



“I shall always be ready to remind you of these things...”  
2 Peter 1:21

## The Backbone to Do What is Right

by Alex Hale



The values of our society have definitely taken a nosedive over the past generation. However, in many cases the problem does not lie with a lack of *values*, but with a lack of *virtue*. Having values means that you know what is right, that you admit that there is a standard of right and wrong. Virtue takes this a step further, as it is actually having the courage (or backbone) to do what is right. People may say that committing adultery is wrong (this speaks to their values), but they do it anyway (this speaks to a lack of virtue). People may say that cheating is wrong (values), but they do it anyway (virtue). As we seek to grow in the Christian graces, let us consider the idea of virtue so that we might add it to our faith (2 Pet 1:5-7).

### Defining Virtue

In Hebrew, the word is *chayil*, which literally means strength. It is translated as virtuous or valiant. It carries with it the idea of a person or group being strong, and many times in scripture is used to describe the strength of an army. In Greek, the word is *arete*, which is translated as manliness, valor, excellence, or praise. This is the word Peter uses in 2 Peter 1:3 and 5. Perhaps the most common definition of virtue is “moral excellence.”

Virtue carries with it the concept of integrity. One of the primary characteristics of the virtuous woman was her ability to be trusted (Prov 31:11). God’s leaders throughout time were to possess integrity (Psa 78:72; 1 Chron 29:17; 1 Kgs 9:4-5; Neh 7:2). Integrity leads to security (Prov 10:9; 11:3), and is rooted in righteousness (Prov 13:6).

### Developing Virtue

***In our thoughts.*** Charles Reader once wrote, “Sow a thought, reap an action; sow an action, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny.” Certainly scripture teaches that whatever we sow, that we shall also reap (Gal 6:7-9). Habitual right *action* is virtue, but as Reader stated, action begins in *thought* (see Mark 7:20-23). This is why it is essential to control our thoughts (2 Cor 10:5). Our thoughts need to be those things which are good (Phil 4:8). These things are rooted in God’s word (Psa 19:7-10).

***In our attitudes.*** We cannot settle for anything less than our best. Rather, we must have the courage to do the right thing (1 Cor 16:13-14). If you live a virtuous life, many people will not like the way you are living (Prov 29:10). Jesus was known for His integrity (Matt 22:16). This testimony came from the Pharisees, who were the Lord’s enemies. Even they had to admit that Jesus was not swayed by human opinion in His teaching or lifestyle. Are we following the example of Jesus in this regard?

***In our associations.*** Sometimes reaching a higher spiritual plane requires breaking ties with the ungodly (2 Cor 6:17-18). Associating with evil will corrupt the good habits we have developed (1 Cor 15:33).

[NEXT WEEK: Demonstrating Virtue]



## CABOT WESTSIDE CHURCH OF CHRIST

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### When We Meet

#### Sunday

Bible Classes – 9:00 am  
Worship – 10:00 am, 5:00 pm

#### Wednesday

Bible Classes – 7:00 pm

### Our Elders

R.D. Hopper  
Norman Kemper

### Our Deacons

Troy Hunter  
Kelly Kendall  
Tony Ramick

### Our Preacher

Alex Hale