



THE  
**VIRTUE-FOCUSED YEAR**  
12 Habits to Become a More Virtuous You

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# How to Do the Virtue-Focused Year



Thanks for downloading this action-oriented printable e-book to help you grow in virtue over the next 12 months! Your progress in these 12 powerful habits depends on how much you intentionally work to incorporate the simple ideas presented here into your everyday life for the next year. Here are my tips for using this manual well:

- Set a reminder for the first of every month to display your new virtue page in a prominent place, preferably somewhere you (or your family if you are all participating) will see it every day - your fridge, a bathroom mirror, your desk at work, or even take a picture of it for your phone lock screen or desktop screen.
- Review the thoughts “to consider” on a daily basis. You can reflect on one quote for the week, or a different one each day, or all of them every day...it’s totally up to you!
- Pick one of the “to do” items to accomplish each day or each week. Please repeat! Also, try to make a specific plan each morning or on the first day of the week to make sure one or multiple of those to-do actions really happen. Put it on your calendar and have someone hold you accountable.
- Reflect in the evenings on the to do actions you’ve completed and how they have helped you grow in virtue. Consider ways to grow even more the following day(s) or weeks that month.
- PRAY for God to shower His grace on your genuine efforts so as to help you advance even further in virtue.
- Don’t try to do so much that you give up on it altogether. This plan is meant to be simple, and to help you focus just a little more intentionally on virtue than you would without it.

# Patience

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## TO CONSIDER:

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Patience is power. Patience is not an absence of action; rather it is timing. It waits on the right time to act, for the right principles and in the right way. -Venerable Fulton Sheen

Be still before the LORD, and wait patiently for him. –Psalm  
37:7

Patience attains all that it strives for. He who has God finds he lacks nothing: God alone suffices. - St. Teresa of Avila

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## TO DO:

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- Be patient with a family member
- Be patient with yourself amidst a struggle you are having
  - Be patient with God to answer your prayer
- Be patient with a friend, coworker, or relative who is on your nerves
  - Be patient with a stranger who bothers you
  - Be patient with a goal you are trying to achieve
    - Be patient for an event you are waiting for

# Charity

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## TO CONSIDER:

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Charity may be a very short word, but with its tremendous meaning of pure love, it sums up man's entire relation to God and to his neighbor. -St Aelred of Rievaulx

When justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous, but dismay to evildoers. -Proverbs 21:15

The source of justice is not vengeance but charity. -Saint Bridget of Sweden

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## TO DO:

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- Deepen your love for God by spending more time in prayer.
- Think of an “enemy” or someone who is hard to love. Love them by praying for them or forgiving them for a wrong they have done.
- Think of someone in your family who could use a little extra love, and do an act of charity for them.
- Love the poor and in need. Make or gift a meal to a neighbor, offer a smile and a prayer for a struggling stranger, or donate to a worthy organization that serves those in need.

# Faith

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## TO CONSIDER:

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In her voyage across the ocean of this world, the Church is like a great ship being pounded by the waves of life's different stresses. Our duty is not to abandon ship but to keep her on course. –St. Boniface

The righteous shall live by faith. –Romans 1:17

There is only one honest reason why anyone should ever believe anything: because it is true. God is, and God has acted, and God has spoken. Now I must respond. That is the true situation. Do I respond Yes (faith) or No? That is the simple question. –Dr. Peter Kreeft

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## TO DO:

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- Read the Bible every day
- Go to Confession at least once this month
- Plan a day (other than your Sunday obligation) to receive the Eucharist
  - Read a spiritual book
  - Learn about the life of a saint
- Participate in a Bible or Catechism study
  - Share your faith with someone else

# Gratitude

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## TO CONSIDER:

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Would that I could exhaust myself in acts of thanksgiving and gratitude towards this Divine Heart, for the great favor He shows us, in deigning to accept our help to make Him known, loved and honored; He reserves infinite blessings for all those who devote themselves to this work. –St. Margaret Mary Alacoque

Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. –1 Thessalonians 5:18

No duty is more urgent than that of returning thanks. - St. Ambrose

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## TO DO:

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- Count your blessings daily, either verbally, in prayer, or through writing a list or in a journal.
  - When tempted to negativity, shift your mood/comment/thought to something positive.
- Balance prayers of petition with prayers of thanksgiving.
- Offer gratitude to God for hard things, both small and big sufferings.
  - Thank others for who they are in your life or for something kind they have done for you.

# Generosity

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## TO CONSIDER:

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In all things I have shown you that by so toiling one must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

–Acts 20:35

Teach us, Good Lord, To Serve Thee as Thou deservest; To give and not to count the cost; To fight and not to heed the wounds; To toil and not to seek for rest; To labor and not to ask for any reward, save that of knowing that we do Thy will. Through Jesus Christ Our Lord, Amen. –St. Ignatius of Loyola

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## TO DO:

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- Give of your time to help another – visit/call a relative or friend who is ill or would like some company, or volunteer for a ministry or event at your parish
- Be exceptionally generous with your almsgiving. Find a new charity you can donate to or see if you can give more to your church.
- Think of someone in your family you can shower with a liberal dose of generous care, by helping them with a project, chore, etc.
- Pare down your possessions and give them to the needy.

# Hope

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## TO CONSIDER:

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Place all your hope in the Heart of Jesus; it is a safe asylum; for he who trusts in God is sheltered and protected by His mercy. To this firm hope, join the practice of virtue, and even in this life you will begin to taste the ineffable joys of Paradise. –St. Bernard of Clairvaux

We must have confidence in God, Who is what He always has been, and we must not be disheartened because things turn out contrary to us. –St. Philip

Real hope is not crushed by disappointment. In fact, it is in difficulty that hope often is born. –Donald DeMarco

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## TO DO:

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- Reflect on Matthew 7:7-8: “Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” Pray for an increase in hope in God’s promises by reciting this passage daily.
- When you pray the Our Father, slow down on the words “Thy will be done,” believing in God’s plan to bring His will about in your life.
- Give thanks: Give thanks to God for the things for which you have hoped for in the past that He has since blessed you with.
- Learn about heaven (a good book to pick up might be Dr. Peter Kreeft’s Heaven: The Heart’s Deepest Longing.)



# Solicitude

★ Brotherly love, admiration, concern for the well-being of others ★

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## TO CONSIDER:

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What is the mark of love for your neighbor? Not to seek what is for your own benefit, but what is for the benefit of the one loved, both in body and in soul. –St. Basil

Love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor. –Romans 12:10

Love to be real, it must cost—it must hurt—it must empty us of self. –Blessed Mother Teresa

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## TO DO:

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- Genuinely congratulate and encourage others to accomplish good things, even if you would like to be recognized for those same things (ex. authorship, promotions, crafty projects, etc.)
- Refrain from thinking poorly about those who have more (or more recognizable) skills than you in certain areas.
- Be conscious of the welfare of others. For example, help another person achieve a goal of his or hers this week or month.

# Mercy

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## TO CONSIDER:

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He who knows how to forgive prepares for himself many graces from God. As often as I look upon the cross, so often will I forgive with all my heart - St. Faustina

Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. –Luke 6:36

I think we too are the people who, on the one hand, want to listen to Jesus, but on the other hand, at times, like to find a stick to beat others with, to condemn others. And Jesus has this message for us: mercy. I think — and I say it with humility — that this is the Lord's most powerful message: mercy.  
—Pope Francis

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## TO DO:

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- Offer forgiveness to someone, either verbally or in writing.
- Go to your parish and schedule a mass to be said for a living or deceased loved one.
  - Send flowers or a card to someone who is grieving.
- Show mercy with your speech by refraining from gossip
  - Give your spouse or child the benefit of the doubt

# Peace

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## TO CONSIDER:

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The servants of God...whether provoked by word or work, by keeping themselves tranquil and peaceful, evince a perfect nobleness of soul.” -Saint Thomas Aquinas

And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. –Philippians 4:7

Never be in a hurry; do everything quietly and in a calm spirit. Do not lose your inner peace for anything whatsoever, even if your whole world seems upset. - Saint Francis de Sales

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## TO DO:

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- Downsize or simplify an area of your life - your calendar of commitments, your meals, your physical possessions — something standing in the way of your peace right now.
- Honor the Lord’s Day more fully by refraining from work, spending more time connecting with God and family, doing things that promote rest and leisure.
- Schedule some quiet time to sit in God’s presence, either in a quiet space at home or in front of the Blessed Sacrament in Adoration.

# Humility

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## TO CONSIDER:

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To be taken with love for a soul, God does not look on its greatness, but the greatness of its humility. -Saint John of the Cross

Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. –Philippians 2:3

Someone once asked St. Bernard of Clairvaux what the three most important virtues are. He famously replied, “Humility, humility and humility.”

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## TO DO:

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- Give recognition to a classmate, coworker, fellow ministry worker, etc. instead of seeking recognition for yourself.
- Remember that the talents and gifts you have are given to you by God, so thank Him when you are recognized for some achievement or given praise, instead of accepting all congratulations for yourself.
  - Practice being honest with yourself about your own strengths and weaknesses. When we grow in self-awareness, we grow in humility.
- Read and reflect on the humility of Jesus in the Gospels.

# Temperance

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## TO CONSIDER:

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Temperance is a mean with regard to pleasures. –Aristotle

Do not follow your inclination and strength, walking according to the desires of your heart. –Sirach 5:2

For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world. –Titus 2:11-12

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. –Romans 13:14

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## TO DO:

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- Moderate your food and drink. Practice not eating past the point of being full or drinking too much.
- Avoid excess, by practicing doing without certain earthly goods that aren't necessary. Maybe you can make a commitment to refrain from buying extra clothes you don't need, electronics, or other gadgets and items that you can live without.
  - Read the life of a saint to be inspired by his or her temperance, seeing how their detachment from earthly things help them become more attached to Christ.

# Prudence

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## TO CONSIDER:

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Blessed the one...who is not anxious to speak, but who reflects prudently on what he is to say and the manner in which he is to reply. –St. Francis of Assisi

I, wisdom, dwell in prudence. –Proverbs 8:12

The wisdom of a prudent man is to discern his way, but the folly of fools is deceiving. –Proverbs 14:8

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## TO DO:

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- Seek counsel. Before making a big decision, practice seeking the advice from wise, faithful people in your life, like a priest or a prayerful friend.
- Pray for discernment when weighing options to make a proper judgment on the best decision or course of action.
- Be decisive. It can be difficult to practice prudence when you are always flip-flopping your decisions. Discern the best choice or course of action for you, and then follow through.
- Read about the moral life so you can be prepared to make decisions and choices to live morally. (The Catechism of the Catholic Church is a great place to start!)



## **Thanks for working your way through the Virtue-Focused Year!**

I hope you have found this free resource helpful. Find more helpful resources and tools for an intentional faith and stronger spiritual leadership at [KatieWarner.com](http://KatieWarner.com).

You can also connect with me on social media! God bless you, and let's keep growing in virtue together!

*Katie Warner*

