

PROGRAM OF LIFE

To create your Program of Life, it will help to follow these steps:

1. Analysis and definition of self

Set aside a time to reflect on yourself. Examine the real root of your sins and shortcomings. If you are doing spiritual exercises and elect to make a general confession you can list all the major sins of your past life and then examine them to discover the root of each one. Usually a pattern occurs.

You will find in this analysis that the obstacles or negative manifestations are chiefly the result of one of three dominant passions we all have: PRIDE, VANITY, and SENSUALITY.

So that you'll better recognize these three passions, below we'll mention some of their most common manifestations.

A. **PRIDE.** When we base our security and self-esteem on ourselves.

Manifestations:

1. **Control.** Problems with trusting others, even God. Feeling threatened if not in control because it could cause failure. Trying to control others (kids, spouse) and not accepting them as they are. Difficulty in delegating. Impatience with others.
2. **Rationalization.** We become the criteria for right and wrong. We are never wrong. Don't accept things through faith. I need always to see them.
3. **Judgmental.** We are critical of others especially when we are mad at ourselves. We don't want others to be better than ourselves. We put a mask on and have a false, elevated idea of ourselves.
4. **Always proving one's self.** Driven to accomplish goals. This forms who I am. Never being satisfied with doing enough. Having higher expectations of myself than God does. Not accepting myself as I am. Putting my self-esteem in my work.
5. **Self-pity.** Getting down when I am not perfect or I fail in anything.
6. **Independence.** Not wanting to depend on anyone; they might let me down. Not depending on God through prayer. When things get busy prayer is the first to go.

B. **VANITY.** When we put our security in others (in what others think of us).

Manifestations:

1. **Wanting others to admire me.** Thinking that I'm the best when others recognize my talents. Being dominated by "human respect" as with shyness, when this shyness is in great measure because I'm afraid others won't like me. Two-facedness or hypocrisy in the attempt to make myself accepted; abandoning or silencing my principles in order to "fit in." Easily judging others when they don't agree with me, and speaking openly of their "errors." Desiring to have "intimate friendships" in order to appear popular. Breaking confidences. Stretching the truth or lying outright in order to make myself admired and loved. Always talking about myself and my accomplishments.
2. **Always seeking to be the center of attention.** Severe disappointment when others don't appreciate my things. Seeking to be accepted even if I have to compromise my principles. Having a real fear of rejection. Rejoicing in others' failures and an inability to rejoice in their successes (I'm too jealous).

C. **SENSUALITY.** When we put our security and self-esteem in things. Seeking instant gratification or avoiding "pain" or difficulty.

Manifestations:

1. **FLIS - "Feel Like it Syndrome."** Giving primacy to my feelings such that my daily work depends upon my emotional state - whether I feel like it, whether I like the person I'm dealing with, if I like my task. Avoiding service when I don't feel good. Always accomplishing my responsibilities at the last minute just to finish them, without concern for perfection in what I do. Wasting time easily, and when I'm not under deadline, working only on what I like most. Fleeing anything which exacts a bodily mortification of me. Complaining about everything; if I'm a little under the weather, everyone knows about it.
2. **Materialism.** Always wanting the newest, the most up to date item on the market. Never wanting to throw anything out. Being attached to any personal possession. Excessive worry about things and about money. To NEED THINGS to feel good about oneself. Excessive time shopping at the mall, especially when I am down.
3. **Life of Pleasure.**
 - **Comfort.** Always looking for the most comfortable, that which requires the least effort, the easiest for me, the most comfortable postures.
 - **Escapism.** Daydreaming, not controlling my thoughts; constructing castles in the air in which generally I play the hero or center.
 - **Food.** Not controlling my appetite, overeating at meals, eating only what I like.
 - **Misuse** of TV, Movies, Alcohol, Internet.
 - **Impurity.** Looking at sex for selfish pleasure.

2. Manifestations of the root sin.

This should only refer to the root sin and only the one root sin you have chosen. It is important to focus in on one and work only on one at a time. The more concrete the manifestations, the clearer the enemy becomes so that you can be more focused on eliminating it. You should list no more than five or six primary manifestations.

3. Choose an opposite virtue.

The spiritual life has to be based on a positive striving for virtue. It cannot remain on a level of “just saying no” to our weakness, but has to be turned into “saying yes” to Jesus in the living of virtue.

A virtue is habit that is formed through the repetition of single acts that become second nature to the person. If a person is working on patience, the more acts of patience he makes, the easier it is to be patient in difficult circumstances

Pick an opposite virtue from the root sin you have detected. This virtue will become the central focus of all your spiritual life. Here are some examples of opposite virtues.

PRIDE: Humility, Simplicity, Supernatural spirit, Meekness, Compassion, Docility, Service of others, Dependence on God through prayer.

VANITY: Purity of intention, Love for Christ, Seeing Christ in others, True acceptance of oneself, Purity.

SENSUALITY: Discipline for love of Christ, Focus on the person of Christ, Abnegation and self-denial for love of Christ, Hope, Spirit of loving sacrifice, Patience, Purity.

4. Choose “concrete” means to obtain this virtue.

What can I do on a daily or weekly basis to form this virtue in my soul? The first two or three means should be prayer and the sacraments. The others can be determined by applying the virtue to your vocation statement: How can I live this virtue in my life as a spouse, as a parent, at work, in my apostolate? Again it is vital to be as concrete as possible so as to have the goal you have set out to achieve as clear and well defined as possible. It should be something that you can use at night for your conscience exam as a guide of what God was asking from you.

5. Define the ideal I'm going to strive to imitate.

Your IDEAL will always be Jesus Christ because the aim of the program of life is to transform yourself into Him. Nonetheless, **based on the virtue** you most need, choose some aspect of the personality of Jesus Christ as your ideal. How does Christ live out this virtue? It will also help to choose a motto, which is to say, a phrase that speaks to you and helps you to remember your ideal.

<p style="text-align: center;">USE OF YOUR PROGRAM</p>

- † **Base your conscience exam on your program.**
Go over the means that I have in place to obtain my virtue. Have I practiced them or not? Why or Why not?
- † **Base your confession on your program.**
“Father, I am struggling with the sin of ... and this is how it has been manifesting itself in the past few weeks.”
- † **Base your Spiritual Guidance on your program of life.**
- † **Focus the fruits of your meditation on the virtue that you are trying to live.**
- † **Try to go over it briefly every day!**

OUTLINE FOR THE PROGRAM OF LIFE

IDEAL:

MOTTO:

OBSTACLES: Root sin:

Manifestations of root sin:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

OPPOSITE VIRTUE:

Means to form this virtue:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

EXAMPLES OF PROGRAMS OF LIFE

IDEAL: Christ seeing all from the perspective of his Father.

MOTTO: Jesus meek and humble of heart

OBSTACLES:

ROOT SIN: *PRIDE*

MANIFESTATIONS OF ROOT SIN:

1. *Being critical. (Especially of my spouse when)*
2. *Not listening to people. Trying to convince them that I am always right. Especially with my mother-in-law.*
3. *Not being consistent in saying my prayers. Not "feeling a need" to pray.*
4. *Always rationalizing. Making excuses for myself, especially at work. Not accepting things by faith alone.*
5. *Not being sensitive to the needs of others. Especially not having patience with my children.*
6. *Never admitting I am wrong. Especially to my spouse and at work.*

PROGRAM--OPPOSITE VIRTUE: *SUPERNATURAL SPIRIT- LIFE OF FAITH*

MEANS TO FORM THIS VIRTUE:

1. *Meditate 15 min. every day, conscience of my dependency on God to be able to accomplish anything in my life. I will especially meditate on the Incarnation and our Blessed Mother's vision of faith.*
2. *I will attend Mass twice during the weekdays and put an effort to live the supernatural aspects of the Mass.*
3. *See Jesus Christ in other people and accept them as they are and not as I would like them to be. I will work on seeing Christ working in these people, especially my spouse when...*
4. *Do not take myself so seriously. Put everything into the proper perspective (of Christ) and be able to see that being right or wrong is not the most important thing; it is showing the other person love and understanding. Go into conversations with that attitude and try to listen more. (esp. with Bob)*
5. *Make sure that all of my decisions are based on supernatural criterion and that I do not rationalize especially when...*
6. *Seek the advice of others at least 2x week.*

IDEAL: Christ Crucified for love of me

MOTTO: Who is in the center?

ROOT SIN: VANITY

MANIFESTATIONS OF ROOT SIN:

1. *I can be really hurt if people do not treat me with respect especially my mother.*
2. *I am always speaking about myself and all the things I do, especially to those at the club.*
3. *I cannot say "No" to anyone. Always allow people to use me. Especially with Bob and Sally.*
4. *I am afraid to stand up for what I believe. I do not want people to think I am a religious fanatic. Especially with...*
5. *I always worry that if I discipline my children they might not love me.*
6. *I love and live for when people compliment me and appreciate my talents, especially my husband and kids and Mary.*

PROGRAM--OPPOSITE VIRTUE: PASSIONATE AND PERSONAL
RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST

MEANS TO FORM THIS VIRTUE:

1. *Meditate daily on the passion, looking for the fruit of being convinced of Christ's love for me and that I do not need to look for it in any other place.*
2. *Come to grips with my feelings of rejection. Bring my most painful memories of being rejected (esp. as a child) to Christ and realize that HE was there all the time loving me.*
3. *Attend Mass twice during the Weekdays (Tues. & Thurs.) and focus on the personal sacrifice of love that I receive from Christ who died for me.*
4. *Before I accept any projects or get involved in anything, I will first tell them I have to think about it and then see if it is for God's glory or my own.*
5. *See all that happens within my family as coming from the loving hands of God and whatever I do to them I do to Christ.*
6. *Do not speak about myself. Concentrate on speaking about others and offer up all my own successes to Christ in secret, my gift just to him.*

EXAMPLES OF PROGRAMS OF LIFE

IDEAL: *Christ in Gethsemane*

MOTTO: *Your will be done! (not mine)*

OBSTACLES:

ROOT SIN: *SENSUALITY*

MANIFESTATIONS OF ROOT SIN:

1. *Laziness, always putting things off, especially exercise.*
2. *Disorganization and disorder. I do whatever is "immediate."*
3. *Only do things when I "feel like it." Moodiness controls me.*
4. *Anger and impatience if I do not feel good. I cannot handle pressure.*
5. *I live to shop, only thing that picks me up.*
6. *Always put my prayer life off. Inconsistency with God.*

PROGRAM--OPPOSITE VIRTUE: *SELF-DISCIPLINE AND FOCUS
FOR LOVE OF CHRIST*

MEANS TO FORM THIS VIRTUE:

1. *I will meditate 15 min. a day especially on Christ and his total self-giving to others.*
2. *I will make a plan for my spiritual life (Rosary, conscience exam, spiritual reading...) and follow it very closely, putting it first not last.*
3. *I will make up a schedule to live by and follow it. Do not do what is the immediate thing. Accomplish what is on the list. See it as God's will for me.*
4. *Read "First Things First" every day for 15 minutes.*
5. *I will be aware of my sentiments and moods and try to make sure that they do not get in the way of what I should do. I will try to put on Christ's sentiments and see all through a supernatural point of view.*
6. *When I do not want to do something, offer it up for some specific intention, knowing that this is my most powerful weapon.*
7. *Points should be concrete and practical.*

