



# FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

GENTLENESS

*Family Study Guides*

# FRUIT OF GOD'S SPIRIT

## *"Gentleness or Meekness"*

### Family Study Guide

#### Objectives:

- Define gentleness as submission to God, calmness of spirit and mildness of temper.
- Explain the importance of treating everything and everyone we meet with gentleness.
- List and describe how to experience gentleness even in harsh circumstances.
- Discuss Christ's examples of showing gentleness to others.
- Review how Paul's conversion illustrates power under God's control.

#### Definition: Gentleness

The word for "gentleness" in the New Testament is Greek word '*prautes*.' The Greeks often used pictures to describe the words they were using. Their definition of gentleness was "*power under control*," and they described it with a picture of a very powerful horse that had been tamed. The concept of gentleness can be compared to a wild animal with its power in check.

Many of you have seen horse-shows or videos with a small child controlling a huge horse. While the horse could easily overpower the child, it chooses to be gentle and submissive. **James 3:3** says, "*Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body.*"

With God's spirit working with us as His people, we can have the same attitude of willingly submitting ourselves to God's will in every aspect of our lives.

Gentleness (Gr. *Prautes*) has also been defined as "*acquiescence to authority and consideration of others*" (NET2 Bible Notes). So, a primary meaning is—that like a gentled horse—we willingly submit to God's power over us and submit to His will. Since a primary command from God is to love one another and "*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ*" (Ephesians 5:21)—gentleness is both an act of love for God, and love for man.

Gentleness is power or strength under control; it's the submission of our strength and will to God's control and purpose. Gentleness or meekness is not weakness, but is strength under control. Therefore, gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit that brings us under God's control.

#### Memory Verses:

**2 Timothy 2:24** *And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel, but be gentle to all....*

**Philippians 4:5** *Let your gentleness be known to all men....*

#### Some things to consider and discuss:

**Philippians 4:5** is quite challenging, "*Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near*" (NIV).

Behaving in a gentle manner, especially under difficult circumstances, is not very easy. While displaying the fruit of gentleness is not fully possible without God's spirit and power working with us, we do have our part in the process of becoming Christ-like. This is what we must do.

1. **Pursue it.** We can't just sit back and hope that we'll become gentle.

**1 Timothy 6:11** says, "*But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.*"

The word, "pursue" means to chase after it until you find it.

2. **Put it on.** Once we see and understand what gentleness is, we are to clothe ourselves with it. We have to purposely and voluntarily submit to God—and decide to put it on, much like we put on our clothes.  
**Colossians 3:12 (NIV)** *“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”*
3. **Know our limitations.** As with all the fruit of the Spirit—realize that these fruits come from God, and we must rely on Him—not on our own goodness.

**Let’s look at the example of Jesus Christ and how He displayed a gentle spirit.**

Jesus is the perfect example of being truly gentle, that is, having power or strength under control. On Passover evening, Jesus illustrated to his disciples how a humble, gentle person behaves. Jesus was the leader, the “boss,” the master—but notice what he was like in attitude and actions:

**John 13:4-5 (NLT)** *So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.*

This was generally the job of a servant, but he was showing them what our attitudes should be towards one-another. He then told them:

**John 13:14-17 (NLT)** *And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. I tell you the truth, slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message. Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them.*

Jesus’ friends did not grasp the need for a humble and gentle attitude. A short time after Jesus washed their feet, some of them went with Jesus to the Garden of Gethsemane. Here they reacted in “normal” manner according to their human nature. They wanted to use “power” to hurt or destroy.

**Mark 14:43 (ISV)** *Just then, while Jesus was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. A crowd armed with swords and clubs was with him.*

**Luke 22:49-50 (ISV)** *When those who were around Jesus saw what was about to take place, they asked, “Lord, should we attack with our swords?” Then one of them struck the high priest’s servant, cutting off his right ear.*

They reacted in a way that most people would. Get somebody back. Get them before they get us. We’ll show them! Jesus had the power to easily destroy all of those who were attacking him. But notice how Jesus reacted:

**Matthew 26:52-53 (NLT)** *“Put away your sword,” Jesus told him. “Those who use the sword will die by the sword. Don’t you realize that I could ask my Father for thousands of angels to protect us, and he would send them instantly?”*

**Luke 22:51 (NLT)** *But Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he touched the wounded man’s ear and healed him.*

Jesus tells us:

**Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT)** *“Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke fits perfectly, and the burden I give you is light.”*

Numerous times Jesus had compassion for the crowds. He gave of himself for them. He taught them. He healed those who were sick. He cast demons and evil spirits out of those who were possessed. He comforted those who were mourning. He raised the dead back to life. Jesus was a gentle man.

### Discussion Questions:

- ✓ Look at **John 18:5**, which shows what happened right before the disciples used their weapons. Why do you think Jesus chose to show His power in this way?
- ✓ At one point of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (**Matthew 5**), he said "*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*" Why would Jesus choose those who are meek, or gentle, to rule the earth?
- ✓ The book of Revelation tells us that before the Millennium is set up, Jesus will have to come not with gentleness, but with righteous anger. **Revelation 19:15 (NLT)** *From his mouth came a sharp sword to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron rod. He will release the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty...*
  - Why do you think Jesus will not deal gently at that time?
  - In **Matthew 26:52-53** Jesus told the disciples not to take up their swords and make war. He is described as being gentle.
  - Why do you think Jesus is gentle with people most times, but not at other times?
  - Which way do you think God would rather deal with you? And why?

### A Biblical Example – Apostle Paul

A direct opposite example of gentleness and meekness was displayed in a man named Saul. He was a very powerful and cruel man in New Testament who ruthlessly persecuted the early followers of Christ. The Bible describes him this way: "*But Saul was trying to destroy the church; entering one house after another, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison*" (**Acts 8:3 NET**).

His story, however, shows how a person can use God's Spirit to become Christ-like when they submit to God's will.

One day when Saul was on his way to persecute more Christians, God got his attention by suddenly making him blind.

**Acts 9:1-6, 8 (NLT)** *Meanwhile, Saul was uttering threats with every breath and was eager to kill the Lord's followers. So, he went to the high priest. He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains. As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?"*

*"Who are you, lord?" Saul asked. And the voice replied, "I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." Saul picked himself up off the ground, but when he opened his eyes he was blind. So his companions led him by the hand to Damascus. 9 He remained there blind for three days and did not eat or drink.*

Compared to what Saul deserved, God treated him quite gently, getting his attention through temporary blindness. Treating someone gently does not always mean avoiding needed correction.

Once God got his attention, Saul repented of his evil attitude and actions, and eventually became the person we know as the Apostle Paul. The dramatic change from selfishness, self-will and evil treatment of others to Christ-like gentle behavior is illustrated in his response to the members of the church in Corinth.

Several members in the Corinth congregation were criticizing Paul. They told him they did not like his sermons and that he wasn't a very good speaker. They said he was a weak pastor with a lousy personality, and that they could do a much better job than he was doing.

How would you react if people were saying these types of things about you?

Here is how Paul responded to the congregation:

**2 Corinthians 13:7-10 (Easy English Bible)** *Now we pray to God that you will do nothing wrong. We do not pray this to show good things about ourselves. We only want you to do what is right. We want that, even if we seem to have failed. We are happy when we are weak. If our weakness helps you to be strong, then we are happy. We want you to become completely as God wants you to be. We pray for that also. I am writing these things to you while I am away from you. So then, when I arrive, I will not need to be angry with you. I will not have to use my authority to punish you. The Lord gave this authority to me so that I could help you to become stronger. He did not give it to me so that I could destroy you.*

Notice also Paul's "power under control" in his letter to the members of the church at Thessalonica:

**1 Thessalonians 2:7-8 (NCV)** *even though as apostles of Christ we could have used our authority over you. But we were very gentle with you, like a mother caring for her little children. Because we loved you...*

#### Discussion Questions:

- ✓ How does Paul's story illustrate "power under control"?
- ✓ Can you think of other Biblical examples where God has corrected His children with gentleness? Have you ever been corrected in way gently, when it could have been done in a harsh way? How did it feel?
- ✓ Paul was an important leader in the church. How could he have chosen to use his power? Why was it better to use it the way he did?

#### Old Testament Example: Isaac - Genesis 26; 20-22, 22-33

Isaac is an example of gentleness when he kept his temper and continued to find an answer to his problem. When you discuss this story, point out the attribute of gentleness as one that a godly person uses.

#### Discussion Questions:

- ✓ Read verse 28 through 31—How did Isaac become a positive example to those around him? What could have been a different outcome if he had chosen to handle the conflict with harshness?
- ✓ Read verses 22-25 and verse 32-33—How did God show His power when Isaac chose gentleness? What lesson is that for us?

#### Possible Family Discussions or Activities:

1. Look up **1 Thessalonians 2:7** with your family. What does it mean?
2. As a family discuss how to show gentleness in these situations:  
[You may want to have some fun by role-playing a rude, disrespectful, harsh way of responding and then showing a gentle way of responding. Then discuss how the right or wrong responses would feel and affect the outcome of the scenario.]
  - You are working on a really fun project and your brother/sister wants you to come help them do something else. How can you answer them in a kind and gentle way?
  - Your brother/sister is riding your bike with their friend, but without your parents' permission. What can you say with a gentle tone?

- You are working on a project at school with teammates. Everyone is fussing that they want to be the team captain. How can you help by showing a calm and gentle attitude?
  - Mom asks you to take out the trash right away, but you need at least 5 more minutes to be able to stop the game you're playing. Use gentle words to respond.
3. Discuss ways to show gentleness and be more considerate to someone in your family this week. Talk about ways family members can show gentleness when disagreements or quarrels arise.
  4. Think of actual situations that have happened. Contrast these with situations where the opposite occurred and the situation became angry and unhappy. How could gentleness have changed that?
  5. Let your children act out a skit where one is angry and one is gentle. Change roles. How do body language and tone of voice contribute to the act of gentleness? Talk about the value of gentleness. Look for acts of gentleness. Reward with stickers.
  6. Discuss or give an example of gentleness that you have seen.
  7. As a family, read **1 Peter 3:8-9**. Relate it to the story of David and Abigail.
  8. Part of Paul's advice to Timothy on how to be a spiritual leader is in **1 Timothy 5:1-2**. God has called us to be leaders for His Kingdom. What can we learn from this advice?
  9. Discuss the current political climate in the United States today. How many times do you see people behaving with a meek and gentle attitude? Why might we not see gentleness in society today? What causes people to be harsh instead?
  10. Describe and give examples of behavior that is mean or harsh and how the behavior can be changed to become gentler. Parents should emphasize to the children that when all family members are gentle with each other, everyone wins and the family is happier.
  11. Discuss other Biblical examples of those who showed gentleness. An example might be Moses.

#### Additional Resources that you can use in your family studies:

- <https://www.ucg.org/sermons/fruits-of-the-spirit-part-2-meekness>
- UCG Booklet: The Power of the Holy Spirit <https://www.ucg.org/bible-study-tools/booklets/the-power-of-the-holy-spirit>
- UCG E-Booklet: The Fruit of the Spirit <https://www.ucg.org/bible-study-tools/ebooklet/the-fruit-of-the-spirit>
- UCG Teen Bible Study Guide: "The Holy Spirit" <https://www.ucg.org/bible-study-tools/teen-bible-study-guides/the-holy-spirit>
- *Beyond Today* article: "Gentleness: The Mark of a Christian" <https://www.ucg.org/the-good-news/gentleness-the-mark-of-a-christian>
- *Beyond Today* article: "The Meek" <https://www.ucg.org/beyond-today/the-meek>

**Possible Classroom Activities  
for the D-6 Summary Lessons**

1. **Journal:** Copy the word 'gentleness' and a synonym along with the memory verse.
2. If you are using a visual building the FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT tree, devote some time for the children to cut, color and attach the fruit of gentleness on their tree.
3. Bring in items that require gentleness: a baby doll (to represent newborn babies), stuffed animals (to represent pets), etc. Talk about why it's important to be gentle.
4. Have students look up a video on the Internet about a gentle horse.
  - a. Discuss different ways that the example of the horse having "power under control" is like the way we need to be under God's control.
  - b. How can we use this concept to help us control our attitudes, reactions and responses to life's circumstances?
  - c. Discuss Jesus' example in **1 Peter 2:18-25** and how we can use His example to respond in a gentle manner?
5. **Balloon Object Lesson**

Give each child an inflated balloon and a small empty aluminum can. What would happen to the shape of the can if you kicked it to move it? (It might get dented or crushed.) Instead, gently rub an inflated balloon in your hair. Then, place it next to the can. The can will roll toward the balloon, and you can use the static electricity to move the can without denting or crushing it. Talk about the power of gentleness through this object lesson. Want some extra fun? Place some painter's tape a few feet apart to create a starting and finish line and race your cans using static electricity. Remind the children to be gentle! The can cannot be dented or destroyed when it crosses the finish line.
6. **Tic Tac Toe**

Write questions based on the lesson. Draw a tic tac toe figure on the board. Break the class into X's and O's. Read a question for the X's. If the answer is correct they get to place an x where they wish on the board. If incorrect, no x. Continue questions alternating the teams. The first team to get 3 in a row wins.
7. **Put on Gentleness**

Get a free printable of paper dolls and clothing/accessory items from an internet site such as this one: <https://www.thesprucecrafts.com/printable-paper-dolls-1253081>. For each item of clothing or accessory, have the children write words describing an intentional act of gentleness. For example—"Hug my sister when she's frustrated". You may want to brainstorm some of these as a class and post them where they are visible to the children. Then have the children color and design the dolls make a paper replica of themselves. Talk about how we have to choose to "put on" gentleness just like they chose what clothing and accessories to put on their paper doll.

8. Have the class create and then act out a skit where someone is angry and another person who is gentle. Have them change roles.
  - a. What did they look like (body language)? What tone of voice did they have (high-pitched and anxious, low and mad, slow and soothing, fast and frustrated)?
  - b. What types of words were used? Who had to be the last one to speak?
  - c. Discuss reactions to harsh words and actions as opposed to the use of gentle words and actions. Discuss the following scriptures:
    - i. **Ephesians 4:29** *“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”*
    - ii. **Proverbs 15:1** *“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”*
    - iii. **Proverbs 25:15 (NCV)** *With patience you can convince a ruler, and a gentle word can get through to the hard-headed.*
  
9. **Promote Gentleness**

Bring some creative supplies for your tweens or teens. Have them work in groups to create a poster or product promoting the fruit of gentleness in today’s society. What slogan, scripture, and visuals would be effective in reminding or persuading others to be gentle? **Another option:** Have them create a Gentleness blog or vlog (video log) journaling their experience with showing gentleness to others over the course of a couple weeks. Have them share it with their class or their congregation.
  
10. During the class look for acts of gentleness. Reward with stickers.
  
11. Discuss other biblical examples of showing gentleness or meekness: (Moses; Abigail toward David; Ruth to Naomi).