

# INTELLECT, WILL, PASSIONS

*The Christian Teachings of Virtue (Series 2, Part 1, Teaching #9)*

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



**Leader Guide...**

See the back page for detailed facilitator instructions.

For thousands of years, teachers of virtue have articulated how to live a virtuous life through the illustration of the horse and chariot. Imagine a strong charioteer in a speeding chariot, arms out, firmly grasping the reins, directing two powerful horses. The charioteer represents our intellect, the reins represent our will, and the horses represent our passions—referring to our emotions.

One horse relates to our passions and emotions in the face of difficulties and trials; the other horse relates to our passions and emotions in the face of desires and temptations.

In this analogy, just as the charioteer must guide the reins to direct the horses, so too must your intellect guide your will to control your passions. Only then can your soul move in the direction of God's will.

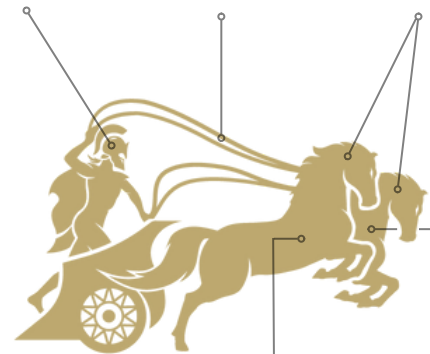
But how many today are being led not by intellect and will, but by emotion alone? They let their passions lead the way—running fast and wild, pulled by every craving and tossed by every hardship. Their chariot crashes again and again, and they wonder why life feels so chaotic, so unsteady, so out of control.

The virtuous one lives differently. They feel the same passions, the same temptations, the same trials. But they do not follow their passions—they guide them. Their mind is trained by truth, their will is rooted in discipline, and so their passions become instruments of holy momentum rather than chaos.

Passions are not your enemy. In fact, they are part of God's design. "Faith does not quench desire, but inflames it" (St. Thomas Aquinas). But like fire, they must be contained, or they will consume you. Left unchecked, they pull you into vice, sin, and regret. But properly trained and directed, they become a powerful force for good—fueling courage, compassion, discipline, and perseverance. They become, by grace, the very superpowers that drive you forward on the narrow path of virtue.

It is said, "Virtue needs a director and guide. Vice can be learned even without a teacher" (Seneca). Therefore, the stronger your intellect becomes in the Word of God and the teachings of virtue, the stronger your will becomes in choosing what is right—and the more capable you become of leading your passions instead of being led by them. When your mind is shaped by virtue, your will empowered by grace, and your emotions brought under control, your soul moves like a chariot in perfect harmony—racing toward the destination for which you were made: truth, fruitfulness, and fulfillment.

Intellect » Will » Passions



Passions in the face of difficulties and trials

Passions in the face of desires and temptations



**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/intellect-will-passions](https://horseandchariot.com/intellect-will-passions)



This teaching reveals the inner workings of your soul and how each part—intellect, will, and passions—must be rightly ordered to live a life of virtue. Your thoughts must guide your choices, and your choices must steer your emotions. When the soul is aligned, you become strong, steady, and Spirit-led.

**1. Let your mind lead, not your mood.** Your emotions are powerful, but they were never meant to lead the way. → Do your decisions flow from reason rooted in truth or reactions ruled by emotion?

**2. Strengthen your will through discipline.** It's not enough to know what is right—you must choose it again and again. → When temptations rise, do you give in or stand firm in what you know to be good?

**3. Train your emotions for holy momentum.** Passion isn't the problem—it just needs direction. → Are you channeling your energy toward what is holy or letting it fuel sin and disorder?

**4. Form your intellect in God's Word.** A weak intellect can't lead; it must be shaped by truth to guide the soul. → Are you regularly studying Scripture and the teachings of virtue to sharpen your mind?

**5. Watch for chaos—it reveals disorder.** When the chariot is crashing, it's a sign something isn't rightly ordered. → What recent struggle reveals an area where your passions are leading rather than following?

**6. Submit the soul to grace.** You cannot master yourself alone. Only grace brings true order and harmony. → Do you invite the Holy Spirit to perfect your thoughts, strengthen your will, and sanctify your emotions?

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A WELL-ORDERED SOUL

Christians who rightly align intellect, will, and passions—cooperating with grace—exhibit these interior strengths:

**1. Clarity.** They discern truth and see through deception.

**2. Resolve.** They consistently choose what is good, even when it costs them.

**3. Self-Mastery.** Their passions serve virtue instead of sabotaging it.

**4. Spiritual Strength.** They are resilient under pressure and anchored in peace.

**5. Purposefulness.** Every part of their soul moves in unity toward what glorifies God.

**6. Obedience to Grace.** They don't rely on sheer willpower alone—they yield to divine help.

### Signs of Struggling in Soul Order...

- You often feel emotionally hijacked and reactive
- You know what's right but frequently choose against it
- Your passions dominate your habits and decisions
- You feel spiritually scattered or unstable
- You act before reflecting, then regret the outcome
- You neglect prayer or truth, weakening your intellect
- You try to "will yourself" into change but fail without grace

**Think:** My soul was made to move in harmony—with my mind shaped by truth, my will strengthened by grace, and my passions disciplined and directed. When each part submits to God, I am free—not from emotion, but from its tyranny. Through Christ, I can lead my life with wisdom, choose what is right, and let my emotions fuel virtue, not vice.

**Pray:** Lord, bring order to my soul. Shape my mind in Your truth, strengthen my will to choose what is right, and sanctify my emotions so they serve You—not self. Teach me to guide, not suppress, my passions. Make me steady where I am reactive, disciplined where I am impulsive, and faithful where I have faltered. Help me live in harmony within, so I may run the race set before me with holy purpose. Amen.

## SELF-EVALUATION &amp; 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 am frequently led by my passions and emotions  
10 = I consistently direct my passions and emotions

1	2	3	4	<del>5</del>	6	7	8	9	10
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← (avoid 5) →

Why did you give yourself this rating?  
(When do you struggle most to lead your passions? In hardship or temptation?)

What benefits will you obtain from raising your rating? (Consider your spiritual life, relationships, decision-making, and personal peace)

Of the two disordered extremes—being ruled by passions or suppressing them entirely—which do you lean toward and why?

What specific action step will you take this week to better train your intellect, strengthen your will, or redirect your passions toward God's will?

Daily Affirmation: Today, I shall strengthen my mind with truth, my will with grace, and my passions with purpose. I will not be led by feeling, but by faith—so my soul moves in harmony with God's will.

## 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).