

The Church in a Time of Crisis (The Fruit of the Spirit) Discussion Guides March - May 2020

Week 1 – The Spirit in a Time of the Flesh



Teaching Text

Galatians 5:13-21

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Recap

In this secular age of the flesh, it's vital that we learn, as people of God, how to live in the Spirit. Many people are driven by statistics, data, desires, and fear, but Jesus calls us to be led by the Spirit. In Galatians 5, Paul states that we cannot have two operating systems within ourselves or our church; either we choose the Spirit or our flesh, which is any independent coping mechanism for life apart from God. Galatians 5:19-21 mentions 15 specific acts of the flesh, eight of which center around how we treat each other in relationships. When we live outside of the Spirit, we are subject to indulgences, sexuality, religion (believing something other than God will solve our problems and manipulating deities to do what we want), and relationships. But the Holy Spirit breathes new life over chaos and enables us to be free from living in bondage to sin. The flesh uses and destroys, the law judges and excludes, but the Spirit transforms and loves.

We are commanded away from the flesh and toward the Spirit. The global pandemic has placed us in a season ripe for deep reflection to repent of our flesh (i.e., judgment, criticism, screen time abuse, etc.) and take action. There is no space for the flesh in our hearts or in the church, but there is ample space for the Abba cry from the Spirit (Romans 8:12-16). To be people moved and led by the Spirit, we must walk with Him in the overall ecosystem of our lives and create an environment where the Spirit delights to abide. Consistent surrender to the Spirit – creating daily space for Him – will allow Him to bear fruits of the Spirit in us and our church.

Discussion Guide

Connect

1. Pastor Jon made multiple references to the “extra margin” in our lives today as a result of the quarantine. What is one way you’ve been enjoying that margin this week?

Contemplate

1. Galatians 5 begins with Paul’s call to the believers to be free. How have you experienced this kind of freedom in your life? What does freedom mean to us today as our daily lives become increasingly restricted?

2. Pastor Jon described “the flesh” as our coping strategies to try to get through life without God. What are the strategies your flesh defaults to in times of stress or crisis?

3. What fruit are you seeing in your life right now: the fruit of the Spirit or the fruit of the world? Share examples.

4. What would it look like to “make no provision for the flesh” during this time?

5. How can we create a space in which the Holy Spirit delights to dwell? What rhythms, habits, and liturgies can we employ to make room for the Spirit?

Encounter

Have group members take a moment to write down or share one practice they will put into place this week to create space for the Holy Spirit to dwell. Encourage them to think through things they might give up (like social media), routines they could commit to, or ways they could do this as a community.

Consider having your group choose prayer partners from within the group whom they can pray for throughout the next week. Switch prayer partners the following week.

CHURCH OF THE CITY

Week 2 – Love in a Time of Selfishness



Teaching Text

Galatians 5:22

But the fruit of the Spirit is love...

Recap

In Galatians 5, Paul provides us with a list of the “fruit” that comes from living in the way of the Spirit instead of the flesh, and the first of these is love. In today’s world, we are more likely to see the fruit of “incurvatus,” a love that collapses inward, or “enlightened self-interest,” a love that has been reduced to loving others for personal benefit. But as the people of God, we are called to live in stark contrast to the current culture of selfishness by loving in a way that goes beyond ourselves. The fruit of love is meant to be a manifestation of the Agape love of God in the world. A love that is centered around others and overflowing with sacrificial care.

To cultivate the fruit of love in our lives, we must first examine our roots and see where they are reaching for nourishment. When Jesus compares himself to the vine and we to the branches in John 15:5,9-11, He calls us to remain in Him, so that we may remain in His love as He has remained in God’s love. Before we can love well, we must first believe that we are loved well. When we are secure in God’s unfailing love, we can begin doing small things with great love everyday. This goes against our instincts to stir ourselves up and do great, big things, but living in the way of the Spirit is not about being big or great. We are called to

mimic Christ by giving ourselves up to serve others. Many times, this looks like a lot of little acts of faithfulness for the sake of somebody else. When we drink deeply from the love of God, we are able to let an extension of that love flow freely into the lives of those around us.

Discussion Guide

Connect

1. Mother Teresa once said, “Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.” What are some of the small acts of great love you have seen or heard in your life or on social media that have stuck out to you since the outbreak of COVID-19?

Contemplate

1. In John 15:4, Jesus tells us, “Remain in me, as I also remain in you.” In times of drought when our roots search for water, Jesus calls us to remain planted in Him and be secure in His love for us. How easy or difficult have you found this to be in your life and why?

2. Love today can sometimes be considered just an “enlightened self-interest,” or loving others for our own benefit. What are some ways you discern whether you are acting out of incurvatus love (love that collapses in on itself) or agape love (sacrificial, Christ-centered love)?

3. In times of selfishness, God may call us to act in sacrificial love, perhaps in ways we don’t even know yet. What do you think sacrificial love may look like for you this week?

4. The Holy Spirit takes our selfishness and transforms us so we can cultivate a culture of sacrifice. Imagine we are on the other side of the global pandemic we currently find ourselves in – what would it look like for us to be fully transformed? How could love in a time of selfishness shape the future of our lives, the Church, and our city after COVID-19?

Encounter

Spend some time in silence or playing worship music and independently ask God to search you and show any selfishness or frustrations in your heart. Ask Him, “How can I serve, bless, or encourage others?” Perhaps write down the names of people who come to mind who may have “fallen through the cracks” recently or need to be checked in on. If time allows, share with the group.

Week 3 – Defiant Joy in a Time of Despair



Teaching Text

Galatians 5:22

But the fruit of the Spirit is...joy.

Other Passages to Meditate On:

Acts 14:15-17

2 Timothy 3:1-5

Titus 3:3

Psalm 73:2-6, 9-10

Romans 15:13

1 Chronicles 16:26-27

Psalm 16:1

2 Corinthians 4:16

2 Corinthians 4:7-11

1 Peter 1:3-9

Hebrews 12:1-3

Jude 24-25

John 15:11

Romans 15:13

Recap

New York is living in a time of despair. It is therefore more crucial than ever to live out of defiant joy, which is in stark contrast to happiness. Culture defines happiness as getting what we want, which enslaves people to passions and pleasures (2 Timothy 3:1-5; Titus 3:3). We can be satisfied – and even gratified – but not fulfilled.

Christian joy is a good feeling in the soul produced by the Holy Spirit as He causes us to see the beauty of God in the Word and in the world. It enables us to respond to external circumstances with inner contentment and satisfaction, because we know that God will use these experiences to accomplish His work in and through our lives. It anticipates a glorious future of salvation and restoration.

To cultivate this defiant joy, consider Jesus' cyclical process in the Gospels: reality, struggle, surrender, resolve, defiant joy. If we go through this cycle, our will will be harmonized with God's will and we will find defiant joy.

This season is an opportunity to be formed by God into more maturity and character, by fixing our eyes on the right things instead of wasting our time. We must set the beauty of God, His Word, and His promises in front of us. Palm Sunday was a time of disillusionment for the disciples, but we have the gift of understanding redemptive history. We must not set our hope on temporary things or our own vision of God's kingdom. Instead, we should fix our eyes on Jesus and His eternal kingdom and let that resurrection reality shape us as we lean in to the joy that comes from the Holy Spirit – this beautiful generator of life that lets us operate in a different way than the world around us (John 15:11; Romans 15:13).

Discussion Guide

Connect

1. On a scale of 1-10, where do you feel you are on the Despair-to-Joy scale this week, with 1 being utter despair and 10 being complete joy?

Contemplate

1. What is something transient that you've been setting your hope in that is now stripped away?

2. Have you witnessed defiant joy this week, whether in your life or in someone else's? What did that look like?

3. Refer back to the “joy and harmony of wills” cycle. What realities are you overwhelmed with right now? What does it look like to struggle with these realities and come to a place of surrender?

4. What opportunities for formation do you see in your “new normal?” How could God be using these to develop your maturity and character?

Encounter

Though He deeply struggled with the reality of the cross, Jesus set His hope on the joy of redemption. What is a verse, promise, or word of encouragement that keeps coming to your mind that brings you deep joy? Spend a few minutes sharing these. If anything particularly resonates with the whole group, ask the sharer to send in your GroupMe (or other means of communication) so your group can access it later.

Encourage your group to spend 5-10 minutes each morning this week meditating on God, setting his beauty and promises before them to set the tone of their hearts for the day.

CHURCH OF THE CITY

Week 4 – Transcendent Peace in a Time of Anxiety



Teaching Text

Galatians 5:22

But the fruit of the Spirit is ... peace.

John 20:19-23

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Recap

The resurrection of Jesus is proof that God has accomplished what He promised in His Word, and that sin, death, and hell are defeated forever. According to the Gospels, however, this story does not start with joy and peace, but rather with anxiety and confusion in the disciples' hearts. We can relate to this sort of anxiety. Anxiety disorders plague our country. Our culture defines peace as the absence of all problems, meaning we're setting ourselves up to constantly live in an age of anxiety.

Jesus offers a different, better peace. First, He offers the peace of His presence. When He appears to the disciples after His resurrection, He draws near and shows them His scarred physical body so they can know His identity and His commitment to them. To experience this peace of His presence, we go through a cycle. We all start with wonder, but as we grow up, we become disenchanted and disillusioned, but we still long for the things we believed before to be true, so we seek re-enchantment, which then brings the wonder-filled presence of God back into our lives. Jesus re-enchants the world again and again.

Secondly, God gives the gift of the peace of purpose. The purpose of Jesus's ministry, death, and resurrection was reconciliation and restoration. Jesus does not condemn His disciples after His resurrection. He walks with people who walk away from Him. We likewise do not go into the world to condemn or judge it, but instead to carry the good news. This is the purpose of our peace.

Finally, Jesus offers the peace of His power. Jesus sends his Holy Spirit into our hearts so that we can have communion with God. God gives us the power of His Spirit and power over the grave and fear. This is not just a historical doctrine - when we receive it, this peace from the Spirit makes a difference in our lives now.

Discussion Guide

Connect

1. How did you celebrate Easter this year?

Contemplate

1. How do you see people pursue peace in our culture? How does Jesus's offering of peace differ from the world's?
2. God's peace through His Spirit enables us to have power over sin, death, and fear. How can we acknowledge the reality of suffering while still walking in this power?
3. Refer back to the cycle image at the bottom of this page. As Christians, we go through a cycle of wonder, disenchantment, disillusionment, longing, and re-enchantment. Is there a stage in this cycle that resonates with you? What does it look like when you live in that stage? How can we encourage one another toward re-enchantment with Jesus?
4. In Luke 24 after Jesus has just resurrected, Jesus walks, without condemnation, with two disciples who are walking away from Him. How can we similarly walk with those who don't

know Jesus? How does Jesus's peace enable us to come alongside others without judgment?

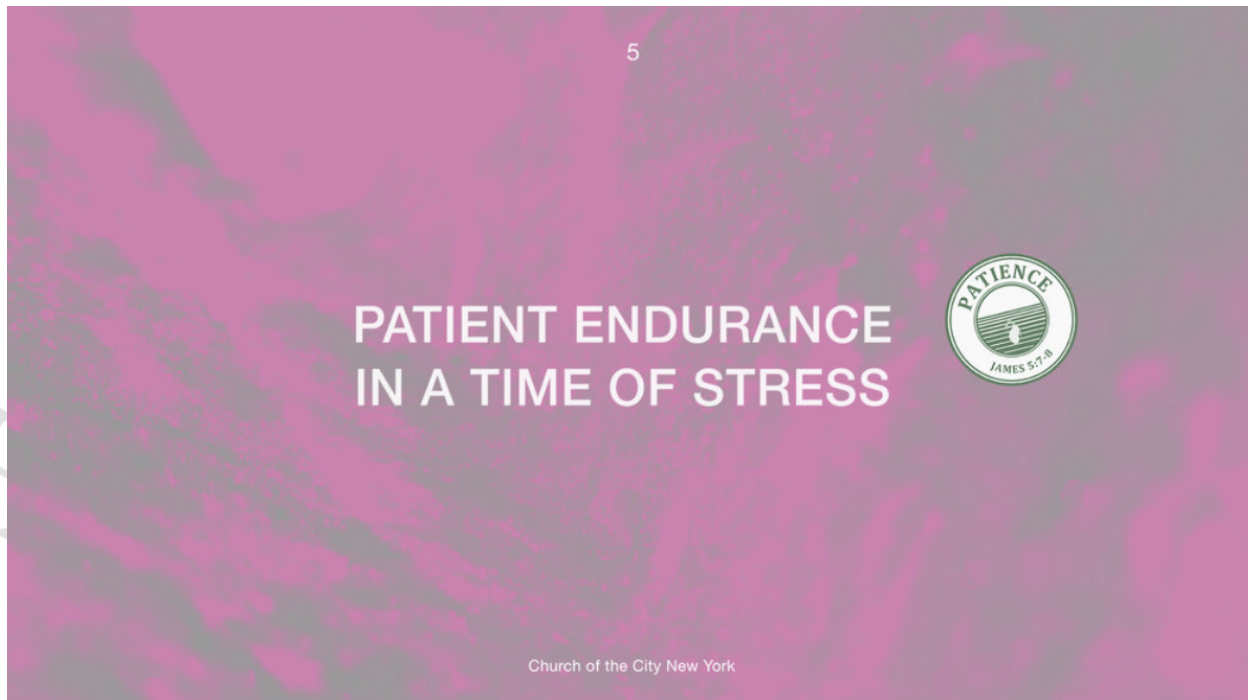
Encounter

In John 20, Jesus breathes on His disciples and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Spend time imagining that Jesus is breathing the same into you, all the time. Consider how receiving His Spirit and peace changes your life. Write down a list of things you can only accomplish through His power. Write down any struggles, anxieties, or sorrows you may be facing, and ask God to reorient your perspective toward what He can accomplish through His Spirit in you.

As a fun group project, consider having your group make a collaborative Spotify playlist filled with hopeful, peace-stirring songs. Encourage group members to find songs that praise God for who He is and proclaim the power He has over sin, death, and fear.

CHURCH OF THE CITY

Week 5 – Patient Endurance in a Time of Stress



Teaching Text

Galatians 5:22

But the fruit of the Spirit is ... patience.

Romans 12:12

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

Recap

The world today seems to lack patience with each other and perseverance in our circumstances. Our self-made attempts at patience end up being fragile and unsustainable, and we fall into distress. However, the good news of Galatians 5 is that God wants to give us the gift of a better patience through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Throughout Scripture, patience has three different meanings in Greek: patience with others, perseverance with circumstances, and persistence in prayer with God. God models patience with others by delaying His anger toward us. Out of His loving mercy and compassion, God creates what is called “redemptive time,” which is the space to allow for repentance. We all need and have received the benefit of God’s patience, allowing and encouraging us to extend this same patience to others. Patience with our circumstances is translated to perseverance. We can persevere in all suffering because Jesus did so first. The same Spirit

that raised Jesus from the dead comes to live in all those who believe in Him. Because of this, we can ask for the same strength and courage Jesus had so that we may persevere, producing mature character in us and establishing our hope. Lastly, patience with God in prayer means persistence. God wants us to take all of our thoughts, emotions, and desires straight to Him in prayer. In doing this, we recognize our dependence, acknowledge God as the highest power, and display complete trust in Him.

Patience creates an opportunity for repentance and restoration, perseverance results in hope fulfilled and a mature character, and persistence creates intimacy with our God who answers. It is only through the power of the Holy Spirit and a persistence in prayer that we can be patient with others and persevere in suffering. Jesus invites us to be slow to anger, courageous in suffering, and consistent in prayer so that God will move in response to the cry of His people.

Discussion Guide

Connect

1. What is one thing you've struggled to have patience with during this season?

Contemplate

1. There are three types of patience: patience with others, perseverance in circumstances, and persistence in prayer. Which of these is the hardest for you and why?

2. What is one area in which God has had patience with you recently? How do you recognize His patience?

3. Romans 5:3-4 says that “suffering produces perseverance, perseverance, character; and character, hope.” How have you seen this process played out in your own life? How do you think we get all the way to hope from suffering?

4. How can we be more like the persistent widow mentioned in Jesus's parable (Luke 18:1-8)?

Encounter

Joel 2:13 says: “Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and He relents from sending calamity.”

Reflect on how you can “rend your heart” during this time of isolation. Consider ways you can “return” to Him each day, and encourage one another to practice this “returning.” Share

how you've seen the Lord's compassion during this season of confusion, suffering, and uncertainty, or how you'd like to see His compassion.

CHURCH OF THE CITY NY

Week 6 – Kindness in a Time of Harshness



Teaching Text

Galatians 5:22

But the fruit of the Spirit is ... kindness.

Recap

We are living in a cultural moment that could be defined by harshness or bitterness. But, as Christians, we are called to manifest the kindness of God through the Holy Spirit in our personalities and our daily lives. God's default heart is steadfast, loving kindness that is not a result of our repentance, but rather leads us to that repentance.

Spirit-led kindness humanizes people, sees the whole story of a person, deeply listens, and meets the tangible needs of others. We can work to cultivate a culture of kindness with our speech, through how we treat those inside our homes, and through the social cues we show to others. The world is aching for a kind community right now, and we have the opportunity to startle the world with glimpses of divine kindness.

Discussion Guide

Connect

1. Pastor Jon says we are hitting "peak quarantine." How do you feel like you're hitting "peak quarantine?" What's the craziest thing you've done or wanted to do lately?

Contemplate

1. Consider parts of the definition of harshness: “Ungentle; grim or unpleasantly severe, stern, cruel; unpleasant or grating to the ear; jarring to the eye; coarse to the touch.” Where are you seeing this harshness in your own life?
2. How do you picture God? Is He harsh or kind? If you primarily picture God as harsh, where do you think that belief stems from?
3. Has there been a specific time where you experienced God’s kindness in your life? If so, please share!
4. Have you been believing that God’s kindness leads to repentance, or that your repentance is what results in God’s kindness to you? How can we grow in the knowledge that God initiates kindness with us?
5. Take a brief audit of your tone of voice in person, online, and in your thoughts behind people’s back. How would you describe it? Has it been one of kindness or harshness lately, and how can you take steps to align your tone with God’s kind heart?

Encounter

Ask someone to read Titus 3:4-7 aloud. Read it again to soak up the words. The whole new covenant of God is summed up in this passage. What words or phrases jump out at you? What parts are hard to believe or hard to understand? Does any part fill you with joy? Take some time sharing your thoughts and encouraging each other with truth.

Week 7 – Restorative Goodness in a Time of Brokenness



Teaching Text

Galatians 5:22

But the fruit of the Spirit is ... goodness.

Recap

God does not revel or delight in our brokenness - this is not what he had in mind when he designed his good world. The word "good" has lost its meaning, becoming either a Christian cliché or a subjective term, completely dictated by opinion. As Christians, we must have a right definition of goodness.

First, biblical goodness is redemptive. In Genesis, God calls his creation good, and sin is the absence of this goodness. With the Holy Spirit in us, we can join God in restoring his creation back to its original intent. Second, biblical goodness is beautiful. It arrests our attention and provides a portal to the divine. The Church itself can be a gallery where we frame up the beauty and goodness of God, so that in the midst of a culture of brokenness, people can pay attention and see another vision of reality. Lastly, biblical goodness is confrontational. When we see that evil is destroying what God designed, goodness rises within us to resist and reclaim what has been stolen. Goodness is provocative and powerful, able to overcome. Historically, Christians have done good. We have a personal invitation to bring about goodness: to redeem, to bring beauty, to confront.

Discussion Guide

Connect

1. What works of beauty - whether in art, science, technology, or other fields - have you experienced that have personally drawn you to something otherworldly or divine? (These can be examples of high art, but can also be books or movies, research papers, technological discoveries, etc.)

Contemplate

1. How does culture define "goodness"? Are there ways that Christians have misunderstood or made biblical goodness into something that it is not?
2. Biblical goodness is redemptive, beautiful, and confrontational. Which of these aspects of God's goodness have you seen at work during this pandemic?
3. Are there specific ways you feel prompted to redeem, to bring beauty, or to confront the brokenness in our time? What are some things you can do to answer that calling this week?
4. Through our creative works and callings, we can create a "portal into the divine." If you have creative endeavors you've been working on during quarantine, please feel free to share your work and your experience of creating.

Encounter

In smaller groups (use the breakout feature on Zoom!), share about someone in your life who is negatively affected by the pandemic. Or, consider groups of people in the city who are negatively affected. Pray for God to show you ways to extend biblical goodness into their circumstances. How can you join God in showing his restorative and beautiful goodness toward them?

Week 8 – Faithfulness in a Time of Compromise



Teaching Text

Galatians 5:22

But the fruit of the Spirit is ... faithfulness.

Recap

We are living in a time that is marked by pragmatic selfishness and compromise, a culture driven by a utilitarian, ends-based thinking which declares, “I want what I want and I don’t care what I have to break to get it.” As Christians, we are called to take a stand against this way of thinking and be people of faithfulness, tethered in our relationship with God.

First, biblical faithfulness is about who we love. It is about having a relational covenant with God, not just adhering to theological ideas. Second, biblical faithfulness is about who we trust, and where our hearts turn in times of stress. God calls us to be faithful by placing our functional trust in him instead of in idols, which will always disappoint. Lastly, biblical faithfulness is made manifest where it matters. It reveals itself in the places of pressure, where the culture pushes us to give in, and where God’s people remain steadfast.

As we live through this present moment of collective hardship, we are given the opportunity to be faithful, renouncing theological compromise and love of worldly things, and remaining loyal to God’s word under pressure, even at great cost. But ultimately, our faithfulness is not rooted in human willpower, but in God’s faithfulness to us. He is the one who does this work

of sanctification in us, and who loves us with an everlasting and unconditional love. Let us encourage one another to be faithful to our faithful God, and recommit to Him.

Discussion Guide

Connect

1. Try a real object "Apples to Apples" Give everyone in your group 2 minutes to grab an object that they think best embodies faithfulness. Have them explain why and have one of the leaders pick a winner.

OR

2. Share for 30 seconds about your most faithful friend. Why did you pick that person and what has their faithfulness meant to you?

Contemplate

1. Faith is a relational orientation, not just a theological conviction; God is a tender lover, not a harsh judge. How does this reminder sit with you? Does it resonate with how you encounter God daily?

2. What does compromise look and feel like? Are there areas where you have felt yourself compromise in the last few months?

3. What are some practical ways this week you can recommit your faithfulness to the truth of God's word?

4. Where have you seen your trust in God weaken? How can we reorient our hearts this week to place our functional trust in God in these areas instead of in other things?

Encounter

Either break into small groups or spend time alone for a period of confession, especially for ways you may have compromised recently and turned away from God. Remember, He is a merciful God who loves when His children turn away from sin and toward Him.

Week 9 – Gentleness in a Time of Roughness



Teaching Text

Galatians 5:22

But the fruit of the Spirit is ... gentleness.

Recap

In the Bible, “gentleness” has two meanings. First, gentleness is an action of restraining your strength and withholding demonstrations of power toward the vulnerable. Second, gentleness as a posture means restraining one’s strength instead of biting and devouring others, and honoring God by suffering and bearing difficult things.

Jesus is gentle and lowly in heart. No one has ever been more approachable than Jesus. Jesus exhibits gentleness when he explains that the meek will inherit the earth, as well as the poor, hungry, and persecuted. He lets the children come to him, unbothered and undeterred, cares for the crowds, and teaches his disciples with gentleness. Jesus is even gentle in the way he enters Jerusalem as a King on a donkey, and in the way he inaugurates the Kingdom through his death. He chooses affliction instead of a demonstration of his power. Jesus is a gentle King in every way.

Today, we often value self-confidence over gentleness, and see gentleness as weakness. Despite our culture and our sinful nature, we can exercise gentleness through the Holy Spirit’s fruit in us: when we restore someone who is caught in sin, when we receive that

restoration, when we lead others, when we bear with one another in love, when we witness to unbelievers, when we care for the afflicted, and when we inherit the earth. Our world is full of people who are weary and burdened, weak and vulnerable, and Jesus wants to move toward them through our gentleness.

Discussion Guide

Connect

1. Share an example of a time you've witnessed or experienced an act of gentleness in New York City.

Contemplate

1. What's the first thing that comes to mind when you think of Jesus? Do you agree with the following statement: "No one has ever been more approachable than Jesus Christ"?
2. Jesus values meekness over self-confidence. What does this mean for New York City? What does this mean for our own lives?
3. In Matthew 11, Jesus says we can learn from him and find rest for our souls because he is "gentle and lowly in heart." In what ways are you weary and burdened this week?
4. Is it comforting or discomfoting that Jesus does not describe himself in terms of his power, but instead in terms of his "lowliness"?
5. How can we practice being Jesus's gentle open arms and listening ears this week? What does meekness practically look like?

Encounter

Make a list of people in your life who might be in need of God's gentleness. Share one or two of these people with the group for accountability to reach out to them and share God's gentleness. Ask God how he specifically and uniquely wants to show gentleness to your people.

Week 10 – Self-Control in a Time of Self-Fulfillment



Teaching Text

Galatians 5:22

But the fruit of the Spirit is ... self-control.

Recap

We all have areas where we feel restless and struggle to control our desires. Our spirituality is determined by what we do with that unrest.

Our current culture can push us in two directions—release or repression. The release of our desires, called hedonism, is the attempt to maximize ourselves through seeking to fulfill our own desires. However, giving into this release actually enslaves us to our desires instead of freeing ourselves from them. On the other end of the spectrum, the repression of our desires gives way to a religion that operates out of fear. This creates the picture of external religion and internal decay, leading to surface-level living and hypocrisy. The thing we rage against publicly is often the thing we are at war with within ourselves. Shame, guilt, and even the praise of man may stop the war for a moment, but they cannot win out in the end. Religious repression doesn't work at changing the heart.

However, Jesus offers us another way through the redirection of our desires. Self-control in Greco-Roman culture was defined as the mastery of self and considered to be the foundation of all virtue. The idea of control of the self for the sake of the self still runs

rampant in our culture, but the self-control Paul writes about in Galatians is a sacrificial stewardship of the self for the sake of others. Paul puts self-control at the end of the list, because it enables all of the other fruits of the Spirit to be actualized in us and acts as a mechanism to make love a reality in a community.

We can't drift into biblical self-control; it must be cultivated. When we are bored, hungry, angry, lonely, or tired, we are disproportionately susceptible to spiritual sabotage, and we must learn to resist not out of our own will-power, but out of our identity in Christ. We can also create environments that facilitate resistance by stewarding what we have to serve others through leveraging our gifts, time, energy, attention, and money. Jesus embodies sacrificial stewardship for the sake of others, and He asks us to join Him. Ultimately, when we take up our cross, deny ourselves, and follow Jesus, we are able to redirect our desires for Kingdom purposes.

Discussion Guide

Connect

1. If you could be the "Cultural Jedi" of one thing what would it be?

Contemplate

1. What comes to mind when you think of having self-control?

2. Proverbs 25:28 says that a person without self-control is, "like a city whose walls are broken through." What do you think this means?

4. Shame, guilt, and the praise of man are ways we may try to incorrectly repress our desires. How have you seen these three play out in your life?

5. BHALT moments (moments when we are bored, hungry, angry, lonely, or tired) are times when we are most susceptible to giving into the desires of the flesh. How have you seen this play out during your quarantine season? How can we create environments that facilitate victory?

6. The sermon encourages us to leverage our gifts, time, energy, attention, and money to take part in God's kingdom. What is one way you can do that this week?

Encounter

Consider what your vision is for what God is doing in this next season. Share how you might redirect your gifts and passions to be a part of that movement. Encourage others in your group by declaring how you see their gifts being used for God's Kingdom.