

The Classical Virtues

The seven classical virtues define human excellence. The virtue framework helps people approach morality and live a flourishing, successful life. There do exist other lists of virtues, fruits of the spirit, and so on, but this simple framework is both profound and enduring. The four virtues are found in Plato, Aristotle, as well as in the Bible and Christian authors such as St. Augustine and C.S. Lewis. Christ himself exemplifies all the virtues. The opposite of the virtues are vices. All people have some measure of virtue but through repentance we can overcome our vices and increase our virtues more and more.

This posters is intended to help classical Christian schools to foster a conversation that encourages the pursuit of virtue. Parents, teachers, administrators, and students should become familiar with the names, the definition, and good examples of each virtue.

The way to acquire virtues is to repent of our vices, to practice doing virtuous deeds, with God's help, until they become habits. Let us "add to our faith virtue"! (II Pet 1:5)

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1. **Prudence:** Prudence or practical wisdom (φρόνησις, phronesis) is not just about some areas of life. The prudent are reasonable in morality, career, relationships, and religion. Examples: Solomon,
 2. **Courage:** Courage or fortitude (ἀνδρεία, andreia) is not just about fighting or military matters. The courageous stay at their post, doing what is right, no matter what adversity they face. Examples: Daniel,
 3. **Temperance:** Temperance or moderation (σωφροσύνη, sōphrosynē) is not just about food and drink. The temperate balance all their priorities, remaining self-controlled with sleep, food, and entertainment so that less important things do not overrun more important things.
 4. **Justice:** Justice (δικαιοσύνη, dikaiosynē) is not just about fairness. The just give to everyone what they are due, live in harmony with friends and society, and remain faithful in doing what is right.
 5. **Faith:** Faith (πίστις, pistis) is not just the affirmation of doctrine. The faithful trust in God for all things, trusts his word, and follows his commandments.
 6. **Hope:** Hope (ἐλπίς, elpis) is not just blind optimism. The hopeful are clear-eyed. They see what is wrong, see what is right, and work to improve themselves and the world while waiting on the Lord's deliverance.

7. **Love:** Charity (ἀγάπη, agape) is not mere affection or romantic love. The charitable worship God; they will the good of the other; forgive enemies; refuse to judge others; sacrifice their own preferences for others; and humbly submit to suffer or even to die for their friends.