

GUIDELINES FOR TEACHERS & GROUP LEADERS

A resource exploring 15 virtues demonstrated by a variety of people in Scripture.

THE 15 VIRTUES

KINDNESS	LOVE	FORGIVENESS
RESILIENCE	CONFIDENCE	PERSEVERENCE
WISDOM	LOVE OF LEARNING	PATIENCE
COURTESY	RESPECT	LOVE OF NEIGHBOUR
FAITH	HOPE	CHARITY

Using modern images and key Bible texts this school resource helps students to:

- A** Discover these virtues in some of the Scriptures.
- B** See how different Bible people modelled these virtues.
- C** Live out these virtues and deepen their faith this year.
- D** Enjoy creative activities using the 15 virtues.

Virtues *to live by*
Scripture to inspire you

INTRODUCTION

The New Testament text that explicitly refers to the value of virtues for living a faithful and good life is 2 Peter 1:5.

“For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge...”
2 Peter 1:5.

The writer of 2 Peter invites his readers to strengthen their faith with virtue, meaning moral goodness. It is the first value that he describes on his list of qualities that a Christian should develop in their relationships with God and with each other.

Paul developed this idea of virtue in many of his Letters. He also gives us a clear foundation on how to build the kingdom of God that Jesus modelled in his life as recorded in the Gospels.

WHO WAS PETER?

There are two Letters attributed to Peter in the New Testament. Whether they were composed by the apostle himself or someone writing in his name, we cannot say for sure.

It is not even certain that they were even written by the same person (there are some differences between the writing style and content between them). However, both Letters powerfully encourage disciples, then and now, in the practice of faith.

In this light, they are just as valuable today. What is emerging in 2 Peter is a tradition of faith practice that is still recognisable in the Catholic Church today.



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A NEW WAY OF LIFE

What we do know is that living with the new faith in Christ was hard, especially in the context of the competing beliefs and social structures of the Roman Empire. There were tensions between the values of Christian discipleship and the influences of the diverse cultures surrounding the young communities, and this sometimes led to persecution.

As in our time, there were different voices offering alternative religious and philosophical ideas and a great deal of social and peer pressure to handle at home, school, at work and in the public square. The guidance and support from faithful leaders, apostles and teachers were much appreciated. In the face of these challenges a framework of fundamental virtues provided solid ground for the Church and its disciples.

In the middle of so much chaos and confusion these virtues provided a helpful focus. They became the mark of Christian communities with a clear vision. They were the sign of a joyful people, with a distinctive identity and lifestyle who lived forgiven and forgiving lives in the hope of eternal happiness with God. These Christians knew where they came from and where they were going.

Each of these virtues is rooted in equality between people and in the service of others rather than the pursuit of happiness at the expense of another's wellbeing. What we now call the 'common good' is related to these virtues as it seeks to place the interests of the wider community at the centre of our actions and not our individual selves.

These virtues lead to holiness and right relationship with God and the world just as Jesus preached and taught in his own life, death and resurrection.

INSTRUCTIONS AND QUESTIONS FOR THE 15 VIRTUES & SCRIPTURE ACTIVITIES

Time required: 1 hour.

Each poster contains 3 virtues and 3 Bible stories.

- A** Print the posters out in either A3 or A4 or show them on a screen.
- B** Find the relevant passages in your Bibles.
- C** Taking one virtue at a time, invite students to read the relevant texts aloud or depending on the size of your group to read the texts in silence.
- D** Ask students to discuss what they most notice about the image and its accompanying virtue.
- E** How does the key person or people demonstrate the named virtue in the Bible story?
- F** Ask students if they can find any other virtues in the story.
- G** How can students live out these virtues in your school, in their family, friendships and community?
- H** Agree in small groups for students to live out one virtue each fortnight.
- I** Ask students to notice how these virtues differ from each other as they put them into practice.
- J** At the end of the year, invite your students to discuss what they learnt from this experience and how their faith has deepened.
- K** Celebrate the virtues and the ways they deepened your students' faith with a special Mass and simple party.
- L** Use the optional Creative Activity Guidelines to accompany this resource.

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