Virtue in Scripture

The Character of God

• God demonstrates moral excellence through His Holiness. (See Deuteronomy 32:4 and Isaiah 6:3.)
• God set a standard for moral excellence in His Law. (See Exodus 20:1–17.)
• People saw the power of Jesus’ virtue and came to Him for healing. (See Luke 6:19.)
• The disciples witnessed Christ’s perfection radiating from His physical appearance on the Mount of Transfiguration. (See Matthew 17:1–2, 5.)
• The Holy Spirit empowers us to live virtuously instead of falling prey to our fleshly desires. (See Romans 8:13.)

Key Concepts

1. The Power of Virtue. The Hebrew word for virtuous, #2428 (khah'-yil) is used to describe mighty men of valor (I Chronicles 12:21), an outstanding woman (Proverbs 31:10), and the power of God (II Samuel 22:33). Virtue is the result of knowing the ways of the Lord, reading His Word, and obeying Him. When you receive salvation through Christ, you then have the power to say ‘no’ to sin. II Timothy 2:22 says, “Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.” Are you living in the power God gives to His children to flee “youthful lusts” and pursue righteousness?

2. Purity Despite a Sinful World. A lighthouse has one job: it shines brightly so ships can reach safe harbor. It’s job is especially important in dark nights and raging storms. As Christians, God has given us the opportunity to be “lights” in the world. This can be a difficult job with so many “storms” about us—violence, temptations, conflicts with others, etc. God tells us how we can have moral purity: As we hide His Word in our hearts, it will spring forth in our words and actions. “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:11). Two effective methods for memorizing God’s Word are 1) writing out the Scriptures, and 2) repeating a verse, each time through emphasizing a different word. Begin today to hide God’s Word in your heart and let it radiate hope and clarity to the dark world of sin around you.

3. Clean Hands, Pure Hearts. A virtuous person is characterized as doing what is right. As soon as you clean your hands, do you immediately go and get them dirty again? No! You want them to be clean. We keep our lives clean by listening to and obeying God’s Word. Psalm 119:9 says, “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.” Praise the Lord that He does not merely improve our sin nature, but completely replaces it with Himself as we die to self and allow Him to live through us. Let the Word of God replace your unclean thoughts with His pure thoughts.

Virtue in My Life

• Romans 12:1–2—Have I committed my body and mind to God?
• Proverbs 4:23—How well am I guarding my heart against thoughts that would lead to impure and immoral actions? What areas do I need to guard better?
• Proverbs 31:11—Do I conduct myself in a virtuous way that earns the trust of others?
• I Corinthians 15:33—What is corrupted by bad company?
• I Timothy 4:12—How can I be a good example to my siblings and friends?
Virtue is the moral excellence and purity of spirit that radiates from my life as I obey God’s Word.

Virtue in the Life of Daniel

Read Daniel 1:1–20 as a family and discuss the following questions:

1. As one of the Hebrew captives, what qualifications did Daniel have to meet in order to stand in the king’s palace? “Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king’s palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans” (Daniel 1:4). What characteristics have you observed in people who are committed to obeying God’s Word?

2. What food was the king going to give to the men who entered the three years of preparation to stand before him? “And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king’s meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king” (Daniel 1:5). What have you been offered that you know you should not accept?

3. What prior commitment to the Lord had Daniel made? “But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself . . .” (Daniel 1:8a). What specific verses from God’s Word have you purposed to obey?

4. How did Daniel respond when he was asked to compromise his commitment? “He requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself” (Daniel 1:8b). What words could you respectfully use when requesting authorities to reconsider their decision?

5. How did God go before Daniel with his captors? “Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs” (Daniel 1:9). Have you asked God for grace in the eyes of your authorities?

6. What creative suggestion did Daniel propose so that the king’s goal would be accomplished without Daniel having to compromise? “Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink” (Daniel 1:12). What creative alternatives could you suggest when you are asked to say something that is not true, or go somewhere you should not go?

7. What was the result of Daniel’s virtuous action? “And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king’s meat. . . . stood they before the king” (Daniel 1:15, 19). Do you sense God is calling you to stand alone in a certain area for Him?
Daniel Keeps His Commitment

“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s [food]. . . .”

—Daniel 1:8

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VIRTUE
Memory Verse


II PETER 1:3

“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.”

Memory Verse Game: Knock, Knock, Caught You!
Select one child to sit facing a wall and with his back toward the others. Have the other children slowly read the verse out loud together. As each word of the verse is said, a different child raises and lowers his hand followed by the next child raising and lowering his hand as the next word is said.

While the children are reciting the verse, the one with his back to the others chooses when to knock on the wall. When he knocks, whoever was raising his hand at that moment switches places with the “knocker.” Continue until everyone has the verse memorized or when each person has had a chance to be the “knocker.”

Doers of the Word
In the blank below, write how this verse could be applied in your life, e.g., “thank God for His power” or “act in a Godly way during my studies,” or “read my Bible to grow in my knowledge of God.”

“Dear Lord, I yield to You and am willing to apply this verse. Help me to __________________________ __________________________. I ask that You would develop virtue in my life. Amen.”

When the Lord gives you an opportunity to apply this verse, write it in your journal to later recall God’s working in your life.

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Craft Instructions

Scratch Art

Introduction

Read to the children: “This month we are asking the Lord to develop virtue in our lives. What a privilege to respond to the work He is doing to change us into the image of His Son! Today we are going to make scratch art to remind us that as we allow God to remove sin and replace it with Himself, His moral excellence and purity of Spirit will radiate from our lives.”

Supplies

Card stock or paper (¼ or ½ a sheet per child is plenty); crayons; black acrylic paint or black crayon; dish soap; small dish or lid for mixing paint; paintbrush; toothpicks or forks.

Instructions

Give each child cardstock and have them color every bit of the cardstock with different colors. There should be no white left showing at all. The thicker your crayon colors are on the paper, the better the final artwork will be.

In a small dish, mix one tablespoon of paint with one drop of dish soap with a toothpick. Paint over the colored cardstock completely, covering every bit of surface. (Note: If paint is not readily available, you can cover your colored paper with black crayon instead.) Allow the paint to dry (approximately 10–15 minutes). Covered with black paint or crayon, you now have a “scratchboard.”

As the children “scratch” designs with toothpicks or forks through the black topcoat to write “Virtue” or draw pictures, read to them: “As we read and obey God’s Word, the darkness of sinful tendencies is replaced with the beauty of God’s ways showing through our lives. What does God’s Word say that we can apply today?”

Scratch art made with paint:

Scratch art made with crayon:
Virtue is the moral excellence and purity of spirit that radiates from my life as I obey God’s Word.

Activity Page

Maze

Use a highlighter to find your way from the top of the page to the bottom right corner of the picture under the food. (Note: For a simpler maze, younger children can find the path from Daniel’s right hand to his left hand.)
“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”

No one seemed to notice the man standing before the church’s giant, sturdy doors. With a long paper in hand, he eyed the vast, closed portal. Then, with quiet determination, the short monk lifted the thick paper to the wooden doors where other public announcements were displayed for all to read. The thudding sounds as he pounded his 95 theses may not have roused attention then—but his posted proclamation would start a ringing commotion which would grow louder and louder, heralding the beginning of freedom and spiritual light for the whole world.

The monk was Martin Luther, a priest who was also a professor at Wittenberg University. He nailed his “95 Theses”—questions and points for public debate—on the Wittenberg church door, as was the practice at that time when there was an announcement or a topic for public discussion. The day Martin Luther presented his 95 Theses was exactly 500 years ago on October 31, 1517.

Martin Luther had seemed like the “perfect” monk. About himself he wrote, “If ever a monk got to heaven by monkery, I was determined to get there.” Starving himself, flogging himself physically, spending countless hours in prayer and solitude—Martin desperately tried everything to appease God’s just wrath in order to be “good enough” to get into heaven. All Martin’s efforts yielded him no peace. The pious monk was in utter spiritual darkness when God began to show him light. Little by little, Martin began to realize what the Bible truly meant when it said “the just shall live by faith.” Soon he felt God’s leading to share this truth with others.

His “95 Theses” proclaimed salvation by faith, which was the truth that sparked the enlightenment to follow. However, the predominant Catholic Church at that time taught salvation by works and human effort. Thus, Luther’s post on the Wittenberg door was the catalyst to start the Protestant Reformation. In 1521, government and Catholic Church leaders demanded that Luther recant his true and controversial written statement. Despite the threat of a horrible death, Luther knew that he must stand true to God’s truth. “I cannot and will not recant. Here I stand. I can do no other. Amen,” he steadfastly answered. The Catholic Church excommunicated him, and his friends were forced to hide him, fearing for his life. While in hiding, Luther worked to translate parts of the Bible into the German language so that the common people could read it in their homes. As time passed more and more people began to joyfully accept the truths from God’s Word that set them free.

Twelve years after his bold public announcement on the church door, the Father of the Protestant Reformation wrote “A Mighty Fortress is Our God.” Composed the night before
a court battle regarding his teaching God’s truth, Luther penned his confidence in God and declared our dependence on Christ for salvation.

Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side,
The Man of God’s own choosing:
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus it is He,
Lord Sabaoth His name,
From age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.

Luther understood that personal purity and holy living are essential to pure doctrine, for “the just shall live by faith.” Christ justifies, purifies, and gives us faith! Martin Luther exemplified our character quality for this month, virtue: “The moral excellence and purity of spirit that radiates from my life as I obey God’s Word.” Luther had strived to live a life that was morally excellent, but could not apart from God’s enabling power. Once Martin Luther understood faith, works, and grace, and accepted Christ's righteousness in his stead, he was driven by a passion to obey God's Word and accurately proclaim and teach it to others, no matter the cost. His bold actions for Christ 500 years ago have impacted our lives today. May we also live virtuous lives as we abide in God's power and grace, radiating His moral excellence as we follow Christ and obey His Word.

Bibliography:
Petersen, Randy, Be Still My Soul, Tyndale House Publisher, Inc., Carol Stream, IL, 2014, p. 5.

This hymn and the other 11 featured hymns of this year’s character curriculum are available on CD. The hymns are sung by home educating families to piano accompaniment. Go to store.iblp.org/product/CBCH2.html for more information.
A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

Martin Luther (1483–1546)  
Translated: Fredrick H. Hedge (1805–1890)  
Harmony: Johann S. Bach (1685–1750)

1. A mighty fortress is our God, A bulwark never failing;  
Our helper He amidst the flood Of mortal ills prevailing.  
For still our ancient foe Doth seek to work us woe. His craft and pow'r are rare  
great, And armed with cruel hate, On earth is not his equal.

2. Did we in our own strength confide, Our striving would be losing,  
We need not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph thro' us.  
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He, Lord Sabaoth His name, From age to age the same, And He must win the battle.  
dure, For lo, his doom is sure: One little word shall fell him.

3. And tho' this world, with devils filled, Should threaten to undo us,  
The Spirit and the gifts are ours Thro' Him who with us sideth.  
The prince of darkness grim, We tremble not for him; His rage we can endure, For lo, his doom is sure: One little word shall fell him.

4. That word above all earthly pow'rs, No thanks to them, a bideth;  
Our help not the right man on our side, The man of God's own choosing.  
Let goods and kin-dred go, This mortal life also; The body they may kill: God's truth a bideth still: His kingdom is forever.

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