

Character Conversations

Introduction

A few years ago, I created a series of “Character Conversations” around the Cardinal virtues. When my kids were 12, I would take them for breakfast once per month and go through these outlines to form them in character and have them think about the virtues more.

Each “Conversation” includes a simple definition of the virtue for a 12 year old, a more extended explanation from the Catechism of the Catholic Church, a section on Habits related to the virtue with a mnemonic to help remember them, two simple applications to do over the month, and a Bible verse to look up to illustrate the virtue. As we ate, I would fill out each section further by giving examples, asking them for examples, taking turns reading, and making it conversational. Usually we met once a month for about an hour over a meal. After the first meeting, we would open the subsequent meetings by quizzing on the previous month’s virtue.

I found these sheets helped put the virtues in a relatable manner for my 12 year olds and got them engaged in growing in virtue. Perhaps you might find elements inspiring or useful.

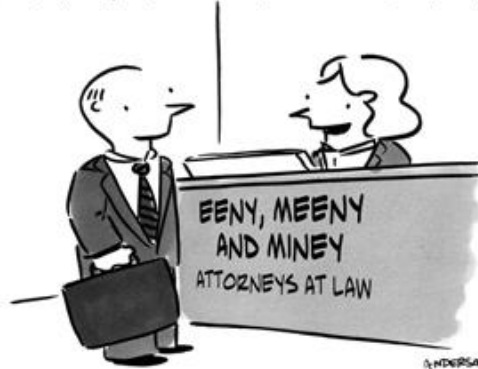
Jeff M. Lockert

www.jefflockert.com

Character Conversation #1

Prudence

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"The partners are very excited about your interview, Mr. Moe."

Simple Definition:

- Good and wise judgement applied to action.

From the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

Prudence is the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it; "the prudent man looks where he is going."⁶⁵ "Keep sane and sober for your prayers."⁶⁶ Prudence is "right reason in action," writes St. Thomas Aquinas, following Aristotle.⁶⁷ It is not to be confused with timidity or fear, nor with duplicity or dissimulation. It is called *auriga virtutum* (the charioteer of the virtues); it guides the other virtues by setting rule and measure. It is prudence that immediately guides the judgment of conscience. The prudent man determines and directs his conduct in accordance with this judgment. With the help of this virtue we apply moral principles to particular cases without error and overcome doubts about the good to achieve and the evil to avoid.

Related Habits: LIMP

Leadership: being an initiator of action for good and inviting others to follow

Integrity: what you do when no one else is looking

Making Wise Decisions: using consideration and thought before acting
(counsel, judgement, decisiveness)

Planning: Preparing in advance to care for responsibilities (knowing what is important and when it needs to be done by)

Growing in Prudence:

#1 Learning from mistakes – Share an example of this.

#2 Learning from others - Ask someone to teach you something you want to learn.

Look up the following Bible verse: Proverbs 19:20

Character Conversation #2 Justice



"What do you mean, you're confused?
I asked you a simple question. DID
YOU LIKE MY STORY OR NOT?!"
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Simple Definition:

- The choice to give to God and others the respect they deserve.

From the From the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

Justice is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbour. Justice toward God is called the "virtue of religion." Justice toward men disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and to the common good. The just man, often mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures, is distinguished by habitual right thinking and the uprightness of his conduct toward his neighbour. "You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbour." "Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven."

Related Habits: WoW FaCT

Worship: giving reverence and praying to God our friend and Saviour

Work: doing all things to the best of our abilities

Family: listening and caring for each person

Community: looking to make the world better, one act at a time

Truthfulness: telling the truth even when it is hard

Growing in Justice:

#1 Pray each night thanking God and asking for His grace to live "justly".

#2 Choose to do something nice in secret to each of your family members.

Look up the following Bible verse: Matthew 22:36-40

Character Conversation #3 Fortitude



Her older brothers always made her go down to the basement first. She wasn't afraid. The monster wasn't down there. It was upstairs, under her bed.

Simple Definition:

- Having courage to do what's right, even when it's hard.

From the From the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

Fortitude is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. The virtue of fortitude enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions. It disposes one even to renounce and sacrifice his life in defence of a just cause. "The Lord is my strength and my song." "In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Related Habits: CHIPs

Courage: the choice to act, and prudently take risks, even if I am afraid

Hardwork: giving 100% of ourselves to everything we do

Initiative: the willingness to be the first person to try or do something good

Perseverance: completing all things we start with excellence even when difficult

Growing in Fortitude:

#1 Pray each night for courage, and try to be the first one to volunteer for things.

#2 Think of a project to do that takes some time, and complete it together.

Look up the following Bible verse: 2 Timothy 1:7

Character Conversation #4 Temperance

Simple Definition:

- Self-control or self-mastery in our decisions and desires.

From the From the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

Temperance is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods. It ensures the will's mastery over instincts and keeps desires within the limits of what is honourable. The temperate person directs the sensitive appetites toward what is good and maintains a healthy discretion: "Do not follow your inclination and strength, walking according to the desires of your heart." Temperance is often praised in the Old Testament: "Do not follow your base desires, but restrain your appetites." In the New Testament it is called "moderation" or "sobriety." We ought "to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world."

To live well is nothing other than to love God with all one's heart, with all one's soul and with all one's efforts; from this it comes about that love is kept whole and uncorrupted (through temperance). No misfortune can disturb it (and this is fortitude). It obeys only [God] (and this is justice), and is careful in discerning things, so as not to be surprised by deceit or trickery (and this is prudence).

Related Habits: **STAMP**

Speech – controlling our tongue and choosing words carefully

Tame your Temper – keeping cool and calm even when you're angry

Avoid Bugging – honouring others by not teasing or physically bothering them

Moderation – choosing not to over-indulge (food, TV, video games, etc)

Purity – keeping our thoughts and actions holy when it comes to sex

Growing in Temperance:

#1 Think of something you really enjoy (like electronics), and give it up for a week.

#2 Don't react in anger to or bug your siblings.

Look up the following Bible verse: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

