

DO THE HARD THINGS

The Christian Teachings of Virtue (Series 3, Part 4, Teaching #20)

Leader Guide...

See the back page for detailed facilitator instructions.

Instructions: Watch video, read aloud, underline what stands out to you most, discuss

Pursuing a virtuous life is undeniably hard. But do not be discouraged. As it is said, “One should not say that it is impossible to reach a virtuous life; but one should say that it is not easy” (St. Anthony the Great). Those words ring true. The road to virtue is not smooth or soft—it is steep, narrow, and often lonely. But it is also the only road that leads to the kind of fulfillment the world cannot offer.

The world tells you to follow your heart, chase pleasure, and do what feels good. But the way of virtue says the opposite: do what is right—especially when it’s hard.

To develop virtuous character, you must embrace doing the hard things before the pleasurable things. Make a habit of it: wake up on time, pray,

do your tasks, put others first. Stop procrastinating, complaining, or half-hearting—seeking delight before duty. Failing to do so will leave an unfilled void in your soul. As Scripture says, “I said in my heart: ‘I will go forth and overflow with delights, and I will enjoy good things.’ And I saw that this, too, is emptiness” (Ecclesiastes 2:1).

You may not realize it now, but the avoidance of hard things sows deep seeds of vice—seeds that slowly grow into habits of laziness, selfishness, entitlement, and apathy. Over time, these habits twist the soul. But when you choose to do what is difficult for the sake of what is good, you sow seeds of virtue. And those seeds grow too—into strength, discipline, courage, and character.

Consider this truth: Seeds of vice are sown in doing the pleasurable things before the hard things. Seeds of virtue are sown in doing the hard things before the pleasurable things.

This does not mean you are to reject all pleasure. There is nothing wrong with enjoying the pleasures of life—a tasty meal, a relaxing trip, a good movie. These are healthy ways to recharge—but only if done in a moderate, moral, and justly ordered way, after the hard things and hard work the Lord has placed before you have been done first. Pleasure is not the problem; disordered pleasure is. Earthly joys are a gift from God and can refresh the soul. But they must be properly enjoyed, not escaped into; received, not grasped for. Joy is sweetest when it follows faithfulness.

“The path of least resistance leads to crooked rivers and crooked [souls]” (Henry David Thoreau). So, do the hard things. Make God’s will your will—do what you ought before doing what you want. This intentionality—day after day, choice after choice—will slowly carve the grooves of virtue deep into your soul, until righteousness becomes your reflex and sacrifice your strength.

Wake up with intention. Go to bed with peace. Live each day as a servant of God’s will, not your own. And over time, you will be surprised by who you are becoming. You will start to crave discipline. You will begin to love order. You will find joy in service. And eventually, the hard things won’t feel so hard anymore—they’ll feel like habit.

So take the first step. Let your life be a living example of one who lives by grace—who chooses virtue over comfort, discipline over disorder, love over selfishness. For it is in the furnace of difficulty that true character is forged. And through that refining fire, holiness will emerge.



Seeds of **virtue** are sown in doing the hard things before the pleasurable things.



Seeds of **vice** are sown in doing the pleasurable things before the hard things.



Watch Video: Scan the QR code to access the video for this teaching as well as additional resources such as related Scripture, quotes, and more. Or, visit horseandchariot.com/do-the-hard-things

Virtue is not formed on the easy road. It grows when you choose what is hard but holy over what is easy but empty. Every time you put duty before delight, faith before feeling, and God's will before your own, you sow seeds of virtue that strengthen the soul.

1. Hard things forge strength. Difficulty is where character is formed. → When was the last time you embraced hardship instead of avoiding it?

2. Avoidance plants vice. Skipping the hard things breeds apathy and entitlement. → What habit of avoidance is slowly twisting your soul?

3. Order before enjoyment. Joy is sweetest after faithfulness. → Do you pursue pleasure first, or do you order it after obedience?

4. Discipline builds freedom. Self-control brings peace, not bondage. → In what area do you need to practice more discipline?

5. Grace sustains effort. You cannot carry the load alone. → Where must you invite God's grace to help you endure the difficult path?

CHARACTERISTICS OF EMBRACING THE HARD THINGS

Those who do the hard before the pleasurable exhibit these traits:

1. Discipline. Chooses duty before delight.

2. Perseverance. Keeps going when the path steepens.

3. Courage. Faces trials without shrinking back.

4. Order. Puts tasks, desires, and pleasures in their proper place.

5. Strength of Will. Refuses laziness, apathy, or indulgence.

6. Joy in Service. Finds satisfaction in faithfulness more than comfort.

Signs of Avoiding the Hard Things...

- You procrastinate or neglect daily responsibilities.
- You seek comfort before completing duty.
- You often complain about difficulty instead of embracing it.
- You indulge in pleasure as an escape rather than a gift.
- You feel restless, dissatisfied, or spiritually empty.
- You resist structure and lack consistent discipline.

Think: The furnace of difficulty refines my soul. Every hard thing embraced in obedience to God strengthens my will, purifies my heart, and forges my character. When I avoid the hard things, I weaken my soul. But when I choose them, I grow in holiness—and the hard things slowly become my habit of virtue.

Pray: Lord, give me courage to embrace the hard things. Strengthen me to choose duty over comfort, faithfulness over ease, and discipline over disorder. Teach me to order pleasure rightly, to love Your will above my own, and to see each trial as a gift for my growth. Forge my soul in the fire of difficulty until it reflects Your holiness. Amen.

SELF-EVALUATION & ACTION STEP

Of the areas you underlined throughout this teaching, which stood out to you most and why?
(Reflect, write down, discuss)

Rate yourself from 1-10

1 = I regularly avoid hard things

10 = I consistently choose what is difficult but good

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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(avoid 5)



Why did you give yourself this rating?
(What hard task have you been neglecting that God is calling you to face?)

Where have you been seeking pleasure before obedience?

How will you rely on grace, not willpower alone, to sustain you in doing the hard things?

What habit of discipline can you build this week (wake early, pray, serve, finish tasks before rest)?

Daily Affirmation: Today, I will embrace the hard things. By grace, I will put duty before delight, obedience before ease, and God's will before my own—until virtue becomes my habit and holiness my joy.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS

Courageous Facilitator,

Your willingness to step forward and lead is a gift of grace to your community and a brave act of faith. God bless you for answering the call to inspire others to grow in virtue and pursue the character of Christ.

The Holy Spirit thrives in fellowship and community, working powerfully through the connections and shared experiences of small groups. That's why these lesson plans are designed to cultivate genuine relationships, inspire meaningful conversations, and foster a spirit of transformation through shared wisdom and grace.

Facilitating these lessons is both simple and impactful. While many forms of teaching rely on one-way communication, where one person speaks and others listen, true transformation happens through two-way communication. In this format, ideas aren't merely taught—they're explored together. You'll guide, but everyone will share and learn from one another, creating a rich environment where the Holy Spirit can move and grow each mind, heart, and soul.

These lesson plans succeed because they:

- **Encourage connection** in a collaborative small group setting that fosters action and accountability
- **Empower every voice** with opportunities for each participant to share and contribute
- **Inspire growth** through educational, inspirational, and transformational teachings

Your role as a facilitator is to:

- **Follow the instructions and trust the process**—the wheel is already built, you're here to guide it.
- **Honor the schedule** by being punctual and respecting the time of your group.
- **Lead with love** and rely on God's grace to inspire, guide, and uplift everyone in the group.

Your courage to create a space for growth and fellowship will not only bless others but will deepen your own journey of faith and virtue. Together, with God's help, lives will be transformed.

To God be the glory!

FACILITATOR CHECKLIST

1. Getting Started (5-10 mins)

- ☐ Give everyone a few minutes to join before getting started. Be friendly and greet people as they arrive. Get them talking! Come prepared with some good ice-breaker questions you can ask during this time.
- ☐ 3-5 minutes in, do quick introductions for anyone new to the group. What brought them to the group? Spend a moment getting to know them.
- ☐ Open with a short prayer (facilitator or volunteer).

2. Watch & Read the Teaching (5-10 mins)

- ☐ Watch the video of the teaching as a group.
- ☐ Have a volunteer read all of page 1. Have others follow along and underline what stands out to them most.

3. How it Applies (5-10 mins)

- ☐ Have a volunteer read all of page 2. Have others follow along and underline what stands out to them most.

4. Reflection & Discussion (20-30 mins)

- ☐ Have everyone quietly take 5 minutes to complete the "Self-Evaluation & Action Step" on page 3.
- ☐ Then, going around the group, have each person take a minute to share what stood out to them most about the teaching and why.
- ☐ If time allows, continue the discussion using the remaining self-evaluation questions as a guide.

5. Wrap Up (5 mins)

- ☐ Remind everyone to do the daily affirmation until you meet again next time.
- ☐ Ask for any prayer requests from the group.
- ☐ Close with a short prayer (facilitator or volunteer).