



No More Options: A Devotional for the Virtuous Man

Inspired by C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Book III, Chapter 5, "Sexual Morality." And 2 Peter 1:5-8 English Standard Version Bible

How many men have convinced themselves they're too far gone?

Too far gone to break destructive habits.

Too far gone to become the husband their wife deserves.

Too far gone to become the father their children need.

Too far gone to live a life that honors Christ.

Many never begin because they have already decided it isn't possible.

Perhaps the problem isn't that change is impossible. Perhaps the problem is that change remains optional.

In the pursuit of changing one's life, choosing virtue removes the need to negotiate with every temptation, hardship, and unresolved problem. A virtue is a moral quality of character. Examples include honesty, integrity, courage, humility, self-control, steadfastness, kindness, faithfulness, and love. As long as virtue is treated as one choice among many, every difficult moment becomes another opportunity to negotiate with ourselves. Every temptation becomes another fork in the road. Every hardship invites us to settle for comfort instead of conviction.

C.S. Lewis captured this idea beautifully in *Mere Christianity*. Reflecting on Christian virtue, he wrote:

"Many people are deterred from seriously attempting Christian chastity because they think (before trying) that it is impossible... Faced with an optional question... one considers whether one can do it or not... It is wonderful what you can do when you have to."

Lewis's point reaches far beyond chastity. It speaks to every area of life. When virtues are optional, we debate. When conviction is settled, we move forward.

Scripture takes us one step further.

"For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:5-8 ESV)



Peter is explaining how to become an effective and fruitful Christian. Each quality supplements the one before it because the next quality enables the previous one to be lived out more completely.

Faith is the foundation. Faith in Christ is supplemented with virtue, and virtue is expressed through moral living.

Virtue is supplemented with knowledge. Knowledge is knowing how to live morally in everyday life.

Knowledge is supplemented with self-control. It is one thing to know how to live; it is another to live that way. Self-control allows knowledge to become action.

Self-control is supplemented with steadfastness. Steadfastness is continuing to live that way consistently over time.

Steadfastness is supplemented with godliness. Consistency is now directed toward God in reverence. A life of virtue is intentionally lived before Him and for Him.

Godliness is supplemented with brotherly affection. Reverence for God naturally extends into the honorable way we treat His people. Brotherly affection expresses that reverence through an eagerness of sacrificial and selfless service to fellow believers.

Brotherly affection is supplemented with love. Christ's love defines every quality that came before it. It gives virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, and brotherly affection their purpose and proper expression.

This is Peter's progression toward an effective and fruitful Christian life. Lewis answers why men fail before they begin, and Peter answers how they mature once they begin.

As a man continues walking this path, the virtues Peter describes become increasingly evident because Christ is shaping his character.

A virtuous man does not walk the path of virtue because it is the best option. He walks it because, in Christ, it is the only one.