

**Christian Virtues Class**  
**Lesson #1: Introduction**

**Sunday, Sept 21**

In this class we will study the apostle Peter's description of Christian virtue in 2 Peter 1, especially his list of Christian virtues in verses 5-7. Our goal will be to become the Christians that Peter describes in his letter. In order to do this, we will learn what virtues Christians should develop, why they should do this, and how this is possible according to 2 Peter 1 and other biblical passages. These objectives involve learning: 1) the *names and meanings* of Christian virtues according to the Scriptures, 2) the *purpose* of developing these virtues in ourselves, our families, and the Church, and 3) the *thoughts and actions* by which we *practice* the Christian virtues. A final objective will be to practice this new (or renewed) knowledge of the virtues in our Christian lives, both individually and collectively.

Exercise #1: Read through 2 Peter (the whole book) at least once and summarize three of the main ideas of chapter 1 and how they relate to the rest of the book.

In our first class on Sunday we will discuss the importance of keeping our focus on three themes in order to accomplish the course objectives listed above.

Exercise #2: Please look at the following titles for each of our themes and reflect on why they might be important to understanding the "what," the "why," and the "how" of living virtuous Christian lives.

- 1) The Inspiration of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:14-17)
- 2) The Purpose of the Spirit vs. the Purpose of the Flesh (Galatians 5)
- 3) The Mind and Manner of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:1-3)

As you will see in the class schedule (back of this sheet), the topic of "virtue" will be addressed in our fourth class, in part because this is the order in which it is presented in 2 Peter 1. In that class we will focus on the meaning of "virtue" and its importance to what we are studying in this segment of classes. Before that time, we will focus on specific "qualities" and "attitudes" and "dispositions" that 2 Peter 1 and other biblical passages teach us are commanded by God and pleasing to God. As we will see later in this course, all these qualities are properly defined as "virtues" that we are to practice so that we are characterized by them. A central insight that comes from focusing on these qualities of character is the realization that there is a difference between "doing the right thing" and "being virtuous." These two ways of obeying God are related, of course, but understanding the difference is essential to achieving our goal of being the Christians described in 2 Peter 1.

Exercise #3: Look up the following passages and write down and reflect upon the descriptions of the men mentioned in these passages. What is it about these men that is praised in the Scriptures, or pleasing to God?

Genesis 6:9

Job 1:8

Romans 4:12

James 5:11

1 Kings 4:29

Acts 13:22

Exercise #4: As we will discuss, Christian virtue and character is shaped and defined by the purpose and goals in a Christian's life. To help us begin thinking about our goals, imagine and write down the obituary (like those in the newspaper) that you would want printed about you when you pass from this life (assuming that the Lord does not come again in your lifetime).