



SPIRITUAL GROWTH REVIEW

The Fruit of the Spirit Is...

THE SECRETS OF BEING FRUITFUL

Memory Verse for this week: *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 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. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."* Matthew 11:28-30

1. How was your week? Was there anything that happened that we would want to celebrate or pray for with you? *Take 10-15 minutes to share life together. Take notes for prayer requests, and plan to follow up comments made in the weeks to come.*
2. How is gentleness different from kindness, or generic nice behavior? *Gentleness as a Fruit of the Spirit proves that gentleness differs from generic nice behavior in that gentleness stems humble heart posture given to us by the Holy Spirit that allows us to treat everyone-regardless of the circumstances- with Christlike compassion.*
3. What can we learn about gentleness how Jesus describes himself in **Matthew 11:28-30**? *Jesus life and ministry show us that gentleness is not simply mercy, but a tender-hearted care for those who are suffering with the burdens of life. His burden is light, and as Christians we know this firsthand: we do not feel the pressure to earn our way into heaven, but trust in Christ's gentleness with us even in our failures as we try to live more and more like Him.*
4. Read **Ephesians 4:1-3**. In these verses, we see Paul linking gentleness with humility, just as Christ does in Matthew 11:28-30. How are gentleness and humility related? *Although not a Fruit of the Spirit, humility is linked to gentleness through how think of ourselves. C.S. Lewis wrote that "Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less." Gentleness is demonstrated when we do not feel a need to exert our own will over others, but instead seek the good for that person even when it might not be convenient or easy for us.*
5. Gentleness isn't always something that is treasured by the world. Responding gently to someone who is offensive or hostile truly differentiates those who have the Fruit of the Spirit from the world that doesn't. When would showing gentleness seem the most surprising to a non-Christian? *Answers could range from workplace disputes to negative interactions with strangers. What's most important is consider in our day to day lives where the world isn't used to seeing gentleness.*
6. Consider **1 Peter 3:14-16**. Why is Peter concerned with way in which we share the reason for our hope in Christ? Why be gentle when the hope of Christ is ultimately death to sin? *When the world sees that we are different, they will be curious to learn more. It would certainly be strange if they inquired of us as to how we can live with such hope and we responded with a harsh diatribe and off-putting rhetoric meant to tear down! A gentle answer not only reinforces that we are different, it invites others to experience Christ's gentleness firsthand!*
7. What would giving a gentle answer for the reason for our hope sound like? If someone approached you tomorrow and asked you: what possible reason do you have to have hope

given the current state of the world? How would you respond? *It's not every day someone asks us so directly about our faith. While these situations might be rare, it is helpful to consider ahead of time what answer we might give so that no matter the circumstances we can respond as 1 Peter 3:14-16 commands us to!*

8. Look at **Titus 3:2**. Considering today's political climate, this verse can be a challenge! With so much disagreement over moral and spiritual realities, why is gentleness to be stressed? *Gentleness not only fosters peace, it ultimately refutes those who speak against Christ! We are not called to be gentle only because it is good for us, but because it is one of the ways in which the Gospel shows its transforming power and others see the glory of God through His transformation in our lives!*
9. What are some of the ways we justify a lack of gentleness in our day to day lives? *Justifications are dangerous because they are just that- ways we lie to ourselves about God's commands so that we can appear just when we aren't! It can be tempting to believe that moment requires a harsh word, or that a gentle answer will be rebuffed or even earn us more mistreatment. If we can assess our justifications beforehand we can ask God for help to act with gentleness in these situations where we are most tempted to justify ourselves.*
10. Read **Ephesians 4:1-3**. Gentleness with other Christians can be just as hard as gentleness with the world! Consider: why is gentleness so important even in our Christian community? *Christians are prone to disagree over doctrine, worship style, and many other topics of great importance. This doesn't mean that we can't be unified, however! After all, do we have to focus on being unified with people who we are already agree on everything with? It is when these disagreements crop up that gentleness with one another becomes critical: a gentle demeanor can preserve unity and is something we should be striving for.*
11. Are there circumstances that call for us to *not* be gentle? What if there are truly situations that require stern words? *Gentleness is more than tone, attitude, word choice or posture. True, there are situations that may require a more serious tone, but this does not give us permission to act with destructive force or be unconcerned with how our words and actions will be received.*
12. Does gentleness come easy for you? How can other Fruits of the Spirit we've covered aid us in exercising gentleness? *The answers here might vary heavily as some may find certain fruits more helpful than others. Yet, this is the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives: we each get individual help and ministry from God in exactly the way we need it to not only please God but to fulfill His purpose for our lives in the here and now.*
13. What are some practical steps you can take this next week to begin producing more of the fruit of gentleness? *First steps will look different for everyone. Encourage everyone to be as practical and thoughtful as possible here. The best answer is the one that is easily done and measured. For some, greater gentleness will come with greater meditation on God's word and how God loves everyone they interact with throughout the day. For others, there might be a specific person they wish to have a more gentle demeanor towards. No matter what the answer, remind them that they are not striving to produce this fruit alone and that God is with them.*
14. What are some ways you can help remind yourself to abide God as your source of gentleness this week so that we do not try and manifest this Fruit of the Spirit on our own?

For this week: Take time each day to consider who you will be interacting with. How have you interacted with them in the past? Remember: Fruits of the Spirit cannot grow without abiding in God as their source!