

The Fruit of the Spirit



A PRACTICAL STUDY GUIDE



BUT THE HOLY SPIRIT PRODUCES

THIS KIND OF FRUIT IN OUR LIVES:

LOVE, JOY, PEACE, PATIENCE,

KINDNESS, GOODNESS, FAITHFULNESS,

GENTLENESS, AND SELF-CONTROL.

THERE IS NO LAW

AGAINST THESE THINGS!

GALATIANS 5:22, 23 (NLT)

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BECOMING LIKE Lener

he fruit of the Spirit appears in a fascinating chapter of the book of Galatians that begins with Paul reminding us of the *freedom* that we have obtained in Christ.

"Freedom?" you might think. Isn't being a Christian about following certain rules and avoiding doing certain things? For some, it would seem that that is the point of the gospel.

However, "for Paul 'freedom' is the very heart of the gospel: God sets us free through Christ and in the Spirit, so that we can love God and others"

That freedom sometimes eludes us, though. In Galatians 5, Paul reminds us of "two forces that are constantly fighting each other" (v. 17 NLT), which produce very different effects on our lives: the

works of the flesh (vs. 19-21) vs the fruit of the Spirit (vs. 22, 23). The former keep us chained to our sinful nature, whereas the latter gives us the freedom to truly love. "How can we break the chains of the 'sinful nature'?" you may ask. Paul gives a simple but profound answer: by allowing the Holy Spirit to "guide [our] lives" (v. 16 NLT), which leads us to the climax—and the focus of this study guide:

"But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!" (Galatians 5:22, 23 NLT).

That "but" is vital. Paul is saying that in Christ we can be different, we can be the "but" to the things going wrong in our world. Yes,



people are selfish but *you* can be loving. Yes, people are unkind but *you* can be kind...

By the way, did you notice that the Bible speaks of the fruit of the Spirit in *singular?* Here is an image that explains this concept very well: think of the fruit of the Spirit as a single orange that is made up of nine segments. Because, in reality, the fruit of the Spirit is a "single character package." It is not a list of items for us to pick and choose. When the Holy Spirit acts in our lives, He produces in us the fruit as a whole! He changes us from the inside out

Why is this important? According to Romans 8:29 (NLT), God's purpose is to *make us like Jesus*: "For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son..."



"WE CAN BECOME MORE LIKE JESUS BY ALLOWING AND INVITING THE HOLY SPIRIT TO LIVE WITHIN US TO PRODUCE HIS FRUIT IN US."

We may wonder, "Okay, how does that happen? How do we become more like Jesus?" This illustration may be helpful here:

"It's no good giving me a play like *Hamlet* or *King Lear*, and telling me to write a play like that. Shakespeare could do it. I can't.

And it's no good showing me a life like the life of Jesus and telling me to live a life like that. Jesus could do it, I can't.

But if the genius of Shakespeare could come and live in me, then I could write plays like his.

And if the Spirit of Jesus could come and live in me, then I could live a life like his."³

We can become more like Jesus by allowing and inviting the Holy Spirit to live within us to produce His fruit in us. That is the invitation we want to extend to you in the following chapters.

It will do no good to go through each chapter and simply *read* about each "segment" of the fruit of the Spirit. You must go in with the attitude of *wanting* the Spirit to actually *do* something within you. Will *you* be fertile soil for Him? That is entirely up to you.



Alexandra Mora *Editor EUD Youth Ministries*



PRAYER

The most important thing you can do as you begin this journey on the fruit of the Spirit is to invite God to be a part of it. In fact, there is no fruit of the Spirit without God, so connecting with Him through prayer will be vital if you want this study guide to make a difference in your life. Pray that God will prepare the soil of your heart, so that it can be the perfect place for His fruit to grow. Pray that He will use the words in every chapter to speak to you personally. Pray that He will present opportunities in your life for you to grow and develop the fruit of the Spirit. Call upon the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to what you need to learn and, perhaps, change in your life so that it can be a fruitful life in Him.

Start a prayer journal where you honestly write down where you find yourself regarding each fruit of the Spirit, and how you would like God to help you grow. Think about specific personal steps that you can take to grow as a follower of Jesus and share them with God. Use your prayer journal to *communicate* with God during this hopefully life-changing experience. With time, you will be able to go back to your journal and see how you have grown with God's help.

In each chapter, you will also find a *Prayer of the Day,* which aims to focus your prayer time on the topic of the day. This short prayer after the main text should get you started and prompt you to invite the Holy Spirit to act in your life in a specific way.





ICEBREAKER AND PERSONAL CHALLENGE

If you want to get as much as possible out of this study guide, pay close attention to both the icebreaker and the personal challenge of each chapter. The *Icebreaker* is a great way to start each chapter, because it helps you realize where you find yourself with the topic. A group experience is all the more valuable here because it allows you to consider more points of view and also learn from others. After the text, the *Personal Challenge* wants to encourage you to take action. Please embrace it! Because our world will only be better if we not just learn about the fruit of the Spirit but actually cultivate it in our lives.











CHAPTER 1





"IF WE LOVE EACH OTHER, GOD LIVES IN US, AND HIS LOVE IS BROUGHT TO FULL EXPRESSION IN US."

1 JOHN 4:12 (NLT)



WHAT IS LOVE, ANYWAY?

- 1. Give everyone a blank sheet of paper and ask **one** of the questions below.
- 2. Have them write their answer in one short sentence and not sign the paper, so the answers remain anonymous. Then everyone should fold their paper in half, so that no one can see what's written on it..
- 3. Then have everyone stand up and toss the paper to someone across the room.
- 4. Then they should toss the paper to someone else and then toss it again one more time.
- 5. After three tosses, they should open the paper and one by one take turns quickly reading what is written.

Questions for Icebreaker-Paper toss:

/	What does true love look like in action?				
/	How do you know someone loves you?				
/	How would you define love? Try to come up with your own original metaphor to describe it. Complete the sentence:				
/	What is love NOT like? Complete the sentence: Love is not				
/	How could you love someone who hurt a family member or someone you love?				

FINAL REFLECTION:

Did anyone's answer surprise you? How so? What did you learn? Share with the group.

Note: If you are doing this icebreaker on your own, answer all questions.

HOW'S YOUR LOVE LIFE?



he doors of the church were bolted and locked. Inside, a group of Adventist believers clung to each other tearfully as they prayed earnestly for God to spare their lives. Hundreds of thousands had already died in the ongoing Rwandan genocide, and they knew that, without a miracle, they would be next.

Suddenly, there was a loud banging on the doors. Everyone held their breath as they realized their worst fears were coming true. Would the doors hold?

"Dear Jesus, please save us!" some cried.

However, shortly after, the doors splintered under the pressure as the vicious mob broke through.

The believers pressed into a tight circle near the pulpit of the church as the killers surrounded them. "Who is the leader of this group?" shouted a young man, who appeared to be leading the mob. The Seventh-day Adventist pastor slowly raised his hand. "I am," he replied calmly. The young mob leader rushed toward the pastor with a machete. Mayhem and screaming ensued as the mob began to attack. It was a horrific scene, and only a few of the believers managed to escape alive.

A couple of days later, after the killers had moved on, those who had survived came back to collect the dead bodies. However, when they were picking up the dead, they found one woman's heart was still beating. Her name was Marie. She was the beloved wife of the pastor who had been the first to die in the massacre. With hope in their hearts, they rushed Marie to a nearby hospital, praying that God would spare her life. Marie's fight for life was intense, but she survived. After months of treatment and rehabilitation, Marie returned home and slowly began to rebuild her life. However, as she regained her health and strength, she determined that she would not live in bitterness, nor did she want her husband's death to be in vain.



Discovering that some of the killers had been captured and were in a nearby prison, Marie went to see them and take them food. As time passed, she became the mother of that prison, regularly bringing the prisoners food and blankets and supplying their needs.

One day, while lovingly ministering to the prisoners, a young man named Rukundo dropped to the floor in front of her and began kissing her feet.

"Madam, do you remember me?" he asked.

Marie swallowed hard as she suddenly recognized his face. It was the young mob leader who had killed her husband.

"Madam, would you forgive me?" he asked, with tears in his eyes.

She pulled the young man up and hugged him. "I have already forgiven you, son. I have decided in my heart that I will not hate. I will not waste my years with bitterness or grudges. I just want to share the love of Jesus."

For several months, Marie studied the Bible with Rukundo and eventually he gave his life to Jesus and was baptized. A few years later, the government of Rwanda gave Rukundo amnesty, and he was released from prison. However, his own family had also been

murdered in the genocide. Not knowing what to do or where to go, he turned to Marie who gladly welcomed him into her home. "I will adopt you as my son," she told him, "And together we will wait for Jesus to return. Then we will meet our loved ones again."



The story I just shared above is true. Unbelievable as it seems, it really happened!

With this in mind, let me ask you, how's your *love life* going? I'm not talking about the romantic type! How are you doing at loving that classmate who constantly makes snide remarks, or the neighbor down the street who has that irritating dog? How's your *love life* when it comes to your parents or your siblings? How's your *love life* when you think of that person who hurt you so deeply?

It is easy to love people who are nice to us and who treat us well. But true love goes way deeper for a real follower of Jesus.

The Bible tells us, "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you

"It is easy to love people who are nice to us and who treat us well. But true love goes way deeper for a real follower of Jesus."

"No matter where you come from or what you look like, He treasures you simply because you are His child!"



do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. [...] 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" (Luke 6:32-35 NIV).

"So, where do we get this kind of love?" you might wonder.

This kind of love is radical, and it can only come from Jesus Himself, for Jesus IS *love*. In fact, when we look at Jesus, we see that He is a beautiful picture of not just love, but also joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Did you catch that? He is *Mr. Fruit of the Spirit Himself*, all wrapped up into one. This is not just His character. This is and was His daily life every day while living on earth. This is also how He rules the world while living in heaven. Now He wants His *love life* to become our *love life*.

The Bible also says, "Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. [...] Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:8-12 ESV).

Did you ever think deeply about how Jesus loved you *first*? You are of infinite value in His eyes, not because of your abilities, coolness factor, grades or finances. No matter where you come from or what you look like, He treasures you simply because you are His child! No matter what people say about your life, Jesus knew you were worth leaving all the glories of heaven (see Philippians 2:6-11)! He has only a simple request for you, and that is that you give Him your life, and love Him with *all your heart, soul, strength and mind*. And, of course, He wants you to love others as you love yourself (see Luke 10:27).

Let's take a few more moments to think about what practical genuine Biblical love looks like, especially as it relates to loving others.

Paul explains that "love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of

wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. [...] And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor 13:4-8,13 NIV).

Let's face it. We are all naturally selfish, self-centered human beings, the opposite of Jesus-like-love. But there is a way that we can gain this love—it's not by working to be more loving, but by learning to *stay connected* to Jesus. We stay connected to Jesus by spending time in His Word. And when we spend time with Jesus in His Word, it changes how we live and especially how we love.

So, my dear friends, if you want an amazing *love life* that will make heaven smile with joy and bring meaning and purpose to your life, start spending time with Jesus each day in prayer and in His Word. Instead of simply praying that God would teach you how to love like Jesus loves, start praying that *Mr. Love Himself* would live in you. You can't love the lost, but Jesus can *through you*. You can't reach out in love to those who spit in your face, but Jesus can *in you* by the power of His Holy Spirit.

When you ask Mr. Love Himself to live within you, everything changes. And you will be able to reflect and share the love of Jesus in radical ways as you've never done before. In fact, there is no better recipe for an amazing love life than this, because Jesus IS love!



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PRAYER OF THE DAY

Dear God, thank You for demonstrating to us what true love looks like at the Cross. We don't know how to love others as you love, especially those who have hurt us, but we ask that You come live in our hearts, through your Holy Spirit. Please love through us, as You promised to do. Thank You for answering this prayer.



"Instead of simply praying that God would teach you how to love like Jesus loves, start praying that Mr. Love Himself would live in you."

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"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."

1 Corinthians 13:13 (NIV)

- 1. What does the Bible mean when it says that we don't know God if we don't love others? Is this statement from 1 John 4:8 really true? Why?
- 2. How did Jesus demonstrate the characteristics of love found in 1 Corinthians 13 in His life while on earth? What examples come to your mind?
- 3. Do you think it's easier to live with an attitude of forgiveness or with bitterness? Explain why.
- 4. What does it mean for love to be patient ("suffer long" in the New King James version) and bear all things? What does it not mean?
- 5. Why does the Bible say that the greatest of all is love?



PERSONAL CHALLENGE

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

LOVING THE "UNI OVARIE"

In today's text, we read about Marie's incredible story, how she was able to love those who had taken from her what she loved most. Imagine what it would be like to forgive and love someone who killed a family member. It seems almost impossible, right? And yet, God can help us love like Jesus did, whose love for us drove Him to sacrifice Himself for us on the cross (see Philippians 2:6-8).

As Jesus said, loving those who love us or are nice to us is easy (see Luke 6:32-35). The hard thing is to love our "enemies", the people who have hurt us.

Think about people in your life who have hurt you in some way, people whom you need to forgive and love now. What name (or names) comes to your mind?

First of all, pray that God helps you see that person in the light of Jesus and His love for us. Pray that God would live in you (1 John 4:12) so that you truly love.

Now, prayerfully think of *practical ways* in which you can reach out to them in love and resolve to get in touch with them *today* to seek reconciliation (if possible*). This could be:

- offering forgiveness;
- deciding to talk with them instead of criticizing them behind their backs;
- helping them when they are in need, even when they have been unkind to you;
- responding in acts of kindness, even when they don't "deserve" it;
- / etc.

*Note: Please, be safe as you do this challenge. We urge you to seek professional help in the case of, for example, abuse. We do not want you to put yourself in a dangerous situation in seeking to love those who have hurt you.

"The Saviour does not bid the disciples labor to bear fruit. He tells them to abide in Him. It is through the Word that Christ abides in His followers...The life of Christ in you produces the same fruits as in Him. Living in Christ, adhering to Christ, supported by Christ, drawing nourishment from Christ [thru time in His Word], you bear fruit after the similitude of Christ" (Desire of Ages, p. 677).

When we talk about abiding, it means *staying connected* with Jesus. We want to be connected with Him at all times, and when we do this, we will love like He loves.

Do you want Mr. Love Himself to live in you?

What practical changes are you willing to make in your daily life, so that you can *abide* in Jesus and He can abide in you?

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CHAPIEK 2





"YOU MAKE KNOWN TO ME THE PATH OF LIFE; IN YOUR PRESENCE THERE IS FULLNESS OF JOY; AT YOUR RIGHT HAND ARE PLEASURES FOREVERMORE."

PSALM 16:11 (FSV)



SHATTERING YOUR LIMITING BELIEFS

I really wanted to learn how to confidently deliver a presentation in class. I even joined a public speaking class! But when my group would ask me to speak on a particular slide, I would shake my head and deflect the question to someone else. "They are way better at public speaking than I am," I thought.

Has this happened to you? Have you ever avoided an opportunity because you thought you couldn't do it, or that someone would be better at it than you? Today, we're going to challenge those limiting beliefs.

What is a limiting belief?

A limiting belief is a thought, opinion, state of mind, or conviction that you believe to be absolutely true, but it actually holds you back in some way; it may even deprive you of joy. It's the story you tell yourself that prevents you from moving forward and experiencing life to the fullest.

Materials: Pen and paper (download a blank version of the table using the QR code below).

Instructions:

- 1. Write down a limiting belief that deprives you of joy.
- 2. Use the feelings column to write at least 3 evidences that support it. If you are doing this in a group setting, set a timer for 3 minutes!
- 3. Now pretend that you are a lawyer and you have to find evidence against your "feelings" list. How would you contradict your statements? This section might take a bit longer, so give yourself some extra time. If you're in a group setting, set a timer for 5 minutes.
- 4. If you feel comfortable, share one of the items on your list with the group. If you are not in a group setting, text someone you trust and share with them! How does your limiting belief deprive you of joy?

LIMITING BELIEF: I can't speak in public because I am introverted.

FEELINGS Last time I spoke in public, I was so nervous that my voice was shaking!	FOCUS I didn't think I would be able to do it, but I asked God to cabn my nerves and I took deep breaths. Next thing I knew, I was doing it! It may not have been perfect, but I did it!			

For a blank version of the table to print out, please follow this link: $\underline{\text{bit.ly/WOP23downloads}}$



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CLAIMING YOUR





"YOU ARE LIKE THE STATUE OF DAVID, NAHW YAND 21 TI DAN PUT IN THE HANDS OF JESUS THAT YOU CAN FULLY BE WHO YOU WERE CREATED AND INTENDED TO BE."

You are like the statue of David, and it is only when put in the hands of Jesus that you can fully be who you were created and intended to be. He chisels away at us bit by bit until He frees the fullness of who we are inside. Right now, you are on a journey to understanding your identity and purpose. You may feel as though you are at the beginning stages of being chiseled at and it's painful and uncomfortable, and you have so many unanswered guestions, but remember that Jesus knows the full completion of you. You are going to experience joy and grief and healing, sometimes all at the same time. When we search for joy, we don't expect it to come with pain or difficulties, but it is actually moments of necessity that breed gratitude, and give us the opportunity to show up for each other in kindness.

James wrote to believers of Jesus who had left Israel and moved into the lands of many unbelievers. He wanted to encourage Christians everywhere to not give up even when they faced persecution and poverty for their commitment to God. In James 1:2-4 (NLT), he says to them, "When troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing." James isn't saying, "If you are facing something difficult, I want you to be joyful about it." He is telling us that we will face difficult things in this life, and when we do, we have an opportunity to fix our focus.

We have an opportunity to make something good out of it. We have an opportunity to find joy. Our greatest example of how to fix our focus was displayed by a man named Jesus, when He went through the pain of dying on a cross—humiliated and bullied by people in our own family tree. He managed to fix His focus and look beyond what He was experiencing in that moment. Hebrews 12:2 (ERV) says, "We must never stop looking to Jesus. He is the leader of our faith, and he is the one who makes our faith complete. He suffered death on a cross. But he accepted the shame of the cross as if it were nothing because of the joy he could see waiting for him. And now he is sitting at the right side of God's throne." The reason you and I are capable of experiencing joy even in the midst of trouble is because we are already living in the freedom He died for. This is why the Bible talks about the fruit of the Spirit, because the experience of living in that freedom produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Does that mean that your negative thoughts and experiences will no longer affect you? No. It means that you are aware that they do not align with the truth of living in freedom with Jesus. You no longer expect moments of temporary happiness to sustain a life of joy, but find joy in your salvation, joy in your calling, joy in your purpose. Joy is a focus before it's a feeling. The world around you craves for something real; a sustenance that can only come from knowing and experiencing Jesus.

In April of 2022, a study came out by Randstad that showed Gen Z (aged 18 to 24) and millennials (aged 25 to 34) would rather quit their jobs than be unhappy at work. According to this research, individuals would prefer to work in an organization that allows fulltime virtual work, takes stands on social issues, offers free mental health counseling and paid time off. Does this resonate with you? What if I told you that you would have no other choice but to work 60-80 hours a week on work that does not align with your call-



"DOES THAT MEAN THAT YOUR NEGATIVE THOUGHTS AND EXPERIENCES WILL NO LONGER AFFECT YOU? NO. IT MEANS THAT YOU ARE AWARE THAT THEY DO NOT ALIGN WITH THE TRUTH OF LIVING IN FREEDOM WITH JESUS."

"DON'T WASTE ANY MORE TIME LOOKING FOR [JOY] TO COME FROM A COUNTERFEIT OR TEMPORARY FEELING."



ing, in a toxic work environment? Would that mean you no longer experience joy? Although we may be getting closer to creating a society that we are proud of, the world will continue to disappoint us if we fix our focus on what is around us instead of what and Who is ahead of us. God has already given you the joy you are looking for. It's in His presence. Don't waste any more time looking for it to come from a counterfeit or temporary feeling. Find it in the bottomless source of the One who made you and deeply desires a life of meaning and purpose for you (John 10:10b).



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PRAYER OF THE DAY

DEAR GOD, YOU ARE THE SOURCE OF MY JOY. INCREASE MY AWARENESS AND REMOVE ALL OBSTACLES STANDING BETWEEN US SO THAT I MAY EXPERIENCE A LIFE ABUNDANT WITH JOY IN YOUR PRESENCE. AS YOU FIXED YOUR FOCUS ON THE TOY OF MY SALVATION, HELP ME TO LIVE IN THE FREEDOM YOU DIED FOR.





"REJOICE ALWAYS, PRAY WITHOUT CEASING, IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS; FOR THIS IS THE WILL OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS FOR YOU."

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

- 1. Gratitude is the gateway to experiencing more joy. What brings you gratitude when you think about your future with God?
- 2. When you were a child, what adult or role model showed you what it meant to live with joy? How did they show you joy?
- 3. What difficult or painful experience is clouding your joy right now?
- 4. We call Scripture "the living Word of God" because it is the best therapist, counselor and meaningful resource to which we have access. What is a Scripture you need to speak into your life to help you recenter your focus?

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PERSONAL CHALLENGE

FIND JOY IN GRATITUDE

Gratitude creates a cycle of positive emotions. When you practice gratitude, you are changing the physiology of your brain. Here are some fun, mind-stimulating ways you can practice gratitude today. Try doing this with a friend, in your group, or during family worship one night. Remember, the more you practice it, the more positive emotions you will feel.

1. THE ABCs OF GRATITUDE.

Sit comfortably and close your eyes. List what you are grateful for, beginning with "A" and working all the way through the alphabet to "Z." It doesn't have to be perfect! Have fun with it.

2. TRY A GRATITUDE APP!

- / Gratitude Journal. A note section for your daily gratitude.
- Gratitude Garden App. Record the things you are grateful for each day, and build up a gratitude garden with your points!
- Happyfeed. Record your gratitude with access to fun, silly, and informative daily reminders.

3. LISTEN TO A PODCAST.

Here are some episodes that have helped me focus on gratitude:

- / The *Good Life Project* episode, "On gratitude, vulnerability, and courage," with Brené Brown.
- The School of Greatness episode, "Cultivate an Attitude of Gratitude," by Lewis Howes.
- Huberman Lab episode, "The Science of Gratitude and How to Build a Gratitude Practice"



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"We should, to begin with, think that God leads a very interesting life, and that he is full of joy. Undoubtedly he is the most joyous being in the universe. The abundance of his love and generosity is inseparable from his infinite joy. All of the good and beautiful things from which we occasionally drink tiny droplets of soul-exhilarating joy, God continuously experiences in all their breadth and depth and richness" (Dallas Willard).

We talked about what brings you joy. Do you know that God experiences joy too? If humanity so deeply craves the experience of joy, it is only an indication that it is part of the nature of God. We can only fully experience something when it comes from the true source.

What are some ways that you think God experiences joy? How

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L H A P I L H





"BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS, FOR THEY WILL BE CALLED CHILDREN OF GOD."

MATTHEW 5:9 (NIV)



CONFLICTS ALL AROUND

1.	Think about a conflict you saw in a movie or a series (if you can't remember, think of a real-life conflict), perhaps one that annoyed you because it could have been resolved differently.					
2.	Do a quick online search about conflict resolution. Are there some steps that could have been taken for a better resolution of the conflict you thought of? Describe below.					

If you want to do this icebreaker in a group:

- 1. Think about a simple common conflict people may find themselves in.
- 2. Select a few volunteers to perform a short play to represent one or more ways in which the conflict could be handled, first in an unhealthy way and then in a healthy way.
- 3. Discuss the differences. What did you learn?

PEACEMAKERS MAKING

was born only some time after the end of a war. That means I was born into peace. But it also means I was born into a postwar society. Amongst the many negative consequences of the war, knowing that my parents met because of it is one positive indirect consequence that makes me glad. Still, the negative effects of war remain – not only in my home country but throughout the world. The fact that you are probably asking yourself right now, "What war is she talking about?" just shows how peace - or even better, world peace – is often more of a wish than a reality.

There is one story about the beginning of the Yugoslav Wars in the 1990s that many people have in common, and it has always saddened me. It is a story about its beginnings, about the defining moments that made family, friends, neighbours and schoolmates go from being just that to becoming strangers – or even enemies. Many people had to leave their homes, some only returning after years and years while others never ever returned. This shared story always gets me thinking about how conflict - whether it is big, like a war, or much smaller – can, in just a quick defining moment, break relationships as strong as family, and divide their history into many wrongs and rights.

"'What war is she talking about?' just shows how peace - or even better, world peace is often more of a wish than a reality."





ON THE WRONG SIDE OF HISTORY

Humanity found itself on the wrong side of history in a guick defining moment as well. For us today, this conflict is inherited – we were born a long time after its beginning. But it all started when our ancestors hurt the relationship with their Father in their home in the Garden of Eden. From this moment onwards, they could not continue living together anymore. The relationship was broken and they had no other choice but to leave their Father's home. They went from being close to being far apart. From a garden to the cursed ground of thorns and thistles (Genesis 3). Later in the Bible, we realise that our family was divided as a consequence of a much greater war that started in heaven. But the biblical story tells us that human descendants still inherit this conflict. The Father made several attempts to help the situation on Earth: by destroying the evil that developed amongst his rebel children in a huge flood (Genesis 7); by trying to develop a restored relationship with a few of them hoping that it would spread to all (Genesis 12); by setting relationship boundaries in the form of a law, so that they could try to live in each other's presence again (Exodus 20). While a few individuals figured out a way to get close to the Father again, the majority of people failed and continued to stay far away.

In every conflict, those who are hurt know that saying "let's just move on" or "let's just go back to the way it was" doesn't work. The hurt and the striving for justice lingers, and sometimes the unjust circumstances as well. It is often difficult for these people to accept peace because it seems like achieving peace means that the cries of hurt or the injustice will just have to be silenced. But that is what is so incredible about our cosmic conflict story. It teaches us that peace is something more.

"In every conflict, those who are hurt know that saying 'let's just move on' or 'let's just go back to the way it was' doesn't work."

COMING BACK HOME

Prophet Isaiah speaks about peace in a very interesting way:

¹⁶ Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field.

¹⁷ The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever. (Isaiah 32:16, 1)

The peace that we are called to adhere to goes beyond a simplified idea of avoiding conflict. It is a peace that asks for *justice* and *righteousness*.¹ For a Hebrew reading this text, this connection is not strange at all. The word for peace in Hebrew, *shalom*, has quite a wide meaning. *Shalom* means peace, but it also means



"For [Paul],
peace is being
home again.
Being a family again."

If we take a deeper look at this text, we can see that achieving peace requires us to understand not only guilt and sin but also the repentance that is accomplished by the cross. This repentance then brings with it not only reconciliation between God and His people, but also an invitation for people to reconcile with one another. Finally, Paul talks about a surprising last step: to become part of God's household. Yes, this path is one that goes through the cross and through the healing of the relationships with both God and others. However, the ultimate destination, peace, seems to be envisioned by Paul here not just as a world without conflict. For him, peace is being home again. Being a family again.

Jesus also speaks about this when He calls us to be ambassadors of this kind of peace. In Matthew 5:9 (NIV), He says the following:

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

GARDENING IN GALATIA

Quite often throughout the letter to the Galatians, Paul does not seem to be happy. He seems to be wondering how can the faithful in Galatia, having supposedly come out of this cosmic conflict, just go back to emphasising petty differences amongst themselves — petty differences that are putting obstacles between them and the complete feeling of belonging. In Galatians, Paul does not try to make peace between the believers by just avoiding the problem. If you compare Galatians to his other epistles, you will find that, in Galatians, Paul uses much harsher language. He does this in order to remind them of the *price* of the peace into which God has invited them. And then he reminds them that it is now on them to accept this divine invitation and to live in peace together. But how?

harmony, completeness and prosperity. It is the result of a just world. The word *shalom* was also a common greeting. In the New Testament, Paul writes in Greek, not Hebrew, yet he still uses the word peace (*eirene*) as a greeting in most of his letters. However, he often adds another element. For example, in Galatians 1:3, Paul says, "Grace to you and peace." He then immediately speaks about what Jesus has done to achieve peace through grace. In Ephesians 2, Paul explains this work of Christ:

- ¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who has made both [Gentiles and Jews] one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation [...]
- ¹⁶ that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.
- ¹⁷ And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.
- ¹⁸ For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.
- ¹⁹ Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

(Ephesians 2:14, 16-19)



"Even producing this one part of the fruit (peace) is not easy."

Well, Paul makes two interesting suggestions. Firstly, he tells the people not to do certain dangerous things that will take them far away and right back into the territory of thorns and thistles again. Paul calls these dangerous things the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21). Secondly, he suggests that all Christians – this new and supposedly united family of Jesus – should seriously think about getting a hobby: gardening. Yup, in a way, Paul says, "You've lived in a land of thorns and thistles for too long. But thorns are not the only way. So, you should take up gardening in this new land where the Spirit is. Go and cultivate some fruit there." Once we understand that God's ultimate end in achieving peace is making us a family again, taking up gardening does not seem strange. After all, this has been the human family business from the moment Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden. Therefore, growing what Paul calls the fruit of the Spirit simply shows that we have embraced all the steps to achieve peace with God and with the rest of our family so much so that the piece of God's Garden given to us is no longer growing thorns and thistles. Now it grows love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control

MAKING PEACE

Throughout this study, we are sharing some ideas on how to work the ground so that the Spirit can produce this fruit in us. But we know that it is not easy. Even producing this one part of the fruit (peace) is not easy. Maybe not all of us can work towards achieving peace in the big conflicts and wars around us. But still, we are called to be peacemakers – even if only in our sphere of influence. We are called to work towards justice and towards creating spaces for belonging. We are called not to avoid conflict – not to bury it so that it silently causes trouble – but to learn how to take active steps towards healthy peace.

Being a peacemaker can be especially difficult when we find ourselves on the wrong side of history or even on the wrong side of a story. This can easily happen when we have done something ourselves to push the people around us far away. But we can also find ourselves on the wrong side of history just because we have inherited a situation in which we are far away due to something other people did before us. Being a peacemaker from such a position can be quite difficult. It requires us to listen to the reasons why other people were pushed far away from us, acknowledge what is our mistake and discover how we can work towards justice and reconciliation. But we are not alone in this. Our Father still works towards peace, starting in the garden of our hearts, and our family of faith is called to do the same.



DOROTHEA RELIĆ MACEDO

was born in Croatia and is 25 years old. She is currently working as an intern pastor in Croatia together with her husband. She loves theology because it feels like home to think about God and life together with a community. Her passion is working with people to find ways to extend God's healing and love to those who are hurting.





DEAR GOD, THANK YOU FOR CALLING US YOUR CHILDREN
AND FOR BRINGING US HOME. HELP US TO SHARE PEACE,
HEALING AND BELONGING WITH THOSE AROUND US.







"Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone."

Romans 12:18 (NLT)

- 1. Are there different types of peace? Name some and explain the differences.
- 2. After a conflict, did you ever feel like you have become strangers with someone you knew well?
- 3. What area or place in your life do you feel like you can call home? Is the feeling of home tied to the idea of peace for you? How so?
- 4. How would you describe the difference between peacekeeping and peacemaking?
- 5. In Ephesians 2, Paul says that Jesus tore down a wall of separation. Discuss some situations from history in which metaphorical or literal walls had to be taken down to achieve peace. What lessons do they hold for us today?





PERSONAL CHALLENGE

CHALLENGE 1: A GENERATION OF CONFLICTS

Think of one generational conflict or incomplete peace you have inherited. This can be more personal like an incomplete peace or conflict in your family, or in your local church, or more complex like an incomplete peace between groups based on nationality, race, religion, etc.

Choose one conflict and think of ways in which you can be a peacemaker. What steps can you take towards forgiveness and reconciliation? Prayerfully put those steps in practice in the near future.

CHALLENGE 2: CULTIVATING A FRUITFUL GARDEN

Think about whether you are cultivating some thorns and thistles towards someone in your life, whether on purpose or by accident.

Decide on one concrete way you will work towards reconciliation and peace. Set a time and date to take each of your steps, and don't forget to include God in the process, through prayer.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"This is the difference between charity and justice. Justice means moving beyond the dichotomy between those who need and those who supply and confronting the frightening and beautiful reality that we desperately need one another" (Rachel Held Evans).

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"YOU ALSO, BE PATIENT. ESTABLISH YOUR HEARTS, FOR THE COMING OF THE LORD IS AT HAND."

IAMES 5.8 (ESV)



DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF PATIENT?

Patience is a character trait that is constantly evolving throughout our lives. It is the result of a continuous learning process. It is characterized by the calm endurance of difficulties, struggles, suffering and waiting. How does your patience manifest itself in your everyday life? The following statements are meant to challenge you into uncovering your current position.

STRONGLY DISAGREE	When someone doesn't reply to my messages straight away, I get nervous. $\longleftrightarrow \hspace{1cm} + \hspace{1cm}$	STRONGLY AGREE
STRONGLY DISAGREE	When the Wi-Fi connection keeps dropping, I stay calm.	STRONGLY AGREE
STRONGLY DISAGREE	When I get a gift for someone, I end up giving it to them immediately.	STRONGLY AGREE
	When I am learning something new and it's not going well,	
STRONGLY DISAGREE		STRONGLY AGREE
STRONGLY DISAGREE	When a friend I am supposed to meet happens to be late, I just patiently wait.	STRONGLY AGREE
STRONGLY DISAGREE	When the traffic lights are red at the crosswalk and there aren't any cars around, I don't bother waiting and cross immediately.	STRONGLY AGREE
STRONGLY DISAGREE	When it takes a long time for the waitress to bring the food I ordered, I feel like leaving the restaurant. When I am explaining something to a friend who doesn't understand it,	STRONGLY AGREE
STRONGLY DISAGREE	Uproceed calmly until he/she does. When the pastor is preaching a long sermon, I wait for the final	STRONGLY AGREE
STRONGLY DISAGREE	"amen" before I check my phone.	STRONGLY AGREE
STRONGLY DISAGREE	When I answer questions in a survey, I answer all of them. ← → → → → → → → → → → → → → → → → → →	STRONGLY AGREE

LOOK AT YOUR ANSWERS AND REFLECT:

- / Did your answers surprise you? In what ways?
- This time have a friend answer the same questions about how he/she views your patience. Compare the answers. What did you discover? Share your experience with the group.



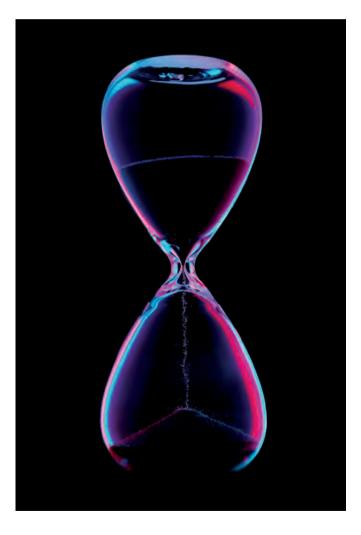
"WE COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT IF WE WANT TO MAKE IT IN THE WORLD [...] WE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO BE A LITTLE FASTER THAN THOSE AROUND US."

hat word would you choose to best describe this era? I would say we live in a "Fast-Paced Age". No one has time. Whether we are ten or eighty years old, let alone thirty or fifty, we are all overwhelmed with tasks, opportunities, commitments, needs and desires. The result? We simply can't keep up. When we ask ourselves why this is, we find various explanations. Sometimes, we are the cause: we can't sort out our values, we fail to prioritize, we get dragged down by responsibilities, we are not assertive enough, we don't know how to say no, we are unable to relax. Sometimes, it is our environment that is to blame; the way we live is speeding up: we walk faster, drive faster, fly faster; computers calculate faster; medicines work faster; film editors cut faster; presenters moderate faster. Whether we like it

or not, there is not much we can do about it. And, pretty quickly, we come to the conclusion that if we want to make it in the world, if we want to keep our jobs and our place in the queue of life (and not only in shops), we have no choice but to be a little faster than those around us.

My favorite Christian author, Henri J. M. Nouwen, described this age very precisely in one of his books, "We are people who run around a lot, do many things, meet many people, attend many events, read many books. We are very involved. We experience life as many, many things. We go here, we go there, we do this, we do that, we speak to him, we speak to her, we have this to do and that to do. Sometimes we wonder how we can do it all.

"IT SEEMS THAT PATIENCE IS WHAT WE LACK THE MOST."





If we sit down and think about it, we are often running from one emergency to another. We are so busy and so involved. Yet if we are asked what we are so busy with we don't really know... It is a problem for many people. It is not so much that we do many things but rather that we do many things while wondering whether anything is happening. Sometimes it seems as though we have all these balls up in the air and wonder how we can keep them all going."1

It seems that *patience* is what we lack the most in an increasingly fast-paced world. In the icebreaker, we described patience as a character trait, but, in reality, it is much more than that. It is also an important concept within Christianity. In the Bible, it has a much deeper meaning than we often realize. It is part of the fruit of the Spirit. That means that patience manifests itself as a result of a deep, living relationship with Jesus.

James aptly starts the section with these words, "Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming" (James 5:7 ESV). Given that around 2,000 years have passed since James' words, we find out right from the start that patience is something that takes time—it is a lifelong process—and it is not always easy.

Based on today's Bible passage, James 5:7-12, there are three main areas in which we—as followers of Jesus—can learn, develop and grow in patience.

PATIENCE IN RELATIONSHIPS

The first area in which we can practice patience is our relationships. We could probably say that patience would not be so difficult if it weren't for other people. But the truth is we will always have people around us-both pleasant and unpleasant. It is no coincidence that, in today's passage, James starts by mentioning the importance of being patient with other people, "Be patient... Don't grumble against one another!" (James 5:8, 9 NIV). Most of the time, we use all kinds of strategies to try to change people who get on our nerves. And if that fails, we at least relieve ourselves by complaining about them to others. The hardest thing to do is to actually accept others with the things that bother us about them. Perhaps that is precisely why we encounter so much gossip not only in society but also in the Church. The Bible invites us to rise up to the challenge: to begin exercising patience primarily in our relationships because—as Paul writes in one of the most famous texts on love—Love is patient (1 Corinthians 13:4).

PATIENCE IN SUFFERING

At first glance, it may surprise us that James goes on to speak of patience in *suffering*. He gives us the example of the prophets and of godly Job, who did not curse God even in times of adversity and affliction (James 5:10, 11). Unlike people throughout history who have suffered for the truth, Job did not even know *why* he was suffering so much. The wounds that came upon him were in no way his fault (see Job 1:9-12), yet he stood through it all. Sometimes, one can come to believe that one is automatically entitled to

a healthy, happy, and long life. We even hear this message being preached in the spirit of what is called "prosperity theology," which says that if we have faith in God, He will give us prosperity and remove all our problems and suffering. In this way of thinking, if we suffer it is because we are far away from God. But the Bible corrects this false assumption in many places. In the very first pages of Scripture, God tells us that suffering will be an integral part of our lives in this fallen world. Jesus Himself suffered, to the point of dying on the cross (see Philippians 2:5-11). So, this world is a world in which we can expect to experience suffering and it is this spiritual fruit of patience, together with the rest of the fruit of the Spirit, which will help us get through it.



"IN THE VERY FIRST PAGES OF SCRIPTURE, GOD TELLS US THAT SUFFERING WILL BE AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR LIVES IN THIS FALLEN WORLD."



"FINALLY, IT IS GOD WHO IS INCREDIBLY PATIENT WITH US. HE PATIENTLY WAITS FOR US TO RESPOND TO HIS CALLING AND TURN BACK TO HIM."

PATIENCE IN SPEAKING

The third area where we can learn to be patient is in our words. James 5:12 (NIV) says: "Above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. All you need to say is a simple 'Yes' or 'No.' Otherwise you will be condemned." James was warning against a common practice in his day, where people tried to get their way by making deceptive oaths. They would "swear" in order to sound truthful, when in fact they were just using words to manipulate the situation or the other. When we grow impatient, we may feel tempted to speak in ways that will bring about the result we want, even if that means saying a few white lies. But James reminds us that one who speaks the truth need not "swear". We don't have to convince anyone right away, and through that we learn to be patient. We learn to patiently wait, and that our words, testimonies, prayers, and wishes have their own time.

We thus see that patience is intrinsic to faith. Patience in relationships, patience in suffering, and patience in speaking are things we are still learning. And the three key concepts of Christianity—faith, hope and love (1 Corinthians 13:13)—are perhaps the ultimate three aspects of our patience. Finally, it is God who is incredibly patient with us. He patiently waits for us to respond to His calling and turn back to Him.



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PRAYER OF THE DAY

DEAR GOD, HELP ME TO BE PATIENT WITH OTHER PEOPLE AND WITH MYSELF. HELP ME TO BE PATIENT WHEN I GO THROUGH TOUGH TIMES, THAT I MAY TRUST THAT YOU WILL STRENGTHEN ME AND GET ME THROUGH. HELP ME TO BE PATIENT IN MY SPEAKING. I PRAY THAT YOU GIVE ME THE ABILITY TO TALK TO OTHERS WITHOUT MANIPULATION. GIVE ME THE STRENGTH TO FORGIVE OTHERS AS MANY TIMES AS NEEDED. AND HELP ME REMEMBER HOW INCREDIBLY PATIENT YOU ARE WITH ME.





"THEREFORE, AS GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE, HOLY AND DEARLY LOVED, CLOTHE YOUR-SELVES WITH COMPASSION, KINDNESS, HUMILITY, GENTLENESS AND PATIENCE."

Colossians 3:12 (NIV)

- 1. When we come to worship, we expect to slow down and experience a certain sense of silence because it is often the only time when we are not really in a hurry. Are you able to really go from the fast-paced day-to-day to the slow Sabbath time during the worship service? In what ways does that become a challenge or a relief for you?
- 2. Do you see patience as a human trait you can get better at? Or more as a fruit of the Spirit, a gift we have to pray for and that comes from above? Explain your answer.
- 3. Which of the three areas (patience in relationships, patience in suffering, and patience in speaking) do you find to be the most challenging? How so?
- 4. What is the difference between being patient towards something and being passive?
- 5. How do you think patience manifests itself in waiting for the second coming of Jesus?



PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Patience goes against our current culture of instant gratification. We want things and we want them now. Having to wait is not part of our DNA anymore. For today's challenge, we have two ways in which we want to challenge you to practice patience.

CHALLENGE 1: STOP BEFORE YOU REGRET IT

For the first challenge, the goal is to **stop** yourself from reacting impatiently when relating to others. When people get on our nerves, we can be quick to raise our voices, accuse them or say hurtful things. So, as part of this first challenge, whenever you find yourself in a situation that is driving you to lose your patience, try to use this STOP technique:

- **S:** Stop what you're doing or saying and make a deliberate
- **T**: *Take* a deep breath and reach out to God in prayer.
- O: Observe what is currently happening (take note of your feelings, emotions and thoughts), tell God and let Him be part of the solution or way out. Listen to Him.
- P: Proceed. Now that you have made a pause and reached out to God, you are ready to continue. What is the wisest thing to do or say next?

CHALLENGE 2: PATIENCE IN THE LITTLE THINGS

The second challenge for you is to do daily experiments of patience. Being patient in the little things will probably help you to be patient in the bigger things (see Matthew 25:23).

Choose 3-5 ways to practice patience in the little things. Here are a few examples:

- , Hold the door open for someone so that they enter the building first.
- Let someone go ahead of you in the cafeteria queue.
- Wait 30 minutes before looking at the notifications on your phone.
- When in a group conversation, allow someone else to speak first even though it was your "turn".

At the end of the day, reflect on how the experience went. How did it feel to practice patience also in the little things? What did you learn about yourself?



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"The Church is her true self only when she exists for humanity... She must take her part in the social life of the world, not lording it over men, but helping and serving them. She must tell men, whatever their calling, what it means to live in Christ, to exist for others. And in particular, our own Church will have to take a strong line with the blasphemies of hybris, power-worship, envy, and humbug, for these are the roots of evil. She will have to speak of moderation, purity, confidence, loyalty, steadfastness, patience, discipline, humility, content, and modesty"² (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, emphasis added).

Bonhoeffer mentions patience as one of the things the church

should be talking about. How do you think the church can

WELL T	

CHAPIEK 5





"THE KING WILL REPLY, 'TRULY I TELL YOU, WHATEVER YOU DID FOR ONE OF THE LEAST OF THESE BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF MINE, YOU DID FOR ME.'"



KINDNESS IN ACTION

		lowing:

1.	Connection question — When was someone surprisingly kind to you, and what effect did it have on your life?
2.	lem:lem:lem:lem:lem:lem:lem:lem:lem:lem:
3.	Watch 'Life Vest Inside's short video 'Kindness Boomerang' (<u>bit.ly/LifeVestKindness</u>). It has no words, so it can be used in any language group, and it is simple but very powerful. Then ask people to share their responses to the following questions:
	/ What did you like best about the video?
	/ What was the main takeaway message for you?
	Who did you most identify with in the video?
	How did the video inspire you?



esus knew His ministry on earth would soon be over. He wanted to leave something behind that would make a lasting difference to the world. For three years He had lived amongst people and shown them the goodness and kindness of God. Jesus was compassionate, kind, abundantly generous, welcoming, and inclusive. He walked through villages and healed all their sick. He fed five thousand people until they were full, and there were still twelve large baskets left over to take home. He turned litres and litres of water into wedding wine, far more than they needed for their celebration. He sought out people who were in different kinds of 'prisons' – fear, mental illness, addictions, social isolation, and self-loathing – and set them free to experience health, joy, peace, and love.

"FOR THREE YEARS HE HAD LIVED AMONGST PEOPLE AND SHOWN THEM THE GOODNESS AND KINDNESS OF GOD.

JESUS WAS COMPASSIONATE, KIND, ABUNDANTLY

GENEROUS, WELCOMING,

AND INCLUSIVE."



Jesus had done everything possible to demonstrate God's loving kindness, but His disciples were still fighting about who was the greatest, and looking down on gentiles, women, children, and social misfits. So, He decided to leave them with a handful of memorable stories, knowing that one day soon, these rough and ready men would be transformed by the Holy Spirit, and change the world – with their words, their goodness, and with their loving kindness.

One of the stories Jesus gifted to His followers was about a shepherd who had a flock of sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31-46). In His story, the 'goats' have lived for their own pleasure. They don't even think to notice the needs of those around them, so they haven't lifted a finger to relieve their suffering. The 'sheep' are those who have lived unselfishly. Being kind was so natural to them that they couldn't even remember when they had helped others! The 'sheep' have shared their food, clothes, home, and love. They have gone out of their way to visit the sick and those who were in prison. They have walked gently and kindly in the world, and lived generously with others, because they have been aware of how generous God has been to them. They have been a channel of God's love into the lives of those who were suffering. They have chosen to do right and caring things... They have been kind and good.

Another story is about the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). He lived out the generous, compassionate, and loving kindness of God when he saw a hurting stranger, of a different ethnic group, who was desperately in need.

"HE LIVED OUT THE
GENEROUS, COMPASSIONATE,
AND LOVING KINDNESS
OF GOD WHEN HE SAW
A HURTING STRANGER,
OF A DIFFERENT ETHNIC
GROUP, WHO WAS
DESPERATELY IN NEED."







Recent research into kindness has highlighted several important ingredients of compassionate action¹:

- / Having eyes, heart, and mind open to notice the needs of oth-
- Believing that I am here to make a difference and if I see a need it is my responsibility to act.
- Listening to the stories of those who need help and asking them what they need the most (or assessing the situation for the greatest needs if the person is unable to speak).
- / Doing what I can to relieve the suffering of the person or helping them to access better help than I can offer on my own.

The Good Samaritan did all these important things to save the injured man's life. In contrast, the Priest and the Levite saw the need but ignored the person and neglected to do what was good and kind.

God loves each person equally. He wants everyone to experience His incredible kindness and goodness. But our hearts need to be transformed by His compassionate love so that we can be His eyes, ears, mouth, hands and feet, and channel His love into this broken world.

God longs for us to be kind to each other because all the kindness in the world starts in His loving heart. He created us to live in loving harmony with each other, and when we are kind to others the hormone oxytocin is released into our brains, as well as theirs! When we care for others, and when others care for us. this amazing hormone makes us feel even more compassionate, peaceful, joyful, and loving, and also less anxious. It helps us to listen better and be more empathic. And the kinder we are, the less conflicts we tend to have! Kindness can even relieve depression, as it spreads joy from our life to others. It brings people together, gives them hope, comforts them, and makes them feel loved and special. And even the tiniest kindness can ripple out and make a big difference.

Think about the Widow of Zarephath, who kindly shared what she thought would be her last slice of bread with a hungry Elijah (1 Kings 17:7-16). And about the Shunamite woman who built a spare room on the roof of her house, so that Elisha could have the space to relax and feel comfortable (2 Kings 4:8-37). Think about Dorcas who made beautiful clothes for widows and orphans to give them back their dignity (Acts 9:39). And Mary and Martha who regularly opened their home to the chaos of Jesus and a dozen tired and hungry disciples.

Each of these kindness stories are included in the Bible to inspire us. Each story is an example of people who acted like 'sheep' -



they fed the hungry, they were hospitable to the homeless, and made clothes for those who needed them. But incredibly, there is an almost hidden common thread in their stories. A thread that links them all to the parable of the sheep and the goats... Each of these women experience a resurrection. The women who helped Elijah and Elisha had their sons brought back to life. Mary and Martha were reunited with their risen brother, Lazarus. And Dorcas was raised back to life so that she could keep on helping the needy people around her.

God values our good-hearted kindness, our compassionate desire to do the most loving thing in the face of human suffering. How can we be like the 'good sheep' and the good Samaritan today? How can we choose to be kind and good to everyone we meet so that they can taste and see that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8)? How can we open hearts to the generosity of God's love to us? And how will letting our hearts be flooded with His compassionate love for us help us to show others that God loves them with a love so vast that they can never reach the end of it (Ephesians 3:14-21)? Because, what really matters in the end, is the way that we have shared God's loving kindness and goodness with everyone we meet.

"BECAUSE, WHAT REALLY MATTERS IN THE END, IS THE WAY THAT WE HAVE SHARED GOD'S LOVING KINDNESS AND GOODNESS WITH EVERYONE WE MEET."

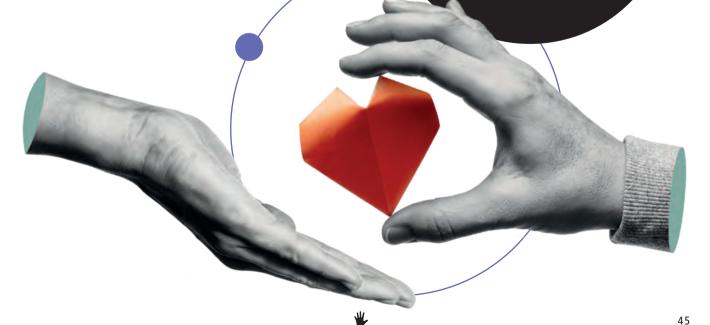


KAREN HOLFORD

trained as an occupational therapist working in brain injury rehabilitation before studying psychology and then family therapy. She now works for the Trans-European Division as the Family, Children and Women's ministry director. She is married to Pastor Bernie Holford and they have three adult children and three grandchildren. She loves writing, creativity and walking in forests.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

DEAR GOD, I WANT TO TASTE AND SEE THAT YOU ARE GOOD, SO THAT AS A RESULT I CAN ALSO BE KIND AND GOOD TO OTHERS, AND ALSO MYSELF. MAY KINDNESS AND GOODNESS FLOW SO NATURALLY FROM MY HEART THAT I DON'T EVEN REALISE IT, LIKE THE SHEEP IN THE PARABLE OF JESUS.





"YOUR KINDNESS WILL REWARD YOU, BUT YOUR CRUELTY WILL DESTROY YOU."

Proverbs 11:17 (NLT)

- 1. Which story of Jesus' practical compassion and kindness is your favourite? Why? And how does this story inspire your own kindness?
- 2. Why is Jesus so concerned that His followers are kind to others? How would the world be different if we chose to be kind and good to everyone we encounter?
- 3. Imagine one year from now your church or youth group wins a competition in your town for being the kindest group in the community. What did you do that led to your winning achievement? What is stopping you from starting an 'invasion of kindness' right now? (https://bit.ly/invasionofkindness)
- 4. It has often been suggested that it is important to look for a life-partner who is kind. Why do you think people say this? How can you prepare for a future relationship, or improve a current one, by developing your kindness so that it becomes second nature to you, as it did for the 'sheep' in the parable?





PERSONAL CHALLENGE

CHALLENGE 1: HOW KIND ARE YOU?

1. On a scale of 0-10 where 10 is very kind, how kind are you to others? What would help you to raise your level of kindness one step at a time?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

2. How can you be kind to yourself? Focus on God's loving kindness towards you and be kind to yourself so that you are better able to be kind to others.

CHALLENGE 2: CREATIVE PRAYER FOR KINDNESS

This challenge is thought to be done as a group. If on your own, simply do the exercise by yourself. However, it will be more enriching if you do it with others.

Read Psalm 103:1-18. Then invite the group (or divide into groups of 2-4 people) to create an interactive prayer of praise for God's goodness and loving kindness. Think of words to describe God's love for every letter of the alphabet starting with A (amazing, adventurous, awesome, attentive), then B (beautiful, bountiful, blessing), and so on. List all the words called out, or record them, and see how many words you can find to describe God. Finally, read out your prayer of praise together.

CHALLENGE 3: BE KIND TO OTHERS

This week focus on being kind to others. Aim to be kind to everyone you meet in what you say or do, so that you leave each person feeling loved by you and by God. Then notice how being kind to others changes your thoughts and actions. Journal what happens. If you need some creative ideas for ways to be kind, visit *live:kind* https://ted.adventist.org/family/outreach/livekind/



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can" (Quote attributed to John Wesley).

What is your key takeaway on kindness and goodness? What

changes do yo	u want to mak	e now?	
1			



CHUPIER 6





"HIS MASTER SAID TO HIM, 'WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT. YOU HAVE BEEN FAITHFUL OVER A LITTLE; I WILL SET YOU OVER MUCH.'"

MATTHEW 25:21 (ESV)



FAITHFULNESS METAPHORS

Let's define faithfulness in an original way. Think of similes to explain—in a graphic and metaphorical way—what faithfulness means to you.

Here are a few examples to get you started:

Faithfulness is like...

A teenager and their smartphone. A hipster and his beard.

Share your metaphors with the group or with a friend.

Questions for reflection:

- 1. What metaphor stood out the most for you? Which one would you choose as your definition of faithfulness?
- 2. How important is faithfulness in relationships (friendship, dating, marriage...)?
- 3. How do you know if someone is faithful?
- 4. Have you ever experienced an infidelity or disloyalty? Think of an experience in which someone was disloyal to you (or maybe you were). How did you feel? What did you learn?

The Result of a Relationship

n this study guide, we are learning about the fruit that is produced within us when the Holy Spirit becomes our greatest influence. And that's easy to say, but it is much more complicated for it to become a reality in our lives. The fruit of the Spirit does not grow in a vacuum. In order for a fruit to exist, you must plant a seed and generate the right atmosphere for it to become a tree that produces fruit. It is a *process*.

We live in a world of darkness in which we often find it hard to see God; we often feel alone, judged, hurt, and afraid because of the uncertainties in life. In this world of sin, taking care of the soil of our hearts so that the Holy Spirit can work within us is hard. We realize that—in spite of our desire to be transformed by God—sin gets in the way and we end up being unfaithful to God. This is unsettling for us, and we may even feel paralyzed as a result.

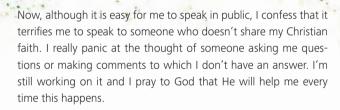
I want to share a situation that has left me paralyzed for a long time. I still need to work on it and improve. I see how the fruit of faithfulness still needs to grow within me.

Let me start by saying that I enjoy public speaking, even though it is one of the most common fears people have. Public speaking can be terrifying because it means exposing yourself. Putting yourself out there. Surrendering yourself to the judgment of those who are listening.



"Although most of these conversations end up being a blessing, the fact that I feel like this at the beginning makes me feel bad. Because I am not being faithful to Tesus.

At least not enough."



Here's what happens to me: every time an unbeliever—someone who has no knowledge of Christianity, let alone Adventism—asks me about what I believe, my work as a pastor or my church... I start to sweat. Not because I am ashamed of God, of my ministry or of my church (Romans 1:16), but because I am deeply aware that what I say may lead that person to fall in love with the most amazing Being in the universe, or, to the contrary, reject Jesus and never want to hear about Him ever again.

Every time this happens, I feel I fail God. I feel that I don't measure up, that I am not a trustworthy follower of Jesus. I feel that I am in fact being *unfaithful* to God when He is nothing but faithful to me. Shouldn't I be glad and excited that people who don't share my faith ask me about Jesus? Why, then, does this happen to me? Although most of these conversations end up being a blessing, the fact that I feel like this at the beginning makes me feel bad. Because I am not being faithful to Jesus. At least not enough. And I know this is not something only I have experienced.

Still, we need to get back up. We may fail and we may be unfaithful to God any given moment, but He continues to be faithful (Romans 4:21; 1 John 1:9; Joshua. 21:45). Every time we are unfaithful to God, let's decide to return to Jesus and connect with Him again. Let's be fertile soil that produces fruit (John 15:5). Let's go back to the path of faithfulness.

In order to do this, we must understand what faithfulness means. Being faithful means being reliable. A faithful person is an honest and upright person, someone you can trust. It also means someone can trust you without fearing that you will fail them. Faithful people keep their word. You are faithful when you do what is expected of you, even if no one is watching; when no one doubts your actions or words because you have a history together and they know you for your trustworthiness. Trust develops over time; it is impossible to gain in a day. The same happens with faithfulness.

On the other hand, faithfulness does not only apply to the bigger things. In fact, small details matter because they usually end up making the difference. In today's text, Jesus says, "...good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much" (Matthew 25:21 ESV). It doesn't matter if your faithfulness is put to the test with a big thing or a small thing: everything testifies of your relationship with God. Everything we do may reflect Jesus. Because that is what it is all about: to reflect Jesus through our faithfulness to our relationship with Him and to His principles. Whether it is in something big or small, before many or a few.

> "We may fail and we may be unfailhful to God any given moment, but He continues to be faithful. Every time we are unfaithful lo God, lel's decide lo relurn lo Tesus and connect with Him again."

"The greatest thing about allowing the Holy Spirit to work within us so that we grow in faithfulness to God is that, as a result, we give testimony."

I want to highlight that we should not see faithfulness as a lofty ideal that only a few people can attain. Faithfulness is the result of our relationship with one Person, the result of the influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Faithfulness to God is strengthened over time. By our relationship with Him. By our constant communication with Him. I am faithful to Jesus because I *know* Him. And the more I know Him, the more faithful I want to be because I don't want to damage our relationship of trust. Just like with our closest friend. The only difference being that Jesus is the best Friend we could ever imagine! And if we ever fail and feel we have been unfaithful, He waits for us with open arms, ready to mend our broken relationship (1 John 2:1; 2 Corinthians 5:17-19).

The greatest thing about allowing the Holy Spirit to work within us so that we grow in faithfulness to God is that, as a result, we give testimony (John 15:27). That means that we are not the only ones who are blessed by being faithful to God, but also those around us (doesn't that remind you of the promise God made to Abraham in Genesis 12:3: "...And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed"?). Being faithful to God leads us to fulfill our mission of sharing the good news Jesus has given us. When we are faithful, we share the gospel. When we are faithful in the little things, we expand the principles of God's great Kingdom. When the Holy Spirit leads and produces fruit in our lives, we open the way for other people's lives to be transformed because we allow God to work in and through us. Let us ask God to help us to be faithful. Let us ask God for the fruit of the Spirit to grow in our hearts.



was born in Romania and raised in Spain. He considers himself a citizen of heaven. By God's grace, he is married to Sayei (@escribiendosupalabra) and they both joyfully seek to share Jesus with post-Christian Europe.

Prayer of the Day

Dear God, Thank You because You fill us with Your Spirit and You produce fruit in us that is a blessing to others. Thank You for Your faithfulness. Thank You because we can trust that You are loving, generous and good. Grow the fruit of faithfulness within me and may others be blessed as a result.





"Many claim to have unfailing love, but a faithful person who can find?"

Proverbs 20:6 (NIV)

- 1. What evidence of God's faithfulness do you find in the Bible? How does it impact or influence your definition of faithfulness? How can we reflect God's faithfulness in our daily lives?
- 2. Have you ever felt ashamed of sharing your faith? If that has been the case, why do you think it is so hard?

5. Is there a solution for (spiritual, relational, etc.) unfaithfulness? How so?

- 3. Have you ever felt stuck in your spiritual life? What have you done/can you do to change that? How can you grow in faithfulness in your relationship with God?
- 4. When you look at your church (and your life), do you ever find a lack of commitment and a lot of conformism? Why is that? What can we do to change that?



Personal Challenge

FAITHFULLY ACCOUNTABLE

Create a WhatsApp/Telegram/Signal/Messenger group with people who are going through this study guide with you. A group that is free of criticism and judgment.

If you are going through this study guide on your own, share this topic with someone and ask them to join the challenge.

Use this group exclusively to share the moments when your faithfulness to God is tested, whether you remain faithful or not.

When someone texts in the group sharing a faithfulness test in their life, each member of the group will pray for that person and for the situation. That way, you will have a prayer network to support you every time your faithfulness to God is put to the test.



Food for Thought

"The greatest want of the world is the want of men [and women]—men [and women] who will not be bought or sold, men [and women] who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men [and women] who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men [and women] whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men [and women] who will stand for the right though the heavens fall" (*Education*, p. 57).

What sort of pe relationships? W		want to be in th	ne world? In you
A SA			
	17.45		
May 4			





"BUT YOU, TIMOTHY, ARE A MAN OF GOD; SO RUN FROM ALL THESE EVIL THINGS. PURSUE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND A GODLY LIFE, ALONG WITH FAITH, LOVE, PERSEVERANCE, AND GENTLENESS."



HOW ASSERTIVE ARE YOU?

Assertiveness can be defined as a person's ability to express their emotions to someone else in an appropriate manner, without any hostility or aggressiveness. People who are assertive are able to share their opinions and feelings—both positive and negative—in a clear and appropriate way.

Aggresive

/ Does not appreciate others
/ Does not listen
/ Imposes own point of view on others

ASSERTIVE Communication

/ Active listening / Express your point of view / Honesty and clarity

Passive

/ People pleaser
/ Wants to be liked by others at all costs
/ Fails to take responsibility:
others are to blame

Lately, big companies are looking for leaders who are assertive, instead of choosing more aggressive styles that were more popular in the past. Why do you think that is?

Next, do an assertiveness company test in order to assess your assertiveness level. The first step in this process is to know yourself!

Assertiveness Test: You can download and/or print the test following this link: bit.ly/WOP23downloads









n the late 1960s, a couple of friends bought a lion cub in a London department store. They took the small lion home and raised it as a pet. They would feed and walk their little cub, who welcomed their pampering as if he were simply a cat. They decided to name him Christian. As time went by, his size became a problem, not only because of where they lived but also because of the amount of food their pet needed. So, they decided to send him to a nature reserve in Kenya in the hope that he would adapt to his natural habitat.

Some months later, the nature reserve manager confirmed that Christian had fully adapted to his new home with a pride of lions. The friends decided to travel to Kenya for a final farewell and to celebrate Christian's new life.

Nine months had passed since the last time they had seen the lion; the nature reserve manager warned them that Christian would not recognize them. The two friends decided to record a documentary about the reunion. It's all uploaded on YouTube. 1

The out-of-focus images from the seventies show two young men with shaggy hair and bell-bottoms in an African wildlife park. They are waiting at the bottom of the hill for the lion to appear. The young men stand still and look upwards. Suddenly, a lion's head appears at the top of the hill. The lion makes its way down. It seems wary. No one has any idea of how it will react. The two friends remain motionless and begin to call his name. All of a sudden, the



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ANSWER IN STRESSFUL SITUATIONS,
LIKE WHEN A WILD LION EMBRACES
TWO HUMANS"

lion starts to run towards them. It is impressive to see how Christian jumps towards the young men... and hugs them between his huge paws, and even licks their faces! The lion's gentle reaction and his docile behavior are in stark contrast with his size and his potentially dangerous nature.

 \sim

I love Christian's story and his gentle strength. I think he is the perfect example to help us understand the meaning of the "gentleness" Paul talks about when he refers to the fruit of the Spirit.

Let me explain. In our minds, we tend to connect gentleness with concepts such as weakness, submission or resignation, in other words, with passive behaviors that enable aggression. It's as if we were talking about small and defenseless sheep that must be protected because they are incapable of facing problems on their own.

However, when Paul uses the Greek word *prautes* ($\pi \rho \alpha \ddot{\upsilon} \pi \eta \varsigma$) to describe this quality of the fruit of the Spirit, he is not referring to those behaviors. For Paul, gentleness has more to do with the surprisingly sweet and gentle response of a lion towards two people, who acts in a different way from what might be expected because of his nature.²

The thing is the term *prautes* that Paul has chosen here is a term full of complexity and richness, since it can be translated not only as gentleness, but also as meekness, mildness or, by implication, humility.

In light of this cocktail of meanings derived from the Greek term, we can now break down the essential characteristics of gentleness into the following key points:

ACTION: For a person to be gentle, they must *actively* interact with external stimuli (it's impossible to display gentleness if you're isolated in a room). In this sense, a gentle person will react in response to injustice, conflicts and problems. They will express their stance and even their disapproval, but they will do it gently, because that is the heart of the matter. It's easy to be nice when things are going well or when I find myself in my comfort zone. However, for Paul, the greatness of this fruit lies in being able to give an unexpectedly gentle answer in stressful situations, like when a wild lion embraces two humans. Or when God made a promise to Hagar, the pregnant woman who had just fled her home because of the problems she caused in her masters' marriage (see Genesis 16).

FORTITUDE: Gentle people are *strong* people. Giving a gentle response while under pressure means that you are able to control the way you react when you interact with others. In practice, gentleness means that—even when you could crush them—you remain firm in showing love to others while overcoming the temptation to hurt them further. Its greatness and strength lie, precisely, in being gentle in stressful situations.





There are two practical examples—one current example and one historical one—that describe this gentle fortitude very well.

We find the first example in a Juvenile Court in Granada, Spain. In this Court, Judge Emilio Calatayud is passing sentence. A 16-yearold has been arrested for hacking into a company's computer system. He will probably be sentenced to a period of imprisonment in a juvenile detention center. But the judge's sentence results in total surprise: the minor is actually sentenced to only 100 hours of community service, namely giving IT classes to people with low or no income.

The second example comes from the Bible, when a terrified Elijah needs God to give him strength because they are looking to kill him. In this crisis, God would rather not meet Elijah in an earthquake, nor a fire nor a windstorm. Instead, the Creator of the universe decides to ease the pressure on Elijah by speaking His plans in a gentle whisper (1 Kings 19).

The strength and fortitude of gentle people lies in being able to empathize with others and in seeking to benefit others.

WILL: Gentleness is a fruit we must voluntarily bear. To be kind in a tough situation is a decision we must make that will probably go against our nature. Gentle people are aware that, in adverse situations, a kind word is much more fruitful than a snarl. And that, even though it is hard to accept criticism without getting angry, it is much better to assertively express how that criticism is affecting me instead of responding with an even greater insult. This is the essence of Jesus' proposal to stop the "eye for an eye"

"BUT THE JUDGE'S SENTENCE RESULTS IN TOTAL SURPRISE: THE MINOR IS ACTUALLY SENTENCED TO ONLY 100 HOURS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE. NAMELY GIVING IT CLASSES TO PEOPLE WITH LOW OR NO INCOME."

way of living (Matthew 5:28-32) and instead focus on intentionally bringing about a major change of events: to respond to others' attacks with love and gentleness. Yes, it is a revolutionary proposal, but the effects of a gentle response on our quick-tempered society would be life-changing. Can you imagine a place where the natural response in any given situation is love? If we look at these three characteristics, gentleness seems to be an ideal that is out of our reach. And the truth is that it is humanly impossible. Paul records this quality in the book of Galatians, as part of the fruit that the Spirit produces in our life. It is only the Holy Spirit who can slowly transform our natural inclinations to responses ripe with gentleness.3

That is why I would like to suggest three steps to help you reflect these Spirit-filled qualities:



"UNTIL THAT MOMENT ARRIVES, WE CAN EXPERIENCE
THE BENEFITS OF CULTIVATING GOD'S CHARACTER
WITHIN US THANKS TO THE EFFECT OF THE SPIRIT
WORKING IN OUR LIVES."

STEP ONE: *Get to know Jesus.* One of Jesus' character traits, according to the Bible, is His gentleness (see Matthew 11:28-30). So, seek Jesus and reflect His character.

STEP TWO: Try to apply gentleness in all aspects of your life, including your relationship with God. This means accepting God's will and the lifestyle He proposes. You will discover that His proposals lead to wonderful results.

STEP THREE: Take care of other people's needs. Jesus made a promise to those who set their pride aside and focus on helping others (Matthew 5:5). Even though this may not be the most popular thing to do, the meek (or gentle) will—at the right time—inherit the earth.

You know what? When I read the story of Christian the lion, I think about how incredible it will be to pet all animals when we are in the New Earth. I also think about how we will live in a community where everyone is full of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, *gentleness* and self-control (see Isaiah 65:17-25). I am looking forward to living in such a place, a place of true happiness, just the way God designed it to be since the beginning.

Until that moment arrives, we can experience the benefits of cultivating God's character within us thanks to the effect of the Spirit working in our lives. We can act like gentle lions, being a reflection of the fortitude that the Holy Spirit infuses in our lives.



Silvia lalos Ibáñez

was born in Zaragoza (Spain). She studied in the Rigel Adventist School and later pursued a Law degree. You will find her in summer camps in Entrepeñas or in AEGUAE. Still on her bucket list: to be part of a Missionary Project in another country together with her husband, Pep.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

DEAR GOD, I WANT YOU TO BE PART OF MY LIFE. I PUT ALL MY REACTIONS IN YOUR HANDS SO THAT THEY CAN BE A REFLECTION OF YOUR GENTLENESS AND LOVE. I PRAY THAT OTHERS MAY GET TO KNOW YOU AS A RESULT OF MY GENTLENESS-FILLED LIFE.





"THEN JESUS SAID, '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 AT HEART, AND YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. FOR MY YOKE IS EASY TO BEAR, AND THE BURDEN I GIVE YOU IS LIGHT."

Matthew 11:28-30

- 1. Do you remember a situation in which Jesus acted firmly but at the same time humble and gentle? Describe it.
- 2. Have you ever experienced a stressful situation in which a gentle answer has given you peace? How was that experience?
- 3. Why do you think Jesus asks us to do away with violence in our interactions with others?
- 4. In your daily life, what situations make you feel stressed and anxious? In what ways would a calmer, gentler and humbler approach help in those situations?





PERSONAL CHALLENGE

CHALLENGE 1: NOBEL PRIZE IN... GENTLENESS

The Nobel Prize is an international award that is given each year to people or institutions who have performed outstanding research, discoveries or contributions for humanity either the year before or during the course of their activity. The current categories of this award are the fields of physics, chemistry, medicine, literature, peace, and, since 1969, economy.

- 1. If a Nobel Prize in Gentleness existed (as a new category), what would be the requirements to earn this award?
- 2. If you had to choose a person (living or dead) to be nominated in this category for the next Nobel Prize Awards, who would be your candidate and why?
- 3. What if you were the candidate? What aspects of your daily life would you need to work on to meet the requirements you defined in the first part of this challenge? Now, think of practical ways to implement those aspects:

This is your action plan. Put it in practice ASAP!

CHALLENGE 2: SELF-EVALUATION

Read 2 Timothy 2:24, 25. In these verses, Paul invites us to be gentle and kind when conflicts arise, which will bring about very positive results. The main ingredient to successfully attain this quality is also included in these verses: to have a relationship with God. Below, you will find a table that you can use when you face a difficult situation. It's simply a guideline, but it can help you put these verses into practice. Also, it can be useful for your self-evaluation; it can help you 1) understand what your attitude is when you face a difficulty, and 2) become aware of the moments in which God has been there for you and has helped you respond in a better way.

PROBLEM (Describe the conflict or problematic situation.)	EMOTIONS (What emotions do I feel when I deal with this difficulty?)	CAUSE (Why does this situation stress me out?)
PRAYER (What perspective of the situation do God and His teachings give me?)	SOLUTIONS (What solutions can I personally implement to improve the situation?)	RESULTS (How did I sense God helped me in this situation?)



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"Jesus could speak the truth very boldly and confront people with great strength. The Gospels have plenty of illustrations of that. But his greatest strength was best seen in his gentleness. Jesus did not get aggresive or belligerent when his enemies tried to trick him and even when they falsely accused him. Jesus did not bully or belittle others, and he made time for those whom the rest of society did bully, belittle, and reject"4 (Christopher J. H. Wright).

The unexpected greatness of gentleness is to reflect God's character in the way we react when we interact with others. It is to react in a kind and gentle way, just like Jesus did.

How can you be part of this revolution of gentleness?

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CHAPTER 8





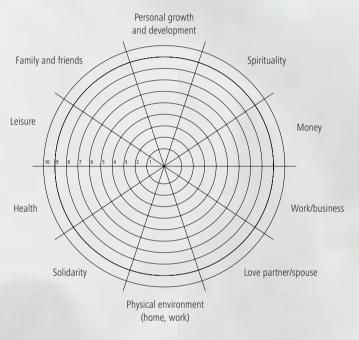
"NOW EVERY ATHLETE WHO [GOES INTO TRAINING AND] COMPETES IN THE GAMES IS DISCIPLINED AND EXERCISES SELF-CONTROL IN ALL THINGS. THEY DO IT TO WIN A CROWN THAT WITHERS, BUT WE [DO IT TO RECEIVE] AN IMPERISHABLE [CROWN THAT CANNOT WITHER]."

1 CORINTHIANS 9.25 (AMP)



IS MY SELF UNDER CONTROL?

Take a few minutes to take a snapshot of your self-control in different areas of your life by filling in the graphic below:



Questions for reflection:

- 1. In what areas of your life is it harder for you to exercise self-control? Why?
- 2. Compare your answers with your friends'. How can you help each other out and support one another? How can you be each other's accountability partner?
- 3. What types of strategies have you used to deal with a situation using self-control?
- 4. Why is it easier to tell others what to do in a given situation instead of doing it yourself?

For a group activity, please use the link below for a second icebreaker idea. $\underline{\text{bit.ly/WOP23downloads}}$



AN ONGOING PROCESS



Since he was 100% sure that the Holy Spirit was with him at all times, whenever he had to face a problem, a hard situation or a temptation, instead of telling God everything that was going on as if He were far away and had no idea about it, he would focus on actually speaking with his Father, asking Him specific questions, such as: "What am I feeling (or not feeling)? What options do I have? How can I face ...? What is the best way to act or react? Is it really necessary?"

In my many conversations with Pedro, I understood that self-control as a fruit of the Spirit is not about denying one's feelings, instincts, desires and appetites. Nor is it about adopting a passive and indifferent attitude towards the circumstances and people that affect us or irritate us. It is rather a process in which we, first of all, take note of what is going on inside of us and, second of all, after a quick analysis of the reality (both internal and external), we *prayerfully* approach the matter by asking the questions I just mentioned.

Self-control is essential in order not to lose the freedom God gives us (Galatians 5:1-13). Perhaps it is even the ingredient that allows us to cultivate and maintain the rest of the fruit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and gentleness) in all areas of our life. In other words, self-control will bring you benefits both in a spiritual and a secular context; both in the private and the public spheres; during your studies as well as at work and in sports; with your friends and family, and in your relationships.

I am sure that you are familiar with Paul's principle that "many believe and say that they are free to do as they please, and, yes, that may be true. However, I must say something important: even if this is so, even if I can do whatever I want, it is not always good for me to do whatever I want. Therefore, I won't let circumstances control me" (paraphrased version of 1 Corinthians 10:23). Every character trait is shaped by the repetition of a

single behavior once, twice, ten times and even a hundred times, until it becomes a habit. This is how someone's character traits are formed (or deformed); this, in turn, will affect the way they react in different circumstances and when facing setbacks.

There are many situations in which the easy thing to do is to lose your cool, get angry, and, finally, explode, yell, insult, offend, curse and even worse. But, let me ask you one thing: is it worth it? If you've already experienced it, how did you feel afterwards?

What could also happen is that you set yourself a goal and you end up discovering that you are unable to follow through because you are lacking in self-control. How can you get out of this cycle to accomplish what you truly desire? (See Romans 7:19-25.)

It is important that you remember that, despite past mistakes, once you open up to the cultivation of the fruit of the Spirit, as we read in Galatians 5, you never start from scratch. Your ex-

perience today is greater than your experience yesterday, and you can always build on it.

I encourage you to not throw in the towel, because a fruit grows and matures little by little.

Now that we've reached this point, I would like to share with you a few pointers that help me in the process of attaining self-control, and that can also apply to the rest of the attributes that make up the fruit of the Spirit:



"THERE ARE MANY SITUATIONS IN WHICH THE EASY
THING TO DO IS TO LOSE YOUR COOL, GET ANGRY, AND,
FINALLY, EXPLODE, YELL, INSULT, OFFEND,
CURSE AND EVEN WORSE."

"YOU NEVER START FROM SCRATCH YOUR EXPERIENCE TODAY IS GREATER THAN YOUR EXPERIENCE YESTERDAY. AND YOU CAN ALWAYS BUILD ON IT."



1. BE CLEAR ABOUT WHAT YOU DO WANT, WHAT YOU DON'T WANT AND WHY

I often talk with people about their problems and the consequences of their life choices. Most of the times, many of the consequences could have been avoided if they had just taken a few minutes to reflect on what they did not want for their lives.

One of the reasons why we may lose control and fail to exercise self-control is not being sure or clear about what we do want, what we don't want and why.

If someone were to ask us, "What do you want from life?", perhaps many of us (especially the younger ones) would respond, after a moment of silence, "I have no idea." There are times in life when you don't really know what you want; so, I find it useful to ask the question from the opposite perspective: "What is it that you don't want?" This allows us to identify the first traces of what we do want.

2. MAKE A DECISION AND STICK TO IT

Once you are clear about your what (what you do want) and your why,1 it is important that you don't overthink it. Of course, it is only natural for you to be doubtful about certain decisions. The point is to set doubt aside to set focus. I recommend you take a look at James 1:6-8 (NIV): "But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do."

3. TAKE BABY STEPS

The development of self-control is like a long-distance race (see 1 Corinthians 9:25). When a task is very complex, it may feel like too much and you may find yourself paralyzed within the first 100 meters.

Divide your goal into smaller steps. The good thing about life is that in a way everything is interconnected. When Jesus spoke about honesty, he explained that being faithful in the little things is the first step towards being faithful in the big things (see Matthew 25:23).

Establish routines that bring you closer to your goal one step at a time.

Note: If you are struggling with drugs, alcohol, sex or pornography, I recommend that you seek help from someone who understands you and can support you in the process. In the Church, there are many people who are ready and willing to help you.

4. LEARN TO SEE THE POSITIVE SIDE

One single drop of ink is enough to stain a glass of water. In the same way, a single thought can change your attitude towards something, either positively or negatively. It is important for you to understand and resolve that the changes or goals you have set for yourself are not a punishment. Focus on the benefits, whether it is improving your relationship with God, self-esteem, health, knowledge, growth, well-being, etc.

Avoid making absolute statements about things that are not an issue from a biblical perspective. Just to give you a simple example, if you have decided you will follow a certain diet or you will stop drinking certain beverages, do not create unnecessary stress for yourself by saying, "I will NEVER go back to ...". You could phrase it in a more positive way, like, "Today, I will replace ... with ...". These little linguistic tricks will be very helpful when dealing with negative thoughts or peer pressure.

5. REWARD YOURSELF FOR YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Another thing that I would recommend is that you reward yourself for your accomplishments. Your brain generates positive emotions when you do this because it creates a "record" that your efforts result in a positive reward. Of course, this reward should be positive and good for you (and also in the eyes of God, see 1 Corinthians 10:31).

6. MAKE A COMMITMENT

Do you know what the difference is between commitment and duty? Commitment comes from within, it is something we take on voluntarily. Duty, on the other hand, is externally imposed. What is interesting about all this is that God does not want to impose Himself on us. His Kingdom in this world starts within each of us, in our minds and in our hearts. But this Kingdom is only possible when you make a commitment with yourself, with your fellow human beings and with God.



I want to conclude with a final thought on this Kingdom. The way I see it, every attribute that Paul presents of the Fruit is an attribute of the Kingdom of God (see Matthew 5 and 6). Paul's list in Galatians 5:22, 23 is not there for us to pick out a few elements, but so that—as a result of opening up to and receiving the Holy Spirit in our minds and in our hearts—the fruit of the Kingdom of God will grow within us and spread from the inside out, from our lives to other people's lives.





Dante Herrmann

has been walking with and for Jesus for almost thirteen years now. He shares his life journey with his beloved Raquel and his children Lucas and Aarón. He is passionate for the gospel and the Kingdom of God. Pathfinder, pastor and theologian.

"PAUL'S LIST IN GALATIANS 5:22, 23
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RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT
IN OUR MINDS AND IN OUR HEARTS—
THE FRUIT OF THE KINGDOM OF
GOD WILL GROW WITHIN US."

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Dear God, I praise you for giving me everything I need to lead a good life. Help me daily to see and understand where in my life I need to exercise self-control. Thank you because Your Holy Spirit is with me and helps me develop this self-control. That is why I choose to open my heart and mind to You, so that I can hear Your voice and exercise self-control in the different areas of my life.



"'I HAVE THE RIGHT TO DO ANYTHING,' YOU SAY—BUT NOT EVERYTHING IS BENEFICIAL. 'I HAVE THE RIGHT TO DO ANYTHING'—BUT NOT EVERYTHING IS CONSTRUCTIVE."

1 Corinthians 10:23 (NIV)

Considering your reality (your context, your sphere of influence, your friends), answer these questions, also bearing in mind the key Bible texts for this topic:

- 1. From the perspective of the text and in relation to Christian living, why do you think self-control is necessary?
- 2. What things do you think it would be good to do (or stop doing) in order to be prepared for the different circumstances and situations we encounter in life?
- 3. From your own experience, what difficulties come to mind regarding the development of self-control?
- 4. Which of the points suggested in the text for the development of self-control caught your attention and why?



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

"Commitment is what transforms a promise into reality; it is the word that courageously speaks of our intentions; it is the action that speaks louder than words; it is finding time when there is none; it is keeping your promise even when things get tough; it is the substance that molds the character to change things; it is the daily victory of integrity over skepticism. To make and keep a commitment is the essence of proactivity" (Shearson Lehman, as quoted by Cris Moltó).²

The cultivation of self-control—and of the entire fruit of the Spirit—requires that we make a commitment. It is up to us to choose to seek God and open our hearts so that the Spirit can live within us and transform us from the inside out.

What commitment would you like to	make with Jesus now, to
cultivate the fruit of the Spirit within	you?

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"COMMITMENT IS WHAT TRANSFORMS A PROMISE INTO REALITY."

ADDITIONAL READING AND RESOURCES

- Wright, Christopher J. H. (2017). Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit: Growing in Christlikeness. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Copeland, Gloria. (2021). Walking in the Fruit of the Spirit: Releasing the Nature and Power of God in Your Life. Kindle edition.
- Offner, Hazel et. al. (2013). A Deeper Look at the Fruit of the Spirit: Nine Sessions for Groups and Individuals. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.
- Rodríguez, Ángel Manuel. (Ed.) (2022). Andrews Bible Commentary: New Testament. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press.
- McKnight, Scot. (1995). The NIV Application Commentary:
 Galatians. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Watch the "Grasping Galatians" series by David Asscherick and Ty Gibson on Storyline's YouTube channel: https://bit.ly/GraspingGalatians



CLOTHED IN THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

As a final challenge, I would like to suggest an activity based on what Paul says in Ephesians 4:22-24 (NIV), "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (emphasis added). If we want to be followers of Jesus, it is not enough to be "righteous and holy" only one or two days a week, or when I meet my friends "from the church". Just like we put on clothes every day, in this challenge I encourage you to "put on" the Holy Spirit every day as well.

You can do this challenge in one day, or over the course of three days (one day for each section). The most important thing is that you approach it in prayer and honestly, asking God for His help throughout the process.

WHAT SPIRITUAL CLOTHES ARE YOU WEARING?

Perhaps you identify with one of the followings looks with regards to your current spiritual life. Put on your fruit of the Spirit glasses and reflect on what spiritual clothes you are wearing at the moment.

"PUT ON YOUR FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT GLASSES AND REFLECT ON WHAT SPIRITUAL CLOTHES YOU ARE WEARING AT THE MOMENT."

THE PRISONER LOOK

Have you been wearing a striped t-shirt of unnecessary and maybe even hurtful habits that have kept you trapped in an unwanted cycle for far too long? Do you feel imprisoned by your circumstances? Describe your prisoner look. What things keep the fruit of the Spirit from growing within you?



THE DOUBTFUL LOOK

Do you remember those times when you have changed your clothes once, twice, or even three times, and still felt unsatisfied? What "clothes" are you wearing—that are contrary to the fruit of the Spirit—that ultimately leave you unsatisfied and doubtful?



THE UNCOMFORTABLE LOOK

Imagine a pair of new jeans that are a little too tight. They can be very uncomfortable, especially at the beginning. Perhaps you find yourself in a situation in which wearing the "new jeans" of the fruit of the Spirit may feel uncomfortable and foreign to you, because it requires you to change certain things in your life. However, in the long run, the most desirable thing is for those jeans to stretch and give a bit, as a result of the action of the Holy Spirit in your heart. How does wearing the "new jeans" of the Spirit give you discomfort? Do those tight new jeans represent something else to you?

How can you apply self-control so that in time you can "painlessly walk" in your Holy Spirit "new jeans"?



THE UNEXPECTED LOOK

You have probably borrowed someone else's clothes at some point. Depending on the situation, this was either positive or

negative for you. When you borrow someone's clothes, you have no say in the color, shape or size of the clothes. You simply wear them because you need to in a given moment. Spiritually speaking, perhaps you are wearing "borrowed" clothes that—in the bottom of your heart—you feel do not really belong to you because they do not align with who you want to be (for example, jealousy, partying, bad habits, alcohol, toxic relationships, anger, selfishness, etc.). What do you feel is "borrowed clothes" for you, that you want to return to their "owner"?



THE IDEAL LOOK

Do you remember a garment that you can't possibly let go of? It seems like it was made just for you. Jesus tells us that the perfect clothes for us is the fruit of the Spirit. In what specific moments do you feel that you are wearing the ideal *look* in your spiritual life, in relation to the fruit of the Spirit?

8



MY CURRENT **LOOK**VS. MY IDEAL **LOOK**

Use the space below to draw your current look, from a spiritual perspective. It could be a mixture of the *looks* I have shared with you, or perhaps you can come up with some new ones. It is of vital importance that you are completely honest with yourself as you do this activity. Remember to also write down what each piece of clothing means to you (for example: striped t-shirt – represents my feeling of being a failure in my relationship with God because I feel I am unfaithful to Him; a blue glove — represents my doubts about committing to Jesus, I lack faith; a golden belt – represents one fruit I do see in my life: peace, I feel peace even when I go through a storm).

On the right-hand side, draw your ideal look, focusing on the nine attributes or characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control) that we have studied together in this study guide (for example: skirt with a heart print – represents my desire to further cultivate the fruit of Love; I want to love the way God loves me).

My current spiritual ${f look}$

My ideal spiritual **look**



IN PURSUIT OF THE IDEAL **LOOK**

It is now time to act as part of this final challenge. You have 4. Learn to see the positive side. How are you going to probably discovered that you are not wearing your ideal look in react when something goes wrong in your process? How your spiritual life. How can you get the look of the fruit of the will you express your purpose in a positive way? Spirit? My proposal for you is that you follow the six steps that we addressed in chapter 8: 1. Be clear about what [look] you do want, what [look] you don't want and why. What kind of person do you want to be/not be? I want to be _ 5. Reward yourself for your accomplishments. When you succeed in putting on your ideal clothes of the fruit of the Spirit, how are you going to celebrate? I don't want to be ___ 2. Make a decision and stick to it. What decision do you need to make right now? **6. Make a commitment.** Wearing the clothes of the fruit of the Spirit requires constant commitment; it is an ongoing process. What is the next piece of clothing you want to put on so that the fruit of the Spirit continues to grow within you? 3. Take baby steps. What specific steps do you need to take to put on your ideal look?





CHAPTER 2 / JOY

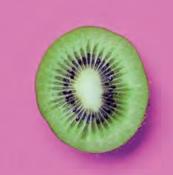


CHAPTER 3 / PEACE

1 Check out last year's Youth Week of Prayer 2022 material, *The Earth is the Lord's: Called to Care for Creation,* chapter 2, for a study on the justice and righteousness we are referring to



CHAPTER 4 / PATIENCE





CHAPTER 5 / KINDNESS AND GOODNESS





CHAPTER 7 / GENTLENESS

- Christian the Lion. See on YouTube: https://bit.ly/Christianthelion
- Based on the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary on Matthew 5:5.
 Based on the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary on Galatian 5:22.
- the Fruit of the Spirit: Growing in Christlikeness. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, p. 133.





CHAPTER 8 / SELF-CONTROL

- 2022 material, The Earth is the Lord's: Called to importance of defining our why and our what. Available in 12 languages. Download at
- Moltó, Cris. (2014). Las 365 reflexiones de lo realmente importante en nuestra vida. Barcelona: Amat Editorial, p. 120.



FOR THE LORD IS THE SPIRIT, AND WHEREVER THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS, THERE IS FREEDOM. SO ALL OF US WHO HAVE HAD THAT VEIL REMOVED CAN SEE AND REFLECT THE GLORY OF THE LORD. AND THE LORD—WHO IS THE SPIRIT—MAKES US MORE AND MORE LIKE HIM AS WE ARE CHANGED INTO HIS GLORIOUS IMAGE.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:17, 18 (NLT)

This resource is recommended to be used as the Youth Week of Prayer for 2023.

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If we look around us, we see a world that is enslaved to the works of the flesh. Self-ishness. Anger. Resentment. Envy. Jealousy. Anxiety. Hatred... We urgently need to free ourselves from the bondage of darkness and come into the light of the fruit of the Spirit. We need to find Christ and truly be free. To lead fruitful lives that are full of love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. If every single person was fertile land for the Spirit, our world would be different. What if the transformation started with you? Will you be fertile soil for the fruit of the Spirit?

The eight chapters in this study guide will help you navigate the nine "segments" of the fruit of the Spirit. The journey may be life-changing; that is up to you.



