

Meditate on Whatever Is a Virtue

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BIG SANDY, Texas—Here is one of the best pieces of advice that a mental-health professional can give to people: "Focus upon the positive factors of this life." It should come as no surprise that this concept is found in the Bible.

One verse that promotes this approach is Philippians 4:8.

Philippians 4:8—"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things."

We began a series to talk about the characteristics mentioned in this verse. Today, we will talk about things that are "a virtue."

Recognize negative

Before we look at this week's characteristic, I want to remind you about a realistic approach in life—recognize negative, but dwell on positive.

- Numbers 13:26-33—Although the other spies became preoccupied with the negative factors, Joshua and Caleb recognized the challenges and focused upon God's promises.
- Luke 14:26-33—The Son of God's instruction to count the cost includes recognizing the challenges and focusing upon God's promises.

Greek word in Philippians 4:8

Let's notice the Greek word used in Philippians 4:8.

- *Arete* (No. 703 in *Strong's Concordance*) is the Greek adjective in Philippians 4:8 translated as "virtue." It is used four other times in the New Testament.

1 Peter 2:9—"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

2 Peter 1:3—"As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue."

2 *Peter 1:5*—"But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge."

Other translations

Here are a few other examples about how *arete* is translated in other Bible translations.

- The New Testament in Modern Speech (Richard Francis Weymouth)—"if there is any virtue"
- The Berkeley Version of the New Testament—"whatever is lofty"
- Revised Standard Version—"if there is any excellence"
- New American Standard Bible—"if there is any excellence"
- James Moffatt Translation—"all excellence"

Any excellence

Although the word *arete* is not used in the following verses, let's notice a few scriptures about the concept of excellence.

1 *Corinthians 12:31*—"But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way."

Philippians 1:10—"That you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ."

Hebrews 1:4—"Having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."

Hebrews 8:6—"But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises."