



THE  
FRUIT  
OF THE  
SPIRIT



# THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

The Fruit of the Spirit, found in Galatians 5:22-23, is made up of the following nine virtues: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. The Bible teaches that each person who is a Christ-follower is granted these attributes by the Holy Spirit, and that we should live out each of them in our daily lives and interactions with others. The Bible teaches that the “fruit” is plural—that is, all Christ-followers have all the “fruits”. You aren’t just kind, or just patient, but possess each characteristic of the Holy Spirit by virtue of the fact the Spirit lives in you as a follower of Jesus [2 Corinthians 13:5, Romans 8:10, Galatians 1:15-16, Galatians 2:20, Galatians 4:19, Colossians 1:27, 2 Thessalonians 1:10].

The format includes some activities more in keeping with a small group doing the study together, but you can certainly make this a personal Bible study if you choose.



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# THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

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## **Read The Scripture**

Each lesson contains multiple sections where you will read Scripture. Have your own Bible handy to look up the Scriptures (though they are printed in this study guide). Mark your Bible with those Scriptures that are especially meaningful to you.

## **To Discuss**

Each lesson contains multiple discussion questions. These are great conversation starters around the Scriptures for your small group. If studying on your own, answer these questions for yourself. You may even jot down a few notes in the margins of your Bible or in this study guide.

## **Living It Out**

Each lesson contains a few concluding remarks, with ideas to help you live out what you have been learning from Scripture.

## **Scripture to Memorize**

Some lessons contain a suggested Scripture to commit to memory.

## **Teaching Notes**

Some lessons contain logistical notes for teachers or leaders of small groups, helping you to prepare to teach these lessons in your own group.



# LESSON 1

# LOVE

One of them, an expert in the law, tested Him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Matthew 22:35-40

## Opening Illustration: The Most Important Thing in Life

Suppose at your next doctor’s visit you are told, “Here’s the bad news. Your condition is terminal. You have only a few days to live”. A certain prognosis. No cure, no antidote, no treatment. All of a sudden, your financial balance sheet, the size of your home, the number of people who report to you, your title, education—none of these mean what they did before you heard the doctor’s news.

## Creative Ideas:

- Wear a doctor’s coat as you share the illustration, or act it out with a class member.
- Google a news story of someone who received a terminal diagnosis and share it with the class.
- Have everybody write down the first thing they would change if they got such a diagnosis. Go around the circle quickly with each person sharing their answer.

## To Discuss:

- If you had just a few days to live, what would you do? What would become important to you in those few days?
- How would that differ from what is most important to you now?
- How can you tell what is most important?
- What do you think gives your life significance?

## Who You Are Is More Significant Than What You Do:

The Bible teaches us that real significance begins with a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We can find and experience real significance in life when we surrender to Christ and live for Him, with His Spirit in us and guiding us.

The evidence of a Christ-centered life is not just the things we do, but more crucially the person that we are. God’s Spirit inside us changes us, grows us over time, and we become more and more like Jesus in our attitudes, our character and outwardly in our actions. We are not “working our way to God.” Rather, God’s work in us leaves tell-tale evidence on the outside. We don’t do Christianity. We are Christ-followers.

## Fruit of the Spirit:

In Galatians 5:22-23, the Apostle Paul lists some characteristics of Christ-followers. Fruit means “that which comes from something; an effect or result”. Not something that originates with you, but something that you are known for because Christ is in you. [Leader note: Fruit is something that is produced by the Spirit in us—see John 15 for details.]

## Read the Scripture:

*But the Fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

Galatians 5:22-23

The fruit Paul refers to is the character, attitudes and actions of a Christ-follower. The Holy Spirit produces fruit in the life of a believer. Notice that the fruit of the Spirit is singular—a fruit. Paul is teaching us that the Spirit produces all of these characteristics in every Christ-follower. Every believer has love, joy, peace—not just some with love, or some with joy, etc.

## To Discuss:

- How does the Fruit of the Spirit differ from the “good” actions in the life of a non-Christian?
- What does a person’s actions tell you about them?
- Is the “fruit” in Galatians 5:22-23 attitudes or actions, or both? Explain.
- Why does Paul refer to “fruit” as a singular “fruit” rather than the plural “fruits”?
- Do you think the list in Galatians is an exhaustive list of character traits of a Christ-follower?

## Being Fruit-Filled:

During this series we are going to talk about each of these nine aspects of the Fruit of the Spirit. As we look at these characteristics individually, we’ll begin to see a picture of the “whole” believer emerge. This teaching will reveal the image of a person who is impacting the lives of others, as their Christ-like character is shown in their outward attitudes and actions.

A Spirit-filled believer is a fruitful person. Think about the kind of person that Paul is describing—a person living out all of these inward characteristics. Do you think they'd be influencing others toward Christ? Would their life be meaningful and significant? Would you want to be that kind of person? In other words, would that effective, Spirit-filled life look attractive to you?

Let's begin our look at the fruit today with the characteristic of love.

### **Influential People Are Loving People:**

Christ-followers would agree that Jesus Christ is a loving Person. As God He knows everything about Love. As a man He demonstrated love in many ways—personally and profoundly—all the way to His loving and sacrificial death on the cross. Matthew 22 contains one of Jesus' greatest teachings on love:

#### **Read the Scripture:**

*Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."*

*Matthew 22:36-40*

Let's explore four aspects of love revealed in this passage from Matthew and other significant passages in the New Testament.

### **Love Is a Command**

In Matthew 22 Jesus details several aspects of love. The first is that love is not a choice or option—it's a command. "Love the Lord your God..." is a declarative sentence. You. Must. Love. If that wasn't enough, He also details the complete nature of our love toward God—"with all our heart, soul, mind and strength." And He finishes the verse by stating it outright: "This is the first and greatest commandment."

#### **To Discuss:**

- Why is Jesus so emphatic about love?

### **Love Begins With God**

Jesus says our love begins with God. We are to love God first and above everyone else and everything else. Look at the words Jesus uses, which go from inward to outward in our expression of love: heart, soul, mind (inward) and strength (outward). We are to love God with all that we are and that will affect the love that we show—toward God and others.

*If you love God, your love for others will grow even greater, for this upward love supernaturally produces love for others.*

*—James Merritt*

#### **To Discuss:**

- What is significant about "heart, soul, mind and strength?"
- Is it possible to love others or experience love apart from God? If so, what is different about this love?
- What keeps us from loving God with all that we are?

### **Love Extends to Our Neighbors:**

Jesus speaks of a second commandment that is like the first—an emphatic and declarative mandate: "Love your neighbor as yourself." See the progression: Beginning with a healthy love for God will then extend to a healthy love for our neighbors. When we love God the most, we will love others with our best.

Jesus' teaching on love with respect to our neighbors is significant throughout the Gospels. He clearly expects His followers lives to show fruit in the area of love toward our neighbors.

#### **To Discuss:**

Read these passages of Scripture and discuss how loving others is lived out through each biblical example:

- Love of the poor: Matthew 25:34-40
- Love through serving: Luke 10:30-37
- Love that forgives: Matthew 18:21-35
- Love with our words: James 3:3-12

### **Creative Idea:**

- For larger groups, you may want to break up into smaller groups of 2-4 people, have each take one of the four passages above. Ask groups to answer a common question, like "What does love look like in this passage?"

In these passages we can see love lived out in the way we care for others, serve those in need and less fortunate than ourselves, forgive others and speak to others. Love is more than an attitude. When we love as God loves, it invades our actions.

*When it comes to love, say it.*

*—James Merritt*

### **Love Comes Back To You**

Finally, don't miss Jesus' last two words on love in Matthew 22:39—we should love our neighbors

as ourselves. This isn't a mandate for self-love. In context, we learn that if we love God properly, we'll come to also love ourselves properly. That is, when our love of God is right, it extends to our love of others, and our love of self doesn't become self-worship or self-idolization.

**To Discuss:**

- What does self-worship or self-idolization look like in someone's life? What are some examples of how loving yourself can become sinful?
- What does healthy self-love look like?

*If you are not loving, you are not living.*

—James Merritt

**Living It Out:**

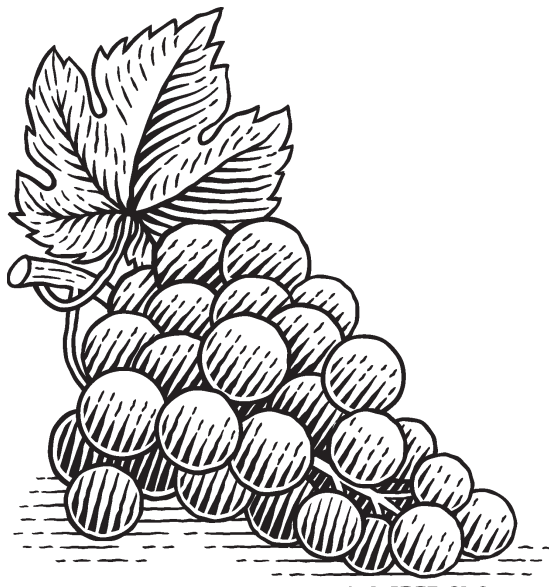
This week take the four ways we talked about loving our neighbors from the lesson, and choose to live one out in your life:

- Love of the poor: Matthew 25:34-40
- Love through serving: Luke 10:30-37
- Love that forgives: Matthew 18:21-35
- Love with our words: James 3:3-12

**Scripture to Memorize:**

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”*

Matthew 22:37-39



**LESSON 2**  
**JOY**

*In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

1 Peter 1:6-9

**Opening Illustration: A Good Laugh**

Did you know that laughter really is medicine? Let's prove it to each other. Have someone in the class tell a good joke. Maybe have several folks try until you get one that has just about everyone chuckling. Now think about this: Laughing produces well-documented physical benefits similar to those obtained through vigorous physical exercise. When you tip your head back and cackle aloud, muscles in the abdomen, chest, shoulders, and elsewhere contract, while the heart rate and blood pressure increase. In one burst of this activity, the pulse can double from 60 to 120, while systolic blood pressure can shoot from a normal 120 to 200. Once laughing ceases, heartbeat and blood pressure dip below normal—a sign of reduced stress.

**Creative Idea:**

- Have a quick in-class “contest” for the best joke, have three or more “contestants” and let the class vote on the best one. Explain to the class that the objective of the “best joke” is to get everyone laughing.

**To Discuss:**

- Where does laughter come from, or what is laughter the result of?
- Do you think laughter is important for life? Why or why not?

**Review from Previous Week:**

- What aspect of the Fruit of the Spirit did we study last week?
- What are some things you learned about biblical love?
- How have you lived out the aspect of love in your life this week?

**Teaching Note:**

- If you allow class members to share experience from the previous week, be sure to keep this short—allow just one or two to share at the most. Keep the study moving and don't spend too much lesson time recounting experiences. This time can be valuable, but it can also allow one or two voices to monopolize the conversation if unchecked.

**Joy and Happiness Are Not the Same:**

The Bible teaches that Christians experience joy. Joy is often thought of as a form of happiness or the same as being happy, but they are not the same thing. Joy is a specific spiritual characteristic of a Christ follower. The Bible instructs us to be joyful and rejoice nearly 400 times. The word rejoice appears in God's Word over 150 times. Joy in Christ is "gladness or delight in spite of present or extenuating circumstances." The Greek word for joy, *chara*, is closely related to the Greek word for grace, *charis*. In fact, it is the grace of Christ that produces joy in the life of a Christ-follower. Joy is not an emotion, but rather an attitude. No you can tell you to feel happy if you are not—but you can choose to be joyful in spite of your circumstances.

Happiness, on the other hand, comes from the old English word *happ*, which literally means "chance". It corresponds to the Latin *fortuna* which means "luck." These words suggest that if things just happen the way we want them to, we'll be happy. But if things don't work out the way we want, then we'll be unhappy. Happiness, then, has everything to do with the now—what's happening, what our circumstances are, what the conditions happen to be. Happiness is temporary and fickle; joy is permanent and settled. Work with your class to fill in this table contrasting happiness and joy:

<b>Happiness</b>	<b>Joy</b>
<i>External</i>	<i>Internal</i>
<i>Depends on outward circumstances</i>	<i>Depends on inward character</i>
<i>Depends on what happens</i>	<i>Depends on Who lives within us</i>
<i>Based on chance</i>	<i>Based on choice</i>

**Read the Scripture:**

*In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and*

*are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

*1 Peter 1:6-9*

**To Discuss:**

- What is the difference between happiness and joy?
- Where does happiness come from? Where does joy come from?
- Can you choose to be happy? To be joyful?
- Can you be joyful in the midst of grief or trials? How?

**Influential People Are Joyful People:**

Each aspect of the Fruit of the Spirit is unique. While love, the characteristic we studied last week, is most often shown outwardly through our actions, joy is focused more inwardly as a part of our attitude. Both of these—actions and attitudes—are forms of Christian character. They feed off one another, actions producing attitudes; attitudes resulting in actions. The Bible tells us that the world will know us because of our love [John 15]. And the Bible also tells us to be joyful—always [Philippians 4:4].

*You can choose to be joyful  
regardless of your circumstances.  
—James Merritt*

Where does joy in the life of a Christian come from? Let's quickly look at five "sources" for joy in the life of a Christ-follower:

**Joy Is a Consequence of Faith:**

In Philippians 1, the Apostle Paul talks confidently about His faith in God, relating to the readers that whether He lives or dies is of no consequence, for Christ is honored either way. Joy comes from having "a confident trust"—or faith—in God. Without faith in God, we cannot experience abiding joy. Faith is essential, because it dispels the attitudes that prevent joy from occurring, like "worry" [Matthew 6:25-30], or "doubt" or "fear" [Matthew 14:27-31].

Where does faith come from? We know that the Word of God produces faith [Romans 10:17] and that, in turn, produces joy [Romans 15:13]. Jesus' very teachings—His words—are also designed to give us joy [John 15:11, 17:13]. The more we know God through His Word, the more worry, doubt and fear give way to faith, and that faith produces joy. So faith, and God's Word, are foundational for real joy.

### **To Discuss:**

- Where does faith come from?
- What is the relationship between the Word of God and faith?
- Can we have real joy without faith?
- How are worry, doubt and fear related to joy?

### **Joy Is the Result of Obedience**

Obedience to the Word of God fosters joy in the hearts of the obedient. Read these three accounts of joy resulting from obedience in the early church:

- The conversion of the Samaritans, Acts 8:5-8
- The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts 8:35-39
- The conversion of the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 1:6

In the New Testament we also see the opposite is true—that disobedience dispels joy and produces fear (Hebrews 10:26-27).

### **To Discuss:**

- Is it possible, based on these verses, that lack of joy is an indication of lack of obedience on the part of the believer? Why or why not?

### **Joy Is Based on Forgiveness:**

The guilt of sin is a major reason why many people lack joy. Guilt causes stress, unhappiness and worry. Paul illustrates the condition of someone struggling with sin (Romans 7:22-24) as one filled with guilt and shame. But where there is forgiveness, there can be real joy!

Psalm 32 is a great account by David of the joy or “blessedness” that comes to someone who knows his sins have been forgiven. We see his “heaviness” give way to joy as we read his account of forgiveness.

### **Read the Scripture:**

*Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to You and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD.” And You forgave the guilt of my sin.*

*Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD’s unfailing love surrounds the one who trusts in Him. Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!*

*Psalm 32:1-5, 10-11*

### **To Discuss:**

- How does the Psalmist describe how the guilt of sin affected him inwardly?
- How does he describe the result of being forgiven?
- Do you believe that guilt over sin can keep us from experiencing joy? Why or why not?

### **Joy Comes from Christian Fellowship**

Throughout the New Testament we see many examples of joy being brought about as believers grew closer to one another and spent time with one another.

*Leaders pull everyone else around them when they are down.*

*—James Merritt*

Paul experienced joy by witnessing love and fellowship in Philemon (Philemon 7). He also found great joy in learning of the restoration of brethren (2 Corinthians 7:7). He rejoiced in the fellowship he had with the Philippians (Philippians 4:10). And John spoke of the joy that comes from Christian fellowship reunited (2 John 12).

### **To Discuss:**

- Are you developing and nurturing the kind of Christian fellowship that results in joy? How?

### **Joy Comes from Christian Service:**

Finally, we see joy as a result of the spreading of the Gospel.

- Barnabas rejoiced in the conversions at Antioch (Acts 11:20-23).
- The Christian Jews delighted to hear of the conversion of the Gentiles (Acts 15:3).
- Seeing the spiritual progress of others was a great source of joy for Paul (Romans 16:19, Colossians 2:5, 1 Thessalonians 3:6-9).
- John wrote that this was among the highest forms of joy (3 John 4).
- Jesus spoke of the blessedness (joy) of giving to others (Acts 20:35).

All those who are willing to become involved in serving the Lord, whether through teaching, giving of time, energy or money, or sharing their faith, will experience joy from such service!

*People of influence choose joy over gloom, gladness over sadness, optimism over pessimism—and lead others to do the same thing.*

*—James Merritt*



**To Discuss:**

- What acts of service or how does serving Christ result in joy in your own life? (Give examples if you have them.)
- Can our service to others also produce joy in the lives of fellow believers? How?

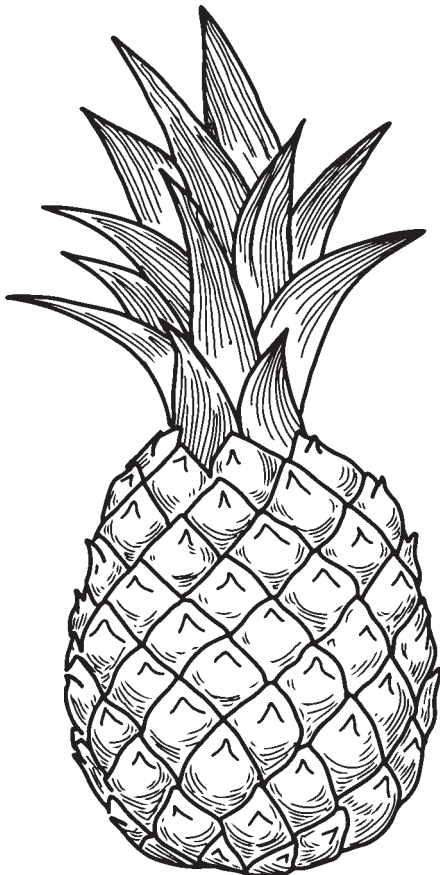
**Living It Out:**

This week, review the five sources of joy we talked about in Scripture and choose to “create joy” in your life as you live one or more of them out:

- Faith in Christ.
- Obedience to Christ.
- Experiencing forgiveness.
- A result of Christian fellowship.
- A result of Christian service.

**Scripture to Memorize:**

*“Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”*  
Nehemiah 8:10

**LESSON 3**  
**PEACE**

*You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.*

*Isaiah 26:3*

**Opening Illustration: Longing for Peace**

In a TV interview, Barbara Walters asked actor Richard Dreyfuss a question: “If you could have one wish, what would you wish for?” Without hesitating, Dreyfuss replied, “Every time I have a birthday, every time I blow out candles, every time I see a shooting star, I wish the same thing—I wish for inner security.” In other words, he wished for peace. Dreyfuss is like many people today who long for personal peace.

What do men want most in their homes? A survey taken a few years ago revealed a surprising answer to what men care most about and hope their wives understand. Men did not want expensive furniture, well-equipped garages or a private study. What they wanted most was tranquility at home. In other words, they wanted peace.

**Creative Idea:**

- Draw a big peace sign on the blackboard or whiteboard. Ask the group what word or images come to mind when they see a peace sign. List their observations on the board.

**To Discuss:**

- How would you define inner peace?
- Why do you think most people long for it?
- Do you think most people ever find inner peace? Why or why not?
- What are some of the ways that the world offers peace?

**Review from Previous Week:**

- What aspect of the fruit of the Spirit did we study last week?
- What are some things you learned about biblical joy?
- How have you lived this out in your life this week?

**Teaching Note:**

- If you allow class members to share experience from the previous week, be sure to keep this short—allow just one or two to share at the most. Keep the study moving and don’t spend too

much lesson time recounting experiences. This time can be valuable, but it can also allow one or two voices to monopolize the conversation if unchecked.

### **A World Without Peace**

We all long for peace—whether personal peace or political peace. We want peace with our next-door neighbors and peace between nations. In more than 3,500 years of recorded civilization, only 286 years have been spent without war raging someplace on the globe. Yet during that same period, 8,000 peace treaties have been signed. Someone once said, “Peace is the brief, glorious moment in history when everybody stands around reloading.” The primary cause of our difficulty in maintaining external peace is our lack of internal peace.

The lack of peace in our world is not just political. We live in the most technologically advanced time in history. While technology is great, these marvels can also bring problems. A *USA Today* article reported that high-tech gadgets boost not only productivity, but stress as well. Think about it... it is rare to see someone without a cell phone, laptop, iPod, hand-held video game, or some other gadget? Have you been to a movie, or even a worship service lately, where you didn't hear a cell phone ring? As a society, we have become obsessed with speed and efficiency. What has happened, though, is that we end up with more activities and plans than ever. Our schedules are almost impossible to follow. Without a doubt this busy-ness and stress has taken a toll on our spirits. Whether you are a CEO or a stay-at-home mom, a student or a senior adult—no one is immune to stress, frustration and worry. Let's look at what Jesus said about peace in the world.

### **Read the Scripture:**

*Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law - a man's enemies will be the members of his own household. Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of Me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.*

*Matthew 10:34-39*

### **To Discuss:**

- Do you think most people experience peace on a daily basis?

- What are some of things in your life that cause a lack of peace?
- What did Jesus say in Matthew 10:34-35 about peace?
- What does this tell us about our circumstances as Christ followers?

### **What is Peace?**

Peace is a word that is used lightly in the world today. Just turn on the news and you will see multiple headlines about the lack of peace in our world, peaceful protests, pro-peace rallies, etc. But peace is more than just the absence of war. Peace is an inward confidence that doesn't depend on the ever-changing circumstances of life. This confidence is rooted in the belief that God is in control of all circumstances. It is knowing that though our circumstances constantly change, God doesn't. He is faithful and good all the time.

This kind of peace is impossible without a relationship with Christ. The peace that Christ offers is peace with God. When we have peace with God, then it is possible to have peace with ourselves and peace with others. That is why peace is the fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22.

The Greek definition of peace in Galatians 5:22 is: “The tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, so it fears nothing from God and is content in all circumstances, whatever they may be.”

The peace Paul writes about in Galatians 5:22 (the fruit of the Spirit) comes only through a relationship with Christ. People are looking for peace today in all the wrong places. Peace is not the absence of problems but dependence and belief in God in the midst of those problems. No one finds peace by looking for peace. Trust Christ, and you will have true peace because He is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). Peace is the fruit of knowing God through faith in His Son Jesus.

### **Read the Scripture:**

*You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. Isaiah 26:3*

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

*Philippians 4:6-7*

Notice that both of these passages deal with the focus of our minds regarding peace. Isaiah 26:3 says God will grant us peace because we trust in Him, and when our minds are fixed on Him. In Philippians, God promises to guard our hearts and minds with peace that transcends human understanding. These passages don't promise peaceful circumstances, but they do promise the presence and peace of God in our circumstances if our focus and faith is on God.

Focusing on circumstances will cause anxiety because they are constantly changing and are often out of our control. But God never changes and nothing is out of His control. When we worry, it is the same thing as saying, "God, I don't believe You can handle this. I don't believe You can be trusted in this circumstance. I don't believe Your Word is true." Worry demonstrates no confidence in God or His promises. It is the opposite of peace.

#### **To Discuss:**

- How does a relationship with Christ give peace?
- How does peace with God change the way we react to our circumstances?
- Discuss Isaiah 26:3. What do you think it means to have a mind that is "stayed on God?"
- What is the promise in Philippians 4:6-7? What is the condition of this promise?
- What are we really saying about God when we worry?
- What do we say about God when we bear the fruit of peace amidst painful, hard circumstances?
- How does our peace, or lack of it, affect those around us who do not trust Christ?

#### **Influential People are Peaceful People:**

How is peace displayed in our lives? How can others see that we have this confidence in Christ because of our relationship with Him? The Bible talks a lot about peace. Peace is not a goal to be achieved but a process where one type of peace leads to another. Today we will look at three kinds of peace.

#### **Eternal Peace—Peace with God:**

As we discussed above, all true and lasting peace begins with a relationship with Christ. There is no real peace apart from Him.

#### **Read the Scripture:**

*Therefore, since we have been justified through faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*  
Romans 5:1

For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life! Romans 5:10

#### **For Discussion:**

- According to these 2 passages, what was the state of our relationship with God before faith in Christ?
- What does it mean to be an enemy of God?
- Do you think it is ever possible to have true peace if you are an enemy of your Maker? Why or why not?
- Why is peace with God the foundation for all peace?
- When we have peace with God, then we can be at peace with ourselves.

#### **Internal Peace—Peace with Yourself:**

This is the peace that so many people long for today but do not have.

#### **Read the Scripture:**

*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one Body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*

*Colossians 3:15*

The word rule in this verse has an interesting meaning. Notice that Paul is addressing believers (members of one Body). They have eternal peace with God through salvation, yet Paul is encouraging them to let the peace of Christ rule in their hearts. Rule here means to be an umpire, to determine or rule. Think about the game of baseball and the function of the umpire. He is the one who determines (or rules) if it's a strike, a ball, or if a player is safe or out. We are to let Christ's peace "umpire" our lives. In other words, we are not to be controlled by our circumstances or our feelings.

#### **For Discussion:**

- Discuss the definition of the word "rule" in Colossians 3:15.
- Discuss what life is like when we are ruled by circumstances and feelings.
- Now, what is life like when Christ's peace rules our hearts?
- How do you choose to let Christ's peace rule, versus circumstances? Be practical with your answers.
- How will allowing Christ's peace to rule your heart affect your witness for God?
- When Christ's peace rules in our hearts, the next type of peace is possible.

## External Peace— Peace with Others

This is probably the most common use of the word peace today. External peace is necessary for human relationships to flourish, whether in families, neighborhoods, churches, or nations.

### Read the Scripture:

*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

*Romans 12:18*

*Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.*

*Matthew 5:23-24*

You cannot be at true peace with others until you are at peace internally. But you can never be at peace in your heart unless you are at peace with God, for all peace flows from the presence of His Spirit. Romans 12:18 does not say we will have peace with all men (just like Jesus said in Matthew 10:34-35). The passage does say that as believers we should strive to have peace with all men... “as far as it depends on you.”

### For Discussion:

- As believers, what are some ways we should strive to be at peace with all men?
- What does Matthew 5:23-24 teach us about the importance of peace within the Body of Christ?
- How does striving to be at peace with difficult people glorify Christ?

### Conclusion

The only place we can ever experience true peace daily is through a deep walk with the Lord Jesus. True peace cannot be found anywhere else. The Korean Christians have a saying that emerged from the persecution they have suffered and endured for their faith. “We are just like nails,” they say. “The harder you hit us, the deeper you drive us; and the deeper you drive us, the more peaceful it becomes.”

Part of God’s purpose in allowing the trials and difficulties in our lives is to drive us to deeper dependence on our relationship with Him. And the deeper we go, the more peaceful it will get.

### Read the Scripture:

*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.*

*Romans 8:28*

*Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.*

*1 Peter 5:7*

### For Discussion:

- How does believing these verses bring us joy and peace?

### Living It Out:

This week, write out the following verses and put them in places that you will see them throughout the day. When you see them, take a moment to examine yourself... is your mind fixed on God, or on your circumstances? Is Christ’s peace ruling your heart or are your feelings? Choose throughout your day and week to believe God’s Word and for your life to reflect that belief. Remember, don’t look for peace, trust God and peace will come.

*Isaiah 26:3*

*Philippians 4:6-7*

*Colossians 3:15*

*1 Peter 5:7*

*Romans 8:28*

### Scripture to Memorize:

*You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.*

*Isaiah 26:3*





## LESSON 4

# PATIENCE

*You, too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.*

*James 5:8*

### Opening Illustration: A Farmer

We can learn much about patience by observing ordinary farmers. Farmers plant, pull weeds, cultivate, and harvest. Every day before the harvest, a farmer will do at least two things: watch and wait. He knows that the harvest will come if he will just be patient. So he watches for problems that need solving while he waits for his precious crops to grow. A farmer knows that he cannot hurry the harvest. It will come in due time.

### Creative Idea:

- A few items to bring: a small pot or cup, soil, a small shovel, seeds and water. Plant a seed(s) together. As you do each step, talk through the process and how it relates to the patience of a farmer.

### To Discuss:

- How would you describe a patient person?
- What are some of the things that try your patience on a daily basis?
- How does it feel when you lose your patience?

### Review from Previous Week:

- What aspect of the fruit of the Spirit did we study last week?
- What are some things you learned about biblical peace?
- How have you lived out the aspect of peace in your life this week?

### Teaching Note:

- If you allow class members to share experience from the previous week, be sure to keep this short—allow just one or two to share at the most. Keep the study moving and don't spend too much lesson time recounting experiences. This time can be valuable, but it can also allow one or two voices to monopolize the conversation if unchecked.

### What is Patience?:

We are beginning to see now that none of the aspects of the Fruit of the Spirit stands alone. You cannot

have true joy without love. And true joy brings peace. And it is impossible to be patient without love, joy and peace. Of all the aspects of the fruit of the Spirit, patience is the one that gets a bad wrap, doesn't it? How many times have you heard someone say, "Don't pray for patience!" Why? Because when we pray for patience, God seems to give us opportunities to be patient, doesn't He? These "opportunities" are often difficult people or situations that try our patience.

We don't have to be afraid to pray for patience. As believers, we can long to be patient in the same way we long to be joyful, kind and good.

### Read the Scripture:

*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

*Galatians 5:22-23*

### Definition of Patience:

- Endurance, constancy, steadfastness, perseverance, long-suffering, slowness in avenging wrongs

This definition brings to mind several images. Remember way back in kindergarten when you first heard the story of the tortoise and the hare? Slow and steady wins the race...that's steadfastness. If you talk to a marathon runner he will tell you that successfully completing a marathon isn't about speed...it's about finding a pace for each individual mile that enables you to endure for 26 miles...that's perseverance.

### To Discuss:

- How does what you learned in previous lessons about love, joy and peace relate to patience?
- Discuss the definition of the word patience in Galatians 5:22.
- How does a person become more patient?
- Why do you think being patient is so hard?

### Influential People are Patient People:

We find in the definition of patience the word long-suffering, which describes patience well. Long-suffering is more than suffering for a long time, which is what patience feels like at times. Long-suffering is the willingness to exercise patience, perseverance, and persistence in the pursuit of worthy goals. It's the ability to be slow to anger, slow to lose hope, and slow to quit even when everyone around you is acting with impatience. Today we are going to discuss three principles about patience.

## **Difficult People Must Be Handled with Patience**

As believers, we must learn to deal patiently with difficult people. Anyone can be patient when it is easy. However, it takes supernatural patience to respond with grace and kindness to a difficult person.

Patience is not passivity or indifference. It is not a fatalistic attitude toward life that sits back, twiddles its thumbs and says, "Whatever will be, will be."

Patience does not mean that you never get angry; anger is not always wrong. Sometimes a lack of anger is wrong. Patience means you are slow to anger and quick to get rid of it. Too often we are just the opposite. We are quick to get angry and slow to rid ourselves of it. When we allow anger to stay, we become bitter, hold grudges, or try to get even.

### **Read the Scripture:**

*A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel.*

*Proverbs 15:18*

*Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city.*

*Proverbs 16:32*

You cannot get away from people who are going to try your patience. In fact, the people you love the most will try your patience the most. In any relationship, whether at home or at the office, patience can salvage partnerships that are worth keeping.

Difficulties are opportunities in disguise to help you cultivate patience. And the more patient you become, the more influential you become because we all navigate toward people who control their emotions in difficult circumstances.

### **Read the Scripture:**

*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*

*Ephesians 4:2*

*We urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:14*

Ephesians 4:2 says to "bear with one another in love. The definition of this word is: To stand firm; to endure. Notice how this relates to the definition we saw earlier of patience. This one verse contains 3 aspects of the fruit of the Spirit—gentleness, patience and love.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:14 we are commanded to be patient with everyone. Yet Paul also urges believers to "warn," "encourage," and "help" as they are patient. We see here that being patient is not being passive. We must choose patience as we carry out the good works that Christ has for us to do. Also, notice the types of people they are to be patient with...idle (lazy), timid (shy), and weak. Aren't these just the types of people that try one's patience?

### **For Discussion:**

- How does patience calm others in difficult situations?
- What does God say about a patient man in Proverbs 16:32?
- How does Ephesians 4:2 say we are to deal with difficult people?
- What does it mean to "bear with one another in love?"
- What are believers urged to do in 1 Thessalonians 5:14?
- Based on this verse, are patient people passive people? Explain your answer.

## **Demanding Problems Must Be Handled with Perseverance**

Have you ever had anyone say to you, "I have some bad news and some good news... which do you want first?" Well, here is the bad news: Everybody has problems. And we always will. Our problems exist because of sin. This doesn't mean we always have problems or trials because we sin. But difficulties come in part because of God's curse on the world in Genesis 3.

Christians are not immune to problems. Jesus said, "In the world, you will have trouble..." [John 16:33]. Jesus went on in that passage to pray not that God would take us out of the world and all its trouble, but that God would protect us from the evil one in the midst of our problems.

Have you ever considered why we have problems? Here is the good news: Problems are not meant to defeat us, depress us, or discourage us. God means for them to develop us. Problems are not tools to tear us down but tests to build us up. As believers, we must begin to view our problems as opportunities rather than obstacles. Most of the greatest lessons we will ever learn will come during hard times. Persevering with patience produces growth spiritually.

### **Read the Scripture:**

*I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*

John 6:33

*We rejoice in our suffering, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.*

Romans 5:3-4

*Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

James 1:2-4

### **For Discussion:**

- According to John 6:33, will our lives ever be problem-free...even when we obey Christ?
- How is it possible for believers to have joy and peace in a world full of suffering?
- Read Romans 5:3-4. Why can believers rejoice, even in suffering?
- What do you think it means to rejoice in suffering? Does that mean we like it? [Leader Note: The word "rejoice" here is translated "exult" and it means: to glorify]
- What does suffering produce if we bear it patiently?
- According to James 1:2-4, how should we as believers view the hardships we face, both big and small?
- Why should we have this attitude toward trials?
- What does this attitude say to others about our God?

### **God's Purposes are Fulfilled Through Persistence**

Patience, perseverance and persistence go hand-in-hand. These traits are difficult to develop because they involve waiting, and most of us don't like to wait. It's one of the most difficult things we have to do in life. In a culture that survives on frozen dinners, fast food, packaged cake mixes, wireless Internet, and freeway express lanes, it's difficult to wait. If the truth were known, sometimes we would rather do the wrong thing than wait.

Instant success is a myth. Standing on top of the mountain is a thrill, but getting to the top requires a persistent climb. Almost every significant success comes at the end of a long wait. In order to

accomplish God's purpose, we must be persistent. When we fail (not if), we must be willing to get back up and keep going instead of laying down in defeat. God never promises us an easy life, but He does promise us all we need to accomplish His plan. Bearing the fruit of the Spirit will take time. But it is possible for every believer who does not give up. Isn't it interesting that Paul used the word "fruit" in Galatians 5:22? It takes time for a tree to produce fruit, and time for the fruit to ripen on the branches. Remember Jesus' words in John 15:5..."I am the Vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing." In our own strength, we will never achieve Christlike patience. But, if we persistently remain in Christ, relying on His strength, we will bear the fruit of patience, just as He promised in John 15.

### **Read the Scripture:**

*Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

Philippians 3:13-14

*Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*

1 Corinthians 15:58

### **To Discuss:**

- Do you find it difficult to be persistent in reaching goals that require a long period of time to reach? Why or why not?
- Why do you think most people give up on worthy goals?
- Why is persistence important when it comes to God's purpose for our lives?
- How does Paul describe his persistence in Philippians 3:13-14?
- What encouragement does 1 Corinthians 15:58 offer regarding persisting in difficult times?
- What are some practical ways that we can be persistent in our daily lives?

### **Closing:**

Have you ever read about the birth of a giraffe? The first parts to emerge are the baby's front hooves and head. Then the entire calf appears and tumbles 10 feet to the ground, landing on its back. Within seconds it rolls over and stands, struggling with those gangly, untried legs. Then an amazing thing happens:

## LESSON 5

# KINDNESS

The mother giraffe positions herself directly over her newborn calf and looks it over. Then she swings a long leg outward and kicks that baby, sending it sprawling. If it doesn't get up, she kicks it again. If it grows tired, she kicks it again to stimulate its efforts to stand.

Each time the baby giraffe manages to get to its feet, its mother kicks it over again. The mother's actions may seem cruel to us, but she is preparing that little calf for survival. The calf must learn to get up quickly and run with the herd when danger comes, or it will not survive.

Now, obviously God is not kicking us...but isn't that what some might think? They think God is mean because He allows hardship and suffering in the lives of His people. What if we began to believe that like the mother giraffe, God, in His wisdom, knows that trials are necessary to mature us? What if we trusted that He is lovingly helping us learn to stand firm in a world that will do everything it can to eat us alive? Just like that baby giraffe, we are going to fall and struggle to stand. But each time we patiently endure, we can know that our persistence is not in vain. God is glorified in our lives when we persevere in faith.

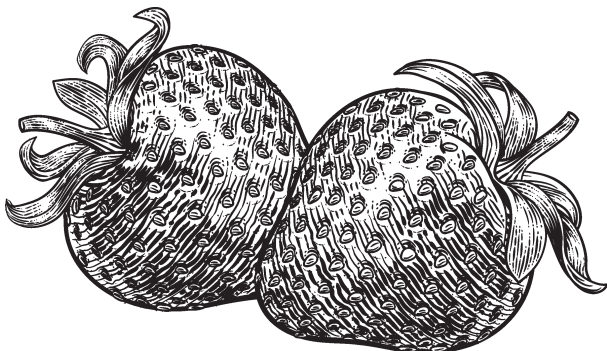
### Scripture to Memorize:

*You, too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.*

*James 5:8*

### Living It Out:

Write on a piece of paper one goal that, if achieved, would strengthen your relationship with Christ. Place this paper somewhere you will see it every day. For 30 days do two things: (1) Every time you see it, say to yourself, Just for today, I'm going to take one step toward achieving this goal, and (2) take that one step. Patiently persevere for 30 days uninterrupted. At the end of the month, you will be amazed at how much God has accomplished in your life.



*Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*

*Colossians 3:12*

### Opening Illustration:

#### Whatever Happened to Kindness?

We live in a society in which kindness is becoming an increasingly rare commodity. A few years ago, the cover story of *USAToday* began with this observation: "A surly driver cuts into your lane. Your teenager brings home a CD with lewd, hostile lyrics. A political candidate in a TV ad morphs into a convicted murderer. A star baseball player spits at an umpire. A radio talk show host insults the president while he's sitting right there... it is impossible to ignore the growing rudeness, even harshness, of American life."

*In the glass of our current society, it seems the milk of human kindness has curdled.*

*—Dr. James Merritt*

### Creative Idea:

- A few items to bring: blank paper, pens, clock or stopwatch. Divide your class into groups of 3-4 people. Have each group work together to make a list of as many ways to show kindness that they can think of in just 2 minutes. Time this activity. Allow each group to quickly share its list as time permits.

### To Discuss:

- Can you remember a time when someone went out of his/her way to show kindness to you? Briefly share this experience and how it made you feel.
- Why do you think there is so little kindness in the world today?
- Do you think the lack of kindness is getting worse over time? If so, why?

### Review From Previous Week:

- What aspect of the fruit of the Spirit did we study last week?
- What are some things you learned about biblical patience?
- How have you lived out the aspect of patience in your life this week?



**Teaching Note:**

- If you allow class members to share experience from the previous week, be sure to keep this short—allow just one or two to share at the most. Keep the study moving and don't spend too much lesson time recounting experiences. This time can be valuable, but it can also allow one or two voices to monopolize the conversation if unchecked.

**The Kindness of God**

You can never be too kind. We all hunger to be treated with courtesy and kindness. People from all walks of life were attracted to Jesus for this reason. He, too, came into an unkind world, a dog-eat-dog, every-man-for-himself culture. No mental institutions, hospitals, or organizations of mercy existed then. Yet when Jesus came, He poured kindness into every bowl of human suffering. No one ever accused Him of being unkind, even His most bitter enemies.

He teaches us that we should be kind not only to those who don't deserve it, but also to those who don't appreciate it. Even in His life His acts of kindness were misunderstood. His greatest act of kindness—His death on the cross—has been misunderstood and even reviled by much of the world for over 2,000 years.

**Read the Scripture:**

*Men, why are you doing this? We [Paul and Barnabas] too are only men, human like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, Who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. In the past, He let all nations go their own way. Yet He has not left Himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; He provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.*

Acts 14:15-17

*At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit...*

Titus 3:3-5

It is interesting and important to note that in both of these passages, God demonstrated His kindness to people who didn't ask for it, want it, or appreciate it. His kindness met both physical and spiritual needs,

not because it was warranted, but because it was needed.

**To Discuss:**

- In each of these passages, how is God's kindness demonstrated?
- Describe the people to whom His kindness is shown.
- What do these verses teach us about God's kindness?
- How is Christ's death on the cross the ultimate act of kindness by God? Use Titus 3:3-5 in your answer.

**The Fruit of Kindness**

Kindness is a word that is sometimes used ambiguously and is hard to understand biblically. Recognizing kindness is often easy, but defining it is more difficult. A great foundation for understanding kindness can be found in 1 Corinthians 13. Most of us know this as the "love chapter" of the Bible. In this one chapter we find perhaps the greatest and most detailed description of biblical love. In verse 4 Paul begins his description of love and he writes, "Love is patient, love is kind." When Paul illustrated how love acts, patience leapt to his mind first. Immediately following he writes, "and is kind," giving the impression that love and kindness belong together.

Last week we studied the fruit of patience. Patience is love forbearing. It is self-restraint under provocation. Kindness, though, is a more active expression of love toward God and others. The love Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 13 is agape love... the perfect love of God. This type of love was expressed perfectly in the life of Christ. His love for God was expressed in His kindness towards others. Christ's life teaches us a real lesson about kindness: True kindness costs. It cost Jesus His life.

**To Discuss:**

- Discuss some examples of how Christ's love for God was demonstrated in His kindness towards others. Suggestions:
  - Feeding of the 5,000 [Matthew 14:14-21]
  - Samaritan woman at the well [John 4:5-29]
  - Woman caught in adultery [John 8:3-11]

**Teaching Note:**

- Do not spend too much time on this question. It is not necessary to read all of the passages. These are just suggestions. The point is to illustrate that Christ's love for God was demonstrated in kindness to others in need.

- How are love for God and kindness towards others connected?

### **Being Fruit-Filled:**

As we saw above, kindness is an attribute of God. The word “kindness” is not used frequently in the New Testament, but there are numerous examples of kindness. The word “kindness” in Galatians 5:22 has its root in the Greek word, “useful.” On the surface, this may not seem like an important detail. However, as we dig deeper, we will see that the “useful” kindness that is the fruit of the Spirit is what will set us apart as the Body of Christ.

One of the best examples of this type of usefulness is found in the actions of the “good Samaritan” (Luke 10:25-37). In this passage an expert in the Law asks Jesus what he must do to have eternal life. Jesus responds with the question, “What does the Bible say?” The Pharisee answered correctly, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength; and love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus affirms his answer saying, “Do this and you will live.”

But then an interesting thing happens. The Scripture says that the Pharisee wanted to justify himself so he added one more question: “Who is my neighbor?” His question tells us a lot about the condition of his heart. Obviously, he had not loved all people equally or he would not have asked that question. It was common in Jewish culture at this time to interpret the Old Testament to mean that love for all men equally was not required by God. In particular, one did not have to love Samaritans because they were enemies, racially mixed so therefore inferior, and perverters of Old Testament religion.

Jesus’ answer to the question “who is my neighbor?” is the parable of the good Samaritan. In this parable Jesus describes a man in great need—he had been robbed, beaten, and left for dead. Who would show him kindness? Not a priest. Not a Levite. These were the upper classes among Jews at this time. These are the examples of godliness that lower classes would follow. Yet in this parable they were neither kind nor merciful... yet a Samaritan was!

Jesus was exposing the self-righteous pride of many of the Jews in His day. Their pride led to unkindness. The Samaritan had nothing to be proud of. He was moved with compassion and bound up the man’s wounds, carried him to an inn so he could recover, and paid for his medical expenses.

The real question here was not, “who is my neighbor,” as if we can make a list of who is and is not a neighbor [thus a list of who we do and do not have to love as ourselves]. Jesus raised and answered the real question, “To whom should I act as a neighbor?” His answer, “I should be a neighbor to whoever needs me.” Kindness is availability, usefulness. In kindness, we should give to others based on their need, not their merit. Isn’t this how God displays His kindness in our lives? When, like the man in the parable, we laid robbed and beaten by the world, left to die in our sins, He came to us, bound up our wounds, carried us to safety, and paid the price for our sin. Despite our sin and our rebellion, He has given us all we need for this life and the one to come. This is kindness.

### **To Discuss:**

- Read Luke 10:25-37 [make sure to explain the meaning of kindness].
- Discuss the interaction between Jesus and the expert in the law. What questions did he ask Jesus and how did Jesus answer?
- Why was this man asking these questions?
- How did the Samaritan show kindness in the parable?
- Based on Jesus’ example, who is your neighbor?

### **Cultivating the Fruit of Kindness**

How do we cultivate kindness in our lives? The answer can be summed up in one word: humility. Just as pride produces unkindness (illustrated in the parable by the priest and Levite), humility produces kindness. Maybe Jesus wanted the Pharisee to see that he had to become like a Samaritan—without pride or worldly status—before he could learn to be kind. We cannot be kind without humility. Even Christ’s kindness was a result of His humility.

### **Read the Scripture:**

*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!*

*Philippians 2:3-8*

*Young men, in the same way, be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with*

humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

1 Peter 5:5

**To Discuss:**

- How do humility and kindness work together?
- Do you think it is possible to be truly kind with a prideful heart? Explain your answer.
- How does Philippians 2:3-8 describe humility?
- Is it possible for a non-believer to be kind? If so, what makes a Christlike kindness different? [Relate your answer to the Scripture above]

**Living It Out:**

As believers, there are two outlets for our kindness. First is within the Body of Christ. We are part of a community, and we need each other. We need each other’s time, prayers, talents and money. We cannot deny kindness to fellow believers.

There is also another outlet for our kindness... the world. The greater our love for God, the greater our kindness will be towards others. This is why Jesus closed his conversation with the Pharisee following the parable by saying, “Go, and do likewise” [Luke 10:37].

The fact that a Samaritan showed kindness teaches us that we must show kindness to men of all races. And this kindness is to be based on need—whether physical, emotional or spiritual—and not merit.

At the beginning of this lesson, the class participated in an activity where we spent just two minutes thinking about ways to show kindness. Think of how many ideas we came up with in just two minutes. What if we were each to spend just five minutes at the beginning of each day in intentional prayer and thoughtfulness about how we can show kindness to others? Think of the impact our church could make if we were intentionally kind each day. What if this kindness was based not on selfish motives, but on a desire to bring honor and glory to Christ?

**Scripture to Memorize:**

*Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*

Colossians 3:12

**LESSON 6**  
**GOODNESS**

*The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.*

Luke 6:45

**Opening Illustration:**

James Merritt says: “I still remember my wife Teresa coming home one time from the grocery store with this horrified look on her face. I asked her what was wrong. She said that she and our oldest son, James [who was about five years old at the time], had been standing at the checkout behind a man who had put a six-pack of beer on the counter. James innocently asked Teresa what it was. My wife smiled and simply said, “Beer.” Without warning and loud enough for this man (and half the store) to hear, James pointed to him and said, “Beer? He must be a really bad man!”

**Review From Previous Week:**

- What aspect of the Fruit of the Spirit did we study last week?
- What are some things you learned about biblical kindness?
- How have you lived out the aspect of kindness in your life this past week?

**Creative Idea:**

- Take a few moments to allow the class members to share any similar experiences they have had with children, siblings, when they were young, etc.

**To Discuss:**

- How would you define goodness?
- Why do you think that we so often define goodness by what people do, or don’t do?

**Teaching Note:**

- If you allow class members to share experience from the previous week, be sure to keep this short—allow just one or two to share at the most. Keep the study moving and don’t spend too much lesson time recounting experiences. This time can be valuable, but it can also allow one or two voices to monopolize the conversation if unchecked.

### **For Goodness' Sake:**

Last week we studied the fruit of kindness. The meaning of the two words “kindness” and “goodness” are so similar that in other parts of Scripture and in the Greek Old Testament they are used as synonyms. So why did Paul, the author of Galatians, list the fruit of kindness and goodness separately when they have essentially the same meaning? It’s important that we keep in mind that we are studying the fruit of the Spirit—not the fruits of the Spirit. Christlike character is of one piece, and one trait will blend into another as we have previously discussed.

To understand why Paul included goodness separate from kindness it is helpful to know the cultural context in which this letter [Galatians] was written. There was a group of Jews [called Judaizers] who were teaching the Galatian believers that faith plus works resulted in salvation. Some Christians were falling prey to this false teaching. The result was that they were becoming selfish. After all, since they thought they had to please God by their own works, their personal concerns began to take precedence over any claim someone else had on their time. This selfishness led to all sorts of other evil.

Perhaps Paul listed these two traits separately to emphasize that goodness and kindness go together. There is an inward and outward element to goodness. If a person is good, he will be kind to others... and if a person is kind, it must come from his goodness. This truth is clearly seen in Galatians 5:22.

The Greek word for kindness is *chrestotes* [khray-stot'-ace], which means: moral goodness, integrity

The Greek word for goodness is *agathosyne* [ag-ath-o-so'-nay], which means: uprightness of heart and life, kindness

These definitions show us how intertwined these traits are. In a Christian culture where the Church’s focus was on making oneself good and acceptable to God, hence the focus was self-centered; Paul lists goodness in addition to kindness to remind the Church that true goodness means being others-focused [kind].

### **To Discuss:**

- Do you see any similarities between the Christian culture in Paul’s day and now? If so, what?
- Discuss the definitions of goodness and kindness, and how they relate to one another in a believer’s life.

### **God—The Foundation of All Goodness:**

Before we can even begin to understand the fruit of goodness in a believer’s life, we must know the

foundation of what is good. That foundation is God. Contrary to popular thinking, goodness cannot exist or be known apart from God. If any meaningful standard determines whether or not something is good, it must be a universal standard; otherwise, goodness is relative...a matter of opinion.

For example, Hitler thought the annihilation of the Jewish race was a good thing. Suicide bombers think the killing of innocent humans is a good thing. How can such thinking be countered with a simple, “That is not good?” What is to keep a Hitler or a bomb-toting extremist from saying, “That’s just your opinion?”

Only One who is universally good can determine a universal standard of goodness, and that One is only God.

### **Read the Scripture:**

*A certain ruler asked Him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “Why do you call Me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good except God alone.”*

*Luke 18:18*

*I said to the Lord, “You are my Lord; apart from You there is no good thing.”*

*Psalms 16:2*

*I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.*

*John 10:11*

Each of these passages teaches that God is the foundation for all goodness. God is the only One who is completely faultless. His character is without blemish. He is pure and righteous, thus He sets the standard of what is good. And the standard He has set is unattainable apart from Him.

### **To Discuss:**

- How do most people measure what is good?
- What is the problem with this standard?
- Why did Jesus question the man who called Him “good teacher” in Luke 18:18?
- Do you think that most Christians really believe what Psalm 16:2 says? Why or why not?
- How would our lives and our world be different if God’s people lived like we believed this verse?
- Why is Jesus the Good Shepherd according to John 10:11?
- What does this teach us about goodness?

### **Oh My Goodness!**

Most people would admit that they want to be a good person and to live a good life. This statement,



however, raises a question: What is goodness and what is a good life? Goodness is a spiritual matter. Goodness is not feeling good, looking good, or having goods; it is being good [inward] and doing good [outward]. The fruit of goodness motivates a person to do what is best for others regardless of the cost. (Just like the Good Shepherd). So why is this a spiritual matter? Because goodness cannot be manufactured on the outside; it emerges from what a person is on the inside.

So where does goodness begin, and how can we cultivate it in our daily decisions and actions? Goodness is not about what we know or what we do; it is a matter of who we are, which is then reflected in what we do. Now, upon first glance, this probably sounds like great news to most people. But remember, what is our standard of good? God is our standard... and His standard is perfection. Most of us think we are "good people" because we are comparing ourselves to one another. Other people are not the standard by which goodness is measured. God is that standard; and when any life is held up to His standard, we all fall short.

This brings us back to why goodness is a spiritual matter. We cannot behave our way to goodness. We will always fall short. Why? Because there is only one God. However, there is Good News! God can transform us into good people, from the inside out. By His grace, through faith, we can have new life. He places His Spirit within us, giving us a new heart that can bear the fruit of goodness.

### **Read the Scripture:**

*There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.*

*Romans 3:10-12*

*The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?*

*Jeremiah 17:9*

*I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit in you and move you to follow My decrees and be careful to keep My laws.*

*Ezekiel 36:27-28*

These passages show us that no one can be good unless God intervenes. Without Him our hearts are hopelessly beyond cure. But because of His grace

and for His glory, He changes the hearts of those who believe in Christ.

### **To Discuss:**

- What does Romans 3:10-12 tell us about man's goodness?
- What does it mean that the heart is deceitful and beyond cure (Jeremiah 17:9)?
- How does God deal with man's heart according to the passage in Ezekiel?
- So, based on these passages, what is a "good person"?
- How does this definition compare with our cultural definition of a "good person"?
- So, the next time you are sharing the Gospel with someone who says he would go to heaven because he is a good person, how will you respond biblically?

### **Being Fruit-Filled:**

So now that we have established that no one can be good apart from a personal relationship with God, let's get practical. How do we cultivate goodness in our lives as a Christian? Ephesians 4:24 says that when Christ saves us, He makes us a new creation. This new man is, "created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."

Just as mankind was originally created in the image of God (Genesis 1-2), once again God uses Himself as the model for our new character. Since God is good, we can be good. Goodness is part of the Holy Spirit's fruit in every believer's life. However, the fruit of goodness is not automatic. It requires faith and obedience.

### **Inward Goodness:**

The fruit of goodness will be borne in our lives in two ways. The first is inward; and it is being of good character, or faultless. A great example of this inward goodness is seen in the life of Daniel.

### **Read the Scripture:**

*Daniel had so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. Finally these men said, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God." So*

the administrators and the satraps went as a group to the king and said: "O King Darius, live forever! The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the kings should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions' den." So King Darius put the decree in writing.

Daniel 6:3-9

### To Discuss:

- How do these verses describe Daniel's character?
- What did the administrators have to do in order to find fault with Daniel?
- What does this tell you about Daniel's reputation among all people?

Daniel's life reflected the goodness and holiness of God. He was different from other people. Upon close inspection, no fault could be found. His life was bearing the fruit of goodness.

### Read the Scripture:

*I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.*

Jeremiah 17:10

*The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.*

Luke 6:45

### To Discuss:

- According to these passages, what does inward goodness have to do with our actions?

### Outward Goodness:

Goodness is also outgoing. Doing good to others is as much a characteristic of God as faultlessness is a characteristic of God. He is both all of the time...and He has called His Church to be and do both. It isn't only the Church's presence that should make this world a better place to live in, it is also our resources, effort, time and abilities dedicated to showing others the goodness of our God.

Inward and outward goodness cannot be separated in a believer's life. We can't choose one or the other... it is both. Because we are being transformed on the inside into the goodness of God, our actions will reflect the condition of our hearts.

### Read the Scripture:

*Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*

Matthew 5:16

*But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.*

Luke 6:35

*For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

Ephesians 2:10

### To Discuss:

- What is the purpose of good deeds according to Matthew 5:16?
- Based on Luke 6:35, who are we to do good to? What will be the result?
- How does Ephesians 2:10 describe believers and the purpose of salvation?
- Do you notice anything interesting about these "good deeds"?

### Teaching Note:

- Ephesians 2:10 says that God has prepared good works in advance for us to do. The phrase "for us to do" in the original translation is, "that we should walk in them." What this phrase means is to make use of opportunities. God has prepared beforehand opportunities for us to do good deeds. It is not a coincidence that we live in the neighborhood we do, or work with the people we do, or meet the new people we do each day. God gives us daily opportunities to impact people for His glory.

### Living It Out:

This week set aside time to focus on the two elements of goodness... inward and outward. Here are some suggestions:

### Being Good:

- Spend time in God's Word.
- Work on storing God's Word in your heart by memorizing a verse.
- Talk to God each day.
- Meet with a trusted fellow believer and share your struggles and pray together.
- Have a family worship time (involve your children!).

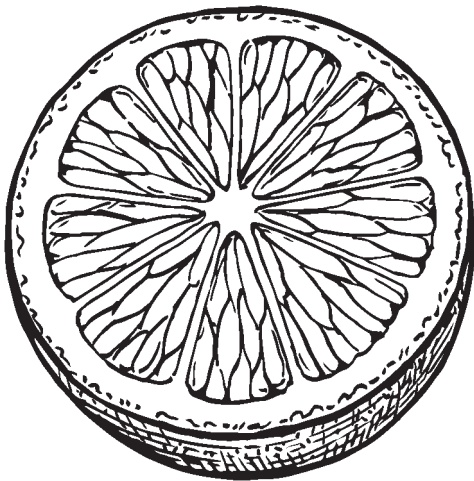
**Doing Good:**

- Invite a neighbor over for dinner.
- Take goodies to your neighbors and ask how you can pray for them .
- Go to the church's website and look for a place where you can serve... and then sign up.
- Write a personal note to (or call) someone you know is struggling and ask how you can help.
- Share the Gospel with someone this week!

**Scripture to Memorize:**

*Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*

*Matthew 5:16*

**LESSON 7****FAITHFULNESS**

*I will sing of the Lord's great love forever; with my mouth I will make Your faithfulness known through all generations. I will declare that Your love stands firm forever, that You established Your faithfulness in heaven itself.*

*Psalm 89:1-2*

**Opening Illustration:**

There are more than 200 geysers in Yellowstone National Park; but there is one that stands above the rest. This geyser is not the largest, and its waters don't reach the greatest height, but it is by far the most popular attraction. This geyser's popularity is due to one thing alone – its dependability. People will stand in long lines under a hot sun because according to a precise schedule it shoots a stream of boiling water more than 170 feet into the air. You can practically set a watch by it. That's why they call it Old Faithful. People are attracted to faithfulness.

**Creative Idea:**

- Ask if anyone in your group has been to Yellowstone National Park and seen Old Faithful. If so, allow him to describe the geyser and why it is such a popular attraction. You may even bring in a picture if you have been there or can find one online. Share that the geyser was given its name in 1870, and it is still called Old Faithful today.

**Review From Previous Week:**

- What aspect of the Fruit of the Spirit did we study last week?
- What are some things you learned about biblical goodness?
- How have you lived out the aspect of goodness in your life this past week?

**To Discuss:**

- What are some words you would use to describe someone who is faithful?
- Is it worthwhile to be faithful when so many people are not dependable? If so, why?

**Teaching Notes:**

- If you allow class members to share experience from the previous week, be sure to keep this short—allow just one or two to share at the most. Keep the study moving and don't spend too much lesson time recounting experiences. This

time can be valuable, but it can also allow one or two voices to monopolize the conversation if unchecked.

- In each section of this lesson, there will be several Scriptures provided for you. You might want to divide these up among your class, or you can go through them as a group as you have time. The discussion questions will be given at the end of each section, not after each passage. Because this week's lesson has so many passages, a visual aid is provided for you in certain parts of the lesson. As you read the verses and discuss them, you can make a list on a whiteboard of key points from each passage. This is optional. Just adjust the amount you cover based on the discussion level, size of your group, and the time you have. Here is the general outline of today's lesson:
  - 1) The faithfulness of God
  - 2) Faithfulness to God
  - 3) Being faithful in my:
    - a. Church
    - b. Relationships
    - c. Resources
  - 4) Closing

### **The Faithfulness of God:**

Faithfulness, unfortunately, is not something we see a lot of in the world today. Before we can even begin to look at faithfulness in our lives, we must understand its definition. The word faithfulness (Galatians 5:22) in the Greek is *pistis* [pe-stes]. It is the same word that is translated faith, which means, "conviction of the truth; belief." One use of this word in the Bible refers to trustworthiness. This is how *pistis* is used in Galatians 5:22. It is used to describe the character of one who can be relied on; fidelity.

As with all of the fruit of the Spirit, God is the One who most clearly demonstrates this fruit. There is none more faithful than Him. God can be trusted at all times, despite how things may feel or appear to us. His faithfulness is not dependent on our faith or our works. He is faithful to His Word, and to His people.

### **Read the Scripture:**

*The word of the Lord is right and true; He is faithful in all He does.*

*Psalm 33:4*

*But You, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.*

*Psalm 86:15*

*The works of His hands are faithful and just; all His precepts are trustworthy.*

*Psalm 111:7*

*If we are faithless, He will remain faithful, for He cannot disown Himself.*

*2 Timothy 2:13*

*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

*1 John 1:9*

### **To Discuss:**

- What are the ways that these verses describe God's faithfulness? (Make a list)
- Based on these verses, is God's faithfulness dependent on anyone or anything else?
- What are some ways that God proves His faithfulness every day?
- Now, look at the list you made. Do you see any characteristics of faithfulness that should also be evident in a believer's life? Discuss these.

### **Visual Aid:**

God's Faithfulness:

- His Word is right and true
- In all He does
- Abounding
- Evident in the works of His hands
- All precepts (commands) are trustworthy
- Not dependent on our faith in Him
- Forgiving

### **Faithfulness to God:**

We could go on about the faithfulness of God. Scripture says that we have a God Who can be trusted no matter what. Most of us know this in our heads, and would even confess our belief in God... but do our lives demonstrate trust in Him daily? How many people trust Christ with their eternity, but fail to remain faithful to Him in the details of life? Obedience and faith go together. Obedience demonstrates faith. Disobedience demonstrates a lack of faith.

In this section of the lesson, we are going to see what Scripture has to say about a believer's faithfulness to God. Faith in God, and faithfulness to Him, is the foundation of a believer's life. We cannot live a life that pleases God without faith. Let's see how faith in God and faithfulness to God go together.

### **Read the Scripture:**

*So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted\* with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.*

1 Corinthians 4:1-2

\*Note, the word “entrusted” in this passage is also interpreted as steward, and it means: the manager of a household or of one’s affairs.

*Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs – he wants to please his commanding officer. Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor’s crown unless he competes according to the rules. The working farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops.*

2 Timothy 2:3-6

*You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.*

James 4:4

### **To Discuss:**

- Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-2 again and discuss the meaning of this verse.
- What does it mean to be a steward of the secrets of God?
- Do you think most believers see themselves this way? Why?
- What examples does Paul give in 2 Timothy 2 of being faithful? Discuss how these examples display faithfulness.
- Discuss how faithfulness to God affects our relationship to the things of the world.
- What do you think it means to be a “friend of the world?”

### **Visual Aid:**

Faithfulness to God:

- As servants
- As stewards (managers) of His secrets
- As a good soldier
- As a winning athlete
- As a hardworking farmer
- As a friend

### **Being Filled with the Spirit:**

Faithfulness to God will result in faithfulness in other areas of our lives. Our faithfulness in these areas, however, must be rooted in our faithfulness to God.

Why? Because like God’s, our faithfulness should not depend on feelings, circumstances, or the behavior of other people. When our focus is faithfulness to God, it puts our lives into perspective.

This type of faithfulness is not possible without God’s presence and power—that is why Paul listed it as the fruit of God’s Spirit. In this last section of the lesson, we will see how faithfulness to God overflows into other areas of our lives. How is faithfulness displayed practically through us each day?

### **In My Church:**

We begin here because this is perhaps the most important way that a believer proves His faithfulness to God. There seems to be the attitude today that membership, fellowship and service in a local Body of believers is optional. This is not what Scripture teaches. If we cannot be faithful to one another, where our hearts are unified by God’s Spirit, how can we be faithful anywhere else? God expects His people to know, love, encourage, serve and support one another.

### **Read the Scripture:**

*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.*

John 13:34-35

*Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!”*

1 Corinthians 12:12-21

*There should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is*



honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the Body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.  
1 Corinthians 12:25-27

From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.  
Ephesians 4:16

### To Discuss:

- Discuss what these verses say about the Body of Christ.
- What do you think it means to be faithful to the Body of Christ?
- Where does local church involvement fit into faithfulness?
- Based on Ephesians 4:16, how does the Body build up in love?
- The phrase, “as each part does its work” literally means, “as each and every one does its assignment or destiny.” What does this teach us about individual involvement and service in the church?
- Is attendance enough, based on these verses? Why or why not?
- What will be the result of each part doing its work?
- Why is it crucial for the Body of Christ to “grow and build itself up in love?”
- What affect will this type of growth have on those outside the Body?

### In My Relationships:

The second area of faithfulness we will discuss is faithfulness in our relationships.

### Read the Scripture:

Each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise—“so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free. And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their

Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

Ephesians 5:33-6:9

### To Discuss:

- Using this passage, discuss faithfulness in each of these relationships:
  - Husband/wife
  - Parent/child
  - Employee to employer
  - Employer to employee
- Why is it sometimes so hard to remain faithful in these relationships?
- How does faithfulness to God (discussed previously) affect faithfulness to people, especially difficult people?
- How does your faithfulness in relationships display the character of God?

### With My Resources:

When we think of the word resources, many of us think only of money. When it comes to faithfulness with the resources God has entrusted to us, we want to think way beyond just money...although money is a resource with which we must be faithful.

Our resources are everything that God has granted to us by His grace. Our job, home, money, property, cars, food, computers, education, position, possessions, the list goes on and on. If you take a moment and close your eyes and think of everything you own, down to the last pair of socks and shoes, these are your resources. Every good thing we receive is from God. Faithfulness to God means honoring Him with the resources He has given to us. He gives to His people not only to meet our needs, but so that we can be a blessing to others and make His glory known throughout the earth.

### Read the Scripture:

No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

Luke 16:13

For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him.

Colossians 1:16

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that

*you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Jesus you are serving.*  
Colossians 3:23-24

**To Discuss:**

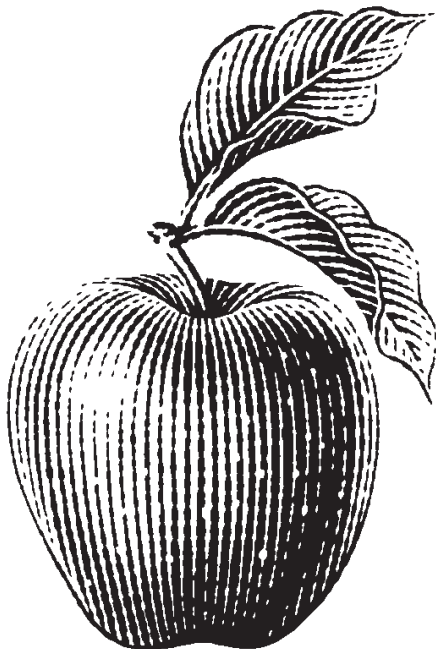
- Do you think it is possible to serve both God and money? Why or why not?
- According to Colossians 1:16, for Whom were all things created?
- If this is true, how should we view our resources?
- Based on Colossians 3:23-24, how are we to approach everything we do? Practically, what does this mean?
- What are some ways that we can be faithful with the resources God has given to us individually and as a church?

**Conclusion:**

*I will sing of the Lord's great love forever; with my mouth I will make Your faithfulness known through all generations. I will declare that Your love stands firm forever, that You established Your faithfulness in heaven itself.*

*Psalms 89:1-2*

How do we make God's faithfulness known? By being faithful to God in the Church, in our relationships, and with our resources. Before you dismiss, take a few minutes to break into smaller groups and discuss how you can personally be faithful in each of these areas. Share areas of struggle. Pray for one another before you leave.



**LESSON 8**  
**GENTLENESS**

*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.*  
Philippians 2:3

**Opening Illustration:**

World War II General Douglas MacArthur wrote this prayer for his son. He prayed:

“Build me a son, O Lord, who will be strong enough to know when he is weak, and brave enough to face himself when he is afraid. One who will be proud and unbending in honest defeat, and humble and gentle in victory.

“Build me a son whose wishes will not take the place of deeds—a son who will know Thee, who is the foundation stone of knowledge. Lead him, I pray, not in the path of ease and comfort, but under the stress and spur of difficulties and challenge.

“Here let him learn to stand up to the storm. Here let him learn compassion for those who fail. Build me a son whose heart will be clear, whose goal will be high, a son who will master himself before he seeks to master other men, one who will reach into the future, yet never forget the past.

“And after all these things are his, add, I pray, enough of a sense of humor so that he may always be serious but never take himself too seriously. Give him humility so that he may always remember the simplicity of true greatness, and an open mind of true wisdom, and the meekness of true strength. Then I, his father, will dare to whisper, ‘I have not lived in vain.’”

**Review From Previous Week:**

- What aspect of the Fruit of the Spirit did we study last week?
- What are some things you learned about biblical faithfulness?
- How have you lived out the aspect of faithfulness in your life this past week?

**To Discuss:**

- Another word for gentleness is meekness. What do you think it means to be meek?
- Is there a difference in being meek and being weak? If so, discuss the difference.

## Teaching Notes:

- If you allow class members to share experience from the previous week, be sure to keep this short—allow just one or two to share at the most. Keep the study moving and don't spend too much lesson time recounting experiences. This time can be valuable, but it can also allow one or two voices to monopolize the conversation if unchecked.
- Here's a broad outline for this week's lesson. The bulk of the lesson centers on point #3—how we see ourselves. Gentleness must come from within. Seeing ourselves as God sees us will humble us... and humility results in gentleness. Remember, you don't have to cover every Scripture or discussion question provided. Adjust the amount you cover based on the discussion level, size of your group, and the time you have.
  - 1) What is Gentleness?
  - 2) Plastic Fruit
  - 3) Gentleness from Within: We are:
    - a. The created, not the Creator
    - b. Sinners who have been saved
    - c. Incapable of good apart from God
    - d. Saved for a purpose
  - 4) Closing

## What Is Gentleness?

In order to define gentleness, we must go back once again to our key text for this series, Galatians 5:22-23. The meaning of the word gentleness in this passage is: mildness of disposition, gentleness of spirit, meekness. The literal translation of gentleness is meekness. That is how it is written in the King James Version of the Bible. For our purposes today, we will be using meekness and gentleness interchangeably.

Meekness is the opposite of self-seeking. It does not mean that a person is weak. In fact, it is power under control. In the two passages listed below, we are going to see the difference in being self-seeking, and in being gentle.

## Read the Scripture:

*An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest. Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside Him. Then He said to them, "Whoever welcomes this little child in My Name welcomes Me; and whoever welcomes Me welcomes the One who sent Me. For he who is least among you all—he is the greatest."*

*Luke 9:46-48*

*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!*

*Philippians 2:5-8*

## To Discuss:

- What were the disciples arguing about in Luke 9:46-48?
- What does this argument reveal about their hearts?
- How did Jesus address their pride?
- Why do you think Jesus used a child in His example?
- What does this example teach you about the character of God?
- How does Philippians 2 describe Christ's attitude?
- How does Christ's incarnation illustrate meekness?
- How can we as believers humble ourselves?

## Plastic Fruit

Have you ever done it? You see a beautiful bowl of fruit and you wonder... is that real fruit? You can't tell from looking at it. It looks so good it must be fake. So eventually you break down and touch it to find out.

There is some plastic fruit out there disguising itself as meekness. It can take on several different forms. One of the most dangerous forms it takes, and unfortunately quite common today, is a refusal to stand for anything. This false meekness avoids trouble at the cost of allowing even greater trouble to develop. Being meek does not mean that you will never take a stand for what is right. It does mean that you will humbly consider what is best for others and firmly take a stand when need be.

In the current culture the Church has gotten the real fruit of meekness and its counterfeit confused. In an attempt to "not offend" anyone, many so-called Christians will tolerate almost anything and refuse to stand firmly on God's Word. This refusal does not make one meek; it makes him a coward. We must boldly live out God's truth... and we must do it with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

## Read the Scripture:

*Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have*

*renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the Word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.*  
2 Corinthians 4:1-2

Note: The word renounced in this passage means: speak out; declare; forbid; give up

### **To Discuss:**

- How does meekness differ from tolerance?
- How is the Word of God distorted, even among believers, today?
- What has been the effect of this distortion of truth?
- How can we gently “set forth the truth of God plainly”?

### **Gentleness From Within:**

The fruit of gentleness must come from within. It will only flow from a humble heart. Pride and meekness cannot exist together. So, how do our hearts become humble so that gentleness will spring forth? Meekness will come when we see ourselves the way God sees us. We will spend the rest of the lesson on this subject.

How does God see His children? The answer to this question is crucial to living the life that God intends for every believer. When we see ourselves the way God does, meekness will follow. This estimate of ourselves must come from Scripture.

### **We are the Created, Not the Creator:**

Understanding this truth guards against self-centeredness and pride. The world does not revolve around our wants and needs. Life is not all about us. God created us for His glory, purposes and pleasure. We exist to serve Him, not the other way around.

### **Read the Scripture:**

*Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker, to him who is but a potsherd [vessel] among the potsherds [vessels] on the ground. Does the clay say to the potter, “What are you making?” Does your work say, “He has no hands?” Woe to him who says to his father, “What have you begotten?” Or to his mother, “What have you brought to birth?” This is what the LORD says—the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker: “Concerning things to come, do you question Me about My children, or give Me orders about the work of My hands? It is I who made the earth and created mankind upon it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshaled their starry hosts.”*  
Isaiah 45:9-12

*Bring My sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth—everyone who is called by My Name, whom I created for My glory, whom I formed and made.*  
Isaiah 43:6b-7

*He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by Him and for Him.*  
Colossians 1:15-16

### **To Discuss:**

- What do these passages teach about God?
- What do they teach about man?
- What is the purpose of all created things?
- Does this include mankind? Why or why not?
- How would understanding the truths in these passages produce meekness in your life?

### **We Are Sinners Who Have Been Saved:**

Before Christ saves us, we are dead in our trespasses and sins. We are lost and without hope, alienated from God and His covenant. But God, in His mercy, has chosen to save us by grace, through faith. This moves us from death to life, from alien to son, from enemy to friend. Our position through grace is an exalted one, unless we let it go to our heads. Grace teaches us gentleness if we remember what we really deserve.

### **Read the Scripture:**

*Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.*  
Ephesians 2:12-13

*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.*  
Ephesians 2:1-5

**To Discuss:**

- How do these verses describe us before salvation?
- What is our position in Christ?
- Should this new position cause pride? Why or why not?
- How does understanding these passages bring meekness?

We Are Incapable of Good Apart From God: Anyone can meet the world's definition of "good." Often as Christians, we settle for this level of "goodness" in our lives and feel proud that we have attained it. But the goodness that God requires is something different entirely; and it is humbling to realize how incapable we are of achieving it.

**Read the Scripture:**

*There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.*

*Romans 3:10-12*

*Just as He who has called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."*

*1 Peter 1:15-16*

*I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing.*

*John 15:5*

**To Discuss:**

- According to the passage in 1 Peter 1, what is God's standard of goodness?
- What do these passages teach us about our ability to meet that standard?
- How does understanding this produce meekness in our lives?

**We Are Saved for a Purpose:**

As we saw above, God created us for His glory. Our sin separated us from God. When God saves us, we are once again able to bring glory to Him. Most of us think that God saved us because He loves us. While it is absolutely true that God loves us, this is not the sole reason He saves us. If so, would He not save everyone, since He loves everyone? God saves us for His purposes, and for His pleasure. He saves us for His glory...and what could be more loving than for Him to give us Himself?

**Read the Scripture:**

*You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in My Name.*

*John 15:16*

*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

*Matthew 28:19-20*

*Then the King will say to those on His right, "Come, you who are blessed by My Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited Me in, I needed clothes and you clothed Me, I was sick and you looked after Me, I was in prison and you came to visit Me." Then the righteous will answer Him, "Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to drink? When did we see You a stranger and invite You in, or needing clothes and clothe You? When did we see You sick or in prison and go to visit You?" The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me."*

*Matthew 25:34-40*

*Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.*

*James 1:27*

**To Discuss:**

- Based on these passages, what is God's purpose for the lives of those He has redeemed?
- Do you think most believers view their lives and their salvation this way? Discuss your answer.
- How does understanding the purpose of our salvation lead to meekness?
- As believers, what does gentleness look like in our lives?
- How does it change the way we treat others?

**Closing:**

It is true that God created and saves mankind for His own glory and purposes. It is also true, however, that all people are precious and valued in His sight. Every life He creates is done so intricately and purposefully.



Psalm 139 says He knits each life together in its mother's womb... each is fearfully and wonderfully made. God values human life above all else that He has created.

**Read the Scripture:**

*Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?*

*Matthew 6:26*

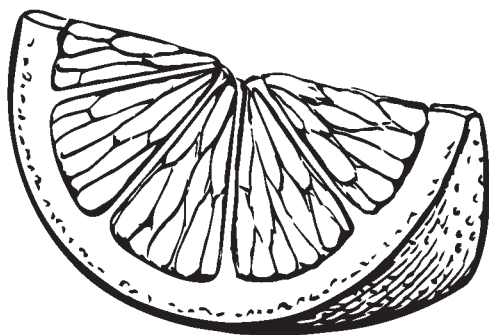
*And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?*

*Matthew 6:28-30*

If you were given a one-of-a-kind fragile piece of art that was worth millions of dollars and was irreplaceable, would you not handle it with great care and gentleness? Human life is so much more valuable and precious. How valuable, you ask? It can only be valued by the price tag God placed on it. The price God paid was His only Son. We must remember this the next time we are tempted to treat someone roughly.

We must remember what God has done for us, and why He has done it. It is our honor and privilege to serve Him by loving others. When we truly believe this, it will produce meekness in our lives. It will change the way we live. And most importantly, it will show the world the greatness of our God.

Close your time together in praise to God. Allow the group to share their thankfulness to God for who He is in their lives. When we worship God for who He is, our hearts are humbled in gratitude.



## LESSON 9

# SELF-CONTROL

*Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control.*

*Proverbs 25:28*

**Review From Previous Week:**

- What aspect of the Fruit of the Spirit did we study last week?
- What are some things you learned about biblical gentleness?
- How have you lived out the aspect of gentleness in your life this past week?

**Opening Illustration:**

We live in a society saturated with self. Below is a list of book titles from religious and secular publishers that have sold like hotcakes:

*Love Yourself*

*The Art of Learning to Love Yourself*

*Celebrate Yourself*

*You're Something Special*

*Your Best Life Now*

*Self-Esteem: You're Better Than You Think*

*Learning the Language of Self-Affirmation*

*Self-Esteem: The New Reformation*

Over the past couple of decades, psychiatrists and psychoanalysts have promoted a movement known as "selfism," which elevates self to the level of god and seeks to avoid anything that would lower one's self-esteem. Selfism has one commandment: "I am the lord my god; I shall not have strange gods before me."

**To Discuss:**

- What is society's current view on self-esteem?
- How does this view compare with a biblical view of self?
- Is it wrong to love oneself? Why or why not?

**Teaching Notes:**

- If you allow class members to share experience from the previous week, be sure to keep this short—allow just one or two to share at the most. Keep the study moving and don't spend too much lesson time recounting experiences. This time can be valuable, but it can also allow one or two voices to monopolize the conversation if unchecked.
- Below is the outline for this week's lesson. It's important as you facilitate the discussion this

week that you remind the group that the Bible does not teach self-hatred or a “doormat” mentality. The key is a Christ-centered life, not a self-centered life. Our goal is to see ourselves the way God sees us.

- 1) What is Self-Control?
- 2) The Uncontrolled Body
- 3) The Uncontrolled Spirit
- 4) The Slow Fade
- 5) It’s All Good
- 6) Being Filled with the Spirit

### **What is Self-Control?**

Do you think it is a coincidence that Paul listed self-control last in Galatians 5:22-23? It is impossible to consistently have love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and gentleness without the fruit of self-control. It is not easy to bear the fruit of the Spirit. It requires a deep abiding relationship with Christ. It requires looking to the needs of others ahead of our own. It requires... well, self-control.

The funny thing about self-control is that to practice it, we must actually choose to give up control. Why? Because only the Holy Spirit’s power can control the sinful nature that is part of “self.” As a believer, we now have within us the power to live a life that bears fruit for God and glorifies His Name. We also have within us a sinful nature that sets itself against God’s Spirit and fights for control of our bodies. Self-control is yielding control to God’s Spirit within us so that His work is done in and through us each and every day.

Once again, let’s go back to our key text for this series, Galatians 5:22-23.

### **Read the Scripture:**

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

*Galatians 5:22-23*

The meaning of “self-control” in this passage is: the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions. The original translation (King James Version) uses the word “temperance.” From the Garden of Eden until now, human beings have never been good at mastering our desires and passions on our own. When left to our own devices, sin got so bad that God sent a flood to destroy all living things, except for one family. The human race doesn’t have a great track record with self-control.

Even as believers, most of us struggle daily with self-control. Many become so discouraged that they cannot

seem to move past one besetting sin that seems to master their lives. We think, “Why can’t I just control myself?” Maybe it’s over-spending, losing your temper, over-eating, impure thoughts or gossiping. Whatever “it” is, self-control seems like an oasis in a desert. Does it really exist? Is it really possible to live a consistently disciplined life? If so, how?

### **To Discuss:**

- What do you think it means to master your desires and passions?
- Are desires and passions a bad thing? Why or why not?
- Why do desires need to be mastered if they aren’t bad?
- Why do you think it is so hard to exercise self-control?

### **The Uncontrolled Body**

There are two main facets of self-control that we are going to study in this lesson. The first is control of the body. There are several passages included. You might want to divide your class into smaller groups and let each group read and discuss a passage. Then come together and allow each group to share what they learned. If you choose this option, give the class some guidelines for discussing the passages.

### **Read the Scripture:**

*It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God.*

*1 Thessalonians 4:3-5*

*In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to Him as instruments of righteousness.*

*Romans 6:11-13*

*Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, Who is in you, Whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body.*

*1 Corinthians 6:19-20*

*I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as*

*always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*  
Philippians 1:20-21

### **To Discuss:**

- What do these passages teach about control of the body?

In Romans 6 Paul contrasts offering the body to sin and to righteousness. Discuss the term “instruments of wickedness” and “instruments of righteousness.”

- How do you offer yourself to sin?
- How do you offer yourself to God for righteousness? Is this a one-time offering?
- What is the practical implication of your body not being your own?
- Why do you think Paul uses the phrase your body is a “temple of the Holy Spirit?” Does God literally dwell within a believer? If so, what are the implications?

### **The Uncontrolled Spirit:**

The other area of self-control that we are going to discuss is control of the spirit. Another way to say this would be control of all that is internal... emotions, desires, thoughts, instincts, etc. Once again, there are several passages included so you may choose to divide up your class again for discussion.

### **Read the Scripture:**

*Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what the nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of the sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.*

Romans 8:5-8

*Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

Romans 13:14

*So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.*

Galatians 5:16-17

*You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Ephesians 4:22-24

### **To Discuss:**

- What is the conflict Paul describes in these passages?
- What does it mean to “live according to the sinful nature?”
- What does it mean to “live in accordance with the Spirit?”
- What is the result of a mind controlled by the Spirit?
- How do you practically “clothe yourself” with Christ like Romans 13:14 says?
- How does self-control relate to the conflict between the sinful nature and the Spirit?

### **The Slow Fade:**

The group Casting Crowns released a song a few years ago called “Slow Fade.” The lyrics are, “It’s a slow fade, when black and white are turned to gray; and thoughts invade, choices are made. A price will be paid when you give yourself away. People never crumble in a day. It’s a slow fade.” Self-control is our protection against the slow fade. Most of the time, if we find ourselves in a mess, we can look back and see tiny compromises and choices along the way that led to where we end up. Self-control is essential in the small, daily choices we make each day, because the journey into sin is many times gradual. Let’s look at an example:

### **Read the Scripture:**

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” “You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.*

Genesis 3:1-6

**To Discuss:**

- Discuss the progression of Eve’s decision to disobey God.
- At what point do you think her actions became sin?
- What tactics did the serpent use to lure her?
- Do you think Eve intended to eat the fruit when she first began her conversation with the serpent? Why or why not?
- Looking at the progression of her actions, what choices along the way could she have made differently?
- How does this example relate to self-control?

**It’s All Good:**

Up to this point we have been discussing self-control as it relates to sin. Now, we need to look at the other side of self-control. As believers, holiness isn’t only about what we don’t do... it’s about what we do. As followers of Christ, there will be many times that we exercise self-control in order to do what is best. “Good” can be our worst enemy. The Apostle Paul put it this way:

**Read the Scripture:**

*Everything is permissible—but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible—but not everything is constructive.*

*1 Corinthians 10:23*

Each day, we are faced with hundreds of decisions that require self-control. Not all of them involve the choice to sin. If our aim is to glorify Christ and live a life that shows others the love of Christ, we will likely be faced with the choice to give up things that might be permissible in order to benefit others.

One such example is how we spend the money God has entrusted to us. Maybe we can “afford” a certain house, car, wardrobe, etc. However, when faced with the needs of others who don’t even have their basic needs met, self-control enables us to choose to buy a lesser house, car, etc. in order to have money to share with others. Another example is how we manage our time. There is pressure on parents today to have their children in many activities. It takes self-control to limit the number of outside activities we allow so that our families can have time together in the home. It’s not that activities are sinful; but family time is much more important. We bypass the good for the best. In self-control we give up what is permissible in order to gain what is beneficial.

**To Discuss:**

- Discuss other examples of using self-control in permissible vs. beneficial choices.
- Why do you think it is so hard to bypass the good for the best?

**Being Filled with the Spirit:**

One of the keys to self-control is the mind. Thoughts left unchecked are dangerous. Self-control begins in the mind. What do we allow into our eyes and ears? What we see and hear enters the mind. Sometimes self-control is simply walking away from a conversation, or turning the TV or radio off. Sometimes it’s not going back for a second helping, or getting out of bed when you want to hit snooze again. Whatever the choice, our mindset is important.

**Read the Scripture:**

*Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.*

*Philippians 4:8*

*We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

*2 Corinthians 10:5*

**To Discuss:**

- How does the mind affect self-control?
- Based on Philippians 4:8, what types of thoughts should fill our minds?
- Can you think of anything that fits that criteria?
- What do you think it means to “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ?”
- What are some practical ways to use self-control to guard your mind and heart?

**Closing:**

*Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control.*

*Proverbs 25:28*

Like a wall around a city, the fruit of self-control is a guard for the heart and the mind. Without it, we are left vulnerable and unprotected against sin.

Allow a time for individual reflection. Is there an area of your life that is being left unprotected because of a lack of self-control?

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