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The Virtues: Seven Habits of Champions

by
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SHOW #2: PRUDENCE (Wisdom) Intellectual virtue.

- I. **DEFINITION OF THE INTELLECTUAL VIRTUE OF PRUDENCE**
 - A. Can't do what's good unless you know what's good. Prudence is the virtue whereby you Know what's good. (CCC 1806)
 - B. Many highly educated people are really impractical, imprudent
 - C. Not book learning or technical knowledge
 - D. Perfects the practical intellect; applies to specific situations, the perfection of conscience.
 - E. Definition of prudence: ***“the perfected ability to make right decisions.”*** “Prudence implies a transformation of the knowledge of truth into decisions corresponding to reality.” Josef Pieper, *The Cardinal Virtues* (South Bend IN: Univ. Notre Dame Press, 1966), 162.

- II. **Mind is important**
 - A. Don't misunderstand being “fools for Christ.” It means we don't follow the false wisdom of the world.
 - B. Heart is the seat of thinking in the OT
 - C. OT command to “Get Wisdom”. Proverbs is about practical life. So is the book of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus).
 - D. Solomon's practical wisdom. The famous story of the two harlots. Solomon understood human nature, the way things work. Understood motherhood.
 - E. Solomon was open to the world, the way things are. Teachable. Give up our pre-conceived notions. Open to the way God is, people are, rather than the way we'd want things to be.

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- F. If we don't know the way things work. We make dumb decisions all the time. Having good intentions is not enough. Love needs to be wise
 - 1. Example of imprudence: girl giving away her virginity to a boy out of misguided sense of love and loyalty
 - 2. Example of imprudence: covering for an Alcoholic. Enabling behavior.
 - 3. Example of imprudence: Parent declining to punish a child. Permissive
- G. Piety does not always mean holiness: Holiness is the development of character.
- H. Prudence is the Mother & measure of all other virtues: The most important of all the cardinal virtues

III. **Sins against Prudence**

- A. **Impulsiveness.** Rash judgment.
- B. **Indecisiveness:** considering pros and cons. Stalling for time. Fear of making a mistake paralyzing. What if I'm wrong. Mat 25:14 ff. God is a loving father. Does not mind if we make mistakes. Making the same mistake over and over again is foolishness. Most things we do allow for some mistakes.
- C. Only way to learn to make good decisions is to practice making decisions!

IV. **Prudence means planning**

- A. Making provision for the future. We live in time. Always plan for the future. Plan for retirement.
- B. Trusting in the Lord is not a substitute for making a plan.
- C. Child in school. Major exam. Neglecting to study is not faith, but irresponsibility. Building a Catholic school.
- D. Often not taught in the Church. Sirach The Church's book. Ecclesiasticus
- E. In early church, RCIA dealt with character, virtue. Only place it is being taught: business seminars
- F. Advertising: what motivates people to make decisions? Need to take the time to understand what attracts people, keeps attention, makes them want more.

V. **How to get prudence:**

- A. Look at models
- B. In Scripture.
- C. Saints.

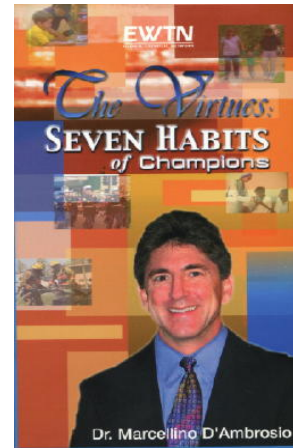
- D. Other great people in history like Teddy Roosevelt. People today.
- E. Take counsel: spiritual director
- F. Make decisions: faith that God will bring good even out of your mistakes
- G. key point: the goal traditional Catholic moral teaching is not moralism (casuistry) or legalism, but helping people come to ethical maturity.

This outline appears in the [Virtues & Christian Character](#), [Christian Lifestyle](#) and [Prayer & Spirituality](#) sections of [The Crossroads Initiative Library](#).

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