“Four Pillars of Decency”

INTRODUCTION: In our Library of Congress in Washington, DC, there are four grand frescoes painted in the four corners of the central hall of the Library…

1. They are portraits of four noble women:
   a. One holds a set of scales and is blindfolded
   b. One carries a sword and shield and wears a helmet
   c. One sits pondering, elbow on her knee, chin in her hand
   d. One holds a cup of wine

2. These four lovely ladies are the Four Cardinal Virtues, depicted in classical Greek form – as a female.
   a. The ancients saw the virtues as female goddesses
   b. Or “muses”
   c. They often were carved in stone or marble as the corner pillars of temples, palaces or libraries.
   d. May our sons in their youth be like plants full grown, our daughters like corner pillars cut for the structure of a palace. (Psalm 144:12)
   e. They are depicted in art form more than any other symbols of our society of government in Washington, DC.

3. They were called the four CARDINAL virtues, derived from the Latin verb cardo.
   a. cardo: to turn or swing
   b. cardinalis: a hinge; hence something upon which important things turn or depend
   c. Thus: a principal or chief thing of importance
   d. The Cardinal Virtues: the four chief virtues upon which are hinged all the other virtues upon which society depends.

4. It was the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers who designated the Cardinal Virtues as four: Prudence, Justice, Courage, Temperance
   a. Or wisdom, justice, fortitude, self-control
   b. These four virtues were fundamental to all other virtues.

5. The Four Cardinal Virtues are described by medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas:
   a. Prudence (wisdom): An intellectual virtue that enables someone to know the truth and to grasp with understanding the highest causes, especially the chief cause: God.
   b. Aquinas taught that there were three intellectual virtues: Prudence (wisdom), Science and Understanding.
c. And Aquinas saw three moral virtues: Justice, Courage and Temperance

d. **Justice:** The chief of all moral virtues because it both determines and guides our relationship with all other people.

e. **Temperance:** the control of passions that go against reason and thus harm us or others unwittingly. (self-control)

f. **Courage (fortitude):** the ability to move beyond the fear of difficulty, danger or death in doing what is morally right.

6. Here is what **Thomas Aquinas** wrote in his *Summa Theologica* (vol. 2; question 61; article 3; p. 347-348)

   First, as existing in the very act of reason: and thus we have one principal virtue, called Prudence – secondly, according as the reason puts its order into something else; either into operations, and then we have Justice; or into passions, and then we need two virtues. For the need of putting the order of reason into the passions is due to their thwarting reason: and this occurs in two ways. First, by the passions inciting to something against reason; and then the passions need a curb, which we call Temperance. Secondly, by the passions withdrawing us from following the dictate of reason, e.g., through fear of danger or toil; and then man needs to be strengthened for that which reason dictates, lest he turn back; and to this end there is Fortitude.

   Prudence is merely a certain rectitude of discretion in any actions or matters whatever; justice, a certain rectitude of the mind whereby man does what he ought in any matters; temperance, a disposition of the mind, moderating any passions or operations, so as to keep them within bounds; and fortitude a disposition whereby the soul is strengthened for that which is in accord with reason, against any assaults of the passions, or the toil involved by any operations.

7. Why go into all this – Library of Congress, Thomas Aquinas, Greek and Roman Philosopher?

   a. Answer: Because the loss of these virtues are what is destroying our society, our churches, our families and our lives!

   b. What is the basis of all our moral, social and spiritual meltdown? The loss of Prudence or Wisdom and the resulting rise of foolish political correctness. Americans don’t know how to think wisely.

   c. What prompted the Supreme Court Decision on same-sex marriage and the tidal wave of pro-homosexual advocacy? The loss to temperance and self-control, and a society given over to unbridled sex, alcohol, drugs, gluttony and materialism. Americans can’t say “no” to their passions.

   d. Why are we still struggling with racism, violence, lack of law and order, riots, looting and rising crime in our streets? The loss of Justice, and a lawlessness, oppression and disregard for other people’s basic rights because of the uncontrolled expressions of our prejudices, preferences and passions. Americans have become a lawless people and an unjust society.

   e. Why haven’t you heard more about virtue in our schools, our churches or our halls of government? The lack of moral courage and spiritual fortitude. People (pastors and presidents) are afraid of the backlash, opposition, persecution and personal abuse they would face if they called people to Justice, Wisdom and Self-control.

   f. He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?  
(Micah 6:8)

8. We have, David F. Wells states, simply lost our virtue!
   b. A book I have my RTS students read when I teach PT518 on Pastoral Ministry
   c. A book every one of you should read
   d. Wells states this in his opening paragraph, p.1.

   This book is about the disintegrating moral culture in American society and what this now means for
the Church. This disintegration is, of course, a well-worn theme. It is the subject of editorials,
books, and television commentary. It is a cause of concern among many people, and it has
occasioned quite a lot of political posturing. Pronouncements are easy to make on such matters. It
is easier still to exploit what is of genuine national concern for private gain, but understanding what
is happening is far harder and far more important. Without this understanding, there will be no
durable solutions. Nor will there be an effective Christian presence in society. In this book, I have
tried to understand. More than that, I have tried to think about the face-off between Christian faith
and our morally disintegrating culture. What has this breakdown done to our understanding of
ourselves as moral beings? For if this understanding is being lost, and I believe that it is, the
consequences are large for how Christian faith will be seen and for how it needs to think about itself
and its responsibilities in society.

9. Tell me: Do you see yourself primarily and most essentially as a moral being? You are, you know, that
very thing –
   a. The Image of God: a moral being with the ability to know and choose between right and wrong.
   b. A being with an immortal soul, and thus, a capacity to know God, be holy, love others, overcome
evil, do good.
   c. You are a person who will be judged at the end of your life, and the end of human history as we
know it, for your moral performance in life.
   d. Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled
away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the
throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the
dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. (Rev. 20:11-12)

10. Virtue is not about law, rules or “legalism.” Virtue is about character that shapes our conduct. The gospel
is about Virtue!
   a. Virtue is the product of grace: God reshaping our souls to be like Christ.
   b. Virtue flows from the work of the Holy Spirit in us.
   c. Virtue is the outflow of three Theological Virtues: Faith, Hope and love.
      i. Prudence is faith in action in everyday life.
      ii. Courage is fueled by hope, in persevering through danger.
iii. *Justice* is love shown towards others for their good.

iv. *Temperance* is love that restrains my own sins for other’s sake.

d. *When the grace of God works in our lives we become virtuous people.*

e. **Christ enables us to live the good and noble life God created us to live.**

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (Gen. 1:26-28)

11. Tonight we begin a sermon series called *The Good and Noble Life.*

a. A Sermon Series on Christian Virtues

b. **Sermon flyer:** Four angels in the background (left to right)

- Courage – with weapons of warfare
- Justice – with scales of justice and a sword
- Prudence – with torch of light and a book
- Temperance – with the simple fan of modesty

c. Tonight: The Four Cardinal Virtues (Prov. 8)

d. Next seven Sundays: The Seven Deadly Sins and their offsetting Heavenly Virtues

12. The Church of the Middle Ages often spoke of the *Seven Deadly Sins.*

a. **Baltimore Catechism: Q. 59**

The chief sources of sin are seven: Pride, Covetousness, Lust, Anger, Gluttony, Envy, and Sloth; and they are commonly called capital sins.

b. The Medieval Church also spoke of Seven Heavenly Virtues: Chastity, temperance, charity, diligence, patience, kindness and humility

c. **Tony Campolo:** *The Seven Deadly Sins* (pp. 9-10).

Sloth, lust, anger, pride, envy, gluttony, greed. The church leaders of the Middle Ages named them The Seven Deadly Sins. They urged people to purge themselves of these sins, for they knew that out of them came the evil in the world. But they are not so much sins as they are evil dispositions which motivate us to sin. They are attitudes, emotions, and states of mind which condition our behavior in ways they are destructive to ourselves and to those who are around us. What the medieval church leaders knew, social scientists are only now belatedly admitting: that we’re all sinners by nature and are helpless to be otherwise. No commitment to do good will last. The bad news is that unless
something miraculous happens, we will continue to do the evil that we have always done because there is something basically wrong with what we are. The good news is that God is willing to perform a miracle – He wants to change our basic nature. Only through this miracle can we become persons who are inclined to do good and be a blessing to others. This miracle is what Christians call salvation.

13. In the coming weeks, our Associate and Assistant Pastors will guide us through these 7 deadly sins and the 7 heavenly virtues.

   • Next Sunday (July 19): **Andy Schuster** (gluttony & self-control)
   • July 26th: **Stewart Neeley** (slothfulness and diligence)
   • August 2nd: **Dave Baxter** (lust and chastity)
   • August 9th: **Bruce Creswell** (envy and contentment)
   • August 16th: **Bernie Lawrence** (greed and charity)
   • August 30th: **Gabriel Sylvia** (anger and patience)
   • September 6th: **Mike Miller** (pride and humility)

   • Note: No man was asked to preach on his pet sin. 😊 The pastors chose a deadly sin about which to preach!

14. **Maxi Dunnam and Kimberly Dunnam Reisman**: *The Workbook on the 7 Deadly Sins*, (p. 2).

   The idea of listing “deadly” (capital) sins is almost as old as Christianity itself. It seems to have begun with the desert fathers in Egypt. John Cassian, a monk from Marseilles, developed a list of eight sins as a way of guiding his fellow monks. Finally, in the sixth century, Pope Gregory I (the Great) adapted the list, and reduced the number from eight to seven. This list thus became applicable not just for the monastic life, but for ordinary life as well and created the list of the seven deadly sins—pride, avarice, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and acedia (sloth)—that we now use. Throughout history, at the foundation of all the discussions of the seven deadly sins is a recognition that these sins are deeply rooted in our nature. Social scientists are finally coming to the same conclusion, admitting that we are reaping the harvest of a failure to recognize the fact of sin.

15. Tonight I will “set up” the series by turning our attention to *Prov. 8:1-36* and **The Four Pillars of Decency**.

   a. Prudence (8:1-12)
   b. Courage (8:13-17)
   c. Justice (8:18-21)
   d. Temperance (8:32-36)

   I. **GOD BESTOWS THE GRACE OF PRUDENCE UPON HIS CHILDREN** (Prov. 8:1-12)

   Does not wisdom call?

   Does not understanding raise her voice?
On the heights beside the way,
    at the crossroads she takes her stand;
beside the gates in front of the town,
    at the entrance of the portals she cries aloud:
“To you, O men, I call,
    and my cry is to the children of man.
O simple ones, learn prudence;
    O fools, learn sense.
Hear, for I will speak noble things,
    and from my lips will come what is right,
for my mouth will utter truth;
    wickedness is an abomination to my lips.
All the words of my mouth are righteous;
    there is nothing twisted or crooked in them.
They are all straight to him who understands,
    and right to those who find knowledge.
Take my instruction instead of silver,
    and knowledge rather than choice gold,
for wisdom is better than jewels,
    and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.
“I, wisdom, dwell with prudence,
    and I find knowledge and discretion. (Prov. 8:1-12)

1. Solomon is very clear: Wisdom speaks to us promising Prudence to the foolish and simple-minded and speaking to us of noble things.

Does not wisdom call?

Does not understanding raise her voice?

On the heights beside the way,
    at the crossroads she takes her stand;
beside the gates in front of the town,
    at the entrance of the portals she cries aloud:
“To you, O men, I call,
    and my cry is to the children of man.
O simple ones, learn prudence;
O fools, learn sense.  

Hear, for I will speak noble things,  
and from my lips will come what is right. (Prov. 8:1-6)

2. Wisdom, in the Proverbs, is the **personification** of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Read Proverbs 8:22-31…

*The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his work,*  
*the first of his acts of old.*

*Ages ago I was set up,*  
*at the first, before the beginning of the earth.*

*When there were no depths I was brought forth,*  
*when there were no springs abounding with water.*

*Before the mountains had been shaped,*  
*before the hills, I was brought forth,*  
*before he had made the earth with its fields,*  
*or the first of the dust of the world.*

*When he established the heavens, I was there;*  
*when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,*  
*when he made firm the skies above,*  
*when he established the fountains of the deep,*  
*when he assigned to the sea its limit,*  
*so that the waters might not transgress his command,*  
*when he marked out the foundations of the earth,*  
*then I was beside him, like a master workman,*  
*and I was daily his delight,*  
*rejoicing before him always,*  
*rejoicing in his inhabited world*

*and delighting in the children of man.*  

(Prov. 8:22-31)

a. **Tremper Longman:** “Wisdom’s Autobiography” (p. 197)

b. Note: Wisdom is presented as a *Woman* (like all the virtues of the ancient world).

*Wisdom cries aloud in the street,*  
*in the markets she raises her voice;*  
*at the head of the noisy streets she cries out;*  
*at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:*  
*“How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?*
How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge?
If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you;
I will make my words known to you.  (Prov. 1:20-23)

c. But Lady Wisdom is clearly the Son of God, for no one else can meet the description in 8:22-31.

   i. He was in existence with God the Father before anything else existed (v. 22-26).
   ii. He was present at the creation of the world (v. 27-31).
   iii. In fact, He collaborated with God to bring forth all that was created (v. 30-31).

d. Thus Wisdom (Prudence) is the chief of all virtues because it is the very spirit of Jesus Christ.

e. There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.
   And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.
   He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
   Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.  (Isaiah 11:1-5)

3. Of all the things we need today, Prudence/Wisdom is our #1 need. We’re simply a foolish people.

   a. We want simple answers to life’s problems: “O simple ones, learn prudence.”  (v. 5)
   b. We follow the crowd into folly because we lack good sense: “O fools, learn sense.”  (v. 5)
   c. Our hearts are not set on noble things but on the crass, the commercial, the sensual and the profane: “Hear for I will speak noble things.”  (v. 6)

4. Need proof? Then consider this…

   a. How many of us watch Survivor, Lost, the Apprentice, the Bachelor/Bachelorette and other crass “reality shows”?
      i. Which are not reality at all, they’re staged and fake.
      ii. They are sexually immoral, crude, mean and shallow.
      iii. Note: There are probably others but since I’ve never watched any of them, I don’t know about the latest trash on TV.
b. What are you reading now? Anything of substance? (Do you even read books?)

c. How often do you refer to and take your cues from your “heart” or “emotions,” rather than from your mind? (How many of you want me to speak to your “heart” and not your head?)

d. Do you find “noble things” boring or comical?

5. **Illustration:** Jane and my goal of visiting the 13 presidential libraries, and how comical (uncool) that seems to some people. (And yet, both the George H. W. Bush Library and the George W. Bush Library were full of noble, inspirational, good and virtuous things.)

6. **The grace of God** weans us off the simple-minded, foolish and low-life things of this world and fills our **minds** with Prudence and the good and noble things of God.

> For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.  
> (2 Cor. 10:3-5)

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**II. GOD BESTOWS THE GRACE OF COURAGE UPON HIS CHILDREN**  (Prov. 8:13-17)

*The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil.*

*Pride and arrogance and the way of evil*

*and perverted speech I hate.*

*I have counsel and sound wisdom;*

*I have insight; I have strength.*

*By me kings reign,*

*and rulers decree what is just;*

*by me princes rule,*

*and nobles, all who govern justly.*

*I love those who love me,*

*and those who seek me diligently find me.*  

(Prov. 8:13-17)

1. God’s grace gives us **strength**, the ability to **rule** or **govern** properly, and the **moral courage** to do what is right.

2. We live in a nation of moral cowards: *Their insecurity and lust for popularity and the approval of others has negated their willingness or ability to stand up for God, righteousness or a just cause because they fear rejection. They lack the virtue of courage.*

3. **Illustration:** George H. W. Bush was elected to the U. S. Congress in 1967, representing the 7th District of Texas. He was a conservative Republican representing a blue-dog Democratic district. In 1968, he voted for the *Civil Rights Act* of President Lyndon Baines Johnson.

   a. Went home to the 7th District

   b. Booed by a hostile crowd of white Texans

   c. He defended his vote, explained his reasons, refused to recant.
d. They gave him a standing ovation at the end of his speech.

e. George W. H. Bush was a man of moral courage: faith, family, friends, public service (4 core values).

4. Tell me, what kind of people turn such a man out of office and select in his place – twice, for two terms – a serial adulterer, a noted liar, and a president whose nickname was “Slick Willy?”

5. As long as our children learn from us that the most important thing in life is to be popular, well-accepted and well-liked, we will be a nation without moral courage.

6. Illustration: The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities has recently released a report which states that college students are dropping out of school, at record levels never before seen, for three reasons

   • The fear of failure
   • The inability to live with uncertainty
   • The unwillingness to make major decisions

All of this is the result of a lack of moral courage and a life of being pampered by parents and influenced by peer pressure. We Americans are soft, fearful and cowardly.

7. The grace of God changes that. It instills in us a moral fiber that combines to give us moral courage

   a. For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. (2 Tim. 1:6-7)
   
   b. Not a spirit of fear
   
   c. But a spirit of power, love and self-discipline = moral courage
   
   d. Fortitude!

III. GOD BESTOWS THE GRACE OF JUSTICE UPON HIS CHILDREN (Prov. 8:18-21)

Riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and righteousness.  
My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold, and my yield than choice silver.  
I walk in the way of righteousness, in the paths of justice, granting an inheritance to those who love me, and filling their treasuries.  (Prov. 8:18-21)

1. Note that crucial phrase: “I walk in the way of righteousness, in the paths of justice…” (v. 20)

2. Righteousness, Justice and Wisdom are major emphases in the Old Testament prophetic and wisdom literature –
a. *The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel:*

To know wisdom and instruction,

to understand words of insight,

to receive instruction in wise dealing,

in righteousness, justice, and equity;

to give prudence to the simple,

knowledge and discretion to the youth— (Prov. 1:1-4)

b. *For the LORD gives wisdom;*

from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;

he stores up sound wisdom for the upright;

he is a shield to those who walk in integrity,

guarding the paths of justice

and watching over the way of his saints.

Then you will understand righteousness and justice

and equity, every good path. (Prov. 2:6-9)

c. In our present passage, justice is mentioned twice.

*By me kings reign,*

and rulers decree what is just;

*by me princes rule,*

and nobles, all who govern justly. (Prov. 8:15-16)

*I walk in the way of righteousness,*

in the paths of justice. (Prov. 8:20)

d. Eight other references to justice in the Proverbs

*The thoughts of the righteous are just;*

the counsels of the wicked are deceitful. (Prov. 12:5)

*Many seek the face of a ruler,*

but it is from the Lord that a man gets justice.

*An unjust man is an abomination to the righteous,*

but one whose way is straight is an abomination to the wicked. (Prov. 29:26-27)

e. *He has told you, O man, what is good;*

and what does the Lord require of you

*but to do justice, and to love kindness,*

*and to walk humbly with your God?* (Micah 6:8)

f. *But let justice roll down like waters,*

and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. (Amos 5:24)
g. “So you, by the help of your God, return,
   hold fast to love and justice,
   and wait continually for your God.” (Hosea 12:6)

h. “This is what the Lord Almighty said: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.’ (Zech. 7:9-10)

i. If I tell a righteous person that they will surely live, but then they trust in their righteousness and do evil, none of the righteous things that person has done will be remembered; they will die for the evil they have done. And if I say to a wicked person, ‘You will surely die,’ but they then turn away from their sin and do what is just and right— if they give back what they took in pledge for a loan, return what they have stolen, follow the decrees that give life, and do no evil—that person will surely live; they will not die. None of the sins that person has committed will be remembered against them. They have done what is just and right; they will surely live. (Eze. 33:13-16)

j. Wash and make yourselves clean.
   Take your evil deeds out of my sight;
   stop doing wrong.
   Learn to do right; seek justice.
   Defend the oppressed.
   Take up the cause of the fatherless;
   plead the case of the widow. (Isaiah 1:16-17)

3. Please Hear Me! Justice is not possible without mercy and humility –

   a. He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.
      And what does the Lord require of you?
      To act justly and to love mercy
      and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)

   b. The humility to see, admit and take responsibility for what is unjust

   c. The kindness or mercy to turn justice into righteous acts of helping the poor, oppressed and weak

   d. The Hebrew mishpat (justice) is rendering to people what God has determined is their right to receive

4. Illustration: How can we have such poverty, such brokenness, and such violence against African Americans, First Nation People, and immigrants in America when no one is prejudiced?

   a. Isn’t that what we hear all the time, “I’m not a bigot? I’m not prejudiced. I don’t hate blacks. I’ve never discriminated against a minority!”

   b. But we are humble enough to see that our inactivity, passivity and disinterest are feeding systemic injustice?

   c. Are we loving and merciful enough to do good to these folks in order to offset the evil done to them?

   d. Are we honest enough to see our history for what it really is?
e. Do we have the moral courage to bear the anger, the rejection, the name-calling and the vindictiveness that always goes with standing against injustice?

f. Do we possess the wisdom (prudence) to see that our fallen world (America) are, by nature, sinful, unjust and unkind?

5. **The grace of God** is able to replace a heart of stone with a heart of mercy, and to reach out to the oppressed in the way Christ reached out to us.

   If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, “You shall not commit adultery,” also said, “You shall not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment. (James 2:8-13)

   Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world. (James 1:27)

IV. **GOD BESTOWS THE GRACE OF TEMPERANCE UPON HIS CHILDREN** (Prov. 8:32-36)

   “Now then, my children, listen to me; 
   blessed are those who keep my ways.

   Listen to my instruction and be wise; 
   do not disregard it.

   Blessed are those who listen to me, 
   watching daily at my doors, 
   waiting at my doorway.

   For those who find me find life 
   and receive favor from the Lord.

   But those who fail to find me harm themselves; 
   all who hate me love death.” (Prov. 8:32-36)

1. “Temperance” is not a good word for us; we tend to think of the radical Women’s Temperance Movement (c. 1915) that led to the Prohibition Laws and the 18th Amendment to the Constitution forbidding the manufacture, sale or consumption of alcohol.

2. “Temperance” is the old-fashioned word for **self-control**.

3. It is the **inner moral compass** that says “No” to our sinful lusts and passions that offend God and hurt other people.

   Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever. (1 John 2:15-17)
4. *Self-control* is mentioned often in the New Testament. It is both a fruit of the Spirit and a virtue produced by the gospel –

> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. (Gal. 5:22-23)

> For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. (2 Peter 1:5-7)

5. The ancients spoke often of the three great enemies of the soul: *The World, the Flesh, and the Devil*
   a. *The Devil* – the mastermind behind all sin and evil
   b. *The World* – the order of fallen mankind pitted against God
   c. *The Flesh* – my inner, sinful, base nature that causes me to sin
   d. The **most difficult** enemy to vanquish is always my Flesh!

6. **But…the grace of God** empowers me to master myself, control myself, to develop *self-control* (temperance) in spite of indwelling sin…

   I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

   (Romans 7:15-25)

7. It is good for us and our children to learn how to say “No!” to our desires, our passions, our emotions, our wants and even our needs.

8. *We must teach our flesh to heel like a trained dog instead of prowl about like a ravenous wolf!*

9. Virtue can do this!

**CONCLUSION:** What you and I will discover over these next seven weeks is this…

1. The **Four Cardinal Virtues** upon which a good and noble life rests and upon which a God-fearing society turns on a hinge: *Prudence, Justice, Courage and Temperance*...
2. …are assaulted and destroyed by **Seven Deadly Sins**: Lust, Greed, Pride, Envy, Gluttony, Anger and Slothfulness (laziness)…

3. …but can be restored by **Seven Heavenly Virtues**: Humility, Chastity, Charity, Diligence, Self-control, Patience and Contentment.

4. How? By three virtuous actions:
   
a. **First**: The gracious act of God in sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem the world. The end result of the Gospel is the restoration of our world and virtuous societies –
   
   *I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time.* (1 Tim. 2:1-6)

b. **Second**: The powerful grace of the Holy Spirit working in us will save us from sins’ ruin, sins’ patterns, and sins’ ignoble ways. The Holy Spirit will produce in each of us a virtuous life –

   *For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.* (Titus 2:11-14)

c. **Third**: We must begin to practice these godly virtues, aided by grace and informed by scripture, and to teach such ways to our children, teenagers and young adults –

   *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching. They are a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck.* (Prov. 1:7-9)

5. **William J. Bennett** wrote this in the Introduction to *The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories* (pp. 12-13).

   *We welcome our children to a common world, a world of shared ideals, to the community of moral persons. In that common world we invite them to the continuing task of preserving the principles, the ideals, and the notions of goodness and greatness we hold dear. And planting the ideas of virtue, of good traits in the young, comes first. In the moral life, as in life itself, we take one step at a time. Every field has its complexities and controversies. And so too does ethics. And every field has its basics. So too with values. The tough issues can, if teachers and parents wish, be taken up later. And, I would add, a person who is morally literate will be immeasurably better equipped than a morally illiterate person to reach a reasoned and ethically defensible position on these tough issues. But the formation of character and the teaching of the moral literacy come first, in the early years; the tough issues come later, in senior high school or after.*
6. Would you want to go through a thunderstorm with only **half of an umbrella**? But many of us do this as we go through life.
   a. The umbrella is *God’s Grace*
   b. On the rear side, it grants us *forgiveness* for all the times we sinned against God and man.
   c. On the front side, it gives us *virtues* to prevent us from dishonoring God and harming others.
   d. Why go through life without virtue, knowing only forgiveness.
   e. Don’t you want a whole umbrella?

7. *We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.* (1 Tim. 1:8-11)

8. **Note that:** “…in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God…”

9. i.e., a Gospel that brings to each of us, and to society to large *a virtuous life – the Good and Noble Life.*