

**The Fruit of the Spirit, Pt. 7: Gentleness and Self-Control
October 19, 2025
Central UMC**

Galatians 5:16-26 (NRSVUE)

¹⁶ Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law.

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envy,^[a] drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.

²⁶ Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.

This is our seventh and final sermon in the series on Fruit of the Spirit and our focus today is gentleness and self-control. Gentleness is

closely related to the fruit of kindness and goodness that we talked about a few Sundays ago. Kindness means showing compassion and love to others by thought, words, and deeds. Gentleness, kindness and goodness are characteristics of true love.

Gentleness is being sensitive to others. Sensitive and caring for their feelings. Sensitive and caring for their needs. Sensitive and caring for their wants and desires. Gentleness is a result of the Holy Spirit living and moving in you and your life.

As I have shared in each sermon, each staff member has led our devotion in our weekly staff meetings with a focus on one of the fruit of the Spirit.

Pastor JD, our Associate Pastor of Congregational Care, who is concerned and conscientious about his responsibilities and has a heart for convalescing and homebound, led the presentation on gentleness. He said, "Gentleness is the quality of being kind and tender. He gave an example of a father or parent not being happy about having to discipline a child but seeing it as a necessary expression of love and doing so with firmness and gentleness."

Pastor JD also shared that we are to humble ourselves and be soft, even in conflict. And I really like this, "Christ is the living example of how to live our lives, even in tough times."

I have a question for those worshipping virtually and those present: Do you know that words can hurt? Do you know that words matter and have meaning? The words we use in our relationships with spouses, significant others, family members, children, co-workers, and people we don't know, strangers, matter.

Do you know that words make a difference, whether positive or negative? What we say and how we say it matters. What we say and our tone matters. Gentleness is being sensitive and caring about *what* we say and *how* we say it. How many of you remember the saying, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me?" That is not true. Words can hurt you or someone else. Whether you are a five-year-old on the playground or an adult at work, home, church or in society.

What we say and how we say it can actually hurt others. If we are true followers of Jesus, then we should be mindful of this and demonstrate the fruit of gentleness. Even if life has been cruel and unfair, it does not mean that we have to be rough, rude, and abrasive, but it allows us to express ourselves in such a way that we can be both firm and gentle, when we need to be. This means we have self-control or discipline. The Christian life is a disciplined life. The root of the word discipleship is discipline. To be a follower of Christ, means to live a disciplined life and to practice self-control.

Debbie is our meticulous, detailed oriented business manager and treasurer and led the devotion about self-control. Debbie said, "Biblical

self-control is defined as "A fruit of the Spirit; also defining it as a restraint in your thoughts and actions to align with righteous living that reflects a life surrendered to God." She also said, "Biblical self-control empowered by the Holy Spirit, shows up when you don't lash out during a conflict and choose peace over pride, when you resist temptation to gossip or instant gratification."

Look at infants and children. Infants and children have little to no self-control, don't they? We try to discipline them and teach them and help them understand how to behave and act. There is certain behavior we just do not tolerate, do we? We don't allow temper tantrums, do we? We don't allow talking back and being disrespectful, do we? When I was growing up, my mother and father simply did not allow my sister and me to even use a certain tone when responding to them.

We teach our children to exercise self-control. They just cannot do and say what they want to say. When they get older, hopefully they've learned those lessons and can practice self-control. When we become mature Christians and mature in our faith-walk; when we walk in the Spirit, we can exercise self-control. Only the Spirit allows us the strength and ability to exercise self-control.

Our human inclination and human nature are to sin, to be disobedient to God, to choose to eat from the tree of knowledge in the garden of Eden. Paul says in Romans 7:21, "I have discovered this principle of life – that when I want to do what is right. I inevitably do what is

wrong.” Let us understand that we were created with free will and we choose to walk in the flesh or in the Spirit. When the Holy Spirit leads and guides us; when we walk in step with the Holy Spirit, we can exercise self-control.

That means we just do not say everything that we think. Children and babies do not have filters. If they think it and they say it. They think it and they do it. We cannot be that way when we walk in the Spirit. We just cannot do everything we want to do. We just can't say everything we want to say.

Is it easy? No! Does it take work, mindfulness, awareness, and discipline? Yes! Can the Holy Spirit give us power to practice gentleness? Yes! Can the Holy Spirit give us the ability to practice self-control? Yes!

We cannot talk about folk, run their names in the ground, gossip, and connive and then turn around and say, “Well the Lord knows I mean well and knows my heart.” The Scripture says that as a person thinks in their heart and mind, that's who they are. What comes out of our mouths is what is in our heart.

Let's walk in the spirit! Let's live in the spirit! Let's speak in the spirit! Let's love in the spirit! Let us be loving, kind and gentle in the spirit!

Let our prayer and song be,
*Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
Take my hands, and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love.*

*Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.
Take my voice, and let me sing
Always, only, for my King.*

*Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee.
Take my silver and my gold;
Not a mite would I withhold.*

*Take my love, my God, I pour
At Thy feet it's treasure store.
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee
Ever, only, all for thee.*

The fruit of the Spirit is gentleness and self-control.

Let the Church say, "Amen."