

Valued Virtues

It's quite tempting to chase after the dopamine-boosting "like" on social media. Double-tap that photo to give it a "heart," and the person who posted it likely feels like they've accomplished something. But before there was Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, Paul described this sort of "approval" with words like "whatever is honorable ... commendable ... and worthy of praise" (Phil. 4:8). What kinds of virtues do we value and show our appreciation of?

As we close our discussions on What's Good — centering our thinking back on wholesome things — let's take a few minutes to appreciate the virtuous life and higher standard of living to which our God calls us.

Honesty — Feel the Freedom of Truthfulness

"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock." (Matthew 7:24–25)

The Big Idea: We love truthful words because they're the language our God uses to speak to us.

We have a stable foundation of truth and honesty on which we build our lives when we hear our Lord and obey (Matt. 7:24). While it's easy to imagine a stranger lying to us, it stings more when someone we love leads us astray. Because God loves us so much, it's impossible to imagine him saying anything to deceive us — God never lies (Titus 1:2)!

And because God can't lie, he won't tolerate us dabbling in deception either. *"Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight"* (Prov. 12:22). Rather than leaving us tangled in a web of dishonesty, the truth breaks those chains and sets us free (John 8:32)!

Honesty is a rare occurrence in our world, so it's refreshing to see it on display. We acknowledge those around us who act with integrity. We take seriously the impact we have on others when we make bold claims *and* deliver on them. And we speak healthy and wholesome words, not to make ourselves look good, but to speak like our Father speaks — truthfully and honestly.

The Big Question: How would it change your relationships if you were more open?

Humility — Lower Yourself to Lift Up Others

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice." (Isaiah 42:1-3).

The Big Idea: When we lift ourselves above others, we forget that our King lowered himself for us.

The Lord of Lords is *"gentle and lowly in heart"* (Matt. 11:29). What an unexpected path to the top Jesus illuminates! We don't climb over others; we hold them up! *"If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all"* (Mark 9:25).

Galileo challenged the belief that the universe revolves around our world. Four hundred years later, some still think they're the center of the universe. The delusion that everyone owes you

makes life a battle for what's yours. But we deserved death, Jesus paid what he didn't owe, and everything changed because of that gift (Rom. 6:23). We're happy debtors, loving others and sharing the gift (Rom. 1:15; 13:8). Narcissism stains our politics, entertainment, and interactions. Pride is fashionable, but we can still find humility. We can show our kids a first responder's selflessness or an expert who keeps listening (Prov. 1:5), staying "*open to reason*" (James 3:14-17).

Where pride looks out for "number one." Humility looks "*not only*" to your "*own interests but also to the interests of others*" (Phil. 2:4). Seeing others as equals, we consider them significant, sharing the glory of Christ's lowliness (Phil. 2:3-11). Andrew Murray rightly calls humility "the disappearance of self in the vision that God is all."

The Big Question: Will you be a "servant of all" today?

Holiness — Fill Your Heart With All the Best Things

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8)

The Big Idea: Filling our hearts and minds with goodness leaves no room for the filth of sin.

What do supermarket labels mean when they say, "100% Pure"? Purity is about completeness. It's "100% pure Canadian maple syrup" only if the entire product is Canadian maple. And we're "*pure in heart*" (Matt. 5:8) when we devote ourselves entirely to the Lord, with single-minded sincerity.

After David's sin, he prayed for God to wash him "*whiter than snow*" (Ps. 51:7). But he didn't stop at a prayer for forgiveness. Instead, he asked God to create something new in him. "*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me*" (Ps. 51:10)

Rather than impure, fleshly thoughts, "*those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit*" (Rom. 8:5). The old you died. In baptism, you rose with Christ (Rom. 6:1-5), who reigns above. So set your mind on what's above and put to death "*what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry*" (Col. 3:2, 5).

Big Question: What sin is it easy for you to overlook, and how can you give it more attention?

Conclusion

Though it's easy to get distracted and "value" things God doesn't, maybe it's time to refocus your attention and show your appreciation when you see virtues like these on display.