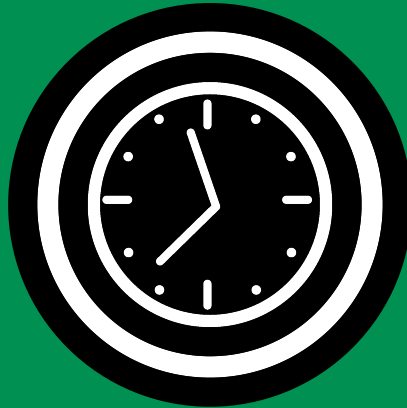
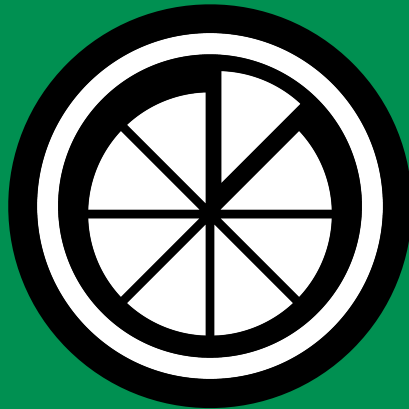


WHAT TO BELIEVE

A Student's Guide to the Fruit of the Spirit



by
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SESSIONS

- The Role of the Holy Spirit
 - Spirit vs. Flesh
 - Love
 - Joy
 - Peace
 - Patience
 - Kindness
 - Goodness
 - Faithfulness
 - Gentleness
 - Self-Control
- Now What: Thankfulness.

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Before you read

Ask yourself this question: *What does the holy Spirit do?*

The Holy Spirit in the Trinity

The doctrine of the Trinity is the single most important teaching that separates Christianity from any other religion. How God can be three distinct persons of Father, Son, and Spirit, yet still be one is a mystery that we cannot fully comprehend. However, just because we can't know how something works doesn't mean that it doesn't work. The Spirit is God.

For Believers, the Spirit "dwells" within us and "seals" us for the day of Redemption, guarding our salvation. At salvation, the Spirit regenerates us, which is what we mean by our being "born again." The Holy Spirit makes us new creations in Christ. Everything that Christ accomplished is now within the Believer- victory over Sin, Death, Hell, and the Devil. The Spirit also enables us to have faith, or loyalty to and trust in God. So, we can pray specifically to the Spirit with regards to his activity in the Believer's life.

The Four C's

Perhaps the easiest way to remember and teach about what the Holy Spirit does is to color this simple alliterative tool.

Comforter: the Spirit comforts Believers in times of distress and persecution, much like how a mother comforts her child

Counselor: since the Spirit gives us "the mind of Christ," we think differently than the rest of the world (or at least we should). This means that our conscience is governed by God rather than ourselves. The Spirit guides and directs us for how to listen to God, read Scripture, deal with our Neighbors, and make tough choices.

Convictor: being a Christian doesn't mean we won't sin or that we will be free from temptation. However, the Holy Spirit convicts us when we sin so that we can confess and repent to God or our Neighbor when we have wronged them, according to God's standards. This conviction is not the same as guilt and shame - conviction involves hope, as the Spirit helps us know that we are forgivable, loved, and that God desires us to be one with Him in every aspect of our lives.

Conformer: since sin has ruined every aspect of our being, our "new birth" by the Spirit means that we have to learn to live life all over again. This process is called sanctification and it is how we are made more like Christ in our redeemed humanity. The Spirit re-makes us like God intended. We are being made like God in holiness and character while also being made like true Humanity in community with our Neighbors.

What About Non-Believers?

Everything above is made available to everyone, but it only happens within the life of the Believer since they have repented and confessed Jesus is God. However, the Holy Spirit is wooing and drawing everyone to Christ, even those who reject God are being convicted of sin and being pointed to Christ. Nevertheless, God doesn't make anyone freely chose him: that's not freedom. Every individual is responsible for how they respond to the Spirit activity in their life, hopefully they will come to repent of their sins and confess Jesus as God.

Questions for Reflection:

1. Why is it important that we recognize the Spirit as God?
2. Why should we know the activity of the Spirit in both the Believer and the un-Believer's lives?
3. How is the Holy Spirit making you more like God and true Humanity?

Scripturer references:

John 3, 14-16, 1 Corinthians 2, 12, Ephesians 1, Titus 3:5

SPIRIT VS. FLESH

Read the following passage and write down your initial thoughts:

“16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.” Galatians 5:16-26

What is “Flesh?”

Flesh does not always mean skin. In Paul’s letters, flesh can mean one of three things:

1. The Human Body - the human body is not inherently sinful. We should be careful not to think that only our bodies are corrupted by sin and not our souls: both need to be redeemed. What we do with our bodies matter to God

2. Mankind - “all flesh” is phrase that pops up in Scripture to refer to Humanity as a whole. This emphasizes Humanity’s unique standing in Creation.

3. Fallen Human Nature - sin corrupt everything. Fo us, sin corrupts both soul *and* flesh. This blend of soul and body is what we call human nature, and due to sin, both our soul’s and bodies are corrupted. In this sense, flesh means our rebellion, antagonism, and hatred of God prior to salvation. This *flesh* can be redeemed though Christ.

Questions for Reflection:

1. Why does it matter which meaning of “flesh” Paul is using in his letters?
2. What “works of the flesh” are acceptable in our world today?
3. What “works of the flesh” do you see in your life? (This may be a quiet, introspective question)
4. How are the Fruit of the Spirit directly opposed to the “works of the flesh”?

Before you read

Ask yourself this question: *What is love? What does love look like?*

Love in Hebrew & Greek

Hebrew: Ahavah: general affection, the idea is “breathing for another” or “giving devotion and time”; hesed - intentional affection; graham - brotherly affection.

Greek: Agape: selfless (sacrificial) affection, also called charity; Philia: brotherly or neighborly affection; Storge: affection between parent and child; Eros: romantic affection. Each of these four loves is illustrated in Scripture as something good and Godly.

Love is...

...preference. This may seem odd at first, but when you think about it, it makes a lot of sense. To love someone means that you prefer them to others. This love is expressed in treating them how you want to be treated. For the Christian, though, we don't prefer for our neighbor what we prefer for ourselves only: we prefer for our neighbor what God prefers for our neighbor. This means we prefer God first, our neighbor second, and ourselves third with God as the standard. However, to love all three at once is made possible by the Presence of the Holy Spirit in the Christian's life.

Why is God the Standard of Love?

God is a Neighborhood within himself of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Scripture teaches us that God is Love. This means that God is pure preference for his Neighbor within Himself. So, God's pure preference for His Neighbor is not limited to Himself: this is most clearly seen in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for our sins. Creation is the Neighborhood, and Humanity is God's other Neighbor. God prefers an eternity with his Neighbors than without it. Since God is love, God cannot but love, even in His justice and holy wrath. God cannot love you anymore than He does right now and He refuses to love you any less, ever.

What Does Love Look Like in the Christian Life?

Jesus taught in the New Testament that all the Law and Prophets in the Old Testament were based on two principles: to love God and to love our Neighbor.

To prefer God means that we agree with what He says about everything, even if it's hard; that we agree with what He does, even if it's hard; and we do what He says, even if it's hard. In other words, we practice our preference for God through obedience.

To prefer our Neighbor means to serve them. Most acts of service are inconvenient because we live busy lives and have many responsibilities. However, we must ask ourselves “How would I prefer to be treated” and then do that. And, how we would prefer to be treated is based on God's treatment of us: God is the standard.

But who is our Neighbor? Well, everyone! Family members (spouses, parents, siblings, children, grandparents) are our primary Neighbors; our Church Family is second; our physical Neighbors are third; and coworkers/classmates are fourth. This is not in order of importance but immediacy. The point is that everyone is your Neighbor!

QUESTIONS for REFLECTION

1. Why is obedience to God harder than service to our Neighbor?
2. How can you better obey God? (Trick question!)
3. Why is it important to know God's preferences when think about how to treat our Neighbor?

Scripture References

Matthew 22:26-40, 1 John 4:7-21, Exodus 20, Leviticus 19:9-18, Luke 10:25-37, John 14:15.

Before you read

Ask yourself this question: *What is joy? What does joy look like?*

Joy in Hebrew & Greek

Hebrew: Simchah - gladness or mirth

Greek: chara - joy or gladness;

Both words imply that joy comes from something, and not from ourselves.

Joy is...

...gladness or mirth. However, we have to ask ourselves, “Where does my *joy* come from?” As one of the first Fruit of the Spirit, we see that this *joy* is not something we make happen but something we are now given and must help grow. So, what is the source of our joy? The easy answer is the Holy Spirit: and you’re not wrong! But we need to ask another question, “What does the Holy Spirit do that makes me *joyful*?”

The answer: the Holy Spirit makes us aware of God’s *grace*, or, his undeserved favor towards us. Apart from the presence Holy Spirit, the source of our joy could be anything: food, vide games, sports, movies, hobbies, anything. However, the Christian knows these things haven’t saved them from anything. Hobbies and such are not bad things but they can become idols when we believe they can fill us with pure *joy*, gladness or mirth.

Why is God the Standard of Joy?

It may sound odd to say that God is the source of his own *joy*, but he is. Since God is a Neighborhood within himself, God is aware of his own grace: God cannot but be gracious. However, this doesn’t mean he isn’t *just* or that he doesn’t have a *holy wrath*. In fact, we see the Father’s grace expressed towards us in the sacrifice and judgement of the Son incarnate on the cross. The Holy Spirit then makes clear to us that God is *pure joy*, in the same way that he is *pure love*.

What Does Joy Look Like in the Christian Life?

Joy is an interesting Fruit. For some, it is expressed in silent gratitude while others shout and sing, then others may celebrate with many individuals, whereas some may like solitude. Since our gladness is not based on good moments in our lives but on the Spirit enabled awareness of God’s grace towards us, Christians should live everyday reflecting on and thinking about how gracious God was, is, and will always be towards his Neighbors. For the Christian our source *joy* is the the Cross. We also must not forget that God’s grace will one day not be available: time will run out. The Christian lives in constant *joy*, not constant happiness - though there is nothing wrong with wanting to be happy. The goal for the Christian is to be *joyful* regardless of the moment. We can see where our *joy* comes from by how we respond to difficult moments, especially the ones we don’t like or want.

QUESTIONS for REFLECTION

1. Why does our source of *joy* matter?
2. How can God be *pure joy*?
3. How does the Cross show us the joy of God?
4. How do we practice *joy*?
5. Why can *pure joy* only come through the Holy Spirit?

Scripture References

Psalms 47:1, Proverbs 10:28, Ecclesiastes 9:7, Esther 8:17, John 16:22, Romans 15:13, Hebrews 12:2, 1 Peter 1:8-9.

Before you read

Ask yourself this question: *What is peace? What does peace look like?*

Peace in Hebrew & Greek

Hebrew: shalom - wholeness or complete in health in prosperity (joined together)

Greek: eiréné - wholeness or complete in health and prosperity (joined together), rest, or tranquility.

Peace is...

...wholeness, or joined together in whole. Think of a puzzle: when all the pieces are scattered and not where they belong, they are individual pieces but now a whole puzzle...yet. When the puzzle finally put together, all the individual peaces are at “peace” with one another. When nations or people are at war with one another, they are not “whole” or “joined together.” When things are “whole” or “joined together” they can be at “rest” and “complete.” We shouldn’t think of peace in terms of warfare but of unity and wholeness.

Why is God the Standard of Peace?

We have already seen that God is *pure love* and *pure joy*. He is also *pure peace*. God is never not whole or complete within Himself. Between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, there is perfect harmony and unity. Even at the Cross, where the Son incarnate was sacrificed on our behalf, there was still *peace* within the Triune Godhead. God’s *peace* as to what was happening at the Cross reflects the kind of *peace* we originally had with Him in the Garden of Eden: we were whole in God. However, due to our sin, we are no longer “whole.” However, God desires *peace* with his Neighbors, so He takes it upon himself to achieve *peace* between us and God. Our participation in His *peace* is our responsibility in rightly responding to his Spirit.

What Does Peace Look Like in the Christian Life?

Peace often feels lonely. There is so much conflict and tension in the world, and in the Church, that *peace* may seem impossible. Even the Bible warns us against *false peace* and those who try to convince us there is *pure peace* apart from God. We need to ask ourselves, “Am I whole?” and “If I am, how am I whole?” Because of the effects of sin in our lives, we need God’s *peace*. The same *peace* that occurs within God is now within us through the Spirit. So, *peace* is the reality of the Christian’s relationship with God: we are whole, or joined together. We live in *peace* with God by obeying his commands; we live in *peace* with our Neighbor by our treatment of them. It is possible for us to have *peace* with our Neighbor and our Neighbor to not have *peace* with us: our *peace* is not contingent on whether or not our Neighbor is at *peace* with us, but upon our *peace* with God.

Peace doesn’t mean there isn’t conflict: it means that even in conflict, we are with God and God is with us. This is what is meant when Scripture says “*peace* of God that surpasses all understanding will guard our hearts and minds in Christ” (Philippians 4:7). We do not create *peace*: we either accept it from God or try to create our own apart from God, who is the source of *peace*.

QUESTIONS for REFLECTION

1. How do we have *peace* with God?
2. Why does *peace* apart from God not truly last?
3. How do we have *peace* with our Neighbor when they don’t have *peace* with us?

Scripture References

Leviticus 26:6, Psalm 85:8, Isaiah 11:1-10, John 14:27, Romans, Colossians 3:15



PATIENCE

Before you read

Ask yourself this question: *What is patience? What does patience look like?*

Patience in Hebrew & Greek

Hebrew: savlanut - to suffer; erek af - “long suffering,” restraining justifiable anger; erek ruah - “slow in spirit”

Greek: hupomoné - endurance or steadfastness; makrothumia - long suffering without complaint.

Patience is...

...not what we think it means. For most of us, *patience* is just waiting, passing the time. However, in both the Hebrew and Greek, it means so much more. To be *patient* seems to have three aspects to it. First, acknowledgement of suffering; second, decision and determination to bear the suffering; and third, the will to not complain while you suffer. However, for the Fruit of the Spirit, only makrothumia is used. Patience therefore has a deeper meaning than we often think it does. *Tolerance* may be a good modern word.

Why is God the Standard of Patience?

God is *pure patience*. Scripture is littered with stories of God restraining His own justified wrath, not because God needs time to think clearly, but because of His love for his Neighbor. God’s anger is always justified, however, He is “slow to anger.” Why? Well, for our sake as well as for those who will live after us. God is *patient* with His righteous justice so that all would have ample time to repent of their sins and come to know Him as God. God’s *patience* is best depicted through the Son’s passion, that is the Easter story. The Son *tolerated* the lies, deception, injustice, malice, pain, and death from those whom He came to save, and He accomplished all this without complaining, self pity, or bitterness.

What Does Patience Look Like in the Christian Life?

Patience in the Christian life is not something achieved: it is something we have. Through the Spirit, God’s *pure patience* is now within our soul. We then have the responsibility to foster *patience* as we live. *Patience* is practiced. However, patience is also one of the few Fruit that also requires discernment. How long should we tolerate injustice done to us and our neighbor? How long should we wait to act? These are hard questions, especially in today’s world where suffering is seen as an evil to eliminate rather than a teacher to educate. Since we know that the Father has the final word on all matters, we *patiently* suffer in this lifetime through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, anticipating the Son’s imminent return.

QUESTIONS for REFLECTION

1. How do we have *patience* with God? How does God have *patience* with us?
2. Why do we not like suffering?
3. How does suffering help us witness?
4. How are *patience* and *joy* connected?
5. What is *patience* not?

Scripture References

Numbers 14:18, Psalm 103:8, Ecclesiastes 7:8-9, Lamentations 3:25-27, Nahum 1:3, Romans 5:3-4, 12:12, Ephesians 4:1-2, 1 Timothy 1:16, 2 Peter 3:9.



KINDNESS

Before you read

Ask yourself this question: *What is kindness? What does kindness look like?*

Kindness in Hebrew & Greek

Hebrew: chesed - kindness, beauty, deeds of devotion, doing favors to the lowly

Greek: chrēstotēs - moral goodness, integrity, uprightness

Kindness is...

... meeting real needs, in God's way, in his timing. To be *kind* means to treat others in an affectionate manner, as we would want to be treated. *Kindness* is both a state of the heart as well as the action that come from it. Another translation defines *kindness* as "tender concern." However, we don't get to determine kindness from our poor standards; we look to God. While *kindness* is a characteristic that is admired in some, others have called it a sign of weakness, or a feminine trait. This could not be further from the truth.

Why is God the Standard of Kindness?

God is *pure kindness*. God's kindness is show in two four distinct ways. First, in the Father's plan to save us from our sins. Second, in the Son's willingness to suffer and die in our place and as our sacrifice for our sins. Third in the Spirit's presence in our lives, enabling and empowering us to live holy lives. Finally, in God's agreement within himself to become the way and means that we are forgiven and reconciled to him. God cannot but be *kind*.

What Does Kindness Look Like in the Christian Life?

Kindness looks like helping those who are "lowly," or those often ignored or left outside the group. As Christians, we treat others as we would want to be treated, because our treatment of them points them to God. It is also the right thing to do. This type of *kindness* is only possible through the presence of the Holy Spirit in our soul. It is not *our kindness* that we feel and act with, but *God's kindness* in us for our Neighbor. True kindness takes courage, as it treats people as they aren't. This means, we have to look past how we see people, and consider how God sees them: his Neighbors. Then, we are free to feel and act kindly towards them, even if they think they are our enemy.

QUESTIONS for REFLECTION

1. How does God have *kindness* towards us?
2. Why do some people consider *kindness* to be a "weakness"?
3. How has God been *kind* to you?
4. How will you be *kind* to your Neighbor?
5. How can we be *kind* to people who are not *kind* to us?

Scripture References

Isaiah 63:7, Psalm 63:3, 69:16, Nehemiah 9:17, Luke 6:35, Galatians 6:10, Ephesians 2:1-10, 4:32, Colossians 3:12-13, Titus 3:4-6



GOODNESS

Before you read

Ask yourself this question: *What is goodness? What does goodness look like?*

Goodness in Hebrew & Greek

Hebrew: cub - goodness, good things, fairness

Greek: agathos - intrinsically good, good in nature, good whether it be seen to be so or not

Goodness is...

...virtue and holiness in action. As Scripture reminds us, apart from God, there is no 'good.' The word agathos is a rather generic term: this could be talking about anything *good*. *Good* is a moral term. As an adjective, it means that something is desirable or approved of. As a noun, it means moral virtue or moral uprightness. *Goodness* is a *good* thing. However, without a standard or source, *goodness* just becomes a matter of preference: one person can think something is good another think it is bad.

Why is God the Standard of Goodness?

God is *pure goodness*. God is the source and origin of 'good.' Apart from God, there is no good or goodness. This is because of God's character and nature: God **is good**: God never sins, never makes mistakes, and never does evil. This doesn't mean that God can't use evil for his or our good. It also doesn't mean that we will always like what God does or what God allows. However, the best example of God's goodness is the death of Christ. Since goodness is a virtue based in God's character, God makes himself our sacrifice for our sins. He becomes the punishment and the punished one, since we could not bear either punishment or being the punished one. God is *good* because God cannot be anything else. His character and nature do not change. God is the "most" moral because God is the origin and source of what is moral.

What Does Goodness Look Like in the Christian Life?

Goodness is God in us. Fallen humanity and non-Christians can do 'good things' only because they are made in God's image, even if that image, like a broken mirror, is shattered. The Spirit within our souls makes us good like God, even though we may struggle or wrestle to live in it. God's *goodness* in us looks like loving God with our whole being and loving our Neighbor as ourselves. Why? Because these are the greatest '*good*' that only God's *goodness* in us enables us to love God and our Neighbor. The order is important: while we love both God and our Neighbor, it is not our Neighbor's *goodness* that enables us to love God. Love of God comes first, but not separate from love of Neighbor.

QUESTIONS for REFLECTION

1. How does God have *goodness* towards us?
2. Why is God the source of *goodness*?
3. What do you mean when you call something or someone good?
4. How do we "show" God's *goodness* to others?

Scripture References

Genesis 1, Psalm 25:8, 31:19, 68:10, Jeremiah 33:11, Lamentations 3:22-26, Nahum 1:7, Matthew 5:16, 7:11, Romans 8:26-30, James 1:17, 2 Peter 3:9



FAITHFULNESS

Before you read

Ask yourself this question: *What is faithfulness? What does faithfulness look like?*

Faithfulness in Hebrew & Greek

Hebrew: emunah - faith, faithfulness, fidelity, conviction that transcends reason

Greek: pistis - faith, trust, belief, fidelity, loyalty, to be persuaded

Faithfulness is...

... more than *trust* and *belief*, although it does include these words. *Faith* has more to do with what we would call *loyalty* or *fidelity*. *Fidelity* means trust to a person, cause, or belief demonstrated by continued commitment. To have "*faith*" in something means to be confident in that the person, cause, or belief is what it presents itself as. We can have faith that a liar will lie just like we have faith that God will be God.

Why is God the Standard of Faithfulness?

God is *pure faithfulness*. This is seen most clearly in the life of Jesus, the Son incarnate. The Son was *faithful* to the Father: does this mean that Jesus *believed* in God? No, this means that the Son was *loyal* to the Father just as the Spirit is *loyal* to the Son and the Father, and they to the Spirit. God is always *faithful* to himself: no person in the Trinity will ever go against the others because they are one. So, the Son both *knew* and *trusted* in the Father's and the Spirit's *faithfulness*, just as the the Father and the Spirit trusted in the Son's *faithfulness*.

In the Bible, God extends His *faithfulness* to His Neighbors through covenants. Covenants are agreements between two parties that have a common goal and agree to work together to reach that goal. Covenants are the means by which God establishes his plan of redemption for His Neighbors and the World. He invites us to partner with Him in His redemptive works.

What Does Faithfulness Look Like in the Christian Life?

Faithfulness is trusting that God is who he says He is and that He will do what He says He will do. The Christian life is one of a covenantal relationship with God, where we come to agree with how God sees things and what He will do about what He sees. This means, we put our faith in God's *faithfulness* because God has proven that He is faithful to Himself and His Neighbors through Jesus Christ.

So, we live as God commands us to in the Covenants because God's commands are for our good and His glory. *Faithfulness* looks like repentance, confession, forgiveness, discipleship, prayer, evangelism, and good works. As Christians, all of God's Covenants in the Old Testament are fulfilled and made better in the New Covenant of salvation through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. Jesus perfectly upholds our end of the Covenant since we cannot do this on our own.

QUESTIONS for REFLECTION

1. How does God have *faithfulness* towards us?
2. In what ways are we *unfaithful* to God?
3. Why does Jesus have to be the standard of *faithfulness*?
4. What does *faithfulness* look like in your life?

Scripture References

Genesis 1-3, 8:20-9:17, 12, 15, 17, Exodus 19-24, 2 Samuel 7, Psalm 72, 89, 132, Jeremiah 31:31-34, Ezekiel 36:22-32, Matthew 26:26-29, Luke 22:19-22, Hebrews 7:22, 9:15 (the whole book of Hebrews, really)



GENTLENESS

Before you read

Ask yourself this question: *What is gentleness? What does gentleness look like?*

Gentleness in Hebrew & Greek

Hebrew: anvah - humility, meekness, gentleness

Greek: prautés - mildness, gentleness

Gentleness is...

...not weakness. Rather it is power under restraint, especially in our treatment and attitudes towards others. Gentleness implies that you are strong, on one way or another, but that you are holding back from using that power. Everyone is powerful; the question is how will you your power? Meekness emphasizes this concept since it is defined as “strength under control.” Even mildness continues the idea of “even-temperedness.” The opposite of gentleness is anger and a desire for revenge.

Why is God the Standard of Gentleness?

God is *pure gentleness*. One of God’s attributes is his omnipotence which means “all powerful.” However, we see that God restrains himself repeatedly throughout Scripture, offering mercy rather than justice, being patient rather than immediately acting on evil and wickedness. This is most clearly seen through Christ on the Cross: God showed us his *gentleness* by not restraining his power on himself but restraining his power against us. He submitted himself to his own justice and holy wrath, offering to us an escape from sin, death, hell, and the Devil should we repent of our sins and confess Jesus as Lord. God is not weak: he restrains his power. It could be said that God uses his power wisely, in a way that brings him glory and is for his Neighbor’s good. This doesn’t mean that God will always restrain himself: Scripture shows us that God does act in just and retributive manners. However, this is not his “knee-jerk” reaction to sin: it his final word. So, even if God isn’t acting immediately, it isn’t because he can’t or won’t, but because he is offering everyone ever possible chance to repent and confess.

What Does Gentleness Look Like in the Christian Life?

Gentleness is putting our power under God’s guidance. Since sin has corrupted every part of us, we do not know how to wield our power as it was intended. Since God is all knowing, he knows the best ways to treat our Neighbors, therefore, we submit to God’s direction and laws of love. We have to kill our pride so that we can use our power God’s way, as he intended. God’s intention is for us to be forgiving when we could seek revenge, holding our tongue when we could insult, standing up for those who can’t stand up for themselves, correcting others in an attitude love rather than in our pride of being right. *Gentleness* is knowing what we could do and choosing to do something better.

QUESTIONS for REFLECTION

1. How is God *gentle* towards you?
2. How are you *gentle* towards God?
3. How are you *gentle* to your Neighbor?
4. Why is true *gentleness* impossible apart from the presence of the Holy Spirit?

Scripture References

Deuteronomy 9:3, Psalm 18:35, Proverbs 15:1, Isaiah 40:11, 1 Corinthians 4:20–21, Ephesians 4:1–3, 1 Timothy 6:11–12, 1 Peter 3:14–16.



SELF-CONTROL

Before you read

Ask yourself this question: *What is self-control? What does self-control look like?*

Self-control in Hebrew & Greek

Hebrew: tzniut - modesty, keeping ones emotions within appropriate bounds, not drawing attention to what you're spending

Greek: egkrateia - self mastery, self restraint, self-control, continence, temperance

Gentleness is...

...mastery of yourself by power from outside yourself. If we're not careful, we will often think that self-control is only related to sexual purity. However, it is related to our entire person: our appetites, desires, longings, habits, routines, ambitions, urges, impulses, reactions, all of us. To have self-control is not only *to not do things* but also *to do things*. Since it listed last in the Fruit of the Spirit, it is soldiered to be the most important, as is the Greco-Roman writing style. Self-control, enabled by God's love, oversees all other Fruit.

Why is God the Standard of Self-control?

God is *pure self-control*. There are certain things God cannot do: he cannot sin, he cannot change in his character and nature, he cannot make people freely do anything, As mentioned in the previous lesson, God is all powerful: but God will always do what is just, right, good, beautiful, and true. This is best seen in Christ on the Cross. As the Son Incarnate, Jesus' willingness and obedience to the Father's plan and the Spirit's guidance shows us three things: the Father's self-control in sacrificing the Son, the Son's self-control by being the Father's sacrifice, and the Spirit's self-control in by empowering Jesus in the act of sacrificing. The Triune Godhead's redemptive plan for humanity came at the highest price at the greatest cost, and God did it willingly.

What Does Self-control Look Like in the Christian Life?

Self-control for the Christian is obedience to God's commandments to love God with our entire being and our Neighbor as ourself, both of which are impossible without God the Spirit in us. This kind of self-control isn't something we make happen; it is something we are given and we either partner with God in accomplishing this in us or we don't. Self-Control means we do things God the way God tells us to do them. Since sin has stained our whole person, God must set our whole person right again: this finally and completely happening at our death and the Resurrection. Until then, the Christian Life is one of learning to love God as God and obey him as God. Love produces obedience; the Spirit produces its Fruit.

QUESTIONS for REFLECTION

1. How does God have *self-control* towards you?
2. Why is *self-control* the foundation of all other Fruit?
3. Why do we struggle with *self-control* more than the other Fruit?
4. Why is *self-control* something we cannot accomplish on our own?
5. How do we partner with God in our *self-control*?

Scripture References

Genesis 39:1-23, Deuteronomy 28:1-68, Psalm 141:3, Proverbs 25:28, Ecclesiastes 7:9, Job 31:1, Nahum 1:3, Matthew 5:38-39, Luke 4:1-44, Romans 12:19, 1 Corinthians 9, Philippians 2:13, 2 Timothy 3:1-5, Hebrews 4:15.

NOW WHAT: THANKFULNESS

When we think about what God has done for us, most of us react in thankfulness. God did what no one else could ever, and He did it willingly because of his love for his Neighbor. While not one of the Fruit of the Spirit, thankfulness is no less important in our lives.

In **Greek**, thankfulness is εὐχαριστία (eucharistia) which means thankfulness, gratitude or thanksgiving. In theology, eucharistia means “the giving of thanks for God's grace.” In fact, Communion was first called The Eucharist, and Believers would give God thanks for Christ's Death and Resurrection.

As Christians, we should always be grateful for what God had done on our behalf. What has He done? He reconciled us to Himself by has offered us pardon and forgiveness of our sins, and hope for life after death after life. The Christian Life is one of thankfulness to God by reminding ourselves of his grace.

I hope this has been helpful. The point of the “**What to Believe**” publication series is to provide answers to students about their faith from a distinctly Pentecostal perspective.

My hope is that you will return to this Guide as you talk about Jesus with your neighbor and as you engage in those wonderful conversations.

So, now what?

Go & Tell, and do so in the confidence that God loves you enough to save you from what you could not save yourself from. Now, you get to tell your story, your distinct part in the great narrative of salvation and the Great Commission.

For more upcoming publications like this, visit nhmiphc.com.

Dosvedanya and Blessings,

Taylor Drake, *Series Author*
4:12 Ministries Director for New Horizons Ministries



a New Horizons Ministries' Department

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