pay (and when you don't!).

8. As a Christian, we are to discipline ourselves (not others). You are a person who makes choices. Make your own choices in concert with Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Do not let others make decisions for you. Watch and pray. Understand the value of delayed gratification.
9. The early Christians linked temperance to self-control, justice, honor, and abstention (the ability to say no to yourself).
10. CHARITY: This is love, but it is more than that. It is charity, generosity, love and self-sacrifice. It is choosing to give to others rather than demanding that they give to you. It is choosing to love others even if they don't love you. It is love that reflects the fact that we are walking with Jesus.
11. DILIGENCE: Be careful and intentional. Be zealous. Have a good work ethic and don't let the world and its devices (literally) pull you away from your mission and from who you are in Christ. Like Luther, stand and say "Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God."
12. PATIENCE: When storms come, ride them out. When the times of silence come, ride them out. Have the patience to resolve conflicts and injustice through peaceful means. Allow others as much grace as you want God to give to you.
13. The early Christians linked patience to peace, mercy, longsuffering, and godliness.
14. KINDNESS: This is close in, personal good. It is doing good without any hidden motive, without expecting anything in return. This is compassion and friendship offered to those who cannot do anything for you. This is love and service without spite.
15. Early Christians linked kindness with loyalty, compassion, and integrity.

16. HUMILITY: Knights would kneel to receive the honor. Humility first, then the honor. Remember who God is and remember that you are not Him. Let God direct the plan. Let God forgive you and those who hurt you. Refuse to judge, but walk in wisdom. Humility is wisdom and strength under control.
17. These are the seven virtues. Keep your ship pointed in that direction. When Peter and the rest of the apostles were caught in that storm, they feared for their lives. When Peter saw Christ walking on the water, he asked permission to go to him – out of the boat, right into the storm – because he knew that was where safety was: wherever Christ is.
18. Look around. See what Christ is doing and join that. Use these virtues as your bowling pins or box scores. Don't use them to beat yourself or others up. Be patient, growing in Christ, sailing with him, allowing his hand to take the wheel and guide you.
19. For where Christ is, there is peace.