

Fruit of the Spirit Series
=GENTLENESS=

Base Passage: Gal. 5:22-23

Reminder

As we continue this series on the fruit of the Spirit, let's all make a concerted effort to examine the scriptures, and ourselves, to learn:

- ~ What does this particular "fruit" look like?
- ~ Why is it important?
- ~ Do I see it growing in my life?
- ~ If so, is it flourishing, or do I need to give it extra attention?

The Nature of Gentleness

The fifth fruit of the Spirit, **gentleness/kindness** comes from the Greek word **chrestotes**, which means graciousness, kindness. Other synonyms are tenderness, warmth, moral goodness, gentleness. It is the opposite of roughness, meanness, harshness, coldness, and combativeness. Indeed, gentleness is rooted in love and peace. Some may look at gentle-hearted people as being weak and wimpy, but in a world filled with people willing to step on others to get ahead, those displaying gentleness are more concerned with doing the right thing and treating others with care, respect and kindness.

Discussion Question: What do you think of when you hear the word gentle? As our ultimate example, can you think of some scenes from the life of Jesus that demonstrate what a gentle person He was toward others?

The Manifestation of Gentleness

Accepting his party's nomination in 1988, President George H. W. Bush called for a "kinder, gentler nation." Instead, in the intervening 35 years, it seems like our country has only grown more ugly and mean-spirited. Rather than showing compassion and kindness, people seem bent on criticizing and finger-pointing. This may be because so many of them do not have inner peace themselves. A person who has peace, and is at peace with his situation, is often more prone to follow a path of peace and gentleness as they interact with others. Kindness costs us nothing, but it paves the way for people to get along peaceably and happily. It is important that children learn to be kind and why it is important.

Discussion Question: How does it make you feel when you are the recipient of an unexpected act of kindness? How does it make you feel when you initiate such an act of kindness?

The Beneficiaries of Gentleness

Like other spiritual fruit, gentleness and kindness primarily benefit others, but secondarily ourselves as well. As we show kindness to others, our own lives are, in turn, blessed with goodness. That is not to say that blessings for ourselves should be our motivation. In fact, when we show kindness to those who may not be likely to return the favor, we demonstrate our faith in a God who is faithful to take care of us and reward us justly. Let us value and practice kindness and gentleness with every opportunity that comes our way.

Discussion Question: Eph. 4:32 speaks of kindness and tenderness. Gal. 6:2 speaks of bearing one another's burdens. How is it possible to ease others' burdens with kindness?