

The Fruit of the Spirit is Gentleness

(Galatians 5:22-23)

Pre-Session Warm Up

We have been learning about the fruit of the Spirit which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

The first fruit is **love**. Love is not just a feeling, it's an action word. And, if we truly have the fruit of the Spirit, we choose to love people with God's kind of love, even when they don't deserve it or even when it's inconvenient to us.

The second fruit is **joy**. True joy comes from having Jesus in your life and knowing that you will live forever with him in heaven. True joy comes from the inside out; not from something that happens *to* us.

The third fruit is **peace**. Because Jesus paid for our sins on the cross, we have peace with God. Now it is our responsibility to do all we can to live in peace with everyone; we're to be peacemakers.

The fourth fruit is **patience**. Patience is trusting that God has a difficult situation under control and being willing to wait for Him to solve the problem. It's being willing to forgive others when they do things that bug us because you know that God has forgiven you for so much. Patience is not something that you are born with; you have to develop it. It takes great courage and faith to wait upon God's timing and for His purposes in your life to be fulfilled.

The fifth fruit is **kindness**. Just like love, joy, peace, and patience; kindness is not just a feeling, it's an action word. God's kind of *kindness* is self-sacrificing; it's having compassion on others and being willing to do something for them without expecting to get anything in return.

The sixth fruit is **goodness**. Goodness involves doing things that are right, but it goes way beyond staying out of trouble. Doing things God's way, instead of the way everyone else does them, is the definition of real goodness. We show goodness by choosing to obey

God, even when it is hard. We should be actively looking for opportunities to do what God says is the right thing to do.

The seventh fruit is **faithfulness**. Faithfulness means being true to your word. Always doing what you say you will do.

Today we're going to learn about **gentleness**.

Opening Prayer

Father, sometimes we're not as gentle as you want us to be. Sometimes we speak too quickly or don't take the time to listen to others. Teach us the importance of showing others the power of Your love and strength before we even speak a word to them. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Memory Verse

But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds... (James 3:17 NLT)

Lesson

What images come to mind when you think of the word "*gentleness*"? Often, we think of things that are soft, cuddly, delicate, or dainty. When people tell you to be gentle, what do you normally think they want you to do? (We are told to be gentle when petting an animal or when playing with a baby.) Often, we hear that word when people want us to be careful with something or to be calm with something.

If a person is *meek* or *humble*, we are describing that person's inner attitude. *Gentleness* describes a person's outward action. So, if a person has a humble heart, he or she will behave with gentleness.

Sometimes people think that a humble, gentle person is weak or babyish. But **true godly gentleness is just the opposite of weakness—it is God's power put into action with love.**

Jesus is a great example of true godly *gentleness*. Here He was *the* most powerful person to ever walk the face of this planet! He created the whole universe! He was strong and bold in the way that he

showed God's love but He did it with quiet strength. He was gentle with people's hearts. That's what **godly gentleness is—it's quietly putting God's love into action.**

On the last night of His life, Jesus knew what He was about to go through. He was God; He knew all things. He knew that the next day He would go through the most horrible torture and death that anyone could ever experience.

But He knew He was just about to return to God the Father in heaven and leave His beloved disciples here on earth. And before going back to heaven, He wanted to give His disciples some last-minute instructions to get them ready to live without Him. So, He got them all together in the upper room and had the last supper with them.

During dinner the devil spoke to Judas' heart and told him that this was the night to carry out his evil plan to betray Jesus.

Then, after dinner Jesus did a very odd thing...

John 13:2-5

It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. (3) Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. (4) So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, (5) and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.

Why would Jesus wash the disciple's feet? The people in Jesus' day wore sandals, and streets were dusty. Just like we take our shoes off when going into someone's home so that we don't track dirt into the house, it was customary in Jesus' day to wash guests' feet when they arrived at your home. Foot washing was usually a job for a household servant to carry out.

Can you imagine? Jesus, the Almighty Creator of the universe, washing dirty feet? What do you think Jesus wanted to teach His followers? Even though He was God Himself, He was not too proud to

be a servant. He was serving them with a humble heart. If Jesus is willing to serve, then we must also be servants, willing to serve in any way that glorifies God with a humble heart.

A gentle person is mellow and harmless. He's not concerned about acting important or making others like him. The Lord Jesus was serving His disciples because He loved them. He was putting His love into action without saying a word.

If Jesus is your Savior, God wants you to serve others with a humble heart. The Bible says that "*whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone...*" (Galatians 6:10 NLT). That means, you are to look for every chance you can to do something nice for someone else. Jesus was teaching the disciples a lesson about true greatness—that it comes when you **quietly put God's love into action.**

Do you think it was hard for Jesus to wash Judas' feet, knowing that Judas was going to betray Him? How would you feel if you were Jesus? Jesus loved Judas and wanted to give him one last opportunity to choose NOT to do the evil thing he was planning. Without saying a word to Judas, Jesus was showing His love to him in gentleness.

John 13:12

After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing?"

The Lord wanted to be sure that His disciples understood why He had washed their feet. By His action He was showing His love and He was teaching them a truth. Do you know what Jesus was trying to teach them? If the Master and Lord is willing to humble Himself and be a servant by washing the disciple's feet, then the disciples should be willing to be servants, also.

Why is it sometimes hard to serve others with a humble heart? We want to be served; we want our own rights; we like to do important things so others will see and reward us. Yet Jesus told His disciples,

“Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant...” (Mark 10:43 NLT). That means if you want to truly please God, you will serve others with a humble heart. You may not be noticed or thanked here on earth, but God will reward you someday. If Jesus is your example, you won’t be too proud to do jobs that seem unimportant.

John 13:15

I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.

God has given each one of us a job to do, and that’s to show others what His love looks like. And the way He wants us to show others His kind of love is by quietly putting God’s love into action with a humble heart.

Often, we don’t even have to say a word to others—we speak our love for Jesus’ gift on the cross through the way we live our lives.

Gentleness is a powerful thing. God gives us gentleness to show the power of love without words. We can be gentle by being polite to others and by thinking of others before ourselves. We can help others when they need something, listen instead of talking, and learn from other people. Jesus showed us what gentleness looks like, and it’s our job to follow His example.

What are some ways you can quietly put God’s love in action? [Teacher, lead the children in a discussion. Help them discover the following:

- Listening to people instead of talking
- Smiling at strangers
- Comforting friends when they are down
- Being polite
- Thinking of others before our selves

- Being willing to learn from others.

We can show God’s love to others through our own gentle actions. Let your actions do the speaking.

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You for giving us everything we need to quietly show the power of Your love to others. Thank You, for showing us what gentleness looks like by sending Jesus to walk on the earth to die on the cross for our sins. Please help gentleness grow inside our lives, giving us hearts filled with Your love. Help us listen to Your gentle whisper speaking to us about the different ways we can share Your love with others. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Gentleness is the Heart of God

Give each child a pre-cut, eighteen-inch piece of thick wire. Set out a box of Styrofoam packing “peanuts”. Have children string the packing peanuts onto their pieces of wire, making sure to leave about an inch of space at one end of the wire. When children have finished, have them form a heart shape with the wire, twisting the two ends together.

Snack

Lemon aid.

Game Center

Show How You Grow

Have children form pairs. Let each pair draw one of the following

Gentle Action Cards. Give them a few minutes to practice pantomiming the situations. Remind them not to say a word but to work together and let their actions do the speaking. Let the other children guess the situation the team is pantomiming.

- Smiling at or being friendly to someone who seems lonely
- Letting someone else go first to ride your new bike
- Letting someone borrow your pencil when his or hers breaks
- Sharing your lunch with someone who forgot his or hers
- Listening to someone else's problem
- Comforting someone who is hurting
- Learning from someone else's experiences
- Being excited with someone and sharing their joy at getting a good grade
- Being sad with someone who is sad about losing the soccer match
- Letting someone know you don't like what that person is doing without getting angry.

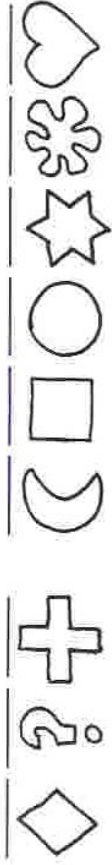
Or, use the following questions in a game or discussion of your choice:

1. What is gentleness?
2. In what simple ways can you try to show gentleness to others?
3. What are some ways you can quietly put God's love in action?
4. When has someone shown gentleness to you?
5. How did it make you feel when someone was gentle in his or her actions towards you?

GENTLENESS

Gentleness means meek or soft-mannered.

What did Jesus say about himself?



Matthew 11:29 NIV

