



# THE FIVE GOOD EMPERORS

Presented by: Daniel DeSelm

Monday, February 5, 9:30 a.m. – 12 noon

Bethany Congregational Church  
556 N. Hope Avenue, Santa Barbara

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Historians commonly pinpoint the apogee of Roman power and grandeur to the period of the so-called "Five Good Emperors," whose reigns stretched consecutively from 96 to 180 CE. The iconic historians Machiavelli and Edward Gibbon both cited this period as a high point of human civilization—the pinnacle from which the Roman Empire began its eventual "decline and fall." These Five Good emperors—Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius—presided over an empire at the summit of its size and strength, but also one on the precipice of decline.

What was so "Good" about these emperors? Why did they succeed? Was it their personality or



strength of character? Or were they lucky beneficiaries of broader historical forces? To what extent can we attribute an empire's success to the strength of its "great men"? Can we blame the Empire's subsequent decay on the weakness of the emperors that came after? Did it help that they had amazing beards?

(continued →)

**Preferred registration deadline\*: January 29, 2024**

\*Early enrollment helps us with our planning; also, those who register by the preferred deadline will be given priority in case of over-enrollment.

## Enrollment form: The Five Good Emperors

Monday, February 5

**VISTAS members \$20; non-members \$30**

- **EITHER pay online** on our website by secure credit card through PayPal:  
<https://www.vistaslifelonglearning.org/current-courses>
- **OR mail this form** and your check to: VISTAS Lifelong Learning, Inc.  
P.O. Box 23228, Santa Barbara CA 93121

Number of persons \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Check # \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

*It is understood that attendance is limited to those who are fully vaccinated against Covid-19.*

As the poster-boys of effective Roman governance, the Five Good Emperors show how the fate of empires can balance on a knife-edge of unpredictable factors. Their experience also underscores the inescapable restrictions that bounded their seemingly limitless power. Their far-reaching administrative reforms and military escapades were impressive, but also set in motion unforeseen changes that would shatter the empire within a few short decades.



**Daniel DeSelm** earned his BA from UC Berkeley and his PhD in History from the University of Michigan. He also studied at Trinity College, Oxford, and at the École nationale des chartes at the Sorbonne, Paris. His published work has focused on Christian relic cults in Western Europe. Dan has served on the faculty at the University of Michigan, Marymount University, and George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, where he taught graduate and undergraduate courses in Roman and Medieval History. When not teaching, Dan has worked as a diplomat for the US Department of State. He is the son of longtime VISTAS members Jane and David DeSelm.

### IMPORTANT COVID-19 POLICY

The health and safety of our attendees and their families are of utmost importance to us. **Accordingly, we are limiting attendance to those who are fully vaccinated.** Proof of vaccinations and boosters (digital Covid-19 Vaccination Card or a photo of your printed card) must be sent to our business manager via email ([vistas@vistaslifelonglearning.org](mailto:vistas@vistaslifelonglearning.org)) or text (805-967-6030). This needs to be done only once—your proof of vaccination will remain valid for all VISTAS events. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation.

## VISTAS Winter/Spring 2024 Calendar

**SUBJECT TO CHANGE; for up-to-date information, visit our website ([VistasLifelongLearning.org](http://VistasLifelongLearning.org)) frequently!**

Course / Event	Date(s)	Time	Venue
VISTAS Winter Social	Sunday, February 4	1:30 pm	The Music Academy
Fiction Book Club	3rd Thursday monthly	10:00 am	Bethany Congreg. Church
Monday Nonfiction Book Club	4th Monday monthly	1:30 pm	Via Zoom
The SB Civil Grand Jury: The Public's Watchdog	Mon. Jan. 8 and 15	9:30 am	Bethany Congreg. Church
Not Just a Pretty Place: Science at SB Botanic Garden	Tues. Jan. 9	1:00 pm	SB Botanic Garden
Legendary Lovers in Opera	Tues. Jan. 23, 30, Wed. Feb. 7	9:30 am	The Music Academy
The Hapsburgs	Thurs. Jan. 25 and Feb. 1	9:30 am	Bethany Congreg. Church
<b>The Five Good Emperors</b>	<b>Mon. Feb. 5</b>	<b>9:30 am</b>	<b>Bethany Congreg. Church</b>
Celebrating 100 Years of the Granada Theatre	Mon. Feb. 12	1:00 pm	Grenada Theatre
Whose Land Is It, Anyway?	Tues. Feb. 13, 20, 27, Mar. 5	9:30 am	The Music Academy
The Climate Crisis: Where We Are, What We Can Do	Weds. Feb. 21, 28, Mar. 6	9:30 am	Bethany Congreg. Church
<i>The Lafayette Escadrille and The Millionaires' Unit</i>	Thurs. Feb. 29, Mar. 7	1:00 pm	Valle Verde Theater
Conserving the Gaviota Coast, in Pictures and Stories	Mon. March 4	9:30 am	Bethany Cong. Church
Annual Short Story Discussion Group, Section 1	Wed. Mar. 6, 13, 20, 27	1:00 pm	Valle Verde Social Room
Annual Short Story Discussion Group, Section 2	Thurs. Mar. 7, 14, 21, 28	1:00 pm	Montecito Covenant Church
Heroes & Rogues, Series 5	Mon. Mar. 11, 18, 25	9:30 am	Bethany Congreg. Church
American Folk Music Revival of the 20th Century	Mon. April 1, 8, 15, 22	1:00 pm	Bethany Congreg. Church
String Quartets in the Vienna in Beethoven's Time	Wed. April 3, 10, 17	9:30 am	The Music Academy
Will China (Still) Eat Our Lunch?	Thurs. April 4	9:30 am	Bethany Congreg. Church
<i>Sinkable: Adventures with Shipwrecks</i>	Wed. April 24	9:30 am	Bethany Congreg. Church
The Golden Age of the Broadway Musical	Fri. May 3, 10, 17	9:30 am	The Music Academy
Artistic Renderings of Human Body / Women Artists	Mon. May 6	9:30 am	Bethany Congreg. Church
The Magic Behind TV Music	Wed. May 8	1:00 pm	Bethany Congreg. Church
13,000 Years of Local Maritime History / Whales	Mon. May 13	9:30 am	SB Maritime Museum
The Immigration Conundrum	Wed. May 15, 23	9:30 am	Bethany Congreg. Church