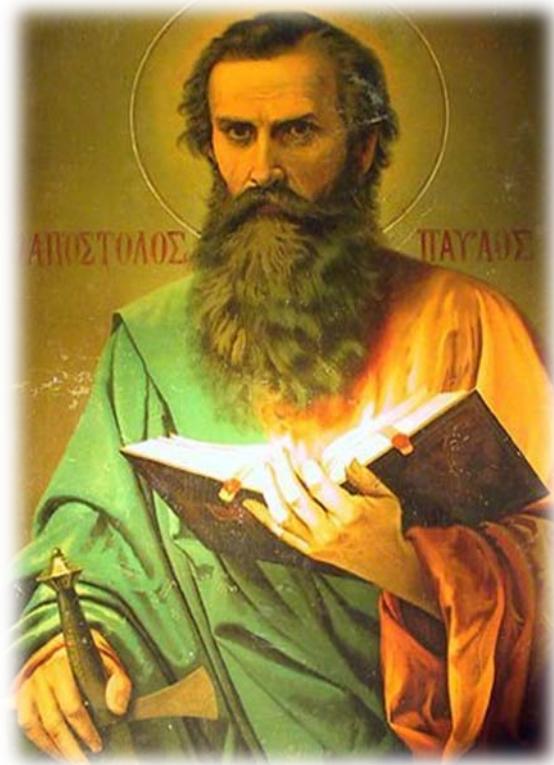


# Virtue in Paul's Pastoral Letters: A 6-week Bible Study



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# Week One: Opening Meeting

“Train yourself for devotion”



## I. Opening Prayer:

- Prayer from the heart; read 1 Tim. 4:7-10, 12:

“Train yourself for devotion,  
for while physical training is of limited value,  
devotion is valuable in every respect, since it holds a promise of life  
both for the present and for the future.

This saying is trustworthy and deserves full acceptance.

For this we toil and struggle, because we have set our hope on the living God [ . . . ]  
Let no one have contempt for your youth, but set an example for those who believe,  
in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity”

## II. Introduction to the Study:

A. These verses from Sacred Scripture are our focus for these next six weeks: we are seeking to journey along the path of Christian maturity, in order that we might be able to, as St. Paul says, “set an example for those who believe” not only in what we say and do, but also, in *how we live* with virtue in our hearts.

1. In the verse above, the word “devotion” is in Greek “*eusebia*.” It “*means more than prayer. It stands for the entire comportment of the Christian who lives in this world while belonging to the next, bearing witness to the holiness attainable even now in this world because of Jesus Christ. This requires what today we would call formation.*”<sup>i</sup>

B. Cultivating and living a life of virtue is, according to St. Paul, the necessary response to an encounter with the living God and the only path for authentic Christian life and discipleship.

1. CCC: “*The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God*”<sup>ii</sup>

2. We can see this clearly in the strength of what St. Paul says above: “*The advice in 4:12 is remarkable in its sense of how Christian faith should touch every aspect of our lives, moral and social as well.*”<sup>iii</sup>

C. Today, we will spend a little time reflecting on St. Paul’s vision of growth in the Christian life and transformation in Christ through a life of virtue. First, however, let us spend a little time learning about the Pastoral Letters themselves.

Scripture Cross-Reference:  
See Philippians 4:8 for more on St. Paul’s vision of virtue

## II. The Pastoral Letters:

A. Some key points about the Pastorals:<sup>iv</sup>

1. They address problems troubling the life of the church and offer advice in response.

Why was this? *“The pastoral churches were seriously adapting the gospel to their unique situations. As they grew from small groups into large urban churches, they suffered the stresses and pains of any growing religious group.”<sup>v</sup>*

2. They are very ecclesially-oriented, and filled with love for God’s church
3. There is a clear emphasis on conversion

*Question for Reflection:* With the setting and purpose of the Pastoral Letters in mind, can you see the need for the emphasis on conversion and virtue? How does this connection between continual growth and maturity in the spiritual and Christian life coincide with a developing Church—and what personal implications does this have for us?

## III. Wisdom from the Church on Human/Spiritual Growth—the Body of Christ

A. Saint John Paul II:

1. Greatly loved the youth, and continually expressed his belief and hope in them throughout his pontificate. Furthermore, he never ceased to call young people to encounter Christ—and not just encounter Him, but to allow themselves to be transformed by Him. He knew that pursuing and living the fullness of the Christian life—through love—was the only way that the human person could be who he was called to be in Christ. Let us take some time to reflect upon some of his words to youth during the World Youth Days during his pontificate:

*It is the nature of human beings, and especially youth, to seek the Absolute, the meaning and fullness of life. Dear young people, do not be content with anything less than the highest ideals! [ . . . ] If you have an ardent desire for the Lord you will steer clear of the mediocrity and conformism so widespread in our society.<sup>vi</sup>*

*[Jesus] is the beauty to which you are so attracted; it is He who provoked you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise; it is He who urges you to shed the masks of a false life; it is He who reads in your heart your most genuine choices, the choices that others try to stifle. It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives, the will to follow an ideal, the refusal to allow yourselves to be ground down by mediocrity, the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently to improving yourselves and society, making the world more human and more fraternal.<sup>vii</sup>*

B. The relationship between growth in virtue and strengthening of the Body of Christ:

1. Our growth in love and virtue builds up the entire Mystical Body, just as our sins affect the Body for the worse. As we grow in our relationship with God, we come to realize that we are responsible not just for ourselves, but for strengthening and edifying the entire Church, to which we are bound and united in Baptism.

a. From the Diary of St. Faustina:

*I strive for the greatest perfection possible in order to be useful to the Church. Greater by far is my bond to the Church. The sanctity or the fall of each individual soul has an effect upon the whole Church.<sup>viii</sup>*

*Now I can be wholly useful to the Church by my personal sanctity, which throbs with life in the whole Church, for we all make up one organism in Jesus. That is why I endeavor to make the soil of my heart bear good fruit. Although the human eye may perhaps never see it, there will nevertheless come a day when it will become apparent that many souls have been fed and will continue to be fed with this fruit.*<sup>ix</sup>

C. St. Paul's understanding of "turning from" more immature ways, in order to become "beneficial to the master of the house" (2 Tim. 2:21)

1. Read and reflect together upon 1 Tim. 6:11-12, 2 Tim. 2:20-22

a. Note the language that St. Paul uses in both of these verses, respectively: "avoid all this [ . . . ] pursue"; and "turn from youthful desires [ . . . ] pursue." St. Paul shows us that it takes a decisive "letting go" of all that which impedes us or is an obstacle to our growth, and to pursue (that is, decisively strive for) all that which belongs to mature life in Christ.

b. We also find in these verses 6 virtues which will compose the rest of our study:

- 1 Tim. 6:11: "righteousness, faith, love, patience"

- 2 Tim. 3:22: "peace, purity of heart"

Scripture Cross-Reference:  
See 1 Corinthians 13:11 for how St. Paul sees Christian and human maturity

#### IV. Homework for next time:

A. Pray with 2 Tim. 2:20-22 this week, asking the Lord to show you what areas of your heart and life He desires to cleanse, so that you can become a more worthy vessel for His purposes.

## Week Two: Faith

*"I know Him in whom I have believed"*



### I. Opening Prayer:

- Prayer from the heart; read 2 Tim. 1:12-14:

*"I know Him in whom I have believed  
and I am confident that He is able to guard  
what has been entrusted to me until that day.*

*Take as your norm the sound words that you heard from me  
in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.*

*Guard this rich trust with the help of the Holy Spirit that dwells within us."*

### II. The Virtue of Faith:

Scripture Cross-  
Reference:

See 1 Thessalonians  
2:13 to see how St.  
Paul describes faith as  
the doorway which  
allows God's word to  
work in us

A. For St. Paul, faith (along with love) is the foundational virtue of the Christian life;<sup>x</sup> it is more than just trustworthiness—*"Its object is Christ, and it is the virtue that alone gives entrance to the righteousness of God."*<sup>xi</sup>

### III. Guard, Example, and Living Relationship: 3 Dimensions of Faith for St. Paul:

A. The Pastoral Letters present us with a rich example of faith. There are three particular ways that faith is presented and described in his letters: as a gift and treasure to guard; as a gift received through the example of others; and as a living relationship with Jesus Christ. Let us look at each of them in turn.

### IV. Faith as a Gift Received through Example:

A. Because faith is primarily a gift, St. Paul reveals it in 3 dimensions while addressing and exhorting Timothy:

1. Received from the witness of his family: *2 Tim. 1:5*

a. Notice the way he describes how the faith Timothy received first *lived in* his mother and grandmother. Already, we see how faith is, to Paul, a living reality in one's heart and life!

2. Edified by the example of Paul, his spiritual father in the faith: *2 Tim. 3:10*

a. Note here that the faith is presented as already something more mature, something that takes root of one's whole existence. St. Paul's example of lived faith is one that Timothy witnessed as enduring many trials and hardships for its sake.

3. Given as a gift for others: the faith Timothy has received as a gift makes him into a rock for the Christian community he serves, making him one from whose example others' faith will take root: *2 Tim. 2:22*

Questions for Reflection: Which of these dimensions of faith as an example most resounds with my own experience? In which of them might the Lord be calling me to grow?

## V. Faith as a Deposit to Guard and to Fight For:

A. The only proper response to a gift is to receive it with openness and gratitude, and to cherish it, protect it, and allow it to grow. Such is the response that St. Paul presents to the gift of faith. This is manifested in exhortations that are both strong, in different senses: *to guard* and *to fight for*:

1. To fight for:

a. 1 Tim. 1:18: "Fight a good fight by having faith and a good conscience"

b. 1 Tim. 6:12: "Compete well for the faith"

- In Greek, this literally translates to, "*Fight the beautiful fight of the faith.*"<sup>xii</sup> This reminds us of another verse in St. Paul, the goal of faith:

b. 2 Tim. 4:7: "I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith"

Questions for Reflection: What makes fighting for the faith different than mere earthly fighting/quarreling? Why is it beautiful?

2. To guard:

a. 1 Tim. 6:20: "O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you"

- Note the unusual urgency in Paul's words here. This guarding means he is "*not to add or subtract, and [ . . . ] is to keep the message in its purity*"<sup>xiii</sup>

b. 2 Tim. 1:13-14: "Take as your norm sound words that you heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard this rich trust with the help of the Holy Spirit that dwells within us."

c. 2 Tim. 14: "Remain faithful to what you have learned and believed, because you know from whom you learned it"

## VI. Faith as a Living Relationship with Jesus Christ:

A. Perhaps the clearest description of faith as a relationship with Christ is in 2 Tim. 1:12: "I know Him in whom I have believed."

1. In Greek, the verb "have believed" is in the perfect tense, which indicates "*a state permanent and uninterrupted state since his first act of faith. The object of his faith here is not a creed, but a person.*"<sup>xiv</sup>

B. However, the way in which the faith is a living reality can also be seen in the way that it nourishes the believer through ministry and service of imparting the faith to others:

1. 1 Tim. 3:13: "Those who serve well as deacons gain [ . . . ] much confidence in their faith in Christ Jesus"

2. 1 Tim. 4:6: "If you give these instructions to the brothers, you will be [ . . . ] nourished on the words of the faith"

## VII. Homework for Next Time:

A. Choose one of the verses that we reflected upon today, and pray with it this week. Examine your own faith and see how the Lord might be speaking to you about where He desires to take it and how He desires to further mature you in it.

**Week Three:**  
**Love**  
“Pursue [. . .] love”



**I. Opening Prayer:**

- Prayer from the heart
- Share homework reflections from the previous week

Scripture Cross-Reference:  
See *Romans 5:5* on how the love of God is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit

**II. The Virtue of Love:**

A. We saw last week that love (alone with faith) is a foundational virtue of the Christian life. This is also one of the virtues (along with faith and endurance/hope) that are commonly found together in the Pastorals. For this reason, we are going to look at the virtue of love today

B. The love that St. Paul refers to is *agape*—selfless, benevolent love. This is an expression of living faith.<sup>xv</sup>

**III. Love: A Gift Received in Order to be Given**

A. The way the St. Paul speaks about love in the Pastorals hearkens back to his beautiful treatise a love in 1 Corinthians 13. If we have not love, we are and have nothing, and even our greatest gifts and works amount to nothing without it. For love to pervade all we do—as St. Paul presents in the Pastoral Letters—it must first be received as a gift from God.

B. However, as St. John Paul II taught, *“Love is never something ready made [. . .] it is always [. . .] a ‘task’ [. . .] Love should be seen as something which in a sense never ‘is’ but is always only ‘becoming’, and what it becomes depends upon the contribution of [the person] and the depth of [his] commitment.”*<sup>xvi</sup>

1. The beautiful gift and power that love becomes depends precisely on each person’s commitment to pursuing it and contributing to its perfection and growth within himself. This is why St. Paul exhorted Timothy to “pursue love” (1 Tim. 6:11, 2 Tim. 2:22)

**IV. Movements of Love in the Pastoral Letters:**

A. We thus see three movements in St. Paul’s teaching on love, assuming that love has already been received in our hearts as a gift from God:

Pursuit→Becoming sound and firm in love→In order to do all things through love

- B. We have already seen St. Paul’s exhortation to “pursue” love, so let us consider the others.
- C. Becoming sound and firm in love:

1. Titus 2:1: "Older men should be [ . . . ] sound in love"

a. Note that here, the description of love as "sound" is in reference to older men. There is an understanding that love becomes more sound as one pursues it, allows it to grow within him.

Questions for Reflection: Whatever virtues and good traits we have shine even more brightly as we grow older; likewise, all vices and sinful tendencies within us that we do not seek to purify are even stronger as we grow older. Have you ever seen an example of this in an older person? How does it make you think about your own path towards Christian maturity?

D. Doing all Things in and for Love:

1. 2 Tim. 1:7: "God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and love and self-control"

a. This is the gift and the anointing that empowers all ministers of Christ to do what they do: *"The power given to the minister, then, proceeds from love, leads to love, and is tempered by love. Or better, it is the very power of love itself."*<sup>xvii</sup>

2. 1 Tim. 1:5: The aim of Timothy's instruction is to awaken "love from a pure heart" in others

3. 1 Tim. 4:12: "Set an example in [ . . . ] love"

**V. Closing Prayer and Homework for Next Week:**

A. Read and pray over the words of St. Therese and St. Faustina this week. Strive to grow in the same spirit of doing all things out of great love for Jesus, and seeing how to make fruitful all of our works in such love:

*"Miss no single opportunity of making some small sacrifice, here by a smiling look, there by a kindly word; always doing the smallest right and doing it all for love."*<sup>xviii</sup>

*"Observing myself and those who are close to me, I have come to understand how great an influence I have on other souls, not by any heroic deeds, as these are striking in themselves, but by small actions like a movement of the hand, a look, and many other things too numerous to mention, which have an effect on and reflect in the souls of others, as I myself have noticed."*<sup>xix</sup>

## Week Four: Patience

*“We have set our hope on the living God”*



### I. Opening Prayer:

- Prayer from the heart
- Share homework reflections from the previous week

Scripture Cross-Reference:  
See Romans 15:4 on the connection between hope and endurance

### II. The Virtue of Patience:

A. In the Pastoral Letters, we have seen the common “faith, love, and endurance/patience” trio that exists.

1. Although it is not explicitly listed as ‘hope,’ *“the Greek word ‘hypomone,’ often also translated ‘endurance,’ is so closely related to hope that it can almost stand for it [ . . . ] It is as if hope proves itself through endurance.”*<sup>xxx</sup>

B. For Paul, hope is not merely wishful thinking—it is *“divine assurance that fires indomitable perseverance”*<sup>xxi</sup>

C. We will therefore look at all of the uses of these three words—hope, endurance, and patience—to look more deeply at how St. Paul saw this virtue

### III. Patience Received from God: Fountain of our Hope

A. St. Paul testifies that the way he was “mercifully treated” by God was a way for Christ’s patience towards Him to be an example for all others who would come to believe in Him: **1 Tim. 1:16**

B. Receiving the gift of God’s mercy and love moves one to do great things for Him, despite the cost—as we shall see later on.

Questions for Reflection: Why do you think that the example of the way Christ treated Paul with such mercy and patience would be a source for hope for new believers? How do you think it shaped St. Paul? How can encountering God’s mercy—in spite of our misery—help us to grow in this virtue of patience with others and hope for the future?

### IV. Patience, Endurance, and Hope in the Pastoral Letters:

A. The way that these virtues are presented in the Pastoral Letters is largely through action—in how we respond to difficulties, crosses, and hardships for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

1. 1 Tim. 4:10: “For this [pursuing devotion] we toil and struggle, since we have set our hope on the living God”

a. This verse is an example of enduring the hard work of our own purification and growth in holiness, patience that is part of our own journey of conformation to Christ.

2. 2 Tim. 2:3: “Bear your share of hardship along with me like a good soldier of Christ Jesus”

a. Such hardship is undertaken because one knows that he is set apart for Christ’s work. This perseverance is that which is necessary in the day-to-day labor of the ministry.

3. 2 Tim. 3:10: “You have followed my [ . . . ] patience [ . . . ] endurance, persecutions, and sufferings [ . . . ] all who want to live religiously in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”

a. This type of patience presented is that which helps one to endure difficulties that are involved with ministry, but also, touches on the patience and endurance needed to bear the opposition that comes as a result of one’s life in Christ and service to Him.

4. 2 Tim. 4:2: “Encourage with all patience and teaching”:

a. This type of patience reflects that which is needed when serving others and helping them to grow and be formed in the faith. It is an arduous work that requires much patience and longsuffering, as St. Paul shows.

Questions for reflection: Think about the four types of patience we have reflected on: patience in my own growth in holiness; patience in bearing with the difficulties that accompany my daily life and vocation; patience in bearing with opposition and unjust sufferings; and patience in dealing with others. Which of them do I feel the Lord might be asking me to grow in?

#### V. Closing Reflection and Homework for Next Week:

A. Read together the excerpt from Pope Emeritus Benedict’s Encyclical *Spe Salvi*:

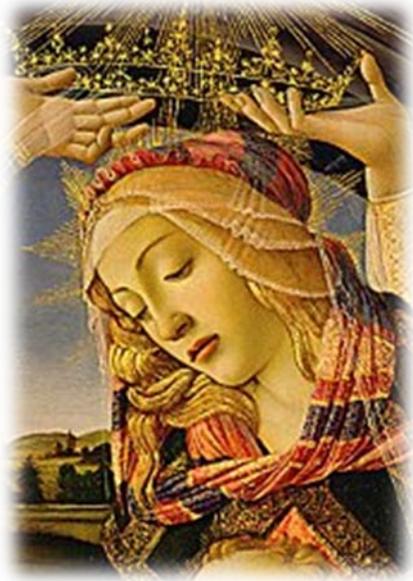
*Day by day, man experiences many greater or lesser hopes, different in kind according to the different periods of his life. Sometimes one of these hopes may appear to be totally satisfying without any need for other hopes [ . . . ] When these hopes are fulfilled, however, it becomes clear that they were not, in reality, the whole. It becomes evident that man has need of a hope that goes further. It becomes clear that only something infinite will suffice for him, something that will always be more than he can ever attain [ . . . ]*

*We need the greater and lesser hopes that keep us going day by day. But these are not enough without the great hope, which must surpass everything else. This great hope can only be God, who encompasses the whole of reality and who can bestow upon us what we, by ourselves, cannot attain. The fact that it comes to us as a gift is actually part of hope. God is the foundation of hope: not any god, but the God who has a human face and who has loved us to the end, each one of us and humanity in its entirety. His Kingdom is not an imaginary hereafter, situated in a future that will never arrive; his Kingdom is present wherever he is loved and wherever his love reaches us. His love alone gives us the possibility of soberly persevering day by day, without ceasing to be spurred on by hope, in a world which by its very nature is imperfect. His love is at the same time our guarantee of the existence of what we only vaguely sense and which nevertheless, in our deepest self, we await: a life that is ‘truly’ life.”<sup>xxii</sup>*

B. Homework for next week:

1. Bring the verses that thoughts that touched you today to prayer during the week
2. Do one act of hope or patient endurance each day—whether in thought, deed, or attitude. In particular, try to act on hope and patient endurance in areas of our lives where we are least prone to do so.

**Week Five:**  
**Righteousness**  
*“The crown of righteousness awaits me”*



**I. Opening Prayer:**

- Prayer from the heart
- Share homework reflections from the previous week

**II. The Virtue of Righteousness:**

Scripture Cross-Reference:  
See 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 for another example of how St. Paul describes righteousness—the holiness expected of God’s people

A. In the Bible, “righteousness” is hard to translate to just one word:

1. *“While the basic sense is rendering to each person his due, in the Bible it is equivalent to holiness, to that perfection that God himself has and that he expects of his people. In leaders it is often allied with other virtues.”<sup>xxiii</sup>*

2. Another way we can understand righteousness is *“right relationships with God and with the people.”<sup>xxiv</sup>*

B. We can understand holiness in the following way: *“Holiness means living a life that manifests one’s consecration by the blood of Christ. It is required of all the baptized.”<sup>xxv</sup>*

C. From these definitions, we can see that righteousness is a very pastoral virtue, at the heart of the servant of God. It is the natural consequence of our identity as children of God, and is all the more necessary and expected as one grows in responsibility in the Body of Christ.

D. We will therefore examine the way that St. Paul uses the following words, since all have to do in one way or another with the definitions given above: righteousness, holiness, and devotion.

**III. Righteousness through the Power of the Holy Spirit:**

A. St. Paul understands holiness as the way he understands the law and grace: love fulfills the law, works do not. In this same way, we can understand how he lived and taught that holiness should be lived: in love, by the power of the Holy Spirit: **Romans 8:4** *“The righteous decree of the law [is] fulfilled in us who live not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”*

1. In this sense, we can see how this virtue quite possibly should have been at the beginning of our study—since it is the fountain from which all life in the Spirit and living of the virtues comes. However, as we shall see, it has more pastoral implications—and is thus reserved for this section of our study.

2. **Galatians 5:13-14, 22-23: Freedom in, and fruits of, the Spirit; the law**

a. Can we see the connection between the dimensions of love in 1 Cor. 13:4-8 and the fruits of the Spirit that are borne from loving our neighbor as ourselves, as described here?

B. 2 Tim. 4:8: “From now on, the crown of righteousness awaits me”: Because St. Paul understands righteousness as primarily God’s work in him based on faith, and his faithfulness to it, towards the end of his life, he speaks with complete confidence in the reward of holiness and eternal life that will be bestowed upon him.

1. We can see that for St. Paul, righteousness was not only a virtue here below on earth, but the ultimate crown that we will receive in heaven.
  - a. Note the disposition of heart described in those who will receive the crown of righteousness: *longing for [the Lord’s] appearance*.
  - b. The 5<sup>th</sup> Glorious Mystery—the Coronation of Our Lady

Questions for Reflection: Think about St. Paul’s humble—but total—confidence that led him to say that he was “certain” that Jesus, the just judge, would award him the crown of righteousness in heaven. How would you describe his trust in God? How is your own trust in God similar or different to that of St. Paul?

#### IV. Righteousness, Holiness, and Devotion in the Pastoral Letters:

A. These virtues are presented either as a goal to pursue, or are presented in the context of exhorting different vocations within the life of the Church. Let us look at each of these dimensions:

1. In the different vocations:
  - a. 1 Tim. 2:15: “[Women] will be saved through motherhood, provided [they] persevere in [ . . . ] holiness”
    - We see here that is not enough just to live one’s vocation; one must live it as a child of God, living the virtues that unite us to Christ. Thus, for women, it is not enough just to be a mother, but to be a holy mother.
  - b. Titus 1:8: “A bishop [ . . . ] must be [ . . . ] holy”
    - “[Holiness] is especially demanded of one who represents the holy community [of Christians]. The bishop is not to be merely an administrator; he is before all else a religious man, a man of prayer and worship, who models for the faithful what each of them should be.”<sup>xxxvi</sup>
2. As a goal to pursue:
  - a. 1 Tim. 4:7: “Train yourself for devotion”
    - We have already seen how devotion is understood by Paul as the holiness attainable through Jesus Christ.
  - b. 1 Tim. 6:11: “But you, man of God [ . . . ] pursue righteousness, devotion”
  - c. 2 Tim. 3:16: “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for [ . . . ] training in righteousness”

#### V. Homework for Next Week:

A. St. Paul speaks of the pursuit of righteousness as *training*. Read and reflect on 1 Cor. 9:24-27:

Do you not know that the runners in the stadium all run in the race, but only one wins the prize? Run so as to win. Every athlete exercises discipline in every way. They do it to win a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one. Thus I do not run aimlessly; I do not fight as if I were shadowboxing. No, I drive my body and train it, for fear that, after having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

1. In what ways do I “run aimlessly” in my life in Christ?

2. In what areas of my life might the Lord be asking me to exercise discipline in, to grow in holiness?

## Week Six: Peace

“Be peaceable”



### I. Opening Prayer:

- Prayer from the heart
- Share homework reflections from the previous week

Scripture Cross-Reference:  
See [Romans 5:1](#) on the source of our peace

### II. The Virtue of Peace:

A. In the Pastoral Letters, “peace” is not spoken of much as a virtue

1. Of the 5 times it is found, 3 of them are a part of the standard Pauline greeting “*grace and peace to you*”

2. In this way, we can see the basic way that St. Paul understood peace: “*[It is] more than the absence of war or peaceful coexistence; even less does it mean a psychological tranquility. It is rather an abundance of good things, and in the New Testament context that means the whole mystery of reconciliation with God and*

*with one another.*”<sup>xxvii</sup>

### III. Peace in the Pastoral Letters:

- A. Part of his standard greeting:
  - 1. 1 Tim. 1:2, 2 Tim. 1:2: “*grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father*”
    - a. We can already see the connection with *mercy*, one way that our peace is enfolded and concretely lived out with others.
- B. 2 Tim. 2:22: “*Pursue [ . . . ] peace*”
  - 1. Note the verses that follow in 23-25, regarding avoiding quarrels and foolish debates. Again, we see the way that peace is lived and manifested in our relationships.
- C. Titus 3:2: “*[The Community is] to be peaceable, considerate, exercising all graciousness toward everyone.*”
  - 1. Here again, we see the way that peace within oneself overflows to kindness and gentleness towards others.

### IV. Closing Reflection and Homework for Next Week: Pope Francis’ Words on Peace:

- A. In his recent pilgrimage to the Holy Land, peace was a strong theme of Pope Francis’ reflections and addresses. Let us read and reflect together upon some of them in light of what we have seen in St. Paul:

The Holy Spirit also anoints. He anointed Jesus inwardly and he anoints his disciples, so that they can have the mind of Christ and thus be disposed to live lives of peace and communion. Through the anointing of the Spirit, our human nature is sealed with the holiness of Jesus Christ and we are enabled to love our brothers and sisters with the same love which God has for us. We ought, therefore, to show concrete signs of humility, fraternity, forgiveness and reconciliation. These signs are the prerequisite of a true, stable and lasting peace. Let us ask the Father to anoint us so that we may fully become his children, ever more conformed to Christ, and may learn to see one another as brothers and sisters. Thus, by putting aside our grievances and divisions, we can show fraternal love for one another. This is what Jesus asks of us in the Gospel: “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete, to be with you for ever” [. . .]

Peace is not something which can be bought; it is a gift to be sought patiently and to be “crafted” through the actions, great and small, of our everyday lives. The way of peace is strengthened if we realize that we are all of the same stock and members of the one human family; if we never forget that we have the same heavenly Father and are all his children, made in his image and likeness.<sup>xviii</sup>

1. Pray about in what great and small ways you can craft peace in your daily life.
2. What connections between holiness and peace do you see in Pope Francis’ words?

# Week Seven: Purity

“Call upon the Lord in purity of heart”



## I. Opening Prayer:

- Prayer from the heart

- Share homework reflections from the previous week

Scripture Cross-  
Reference:

See Matthew 5:8 for  
the Lord's words on  
purity

## II. The Virtue of Purity:

A. Purity is used in different ways in the Pastoral Letters. One definition that underlines them all is *“a single-hearted desire to please God.”*<sup>xxxix</sup>

B. As with many of the Pastorals, this virtue is presented both as how it affects the individual, and how it manifests itself in ministry. Both shall be considered

## III. Purity in the Pastoral Letters:

A. Purity as a personal disposition:

1. 1 Tim. 6:14: “I charge you [. . .] to keep the commandments without stain or reproach”
  - a. Note on 129—this means the entire Gospel. Here, purity is seen as guarding the deposit of faith, as we saw earlier—protecting the gift.
2. 2 Tim. 2:22: “Turn from youthful desires and pursue [the virtues . . .] along with those who call upon the Lord in purity of heart”
  - a. Purity is a virtue in itself, but living the virtues creates a pure heart in us. The virtues have a purifying effect upon our hearts.

B. Purity in the Work of Ministry:

1. 1 Tim. 1:5: “Love from a pure heart”
  - a. The aim of instruction in the faith is to lead others to this kind of pure love.
2. 1 Tim. 4:12: “Set an example in [. . .] purity”
  - a. The translation of the Greek word “hagneia” can be rendered as “integrity.” Like purity, this virtue is especially needed in the exercise of authority and leadership.<sup>xxx</sup>
3. 1 Tim. 5:2: “Treat younger women as sisters with complete purity”:
  - a. The specific way that purity is to be exercised in regard to younger women is with the *“loving respect one would observe with one's sisters [. . .] Paul is a realist here. The Christian community provides a closeness and equality not available in other environments and, for that reason, a challenge to greater vigilance regarding the observance of boundaries and purity of heart.”*<sup>xxxi</sup>
4. 1 Tim. 5:22: “Do not lay hands too readily on anyone...keep yourself pure”

a. Here, we see that responsibility for souls demands purity in every respect— action, choices, assessments, etc. The words “lay hands” refer to ordination in the Pastoral Letters. Thus, Paul is warning Timothy not to be too hasty to confer the gift of orders upon anyone that has not proved their character and readiness to receive such a gift and responsibility, or else, he will also be responsible for any bad fruit, abuse of the office, or even personal sins in the future.<sup>xxxii</sup>

#### **IV. Concluding Sharing and Reflections:**

- A. Let us review each of the six virtues that the reflection and study we have journeyed through together in these past weeks:
  - 1. Which of the virtues has spoken to you the most, and has begun to shape your understanding of Christian and human maturity?
  - 2. How do you plan to continue to grow in these and all of the virtues?

*“In the hour of farewell, or, better, of leave-taking,  
I repeat once more that what matters most in this life is:  
our blessed Jesus Christ, his holy Church, his Gospel,  
and in the Gospel above all else the Our Father according to the mind and heart of Jesus,  
and the truth and goodness of his Gospel,  
goodness which must be meek and kind, hardworking and patient, unconquerable and victorious.”<sup>xxxiii</sup>*

*Saint John XXIII, Journal of a Soul*

## Endnotes

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- <sup>i</sup> George Montague, *First and Second Timothy, Titus*, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 97.
- <sup>ii</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 2000), 1803.
- <sup>iii</sup> Jerome H. Neyrey, *First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus, James, First Peter, Second Peter, Jude*, Collegeville Bible Commentary (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1983), 21. Hereafter noted as *First Timothy*.
- <sup>iv</sup> Taken from Neyrey, *First Timothy*, 9.
- <sup>v</sup> Neyrey, *First Timothy*, 9.
- <sup>vi</sup> Pope John Paul II, World Youth Day Address (2002).
- <sup>vii</sup> Pope John Paul II, World Youth Day Address (19 August 2000).
- <sup>viii</sup> St. Faustina Kowalska, *Divine Mercy in My Soul: Diary of St. Maria Faustina Kowalska* (Stockbridge: Marian Press, 2005), 1475.
- <sup>ix</sup> St. Faustina, *Divine Mercy in My Soul*, 1364.
- <sup>x</sup> Montague, *First and Second Timothy, Titus*, 69.
- <sup>xi</sup> Montague, *First and Second Timothy, Titus*, 174.
- <sup>xii</sup> Montague, *First and Second Timothy, Titus*, 128.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Montague, *First and Second Timothy, Titus*, 133.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Montague, *First and Second Timothy, Titus*, 150.
- <sup>xv</sup> Montague, *First and Second Timothy, Titus*, 174.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility*, 139.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Montague, *First and Second Timothy, Titus*, 143.
- <sup>xviii</sup> St. Thérèse of Lisieux, *The Story of a Soul* (New York: Double Day, 2001).
- <sup>xix</sup> St. Faustina, *Divine Mercy in My Soul*, 1475.
- <sup>xx</sup> Montague, *First and Second Timothy, Titus*, 127.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Montague, *First and Second Timothy, Titus*, 127.
- <sup>xxii</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter on Christian Hope *Spe Salvi* (30 November 2007), §30-31.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Montague, *First and Second Timothy, Titus*, 173.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Montague, *First and Second Timothy, Titus*, 127.
- <sup>xxv</sup> Montague, *First and Second Timothy, Titus*, 221.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Montague, *First and Second Timothy, Titus*, 221.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> Montague, *First and Second Timothy, Titus*, 33.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Pope Francis, Homily at Holy Mass at Amman International Stadium (24 May 2014).
- <sup>xxix</sup> Montague, *First and Second Timothy, Titus*, 37.
- <sup>xxx</sup> Montague, *First and Second Timothy, Titus*, 100.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Montague, *First and Second Timothy, Titus*, 107.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Montague, *First and Second Timothy, Titus*, 115.
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> Saint John XXIII, *Journal of a Soul* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 343.