

Lent 2021

Cultivating the Fruits of the Spirit

Discussion Questions

Developed by the Pastors and the Adult Deepening Team



Week Two: Gentleness

(Week of February 28)



UNITED PARISH IN BROOKLINE

American Baptist • United Church of Christ • United Methodist

Purpose of this Lenten study

To expand our individual understanding of the gifts - or fruits - of the Spirit

To explore how we can cultivate and embody these gifts to feel more in alignment with and authentic with God

To appreciate that each of us has particular gifts to contribute to the fruitfulness of our community aspirations and efforts

Based on Galatians 5:22-23:

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Purpose of this session

To introduce and examine gentleness as a Christian virtue

Week Two: Gentleness**Opening Prayer**

Dear God,

Giver of all the fruits of the Holy Spirit, be with us as we explore the virtue of gentleness in this second week of Lent. We pray for all those in our United Parish community who are joining us in this Lenten journey individually and in groups.

Inspire us to manifest these virtues, as Jesus' hands and feet in our world.

Amen

Scripture**James' Letter to Early Jewish Christians**

James 3:13-18

¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. ¹⁴But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. ¹⁵Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. ¹⁶For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. ¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of

partiality or hypocrisy. ¹⁸ And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians 4:1-3

Ephesians 4:1-3

¹ I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Notes on the Greek words in these texts: In the Galatians, gentleness is “chrēstotēs”, meaning “moral goodness, integrity, benignity, kindness.” In the Ephesians (praotēs) “gentleness, mildness, meekness” and James (prautes) “mildness of disposition, gentleness of spirit, meekness.”

Discussion Questions

Centering Questions

- How was I taught to be gentle?
- What examples of gentleness did I experience or witness growing up?
- Were there ways I was expected to be gentle?
- Was I ever mocked for being gentle?
- What does it mean to me now to be gentle?

Jesus and Gentleness

Here are some scriptural examples of times when Jesus either exhibited gentleness, went against gender roles, or both: (the list is mostly pulled from [this article](#))

- He welcomed physical affection with his friends. (John 13:23)
- He encouraged others to talk about their feelings (John 20:15)
- He wept openly in public (Luke 19:41; John 11:33-36).

- He was comfortable in the company of women, allowing them to follow him in his travels. In fact, he even received financial support from women (Luke 8:1-3).
- Some of his parables—about baking with yeast (Matt. 13:33), looking for a lost coin (Luke 15:8-10), and virgins at a wedding (Matt. 25:1-13)—indicate a familiarity with women’s everyday life.
- He welcomed little children when most men didn’t have time for them (Mark 10:13-16).
- Jesus never seemed obsessed with fame and success. In fact, he taught his male disciples, who were jockeying for status and honor, that true greatness lies in humility and service (Matt. 18:1-4; 20:20-28; Mark 9:33-35; 10:35-45; Luke 9:46-48).

How does gender play a role in what you think about gentleness as a fruit of the Spirit?

Closing Prayer

Dear God,

Help us in our Lenten journey this week to embody “gentleness born of wisdom” in the way that Jesus did. Let us explore how gentleness is a strength rather than a weakness, and can augment our unique set of God-given gifts, personality traits and energy levels. Be with us as we figure out how to extend gentleness to others in need, as well as tend to our own hurt places.

Amen

Hymn (Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness)

Spirit, spirit of gentleness,
blow through the wilderness, calling and free,
Spirit, spirit of restlessness,
stir me from placidness, wind, wind on the sea.

You moved on the waters, you called to the deep,
then you coaxed up the mountains from the valleys of sleep;
and over the eons you called to each thing;
“Awake from your slumbers and rise on your wings.”

You swept through the desert, you stung with the sand
and you goaded your people with a law and a land;
and when they were blinded with idols and lies,
then you spoke through your prophets to open their eyes.

You sang in a stable, you cried from a hill,
then you whispered in silence when the whole world was still;
and down in the city you called once again,
when you blew through your people on the rush of the wind.

You call from tomorrow, you break ancient schemes.
From the bondage of sorrow all the captives dream dreams;
our women see visions, our men clear their eyes.
With bold new decisions your people arise.

(James K. Manley (20th century), hymn-writer