



*"The fruit of the Spirit is not what we can make ourselves do for a moment, But what God makes us to be for a lifetime." -Wayne Jacobsen*

## Exploring the Fruit of the Spirit

*"22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other." -Galatians 5:22-26*

When Paul wrote these words to our first-century brothers and sisters, he was telling them something about the harvest that the Holy Spirit was trying to cultivate in their lives. Our society specializes in getting us to focus on our needs, our wants, and our desires, and just before talking about the Fruit of the Spirit, Paul describes what happens when we live to please only ourselves. But this kind of harvest, the Fruit of the Spirit, would be entirely different. Galatians 5 calls us to stop living only for ourselves and to start living to please the Spirit.

### Why does Paul call it "Fruit"?

I think Paul was very intentional with his choice of words. The "Fruit" that Paul talks about is singular—fruit. It's not the fruits of the Spirit, as if the Spirit were producing a wide variety of different things that we might get in various quantities, depending on our personalities or gifts. Instead, Paul wants us to hear that the Spirit is cultivating a *single* crop or harvest that has several

distinct elements. It's not our job to pick and choose which ones we want to cultivate—the Spirit is already working to grow all of them.

### The Best Dirt You Can Be.

The agricultural language is quite important. In **Matthew 13**, Jesus tells a parable about the Word of God going out like a farmer sowing seed. Some seed falls exactly where it needs to, and it produces a wonderful **harvest**.

That word "harvest" is the same exact word as the "Fruit" of the Spirit. So there is an interesting connection between those two agricultural metaphors already. But as you may remember, not all of the seed fell on the right kind of soil. Some of it was choked out by thorns, some of it was snatched up by birds, and some didn't have deep enough roots to grow to maturity. In this parable, we are the soil—and we need to do everything we can to be good, healthy soil that can produce what the Spirit is trying to cultivate in our lives. As we begin our study of the Fruit of the Spirit, let's keep these principles in mind:

- God is the only one who can bring this harvest to fruition, but we need to be open to what he's doing in our lives.
- Jesus models what each of these character traits looks like in practice.
- We can't pick and choose which ones we're going to strive for and which ones we're going to ignore.

## **What Our Study Will Cover**

Each week, we'll focus on one aspect of the Fruit of the Spirit. We will spend some time exploring some of the following questions:

1. What did these words mean in the original first century context?
2. Where else are these word used in the Bible, and what can we learn about them from those passages?
3. Are there any noteworthy quotes or insights about the various aspects of the Fruits of the Spirit from authors, New Testament scholars, or other church leaders?
4. How did Jesus demonstrate each of these characteristics in the Gospels?
5. Why is it important for followers of Jesus to demonstrate these characteristics in their lives?



## What is Love?

Perhaps you've heard that the New Testament has several words for love:

1. There's **romantic** love shared between a husband and wife.
2. There's **familial** love shared between family members.
3. There's **brotherly** love shared between close friends.
4. And then there's the **selfless, agape** love that God demonstrated by sending Jesus to die on the cross.

There is often considerable overlap between the words and it's not always wise to draw sharp lines of distinction between them. That being said, it's probably no surprise that the "love" Paul mentions to begin his description of the Fruit of the Spirit is **agape**—selfless, sacrificial love.

I would argue that the Bible is essentially a love story about God's affection for the people he created. Throughout the Bible we see that it is God's deep love for humanity that compelled him to keep pursuing us even as we rejected him time and time again. As such, love is one of the most consistent themes in the entire Bible. The more I think about it, the more I realize it's virtually impossible to tell the Biblical story without mentioning love.

When God chose Israel as his people, he did it because he *loved* them. God's *love* is enshrined into the Ten

Commandments. Even when Israel bowed down to a golden calf, he passed in front of Moses and declared that he abounded in *loving-kindness*. The Psalmists sing about the *love* of God that endures forever. The prophets testify about the *love* of God even in response to our sin. And Jesus entered into our world to fully and visibly demonstrate the *love* of God. And now we are called upon to show the same kind of selfless, agape *love* to the world around us—because the world will know that we are disciples of Jesus Christ by our love.

## What Does Love Look Like?

It's always best to let God define his own terms and set his own example. So if we want to understand agape love, we need to listen to what Scripture says and explore what kind of example he sets when it comes to love.

Perhaps the best description of love in the entire Bible is **1 Corinthians 13:4-8**:

"4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8 Love never fails."

Love is so important, according to Paul, that even the most impressive religious acts done in the name of Jesus are worthless if they aren't done in love.

Beyond **1 Corinthians 13**, there are several other key verses that show us what agape love is all about.

- **Agape Love is Sacrificial.** “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” - (**John 15:13**... see also **John 3:6, Romans 5:8, Ephesians 5:25**)
- **Agape Love is Willing to Serve.** “Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.” (**John 13:1**... when he washed the feet of the disciples)
- **Agape Love is More than Just Words.** “Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.” (**1 John 3:18**)
- **Agape Love is Means Loving Your Enemies.** “But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...” (**Matthew 5:44**)
- **Agape Love Speaks Difficult Truths.** Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack. Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” (**Mark 10:21**)
- **Agape Love Grows out of Forgiveness.** “Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.” (**Luke 7:41**)
- **Agape Love Is Loyal.** “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.” (**Luke 16:13**)
- **Agape Love Demonstrates Our Identity as Disciples.** “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (**John 13:34-35**)
- **Obedience Flows out of Agape Love.** “Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me.” (**John 14:21**)
- **Jesus Sets the Example of How We Should Love.** “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.” (**John 15:12**)

## An Excellent Insight from Richard Rohr

In any discussion of Christian morality, or Christian virtues, or “doing the right thing,” we always have to begin with the necessity of love. The unavoidable truth about Christianity is that it’s possible to go through the motions of the Christian religion without ever having a sincere love for God or others. But, as Richard Rohr

explains below, it doesn’t matter how much good we do in the world if we don’t have love in our hearts:

*“If love is the soul of Christian existence, it must be at the heart of every other Christian virtue. Thus, for example, justice without love is legalism; faith without love is ideology; hope without love is self-centeredness; forgiveness without love is self-abasement; fortitude without love is recklessness; generosity without love is extravagance; care without love is mere duty; fidelity without love is servitude. Every virtue is an expression of love. No virtue is really a virtue unless it is permeated, or informed, by love.”*

As we study the Fruit of the Spirit together and pray about how we can let the Spirit of God cultivate these characteristics in our lives, we need to make a steadfast commitment to keep love at the center of it all.

## How Did Jesus Show Love?

This almost feels like a trick question. We know that God is love, and that Jesus is “the exact representation” of God’s being (**Hebrews 1:3**), so in a verse real sense *everything* Jesus did flowed from the love of God.

Nevertheless, there are a few scenes from Jesus’ life that do an especially good job of showing what agape love looks like. Perhaps you can think of a few more.

### 1. When Jesus washed the disciples’ feet, he did it to show the full extent of his love. (**John 13**)

- One remarkable thing about this story is that Jesus chose to wash the feet of all twelve disciples—including the two that he knew in advance would betray and deny him.

### 2. When Jesus Spoke up for the Woman Caught in Adultery (**John 8**)

- Jesus found a creative way to balance grace and truth. He didn’t water down her sin or water down what the Bible teaches, but he didn’t join the

### 3. When Jesus Wept with Mary and Martha (**John 11**)

- Jesus demonstrated his compassionate, empathetic love by grieving alongside his dear friends—despite knowing that Lazarus would be resurrected.

## Application:

- As we begin our study, ask God to let love be the motivating factor in everything we do.
- Pray for a greater capacity to love people like Jesus did.



## What is Joy?

One dictionary of Bible words makes the bold claim that joy is the “*distinguishing characteristic of the Judeo-Christian religion.*” But what exactly is joy? Here is a sampling of the ways that different resources have defined **joy** or **rejoice**:

5. **Bible Project:** “Biblical joy is more than a happy feeling. It’s a lasting emotion that comes from the choice to trust that God will fulfill his promises.”
6. **GotQuestions.com:** “Joy is the natural reaction to the work of God, whether promised or fulfilled.”
7. **Webster’s Dictionary:** “Joy: The emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune or by the prospect of possessing what one desires”
8. **Christianity.com:** “Biblical joy is choosing to respond to external circumstances with inner contentment and satisfaction, because we know that God will use these experiences to accomplish His work in and through our lives.”

## Is There a Difference Between Happiness and Joy?

While there are some definite similarities, there is a crucial difference between **happiness** (which largely depends on the circumstances on any given day) and **joy** (which depends on the unchanging reality of God’s presence and love).

This excerpt written by Clarence Haynes does a great job of describing the difference between happiness and joy:

*“Is there a difference between joy and happiness? While there are some similarities between happiness and joy there is one major difference in my opinion. Here is how I will define it. Happiness is because of. Joy is in spite of. Happiness comes as a result of the things that are happening in your life. When things are happy and good then that produces happiness. This comes from outside and works its way in. Joy on the other hand comes in spite of. While the things happening around you can in fact produce joy, your joy is not dependent on those things. Because joy flows from the reservoir inside of you it has the ability to sustain you even if nothing on the outside gives you a reason to rejoice. This is why you can have joy in the midst of trials, hardships, or even some of the difficult places in life because it is springing up from what is inside.”*

### Discussion Questions:

- How would you define happiness? How would you define joy?
- Do you feel God expects us to be happy and positive all the time? Why or why not?

## How Does Jesus Bring Joy?

Joy is a major theme during the major events of Jesus' life (his birth, cross, resurrection and ascension). In most instances, the people around Jesus experience joy when they witness these key moments in his life.

### The Birth of Jesus

- **The Angel Visits Mary**, "The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." (Luke 1:28... note that "Greetings" is literally a command to "Rejoice!")
- **Mary's Song**: "And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior..." (Luke 1:47)
- **The Angels Announce the Birth of Christ**: "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people." (Luke 2:10)
- **Matthew 2:10**, "When they saw the star, they were overjoyed."

### The Triumphant Entry

- "When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen" (Luke 19:37)

### The Cross

- "For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." (Hebrews 12:2-3)

### The Resurrection

- **The Women at the Empty Tomb**: "So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples." (Matthew 28:8)
- **The Disciples Who Saw The Risen Jesus**: "And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" (Luke 24:41)
- "After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord." (John 20:20)

### The Ascension

- "51 While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. 52 Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. 53 And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God." (Luke 24:50-53)

## How Does Jesus Experience Joy Personally?

There are a handful of examples of Jesus feeling joy at different points of his life. Here are a few times when the Gospels mention the joy that Jesus felt:

- **Jesus Rejoices at the Success of His Disciples**: "At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth..." (Luke 10:21)
- **Jesus' Joy is our Joy, Too**: "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." (John 15:11)
- **Jesus Prays for His Disciples To Experience Joy**: "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them." (John 17:13)

### Jesus also gives us some Biblical teaching and encouraging promises about joy:

- Rejoice even when we are persecuted (Matthew 5:12)
- Rejoice first and foremost in our salvation (Luke 10:20)
- The disciples should rejoice that Jesus is returning to the Father, not feel discouraged (John 14:28)
- Our grief will turn to joy (John 16:20-21)
- No one will be able to steal our joy when Jesus returns (John 16:22)
- Our joy will be complete, especially when we experience answered prayers (John 16:24)

In addition to that, Jesus tells several parables that illustrate the joy God / Jesus / The Spirit experience when lost sinners find salvation.

### Here's a few examples of parables that show God's joy:

- In the parable of the talents, the master rejoices when his servants prove faithful with the resources they've been given (Matthew 25:21-23).
- Jesus teaches that the angels rejoice when sinners repent (Luke 15:7,10)
- In the parable of the lost sheep, the shepherd rejoices when the lost sheep is found, then he rejoices with his friends and neighbors (Luke 15:5-6)
- In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the Father rejoices when his lost son returns (Luke 15:32)

## Joy was a Common Response to the Success of the Gospel.

- The Samaritans (**Acts 8:8**)
- The Eunuch (**Acts 8:39**)
- Barnabas rejoiced at the grace of God in Antioch (**Acts 11:23**)
- The Gentiles in Pisidian Antioch believe (**Acts 13:48**)
- The disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit after evangelizing a whole region (**Acts 13:52**)
- The Gentiles come to faith (**Acts 15:3**)
- The Philippian jailer (**Acts 16:34**)
- Paul rejoiced that Jesus was being preached, even if it was with suspicious motives (**Philippians 1:18**)
- Rejoicing at the fact that Christians are walking in the truth (**2 John 1:4, 3 John 1:4**)

## Rejoicing in Every Situation

“4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”-**Philippians 4:4-7**

The fact that God teaches us to rejoice in *every situation* implies that our joy doesn't rise and fall with the circumstances in our lives. It's natural for our happiness or our mood to be affected by the day-to-day, but as followers of Jesus we can rejoice in every situation because there's something consistent in every situation that is worth rejoicing over--the presence of God, the assurance of his love, and the promise of our salvation.

I believe Jesus felt every emotion that we do, and yet his life was full of joy. There was something consistent throughout all the difficult circumstances of life that enabled him to experience deep joy even in the hard times. And Jesus has prayed and promised that his joy will be our joy. That means it's possible for us to have that same deep joy even in our times of stress, anxiety, and setbacks.

**My prayer for you today is that the Spirit of God would be hard at work in your life, cultivating joy in a way that enables you to have peace even in anxious times.**



## What is Peace?

It's been my experience that when people use the word *peace*, they're usually referring to an absence of some kind of conflict (like war between countries or a feud between individuals).

There are plenty of times when the Bible uses the word *peace* in this way, especially in the Old Testament when Israel was frequently at war with their enemies. After a period of war, the fighting would stop and Israel would enjoy a time of peace with their neighbors.

But it's important to note that the Bible's definition of peace isn't limited to the *absence* of conflict and turmoil. It also refers to the *presence* of welfare and health. Peace is associated so closely with salvation, victory, and prosperity in the Bible that the words are nearly synonymous. This illustrates the point that Biblical peace is more about **presence** (of God's blessings) than **absence** (of conflict and turmoil).

One of the unique aspects of peace in the Bible (compared to the way other ancient civilizations thought about it) is the way peace is described as a gift from God, not something that is brought about through human effort or political intervention. Prosperity, welfare, health, and salvation—all of which fall under the umbrella term of peace—are gracious gifts that only God can provide.

## The Big Ideas in Today's Study

1. **Peace is an attribute of God.** It is part of his essential nature or his core character.
2. **Peace is a gift from God.** It is something that he graciously offers his people, especially those who are in Christ.
3. **Peace is an umbrella term for a life with Christ at the center.** It is a way of describing the positive results of living the way God created us to be.
4. **"Grace and Peace" was a heartfelt greeting.** Paul frequently began his epistles with this blessing.
5. **"Go in Peace" was a farewell blessing.** It signified parting ways on positive, loving terms.
6. **Jesus demonstrated peace** by maintaining a non-anxious presence in the midst of heightening anxiety.

## 1. Peace is an Attribute of God.

There are several times in the Bible when “peace” refers to the character, heart, or essential nature of God. Peace is part of who God is. As we consider what it means to be made in the image of God (**Genesis 1:26-27**) and to imitate God, we need to consider that God is a God of peace.

- “The Lord is Peace” (**Judges 6:24**)
- “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” (**Isaiah 9:6**)
- “The God of peace be with you all. Amen.” (**Romans 15:33**)
- “And the God of peace will be with you.” (**Philippians 4:9**)
- “Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.” (**2 Thessalonians 3:16...** In this passage peace is an *attribute* of God and a *gift* God offers).

## 2. Peace is a Gift from God.

Peace is also something that God offers us, especially those of us who are in Christ.

- “The Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace.” (**Psalms 29:11**)
- “I will listen to what God the Lord says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants— but let them not turn to folly.” (**Psalms 85:8**)
- “Lord, you establish peace for us; all that we have accomplished you have done for us.” (**Isaiah 26:12**)
- “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (**John 14:27**)
- “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 16:33**)
- “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (**Philippians 4:7**)

## 3. Peace is an Umbrella Term for a Life with Christ at the Center.

Peace is sometimes used in a general way to describe the blessings that come from a life lived in Christ.

- God’s light guides us to the path of peace. (**Luke 1:76-79**)
- The angels announce “peace on earth” during Jesus’ birth. (**Luke 2:14**)
- “The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.” (**Romans 8:6**)

## 4. Grace and Peace was A Heartfelt Greeting.

This was a common way for the Apostles to begin their letters to various churches. You can find the phrase in the opening section of **Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, Titus, Philemon, 1-2 Peter, and Revelation.**

- “To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” (**Romans 1:7**)

## 5. “Go in Peace” was a Farewell Blessing.

- **Jonathan to David:** “Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the Lord” (**1 Samuel 20:42**)
- **Eli to Hannah,** after praying for a child: “Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him.” (**1 Samuel 1:17**)
- **Jesus to the woman who touched his clothes:** “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.” (**Mark 5:34**)
- **Jesus to the woman who washed his feet:** “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” (**Luke 7:50**)
- **The Jailer to Paul and Silas:** “The magistrates have ordered that you and Silas be released. Now you can leave. Go in peace.” (**Acts 16:36**)

## 6. Jesus was a Non-Anxious Presence During Heightened Anxiety.

- Jesus calms the storm (**Matthew 8:23-27**)
- The wine runs out at the wedding (**John 2:1-12**)
- The woman caught in adultery (**John 8:1-11**)
- The edge of a cliff in Nazareth (**Luke 4:28-30**)

### Being a Non-Anxious Presence

Peter Steinke: “The capacity to self-manage is sometimes referred to as being a ‘nonanxious presence.’... *The nonanxious presence is a description of how a person works to keep the center of control within oneself and as a way to affect relationships in a positive manner.* To be a nonanxious presence, you focus on your own behavior and its modification rather than being preoccupied with how others function.”

1. Manage our own gut reactions to difficult situations
2. Use knowledge to suppress impulses and those automatic reactions
3. Keeping calm so you can think clearly, reflect, and be in thoughtful conversation with others.
4. Carefully observe what is happening around you and more importantly in you
5. Tolerate high levels of uncertainty and frustration
6. Keep a clear sense of direction, despite everything else.

“When obsessing about danger, our capacity to see or hear other information is nearly impossible. To be a nonanxious presence means to acknowledge anxiety but not let it be the driver of behavior.”

## The Application: Know that Circumstances are Temporary, but God’s Love is Forever.

### Philippians 4:11-13

*11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.*

### Exodus 14:13-14

*13 Moses answered the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. 14 The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.”*



## Lord, Give Me Patience (*And Do it Now!*)

I've often been told that praying for patience is a dangerous thing to do. Why? Because God is very likely to answer that prayer by giving us situations that test our patience! Why would he do that if he knows patience is the very thing we're struggling with? It's actually because the best way to get stronger in any area of our lives is to work out the muscles (literal or spiritual) that are weak or underdeveloped. You can't expect to get stronger in one area of your life without being challenged to grow in it.

The Bible talks a lot about patience. I think it's very significant that patience is listed as one of **God's** unchanging qualities in **Exodus 34:6**; it's listed as a key characteristic of **agape love** in **1 Corinthians 13:4**; and it's among the **Fruit of the Spirit** in **Galatians 5:22**. My thought is that since it's one of the only things mentioned in *all three* of those key lists, it's clearly a key part of who God is, of how what he's trying to cultivate in our lives, and of how he wants us to love others.

### More About the Word "Patience"

The word "patience" in **Galatians 5** (which is sometimes translated "forbearance" or "long-suffering") comes from the Greek word *makrothumia*, which is defined in the lexicon as follows:

"1. The state of remaining tranquil while awaiting an outcome, *patience, steadfastness, endurance*;

2. The state of being able to bear up under provocation, *forbearance, patience*" (*BDAG Lexicon*)

*Makrothumia* (patience) is a compound word in Greek, meaning it contains two separate words that are joined together to form a new meaning. It doesn't always work to apply the two words literally (for example, a butterfly is not flying butter), but in this instance the combination does convey something important for us to understand.

- *Makro* refers to a long passage of time or a considerable distance.
- *Thumia* refers to intense emotion and passion—and not the pleasant kind.

The combination of these words conveys the idea that a patient person is slow (*makro*) to anger (*thumia*). In the spirit of **James 1:19**, they are quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.

One author described it this way. **Impatient people have a short fuse.** The spark lights at the end of the fuse, and the dynamite blow up right away. **But patient people have a long fuse.** The spark lights, but it doesn't blow up right away. The long fuse gives you enough time to put out the fire before it ignites the explosives.

Patient people don't instantly say every harsh word that comes into their mind. They don't react emotionally. They don't do something impulsively that they later regret. Instead, they wait for a while so that the intensity of their emotions dies down and they're able to see the situation more clearly and respond appropriately. The

spark might have been lit, but the fuse is long enough that they have time to put it out before it does any damage.

Makrothumia (patience) can also be used as an adjective (a *patient* person) or a verb (to *wait patiently*). It conveys two basic ideas, depending on the context: First, being willing to wait for a considerable time while maintaining a positive attitude, and second, a steadfast endurance in the face of adversity or confrontation.

- For example, Jesus patiently waited 30 years for the right time to begin his public ministry.
- He also showed steadfast endurance in the face of excruciating pain during his arrest, trial, and crucifixion.

Both of these are examples of the word translated “patience” or “forbearance” in the Fruit of the Spirit passage.

## Examples of God’s Patience

### 1. Towards Paul:

- “But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense **patience** as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life.” (1 **Timothy 1:16**)

### 2. Towards Peter

- “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is **patient** with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” (2 **Peter 3:9**)

### 3. Other Examples:

- **Romans 2:4, 9:22; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 3:9**

## The Call to Be Patient People

- “Be completely humble and gentle; be **patient**, bearing with one another in love.” (**Ephesians 4:2**)
- “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and **patience**.” (**Colossians 3:12**)
- “7 Be **patient**, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, **patiently** waiting for the autumn and spring rains. 8 You too, be **patient** and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near. 9 Don’t grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! 10 Brothers and sisters, as an example of **patience** in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.” (**James 5:7-10**)
- See also **1 Thessalonians 5:14; Colossians 1:11; 2 Timothy 4:2**

## Patience is a Quality Worth Imitating

- “You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, **patience**, love, endurance, 11 persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.” (2 **Timothy 3:10-11**)
- “We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and **patience** inherit what has been promised.” (**Hebrews 6:12**)
- See also **2 Corinthians 6:3-6; Hebrews 6:15**

### The God Creed

(Exodus 34:6)

The Lord is compassionate, gracious, **slow to anger**, abounding in love and faithfulness.

### The Love Chapter

(1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

Love is **patient**, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8 Love never fails.

### The Fruit of the Spirit

(Galatians 5:22-23)

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, **patience**, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.



## The Kindness of God

When you stop to think about the depth of God’s love, the tenderness of his affection, the magnitude of his blessings, and his selfless sacrifice on the cross, it almost seems like an understatement to say that God is *kind*. It seems too mild or small of a word in comparison to everything God is and everything he’s done for us. But kindness is one of the common words that the Bible uses to help us understand the character of God.

If you research the original word that is translated “kindness” in our English Bibles, you’ll discover that it can be used three different ways, depending on the context.

1. It can mean **easy and light**, as opposed to heavy and burdensome, like when Jesus invites people to follow him because his yoke is easy and his burden is light (**Matthew 11:28-30**)
2. It can mean **high quality**, especially about material things like *fine* clothing or *choice* wine.
3. It can refer to someone with **good morals** who is benevolent and generous, always ready to help others.

There is a sense in which all of these apply to God, but the third definition seems to be the most common thing the Biblical writers had in mind.

## Examples of God’s Kindness

- “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is **good**; his love endures forever.” (**Psalms 106:1, 107:1, 136:1**)
- “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 children of the Most High, **because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked**. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” (**Luke 6:35-36**)
- “3 So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God’s judgment? 4 Or do you show contempt for the riches of his **kindness**, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s **kindness** is intended to lead you to repentance?” (**Romans 2:3-4**)
- “6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his **kindness** to us in Christ Jesus.” (**Ephesians 2:6-7**)
- “3 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. 4 But when the **kindness** and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.” (**Titus 3:3-5**)

## Going Deeper

The Theological Lexicon of the New Testament has an excellent entry on this word kindness. Here is a summary of what they say about this word:

*“The point is brotherly love, a loving attitude that includes a willingness to serve one’s neighbor. This virtue is possessed only by magnanimous and unselfish souls who are characterized by kindness, friendliness, and liberality: the Christian is both delicate and generous in brotherly relations, seeking to be useful, considerate, helpful, beneficent, always in an agreeable way, even with a smile.”*

### Four Aspects of Kindness

#### 1. Kindness is a divine attribute

- Biblical writers use this word to describe who God is, but the Greeks and Romans and people of other religions also used this word to describe their own god(s).

#### 2. Kindness is an attribute of nobility and (good) earthly rulers

- A title given to highly respected people in all areas of life (family, civics, religion).

#### 3. Kindness is an attribute of honest folk

- It refers to goodness and concern for others, especially when receiving guests.
- Someone who behaves properly, tells the truth, and has good morals.
- Paul tends to emphasize goodness, mildness, and generosity, but it retains the sense of nobility and a title of honor given to respectable people. That connection to nobility gives it a little different connotation than meekness or humility.
- “Kindness” is the quality that seems to be mentioned more than anything else on ancient funerary inscriptions. People wanted future generations to remember the **kindness** of their loved ones.

#### 4. Kindness is an expression of love.

- There are several words and phrases with similar, overlapping meanings: goodness, kindness, willingness to be of service, honesty, nobility, loyalty, probity (i.e. strong moral principles).
- At some point it’s hard to tell the difference between these positive character traits.

## A Call to be Kind

- “Love is patient, love is **kind**. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.” (1 Corinthians 13:4)
- “Be **kind** and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:32)
- “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, **kindness**, humility, gentleness and patience.” (Colossians 3:12)
- “4 Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; 5 in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; 6 in purity, understanding, patience and **kindness**; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; 7 in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left...” (2 Corinthians 6:4-7)

## Group Brainstorming: What are Examples of Jesus’ Kindness in the Gospels?



## What Does *Goodness* Mean?

The “goodness” that Paul talks about in **Galatians 5:22** is closely related to the word right before it, *kindness*. But the emphasis with goodness is on being generous and having the other person’s best interests in mind. A “good” person does what is useful and beneficial, and through that generosity they prove that they are an exemplary person (i.e. a **good** person or a **good** citizen).

New Testament scholar David deSilva highlights connection between **goodness** and **generosity** (which is how the NRSV translates the word) in his definition of the word:

*“Goodness,” a close synonym of the preceding word, carries overtones of “generosity,” as in the contrast between the “good” (generous) landowner and the envious workers in the parable of the laborers (Matt 20:1–16). The disciple’s experience of God’s goodness and generosity overflows into the lives of others, arousing a genuine benevolence toward others. When we see a need, we must respond to it in the compassion of Christ, uplifting the quality of people’s lives around us.*

Another Bible dictionary defines **goodness** as a “positive moral quality characterized especially by interest in the welfare of others.”

## Examples of God’s Goodness:

### 1. Joseph Reflects on his Trials in Egypt:

“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.” (**Genesis 50:20**)

### 2. Paul describes God’s Good Plan for our Lives:

“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**)

### 3. The Levites Reminded Israel of God’s Good Gifts:

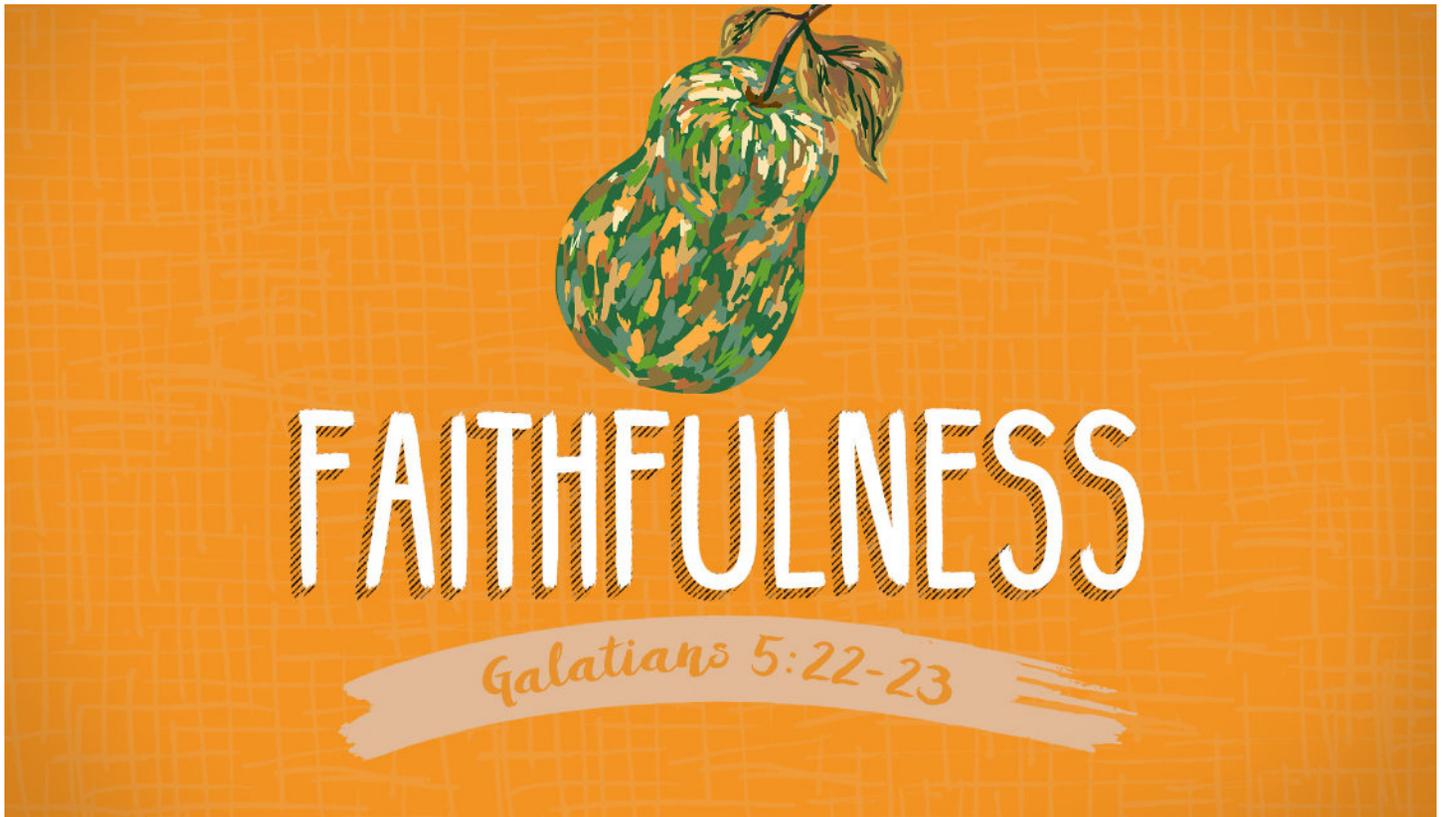
“Even while they were in their kingdom, enjoying your great goodness to them in the spacious and fertile land you gave them, they did not serve you or turn from their evil ways.” (**Nehemiah 9:35**)

### 4. Paul and Barnabas Testify About God’s Generosity Towards All People, Christian or Not:

“Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness [goodness] 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 14:17**)

## God Wants us to Practice Goodness.

- “33 And if you **do good** to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. 35 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 children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” **(Luke 6:33-36)**
- “Or the fruit of the light consists in all **goodness**, righteousness and truth” **(Ephesians 5:9)**
- “With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for **goodness** and your every deed prompted by faith.” **(2 Thessalonians 1:11)**
- “Command them to **do good**, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.” **(1 Timothy 6:18)**
- “For it is God’s will that by **doing good** you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people.” **(1 Peter 2:15)**
- “But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for **doing good** and you endure it, this is commendable before God.” **(1 Peter 2:20)**
- “So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue **to do good.**” **(1 Peter 4:19)**
- “Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who **does what is good** is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God.” **(3 John 1:11)**



## What Does *Faithfulness* Mean?

The word Paul used for “Faithfulness” in this passage is one of the foundational words and themes of the entire Bible. This Greek family of words refers can mean any of the following, depending on the context:

- To trust someone (e.g. a person or God)
- To believe something is true (e.g. that Jesus is the Son of God)
- To believe *in* a kind of lifestyle as a matter of principle (e.g. I believe in buying organic)
- To be reliable or trustworthy
- To be loyal (e.g. a faithful husband)
- The set of ideas you believe in (e.g. I believe in the Christian faith)
- Trust or confidence in something (e.g. I am putting my trust / faith in God)

Because this word-group covers so much ground, we have to consider what Paul is actually referring to in **Galatians 5:22**. Here are four options of what Paul (and really God) could have had in mind.

- The Holy Spirit wants us to grow in our willingness to **trust God** and put our confidence in him.
- The Holy Spirit wants us to be more **loyal** to God instead of having a divided heart.

- The Holy Spirit wants us to develop a **deeper conviction** that the Gospel message is true.
- The Holy Spirit wants us to be **trustworthy and reliable**—the kind of Christian our brothers and sisters can depend on.

It seems self-explanatory that God wants all of these things to be true in our lives, but the immediate context of the Fruit of the Spirit passage seems to point toward being a trustworthy and dependable member of the church community. David deSilva argues for this reading in his commentary on Galatians:

*“Although Paul often uses the Greek word pistis [faith] elsewhere throughout Galatians to denote “trust,” here in the context of interpersonal virtues it more probably evokes the ethical quality of “faithfulness,” “reliability,” or “loyalty.” It is the quality that leads those around us to feel safe in relying on us (hence, encouraging others to trust). It is the social counterpart of God’s own reliability, bearing each individual believer aloft in the safety net of the community.”*

I find this argument—that faithfulness in this context refers to being a loyal, dependable Christian that our brothers and sisters can rely on—to be persuasive. So the question becomes, how can we work with the Holy Spirit to cultivate this aspect of the Fruit of the Spirit?



## What Makes a Person Trustworthy?

Let's begin with a general question: What are some things that make a person trustworthy? Not just in a church context, but in everyday life? Here are a few things that came to my mind:

- Quality time together... you get to know them.
- They live with integrity.
- They have a track record of following through on promises and commitments.
- They have proven they care about you and your needs.
- They tell the truth.
- They have the right skills and expertise for the job.

**What else would you add to this list? (Write your answers below, if you'd like)**

## What Makes a Person Unreliable?

On the flip side, there's a few things that would immediately destroy the trust in a relationship:

- Not following through on commitments
- Lying / deception
- Gossip
- Selfishness
- Harm / abuse / cruelty
- Divided loyalties and priorities
- Impulsiveness / abrupt changes

**What else would you add to this list?**

## Four Ways Jesus Earns our Trust:

### 1. The signs and wonders he performed proved that he was sent by God.

- “What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.” (**John 2:11**)
- “Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name.” (**John 2:23**)
- “Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves.” (**John 14:11**)
- “Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed.” (**John 20:8**)

### 2. Jesus’ promises came true.

- “After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.” (**John 2:22**)
- “When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, “Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him.” Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live.” So he and his whole household believed.” (**John 4:52-53**)
- “The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.” (**Mark 14:16**)

### 3. Jesus made it obvious that he cared about our needs.

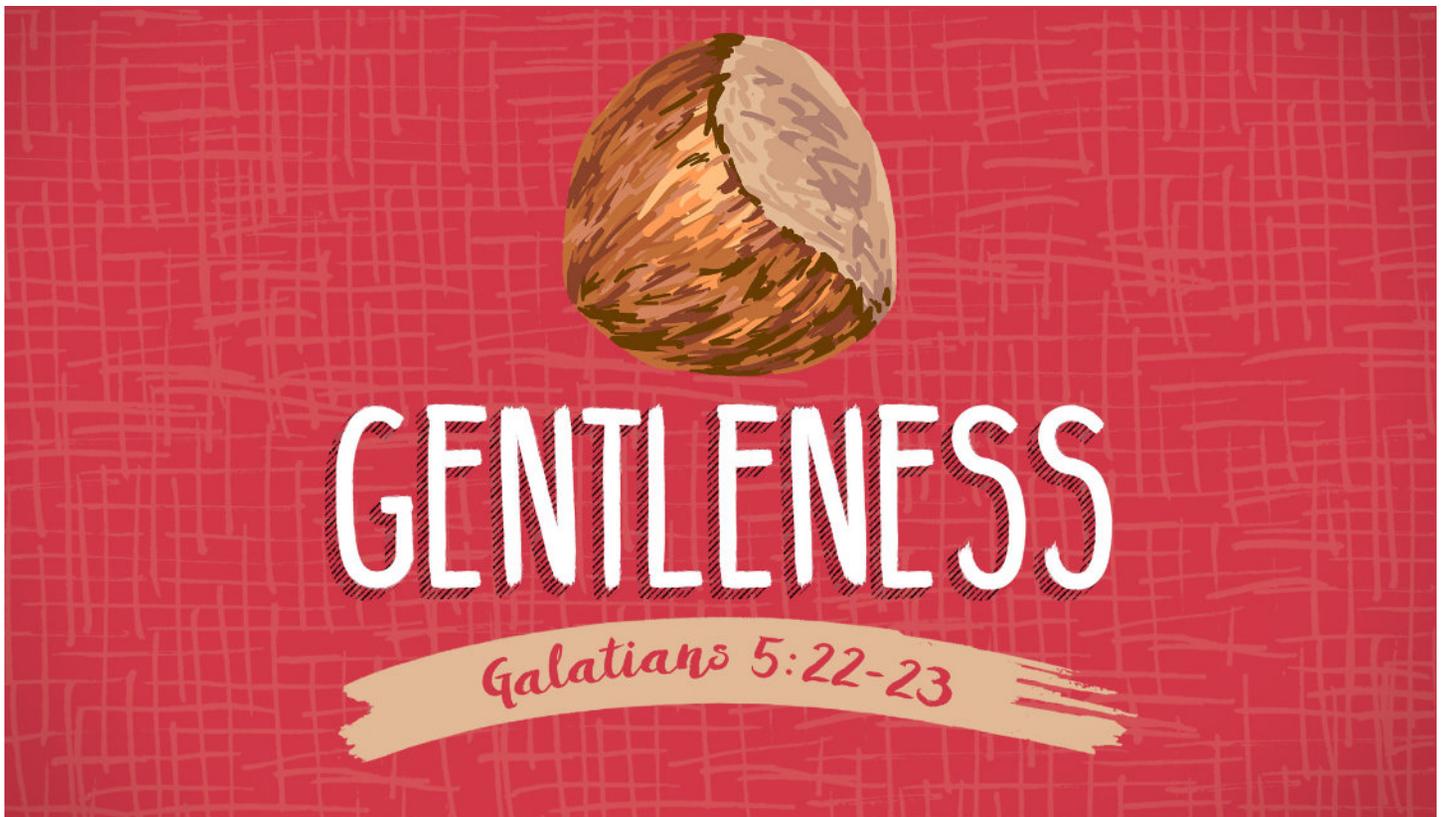
- “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” (**John 10:10**)
- “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.” (**John 10:14-15**)
- “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (**Mark 10:45**)
- Jesus emptied himself so that we might receive the full measure of God’s grace. (see **Philippians 2:5-11**)

### 4. The content of Jesus’ message was relevant, compelling, and persuasive.

- “Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. “Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?” they asked.” (**Matthew 13:54**)
- “21 They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. 22 The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.” (**Mark 1:21-22**)

## Application: What is the Spirit trying to Cultivate in Our Hearts?

- **Faithful followers** who trust in God and are loyal to him.
- **Faithful members** of the body of Christ who are reliable, trustworthy, and dependable towards one another.
- **Faithful witnesses** who have a positive reputation in the community.



## What Does *Gentleness* Mean?

We talk a lot about gentleness in our house. When you have two older boys (ages 8 and 6) and a younger girl (age 2), it's important to make sure everyone is being gentle. Sometimes our kids don't know their own strength, so we need to teach them to be mindful of keeping their hands, feet, and other bodily protrusions to themselves. And we need to teach them to be very careful when they pick up someone else's toys (or lego creations, play dough sculptures, etc.). When we use that word in the Fojtasek house, we're talking about not being rough, violent, or careless.

When the Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit is trying to cultivate **gentleness** in our hearts, there's more to it than not beating up your brother or sister. It's referring to a particular kind of inner attitude.

One Bible dictionary defines the word Paul uses for *gentleness* as "The quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of one's self-importance" (BDAG). Along with *gentleness*, it suggests *humility*, *courtesy*, *considerateness*, *meekness* as possible translations. And in fact, gentleness is the same word that Jesus uses in the Beatitudes when he says, "Blessed are the *meek*."

Another Bible dictionary (TLNT) explains that gentleness/meekness has a vertical dimension (how we practice it with God) as well as a horizontal dimension (how we practice it with each other). Here's how they phrases it: "[Gentleness] means a religious quality involving radical submission to God and modesty in dealings with other people."

## Gentleness with God

*"A man is not far from the gates of heaven when he is fully submissive to the Lord's will." -Charles Spurgeon*

The way we practice gentleness with God is by showing "perfect submission to the divine will" (TLNT). It brings to mind humility, trusting in God's plan even when we don't understand it, and having the same attitude as Jesus in the garden: "Not my will but yours be done."

Typically this word is used to describe the kind of submission and deference a servant ought to show their master, which fits the Biblical context of Christians (who are described as *slaves* to God) submitting to God (who is our Lord—meaning *master*).

## Gentleness with Others

*"If you ask me what is the first precept of the Christian religion, I will answer first, second and third, Humility." -Augustine of Hippo*

The way we practice gentleness with others is by being calm, even-tempered, considerate, and humble. It involves living with "An approachable manner, measured speech, reserved attitudes" (TLNT). We don't assign bad motives or evil intent to others, we don't rush to judgment, we practice Quick / Slow / Slow (**James 1:19**), we don't attend every argument we are invited to, and we take responsibility for what's happening inside of us so we can regulate our emotions and maintain a non-anxious presence even in the midst of conflict.

The Greek Philosopher Aristotle defined this word as the healthy medium between irrational anger (throwing fits of rage for no reason) and complete apathy (not getting angry even when the situation calls for it). Thousands of years later, President Roosevelt artfully described the concept as speaking softly but carrying a big stick.

### What the Bible Scholars are Saying

New Testament Scholar David deSilva summarizes the meaning of gentleness in this way:

*“The Greek word translated here “forbearance” is also often translated “gentleness” (so NRSV, NIV, CEB). It was rendered “meekness” in older translations (such as the KJV), though this word can evoke negative associations (e.g., a failure to be assertive or display appropriate strength). Aristotle defines this virtue as the mean between excessive anger and the inability to get angry. It speaks of the proper restraint of anger or power, out of consideration for the other person. “Forbearance” may therefore capture its meaning most accurately. Paul will suggest one way in which to put this virtue into action in 6:1, where he urges believers to follow the Spirit in restoring fellow believers “in a spirit of forbearance” rather than in a harsh, judgmental manner. “Forbearance” is able to confront difficult issues or behaviors (see also the use of this word in 1 Cor 4:21 and 2 Tim 2:25), doing so in a way that allows the confrontation to be received as an expression of love, care, and commitment.”*

## Point #1: Gentleness is Part of the Character of Christ.

- “28 Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am **gentle and humble** in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)
- “Say to Daughter Zion, ‘See, your king comes to you, **gentle** and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’” (Matthew 21:5)
- “By the **humility and gentleness** of Christ, I appeal to you...” (2 Corinthians 10:1)

## Point #2: Christians Should Be Gentle People:

### In our relationships with other Christians:

- “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.” (Ephesians 4:2)
- “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” (Colossians 3:12)

### In our relationships with outsiders:

- “Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be **gentle** toward everyone.” (Titus 3:1-2)
- “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with **gentleness** and respect” (1 Peter 3:15)

### When we’re helping people overcome sin or doctrinal errors:

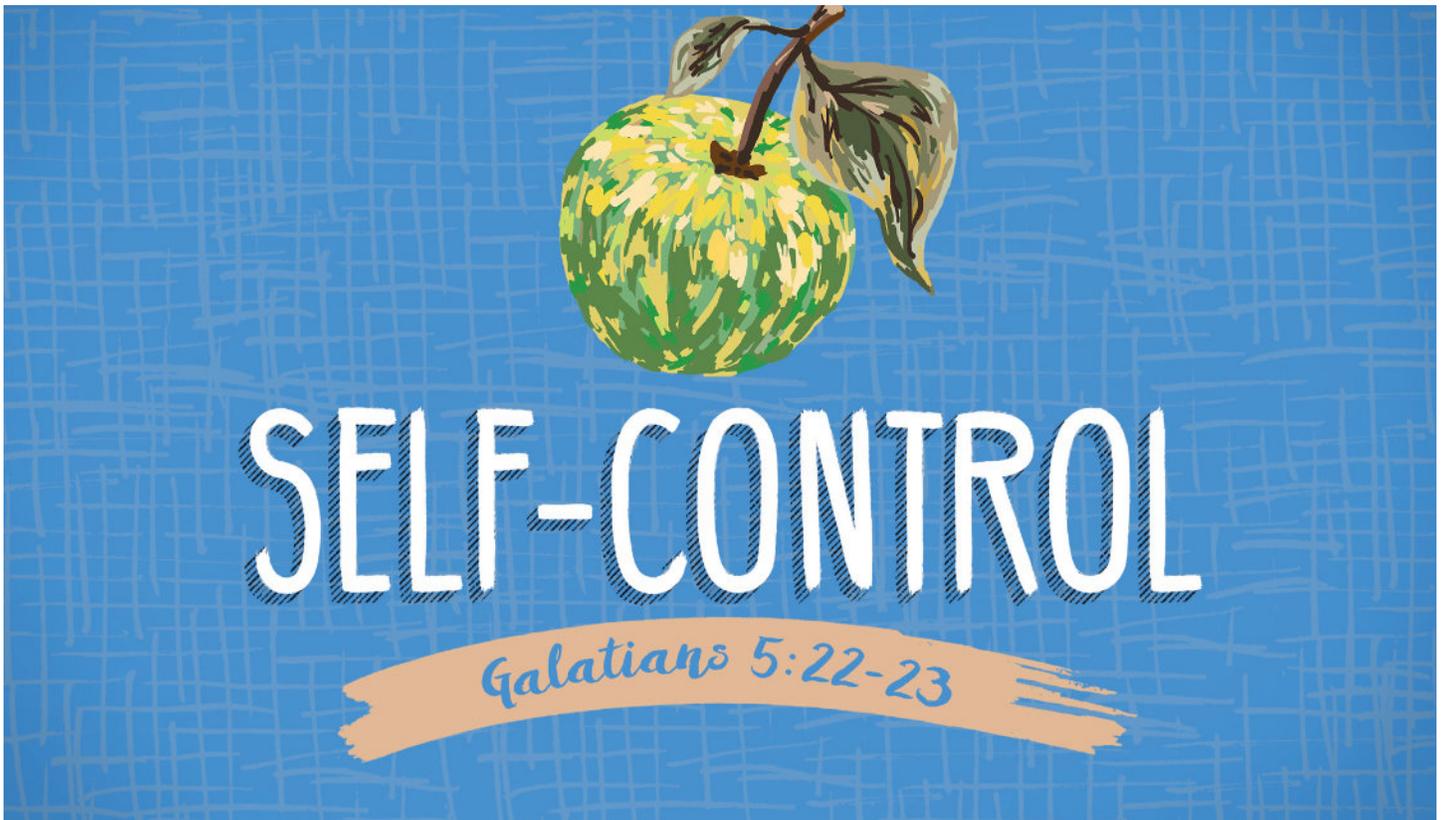
- “Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person **gently**. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.” (Galatians 6:1)
- “Opponents must be **gently** instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth...” (2 Timothy 2:25)

### When we encounter the Word of God:

- “Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and **humbly** accept the word planted in you, which can save you.” (James 1:21)

### In every situation:

- “Blessed are the **meek**, for they will inherit the earth.” (Matthew 5:5)
- “But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and **gentleness**.” (1 Timothy 6:11)
- “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the **humility** that comes from wisdom.” (James 3:13)



## Words of Wisdom about Self-Control

Roughly a thousand years before the birth of Jesus, King Solomon shared these words of wisdom about self-control:

“Better a patient person than a warrior, one with self-control than one who takes a city” (**Proverbs 16:32**)

“Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control.” (**Proverbs 25:28**)

Solomon’s words were countercultural when they were written, and they continue to be countercultural today. His culture, much like our own, placed a high value on brute strength and military prowess. Solomon’s father David certainly had that kind of reputation. For example, the people of Israel celebrated the “tens of thousands” of enemies he killed even before he became King. Later on in life, David surrounded himself with a band of “mighty warriors.” He was even known to have killed wild bears and lions during his time as a shepherd. And as you read the story of David’s rise to power, it’s obvious that his victory over Goliath is where it all began.

Despite all that, Solomon teaches us that there’s something even more important than brute strength and combat ability: **self-control**. It’s better to be disciplined than powerful, because a lack of self-control leaves you vulnerable to the enemy’s attacks. These are important principles for us to keep in mind as we study the topic of self-control.

## What is Self-Control All About?

Self-control is the last thing mentioned in Paul’s description of the Fruit of the Spirit, but that doesn’t mean it’s the least important. I would say that it’s mentioned last as a way of emphasizing that none of the preceding characteristics can be properly cultivated without exercising self-control. Things like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and faithfulness aren’t going to accidentally become part of a Christian’s heart and lifestyle; they have to be intentionally cultivated. We can all recognize that there are a lot of distractions in our lives that make it hard to grow in our faith, and we need to have the discipline or self-control to not let those prevent the Holy Spirit from growing a harvest of righteousness in our lives. We need to stop the weeds from growing up and choking out the good fruit that Paul has been talking about.

The word Paul uses here combines the word for *inner* with the word for *strength, power, or rule*. Maybe you can see how those words would combine to mean self-control. We are “**ruling over ourselves**”—and more specifically those urges and temptations we all face that lead us *away* from Jesus instead of *towards* him. The Theological Lexicon of the New Testament says that this word refers to “the person who is master of himself,” especially in the sense of mastering the unhealthy, ungodly impulses that we all feel.

## Faith Lessons from Other Passages that use this Word:

### 1. We Need Self-Control to Resist Temptation:

- “After he had washed his face, he came out and, **controlling himself**, said, “Serve the food.” (Genesis 43:31... when Joseph recognized his brothers in Egypt and probably wanted to harm them)
- “Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I do. But if they cannot **control themselves**, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.” (1 Corinthians 7:9)
- “As Paul talked about righteousness, **self-control** and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, “That’s enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you.” (Acts 24:25)

### 2. We Need Self-Control to be Effective and Productive

- “5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, **self-control**; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being *ineffective* and *unproductive* in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:5-7)

### 3. We Need Self-Control to “Finish the Race”

- “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into **strict training**. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.” (1 Corinthians 9:24-25. Note: “Strict training” is the same word for self-control.)

### 4. Self-Control is a Characteristic of Godly Leaders:

- “6 An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. 7 Since an overseer manages God’s household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. 8 Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is **self-controlled**, upright, holy and disciplined.” (Titus 1:6-8)

## Examples from the Life of Jesus

### 1. Early Morning Prayers (Mark 1:35)

- The discipline to wake up early and make quiet time with God a priority.

### 2. Overcoming the Temptations in the Wilderness (Matthew 4).

- The self-control to resist temptations.

### 3. When the People Tried to Make Jesus King (John 6:15)

- The self-control to resist the allure of worldly power and fame.

### 4. Praying in the Garden (Luke 22:42)

- The discipline to submit to the will of God.

### 5. Healing the Soldier in the Garden (Luke 22:51)

- The self-control to resist getting even

### 6. During the Trial (Matthew 26:63)

- Not feeling the need to clear his name or have the last word.

### 7. Forgiving the Soldiers on the Cross (Luke 23:34)

- The inner-strength to love his enemies and pray for the ones persecuting him.

## Application:

- Be prayerful and honest about the “weeds” (distractions, temptations, idols) that are popping up in your life that are stopping you from experiencing the Fruit of the Spirit.
- If you want to experience the Fruit of the Spirit, stop watering the weeds! Don’t give time and space to the wrong things.
- When you set spiritual goals, consider making them “S.M.A.R.T.”
  - Specific — Not too vague.
  - Measurable — You know if you did it.
  - Achievable — Challenging but possible.
  - Relevant — Helps you achieve your goal
  - Time-Bound — There’s a deadline.