



BEFORE SESSION 7 · ORIENTATION

Why We Ask You to Take the VIA

About fifteen minutes, free, and the other half of your values work

“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”

— Psalm 139:14 (NIV)

What it is

The **VIA Survey of Character Strengths** is a short online questionnaire from the nonprofit VIA Institute on Character. It measures 24 character strengths, such as honesty, kindness, perseverance, gratitude and humor. They are grouped under six virtues found in nearly every major moral and religious tradition: Wisdom, Courage, Humanity, Justice, Temperance and Transcendence.

It has a serious pedigree. Psychologists Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman led a team of 55 scientists over several years and published the framework in 2004. They built it deliberately as a counterpart to the psychiatrists' diagnostic manual, which runs to nearly a thousand pages on what can go wrong with a person. VIA is the missing volume: what goes *right*. Nearly 35 million surveys have been taken worldwide.

Why we ask you to take it

- 1. Values say where. Strengths say how.** In Session 7 you will name your two core values, the destination. VIA names the roads you actually drive to get there. Two men can both value family: one lives it through Kindness (he notices), one through Leadership (he organizes Thanksgiving), one through Humor (he makes the room survivable). Same value, three different roads.
- 2. It is a mirror, not a grade.** There is no passing score. Every man has all 24 strengths. The ranking only shows which ones come first and most naturally to you. A strength at the bottom of your list is not a defect; it is simply not your native road.
- 3. Retirement took away the scaffolding.** For forty years a job told you which strengths to use and when. Now nobody assigns them. Knowing your top strengths tells you what to carry into the next chapter: the ones that give you energy, not just the ones you were paid to be good at.
- 4. It gives the brothers a common language.** When every man in the room can say “my top strength is Perseverance,” encouragement gets specific, and so does honest feedback.

Your signature strengths

Your report ranks all 24. The top five are what VIA calls your **signature strengths**, and they carry three marks:

Essential It feels like you, not like a role you are playing.	Effortless It comes without being summoned.	Energizing It gives you energy rather than taking it.
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The third mark matters most in this season. You can be very good at something that drains you. That is a skill, not a signature strength.

How we will use it

When	What happens
Session 7	The VIA Echo Check . You lay your top five beside your two core values and ask: which strength carries each value? A value with no strength carrying it is the most useful finding of the night. It is a gap in practice, not in character.
Session 8	The Strengths Portrait . VIA meets your talent themes: what you do, and the man you are while you do it.

Before you click

- Go to **viacharacter.org** and choose the **free** survey. You will create a free account with your email.
- Set aside 10 to 15 quiet minutes and do it in one sitting.
- Answer as you **actually are**, not as you wish you were, and not as you think a Christian man should be. Your first instinct is usually the honest one.
- Skip any paid upgrade. The free results are all we need.
- Print or save your **full ranked list of all 24** and bring it to Session 7.

A WORD FOR THE SKEPTIC

“At my age, I know who I am.” Maybe. But most men can list their weaknesses in ten seconds and struggle to name three strengths. Scripture names character before capacity: the fruit of the Spirit is a list of who a man is, not what he can do (Galatians 5:22–23).

VIA does not replace Scripture, and it is not a spiritual gifts inventory; that comes separately. It is a well-built mirror. Take fifteen minutes, look honestly, and bring what you see.

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