

THE GOLDEN MEAN

The Christian Teachings of Virtue (Series 3, Part 3, Teaching #19)

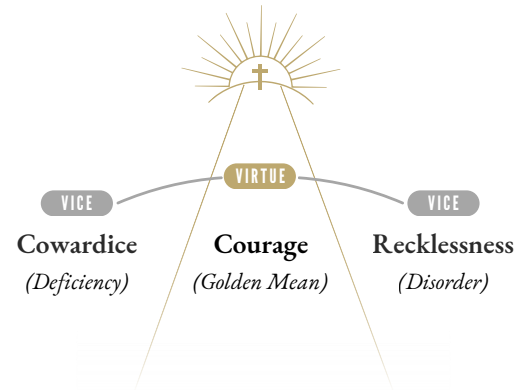
Leader Guide...

See the back page for detailed facilitator instructions.

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

For every virtue, there are two opposing extremes of vice—one from deficiency, the other from disorder. Virtue, then, is the golden mean—the balanced, rightly ordered response between those extremes. It is the narrow path between the margins of vice.

Take courage, for example. On one side lies cowardice—a deficiency of courage that causes one to shrink from difficulty, avoid discomfort, and abandon duty. On the other side lies recklessness—a disorder of courage, untethered from wisdom, that throws one into danger without cause or counsel. Courage, rightly ordered, is the golden mean between the two. It knows when to advance, when to wait, and when to stand firm. It is the steady hand under fire, neither ruled by fear nor blinded by bravado.



Imagine standing at the edge of a battlefield. Courage would move you to rise with your fellow soldiers and run toward the fight, even though fear beats in your chest. Cowardice would paralyze you, holding you back. Recklessness would drive you to charge in alone, unarmed and unwise, with no chance of victory. But the golden mean walks in step with truth, timing, and grace.

This principle applies not only to courage, but to every virtue. Righteousness, for example, lies between unrighteousness and self-righteousness. Generosity lies between stinginess and extravagance. Patience lies between impatience and indifference. Self-control lies between self-indulgence and self-denial. Contentment lies between discontentment and complacency. The virtuous life is not an extreme on either end—but the steady, centered walk of one who follows the Way.

This is why virtue requires both strength and discernment. It's not merely doing "the right thing," but doing it in the right way, at the right time, with the right intention. This balance—this golden mean—is not easy to maintain. In fact, without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it's impossible. But with grace, it becomes the rhythm of a soul in harmony with God.

The world will often pull you toward the extremes. It will applaud pride and call it confidence, or excuse recklessness and call it bravery. But do not be deceived. The narrow path is not loud or flashy. It is quiet, resolute, and less traveled. "For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:14). And yet, that narrow path—the golden mean—is the very road to holiness.

So ask yourself: Where have I drifted into the margins? Have I let fear hold me back? Have I allowed zeal to outrun wisdom? Am I pursuing the balance of virtue, or swinging between extremes?

Virtue is the pursuit of order. It brings peace to the passions, clarity to the intellect, and strength to the will. It is the mean between chaos and stagnation, deficiency and disorder, noise and silence. And you do not walk it alone. The balance of virtue is only possible through the strength of grace. The Holy Spirit is with you—guiding, correcting, and empowering you to stay the course.

Walk the golden mean. And you will walk with Christ.



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/the-golden-mean

The golden mean shows that virtue is not found in the extremes but in the steady balance of a soul ordered by truth and grace. Every virtue stands between two vices: one of deficiency, the other of disorder. To live in the mean is to walk the narrow path of Christ, guided by the Spirit.

1. Virtue balances extremes. Every vice pushes too far one way or the other. → Where are you leaning into deficiency or disorder instead of balance?

2. Courage is steady, not reckless. It faces fear wisely, not foolishly. → Do you confuse zeal with wisdom, or fear with prudence?

3. The world mislabels extremes. Pride masquerades as confidence; indulgence poses as freedom. → Where are you tempted to rename a vice as virtue?

4. The mean requires discernment. Right thing, right way, right time, right intention. → Are you seeking God's wisdom before acting?

5. Grace keeps the balance. You cannot hold the mean alone. → Do you invite the Spirit daily to guide your passions, will, and choices?

CHARACTERISTICS OF WALKING THE GOLDEN MEAN

Those who strive to walk the golden mean exhibit these qualities:

1. Discernment. Knows when to act and when to wait.

2. Stability. Does not swing wildly between extremes.

3. Clarity. Sees through the disguises of vice.

4. Peace. Experiences inner harmony through ordered passions.

5. Wisdom. Marries zeal with prudence.

Signs of Straying from the Mean...

- You avoid challenge, calling it "prudence," but it's fear.
- You rush ahead without counsel, calling recklessness courage.
- You excuse impatience as passion, or indifference as "patience."
- You find yourself spiritually swinging between extremes.
- You stay in the margins of vice too long, not correcting course.
- You rely on willpower, forgetting to seek the Spirit's guidance.

Think: Virtue is the narrow road, the balanced center between deficiency and disorder. It is not weakness, but strength under wisdom's control. The golden mean is not achieved by calculation alone but by grace that steadies the soul. When I walk it, my life moves in harmony with God's will.

Pray: Lord, teach me the balance of virtue. Keep me from shrinking back in fear or surging ahead in recklessness. Show me the narrow path where truth, wisdom, and love meet. Grant me discernment to act rightly, humility to seek counsel, and grace to stay centered in You. May my life be a steady reflection of Your holy order. 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 often live in extremes

10 = I regularly walk in balance by grace

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



Why did you give yourself this rating?
(Where in your life do you tend toward deficiency (too little) or disorder (too much)?)

What virtue do you need to strengthen to bring balance to that area?

What small daily choice could help you practice the mean instead of the margin?

How will you lean on the Holy Spirit this week to steady your soul in virtue?

Daily Affirmation: Today, I will seek the golden mean. I will not live in the margins of deficiency or disorder, but in the balance of virtue—steady, Spirit-led, and walking the narrow path with Christ.

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).