



P U R S U I N G
G R E A T N E S S

G R O W T H G R O U P B O O K L E T

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LOVE.
LOVE

WEEK ONE | LOVE

Personal Devotion

Monday:

Read Proverbs 15:17 and Proverbs 17:17

Spend time reflecting on these Proverbs.

Set a reminder on your phone this week to draw your mind back to these verses.

Discuss with someone in your growth group what your favourite verse was and how it can be applied to your life this week.

Friday:

Read Galatians 5:13-26

Reflect first: What is God saying to you?

Paul describes the acts of the flesh as obvious and in context, unloving

(In Brackets is Tim Keller's definition from *Galatians for you*)

Sexual immorality (sex between unmarried people):

Impurity (Unnatural sexual relationships - not man and woman) :

Debauchery (Uncontrolled sexuality):

Idolatry and witchcraft (Pagan religious practices)

Selfish Ambition (Competitiveness/self-seeking motive):

Envy (coveting/desiring what others have):

Jealousy (The zeal and energy from hungry ego "I deserve *that*"):

Hatred (Hostility, adversarial attitude):

Discord (Argumentative, seeking to pick fights):

Fits of rage (outbursts of anger)

Dissension (Divisions between people)

Factions (permanent parties and warring groups)

Write 'M' next to the 3 of these you most struggle with, and write 'C' next to the things you think our culture struggles with the most at the moment.

Prayer: Repentance is the act of turning away from sin and turning to Jesus. Spend some time praying through the things you marked 'M', saying sorry for sin, asking for forgiveness, and praying that God would help you take off the old self and put on the new self.

Weekly Exercise:**Questionable Love.**

Is there an act this week that you can show the people around you that causes them to ask why are you showing that act of love? Here are some ideas of questionable love:

- Make someone a meal
- Take someone out for dinner and pay for it
- Buy someone a \$50 UberEats voucher
- Write someone a letter encouraging them on tangible things they do
- Babysit for people so they can go out for a breakfast/lunch/dinner
- Offer to clean someone's house
- Buy a colleague a coffee without asking
- Take your son/daughter out for ice cream for no reason
- Invite an acquaintance in your life over for a meal to share with your family
- Invite a colleague out for lunch
- Volunteer to do the task at work that no one wants to do
- Empty the dishwasher at work
- Mow your neighbour's lawn

QUESTIONABLE LOVE

STUDY ONE | LOVE

1 Minute Warm-up: Who is the most loving person you know? What do you love about them?

Before we start: Has anyone had a chance to participate in the weekly exercise? How was your experience?

Read: *John 15:9-17*

Think/pair/share

Spend 5 minutes thinking about:

How do you see Jesus' love in this story?

Have you experienced this act of Jesus' love? How would you describe that experience?

What is the impact of this love in this passage?

Break into 2/3s and discuss those questions.

Read: *Galatians 5:13-26*

Are there any parallels between Paul's words in 5:15-17 and Jesus' words in John 15?

How do Jesus' words in John 15 and Paul's words in Galatians 5 help us to overcome the desires of the flesh?

Going deeper with Love:

Definition: to Love someone is to serve a person for their good and intrinsic value, not for what the person brings you.

The opposite: self-protection, hate, and abuse.

The counterfeit: selfish affection (where you are attracted to someone for how they make you feel)

What thoughts do you have about this definition of love? How does it match with what we've seen and experienced in Jesus?

We can think the opposite of love is simply hate. Why might self-protection be a better opposite?

Have you felt counterfeit love in a situation where you were driven by the way someone made you feel?

Going practical with Love

Read: *1 Corinthians 13:4-7*

While this passage is often used at weddings, it was first written for a community of believers in a local church.

Could you say you treat the people at church in the way Paul describes love here?

What makes it hard to love our church like this?

What's one thing you can do differently this Sunday to pursue loving your church as God calls you to?

Prayer

(One way to show love to people is to pray for them throughout the week, to help we've given enough room to write their prayer points down below)

How are you going at practising the fruit of the Spirit with others around you?

What can we pray for from the study tonight?

How has God been at work in your life this week?

How are you going with God?

Who are you on mission to and what can we pray for them this week?

JOY.Y

09

WEEK TWO | JOY

Personal Devotion

Monday:

Read:

Proverbs 15:13

Proverbs 17:22

Proverbs 28:14

Spend time reflecting on these Proverbs.

Set a reminder on your phone this week to draw your mind back to these verses.

Discuss with someone in your growth group what your favourite verse was and how it's applied to your life this week.

Pray:

Friday:

Read: *1 Peter 1:3-9*

Reflect: What is God saying to you?

Share: Who can you encourage with these words today?

Pray: Spend a moment praying through the words of this passage.

STUDY TWO | JOY

1 Minute Warm-up: Describe a location that brings you joy. What makes it great?

Before we start: Has anyone had a chance to participate in the weekly exercise?
How was your experience?

Read: *John 2:1-12, John 17:13-15*

Think/pair/share

Spend 5 minutes thinking about:

How do you see Jesus bringing Joy at the wedding of Cana?

Have you experienced the joy Jesus offers? How would you describe that experience?

What does Joy from Jesus look like in good moments? What does it look like in hard moments?

Break into 2/3s and discuss those questions.

Big Group:

Read: *Galatians 5:22-26*

On a scale of 1-5, how joyful are you? Are you content with that score?

In his book “The Fruitful Life” Jerry Bridges says there can be four things that rob of us joy:

- Our own sin
- Discipline from the Lord
- Trials of many kinds
- A melancholy temperament

Which one of these do you resonate with the most and why?

On Sin:

Look at Psalm 51:1-12

What does David do when sin has robbed him of joy?

On Discipline from the Lord:

Look at Hebrews 12:7-11

What does the author give to help those under discipline to find joy?

On trials of many kinds:

Look at James 1:2-5

What does James say gives joy under trials?

On a melancholy temperament:

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

What are the two practical things Paul gives to help the command “Rejoice always”?

Going deeper with Joy:

Definition: Joy is a delight in God for the sheer beauty and worth of who He is.

The opposite: hopelessness and despair

The counterfeit: an elation that is based on experiencing blessings, not the Blesser, causing mood swings based on circumstances.

What thoughts do you have about that definition of joy? How does it align with what we’ve seen and experienced in Jesus?

If Joy’s opposite is hopelessness and despair, should we confront melancholy or pessimistic attitudes?

How can we ensure we have real joy (not a counterfeit elation) in the middle of blessings?

Going practical with Joy:

What’s one thing you can do this week for your church community to bring them joy?

Prayer

(One way to show love to people is to pray for them throughout the week, to help we've given enough room to write their prayer points down below)

How are you going at practising the fruit of the Spirit with others around you?

What can we pray for from the study tonight?

How has God been at work in your life this week?

How are you going with God?

Who are you on mission to and what can we pray for them this week?

PEACE.
PEACE

WEEK THREE | PEACE

Personal Devotion

Monday:

Read:

Proverbs 12:6

Proverbs 13:3

Proverbs 14:17

Spend time reflecting on these Proverbs.

Set a reminder on your phone this week to draw your mind back to these verses.

Discuss with someone in your growth group what your favourite verse was and how it can be applied to your life this week.

Friday:

Read: *Colossians 1:15-20*

What is God saying to you from this passage?

How does knowing God's peace help you share peace with others?

Pray

Weekly exercise:

Peace with others is a fruit of the spirit that we love to experience, and we know when our relationships are not in peace but are in conflict.

Two unhealthy ways of dealing with conflict are:

Rhino:

Definition: A rhino in conflict attacks the other person when they are wrong or defensive. This can be very damaging, often creating hurt with words.

Signs of a rhino: Aggressive, speaks without empathy, the tone gets louder, will tell you there's a problem.

Hedgehog:

Definition: A hedgehog retreats under conflict, bottling the problem and putting spikes up.

Signs of a hedgehog: Passive aggressive, explodes over smaller things, avoids speaking about why they're distant or upset.

Conflict is a part of life, but healthy conflict is what the follower of Jesus is invited to participate in.

Jesus invites us to practice the fruit of the spirit in conflict. This is the path of pursuing peace in chaos.

The weekly practice this week is in conflict:

- Talk to those in your life about conflict and chat about whether you're a rhino or hedgehog.

Then reflect on conflict:

- What would it look like to show more love? Patience? Gentleness?
 - If you're a rhino - what would it look like to show self-control?
 - If you're a hedgehog - what would it look like to show faithfulness to stand up for justice and speak out the truth?
-

STUDY THREE | PEACE

1 Minute Warm-up: What time of the day do you have the greatest sense of peace? Why is that?

Before we start: Has anyone had a chance to participate in the weekly exercise? How was your experience?

Read: *John 18:1-11, John 16:31-33*

Think/pair/share

Spend 5 minutes thinking about:

In what ways do you see Jesus displaying peace at the moment he's betrayed?

What does Jesus say in John 16 to help you experience peace? Have you ever felt that?

How can suffering and peace happen at the same time?

Break into 2/3s and discuss those questions.

Big Group:

Read: *Galatians 5:22-26*

Which one of the following words (worried, concerned, numb, improving, confident, at peace) would you use to explain how at peace you are:

With God?

Within yourself?

With others?

What excites you about your answers?

What concerns you about your answers?

Colossians 1:20 says *"Through him to reconcile everything to himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven by making peace through his blood shed on the cross"*.

Does this verse match up with your answer on how at peace with God you are?

Going deeper with Peace:

Definition: Confidence and rest in the wisdom and control of God, rather than in your own.

The opposite: Anxiety and Worry.

The counterfeit: Indifference, apathy, not caring about something,

What thoughts do you have about that definition of peace? How does it align with what we've seen and experienced in Jesus?

Anxiety and worry can be things we live with.

When should we seek help?

When should we confront our anxiety and worry?

Going practical with peace:

Are there people in your life whom you once had peace with but now you don't have peace with?

Why is peace something we have to pursue as followers of Jesus?

Take 3 minutes to reflect by yourself before we split into prayer groups:

Who is God putting on your heart as someone you should pursue peace with:

Do you need to send a message or call someone looking to reconcile?

Do you need to apologize for something?

Do you need to forgive something?

Is there something in the past you need to let go of?

Is there a past offence that you need to confront because it's affecting how you relate to someone?

Prayer

(One way to show love to people is to pray for them throughout the week, to help we've given enough room to write their prayer points down below)

How are you going at practising the fruit of the Spirit with others around you?

What can we pray for from the study tonight?

How has God been at work in your life this week?

How are you going with God?

Who are you on mission to and what can we pray for them this week?

PATIENCE.
PATIENCE.
PATIENCE.

WEEK FOUR | PATIENCE

Personal Devotion

Monday:

Read:

Proverbs 3:5-6

Proverbs 14:29

Proverbs 16:32

Proverbs 25:15

Spend time reflecting on these Proverbs.

Set a reminder on your phone this week to draw your mind back to these verses.

Discuss with someone in your growth group what your favourite verse was and how it can be applied to your life this week.

Friday:

Read: *Hebrews 6:9-12*

What is God saying to you?

What does this passage say about being patient but not lazy?

Pray

Weekly exercise:

At a heart level, impatience can come from a struggle to trust in the timing of God. Both in small things and big things, this can be seen:

Smaller:

- The timing of the traffic lights
- The timing of the person in your house who takes a little longer to get ready
- The timing of the lineup at the shops.
- The timing of our children's interruptions

Bigger:

- The timing of the relationship I want
- The timing of the family I want
- The timing of the job I want
- The timing of the future I want

These are very real things that cause us to question God and result in impatience.

One exercise to help us through this is to reflect on our past. Through the gift of hindsight, reflect on how your moments of waiting were moments where God was working.

As you think back on your past experiences, can you identify 3 events in your life where you were impatient in the season, but you now see God at work and can appreciate his timing?

Prayer - in reflection, pray that God would help you trust his timing and give you patience in future struggles.

STUDY FOUR | PATIENCE

1-Minute Warm-up: What is the most minor thing in your life that tests your patience the most? (ie. driving, waiting, technology) Why is it so frustrating?

Before we start: Has anyone had a chance to participate in the weekly exercise? How was your experience?

Read: *John 20:24-29*

Think/pair/share

Spend 5 minutes thinking about:

What would be your response to Thomas if you were a disciple and he didn't believe you?

In what ways do you see Jesus displaying patience at this moment?

Have you experienced God's patience over your life when you think of where you were 5/10/20 years ago to where you are now? What stands out?

Break into 2/3s and discuss those questions.

Big Group:

Read: *Galatians 5:22-26*

Is patience an underrated fruit of the spirit? Why/why not?

When has someone shown you patience? Describe what that experience was like.

Read: *1 Peter 3:8-9*

What does God's patience in 1 Peter 3:8-9 do for you?

Going deeper with Patience:

Definition: An ability to face trouble without blowing up or hitting out.

The opposite: Resentment toward God and others

The counterfeit: Cynicism or lack of care: “This is too small to care about”.

What thoughts do you have about that definition of patience? How does it align with what we’ve seen and experienced in Jesus?

When we are in a season where we don’t have what we want, it can result in resentment toward God. Why is this a normal human response? How do we overcome that?

“I don’t care” is a tagline of the counterfeit of patience. When does this become a problem?

Going practical with patience:

Reflect on the small things that test your patience. Have you become satisfied with your response in those moments?

What have you found helps overcome the lack of patience in moments we’re asked to show it?

Prayer

(One way to show love to people is to pray for them throughout the week, to help we've given enough room to write their prayer points down below)

How are you going at practising the fruit of the Spirit with others around you?

What can we pray for from the study tonight?

How has God been at work in your life this week?

How are you going with God?

Who are you on mission to and what can we pray for them this week?

KIND
& GOODNESS.
NESS

WEEK FIVE | KINDNESS & GOODNESS

Personal Devotion

Monday:

Proverbs 19:17

Proverbs 23:17-18

Proverbs 28:27

Spend time reflecting on these Proverbs.

Set a reminder on your phone this week to draw your mind back to these verses.

Discuss with someone in your growth group what your favourite verse was and how it can be applied to your life this week.

Friday:

Read: *Matthew 25:31-46*

What stands out to you?

What emotions does this passage raise in you? Why?

How does God want you to respond to this passage?

Pray

Weekly exercise:

The 5 love languages

Gary Chapman wrote a book a few years ago called the 5 Love Languages. The book was specifically talking about marriage... but when we think about love in practice (kindness and goodness), it can be a really helpful guide to help think through how you can love the people around you.

It's worth identifying two questions:

1. What love language/s do you identify with?
2. What love languages do the people around you identify with?

Below is a list of these love languages, how to communicate, what actions to take, and what things to avoid with the love language. We've written this with the church family in mind.

Words of Affirmation

How to communicate: Encourage, affirm, appreciate, empathize, and listen actively.

Actions to take: Send an unexpected letter, write encouraging emails, text, and encourage genuinely and often.

Things to avoid: Non-constructive criticism, not recognizing or appreciating the effort.

Physical Touch

How to communicate: Non-verbal, use of body language and touch to emphasize love.

Actions to take: Where appropriate - Hug, handshake, an arm around the shoulder.

Things to avoid: Inappropriate touch or uninvited touch often across gender or generations.

Receiving Gifts:

How to communicate: Thoughtfulness, making the person you're talking to a priority.

Actions to take: Thoughtful gifts and gestures, small things matter in a big way, expressing gratitude when receiving a gift, finding out and remembering birthdays or anniversaries.

Things to avoid: Unenthusiastic gift receiving, forgetting/ignoring special occasions.

Quality time:

How to communicate: Uninterrupted and focused conversations, one on one time, asking deeper questions than just surface-level questions, empathy.

Actions to take: Hanging out outside of a Sunday, outside of your serving team or growth group moments.

Things to avoid: Distractions, always looking away, talking only about your stories rather than listening to someone else.

Acts of service:

How to communicate: Use action phrases like “I’ll help..”, raising problems and offer the solution

Actions to take: Serving together, arriving early to set up and leaving only once things are packed up, serving outside of structured moments. (If you aren’t serving, let your Growth Group leader know and they’ll point you in the right direction).

Things to avoid: Lacking follow-through on big and small tasks, acting like you're beyond a small task.

WEEK FIVE | KINDNESS & GOODNESS

1-Minute Warm-up: What out of the following makes you feel the most loved:

Words of affirmation

Acts of service

Physical touch

Quality time

Receiving Gifts

Before we start: Has anyone had a chance to participate in the weekly exercise? How was your experience?

Read: *John 13:1-17*

Think/pair/share

Spend 5 minutes thinking about:

What does this action say about Jesus' heart towards his disciples?

What does this story tell us about the cross?

What does this moment in history invite us to participate in?

Break into 2/3s and discuss those questions.

Big Group:

Read: *Romans 2:1-4*

What does experiencing God's kindness and goodness lead us to in our relationship with God?

What does experiencing God's kindness and goodness lead us to in our relationships with others?

Going deeper with Kindness and Goodness:

Definition: Kindness is the sincere desire for the happiness of others, goodness is kindness in action - words and deeds.

The opposite: Envy which leaves me unable to rejoice in another's joy.

The counterfeit: Manipulative good deeds.

What thoughts do you have about that definition of Kindness and Goodness? How does it align with what we've seen and experienced in Jesus?

Envy (and jealousy) is desiring what others have, thinking that I deserve it more. Why is this the opposite of Kindness and Goodness?

Have you ever found yourself doing a good thing to manipulate someone? Did you realize it at that moment? What was that experience like?

Going practical with kindness and goodness:

In the last twenty-four hours, how aware were you of the needs and well-being of the people around you? If you were distracted, what distracted you?

What is one new practical way you can show kindness and goodness at Church on a Sunday?

What is one new practical way you can show kindness and goodness with our growth group, not on a growth group night/day?

Prayer

(One way to show love to people is to pray for them throughout the week, to help we've given enough room to write their prayer points down below)

How are you going at practising the fruit of the Spirit with others around you?

What can we pray for from the study tonight?

How has God been at work in your life this week?

How are you going with God?

Who are you on mission to and what can we pray for them this week?

FAITH
FAITHFULNESS.
FULNESS

STUDY SIX | FAITHFULNESS

Personal Devotion

Monday:

Proverbs 10:9

Proverbs 11:19

Proverbs 12:2

Proverbs 20:6

Proverbs 21:21

Proverbs 28:6

Spend time reflecting on these Proverbs.

Set a reminder on your phone this week to draw your mind back to these verses.

Discuss with someone in your growth group what your favourite verse was and how it can be applied to your life this week.

Friday:

Read: *Daniel 6:1-5, 1 Peter 1:13-21*

What is God saying to you from these verses?

What strikes you about Daniel's faithfulness?

Could people say that about you?

What is the motivation to be holy in 1 Peter 1:13-21?

What is the comfort of 1 Peter 1:13-21?

Weekly Exercise:

Friendships are often the area where faithfulness can be the most important.

Write down the names of 2 friends below, and think through aspects of faithfulness with these friendships:

Name:

When was the last time I organized to catch up with them?

When was the last time I truly asked how they were going and listened to them?

When was the last time I encouraged them?

Is there anything they did wrong that I need to pursue reconciliation with gently?

Has this friend gone distant for no apparent reason, and I may need to pursue connecting and understanding what I may have done wrong and apologize for it?

What is one way I can show utter dependability this week to this friend?

Name:

When was the last time I organized to catch up with them?

When was the last time I truly asked how they were going and listened to them?

When was the last time I encouraged them?

Is there anything they did wrong that I need to pursue reconciliation with gently?

Has this friend gone distant for no apparent reason, and I may need to pursue connecting and understanding what I may have done wrong and apologize for it?

What is one way I can show utter dependability this week to this friend?

STUDY SIX | FAITHFULNESS

1 Minute Warm-up: What light-hearted moment did you see hypocrisy (saying one thing and doing another) at play?

Before we start: Has anyone had a chance to participate in the weekly exercise? How was your experience?

Read: *John 19:1-11, 25-30*

Think/pair/share

Spend 5 minutes thinking about:

How do these verses show us Jesus' faithfulness?

"It Is Finished" speaks of the complete faithfulness of Jesus to completely deal with sin. Have you experienced the forgiveness of Jesus?

Describe one of the first times you can remember realizing your sin is dealt with.

Break into 2/3s and discuss those questions.

Big Group:

Read: *James 2:14-26*

Can faith be detached from works?

Underline 2 of the following feelings that this passage most provokes in you:

- Tiredness
- Ambition
- Sadness
- Excitement
- Relief
- Clarity
- Fear
- Peace
- Concern
- Joy
- Anxiety

Share why you chose one of those feelings

Going deeper with Faithfulness:

Definition: To be utterly reliable and true to your word.

The opposite: An opportunist, a friend only in good times.

The counterfeit: Loving but not truthful.

What thoughts do you have about that definition of faithfulness? How does it align with what we've seen and experienced in Jesus?

Why does having a friend only in the good times (the opposite of faithfulness) hurt so much?

To be loving but not truthful is easy, what of the other fruit of the Spirit is needed most if we want to be loving and truthful?

Going practical with kindness and goodness:

Sometimes we react to situations with 'I'll see' or 'maybe' because we're STABO (Subject To A Better Offer). Why is it hard to say yes or no and follow through with it?

When in the last few weeks did you have to follow through with something and keep your word? How dependable were you?

What sort of situations tempt you to deceive others?

Prayer

(One way to show love to people is to pray for them throughout the week, to help we've given enough room to write their prayer points down below)

How are you going at practising the fruit of the Spirit with others around you?

What can we pray for from the study tonight?

How has God been at work in your life this week?

How are you going with God?

Who are you on mission to and what can we pray for them this week?

GENTLE
GENTLENESS.
NESS

STUDY SEVEN | GENTLENESS

Personal Devotion

Monday

Proverbs 15:1

Proverbs 29:8

Proverbs 29:22

Spend time reflecting on these Proverbs.

Set a reminder on your phone this week to draw your mind back to these verses.

Discuss with someone in your growth group what your favourite verse was and how it can be applied to your life this week.

Friday:

Read: *Ephesians 5:22-6:4*

Why is it important to see Jesus as the model for love within families?

To love like Christ is the call of all Christians in all relationships and Jesus was gentle with all he related to.

Would anything change for you if you were pursuing greatness in gentleness today in some of the following areas?:

- When your spouse disagrees with you?
- When your spouse lets you down?
- When your children interrupt you?
- When your children want your attention?
- When you want to open the bible as a family?
- When your housemate leaves their dishes out?
- When your housemate annoys you?
- When your parents ask you to do a job around the house?
- When your parents ask you how your day was but you want to relax?

Weekly Exercise:

One of the first steps to pursuing greatness with gentleness is to reflect on and be aware of our impact on other people. This next practice helps us to become aware of how gentle we are, and how people perceive us. The type of activity can be very confronting. If this raises concerns for you, remember Jesus invites us to him and he gently helps us. We can turn to our great Shepherd who knows us and works in us to produce this fruit.

Activity:

On a scale of 0-5 rate yourself on the following qualities. Then ask your closest friend or spouse to do the same for you:

0 - not true, 1 - rarely true, 2 - more false than true, 3 - more true than not, 4 - mostly true, 5 - strongly true.

I am sensitive to other people's rights and feelings.

My answer: 0 1 2 3 4 5

My friend/spouse: 0 1 2 3 4 5

People relax in my presence. They don't have to worry about being looked down on or criticized.

My answer: 0 1 2 3 4 5

My friend/spouse: 0 1 2 3 4 5

I don't condemn other people for their weaknesses. I speak the truth gently until their true need is exposed and they are open to my help.

My answer: 0 1 2 3 4 5

My friend/spouse: 0 1 2 3 4 5

I am sensitive to others' opinions and ideas.

My answer: 0 1 2 3 4 5

My friend/spouse: 0 1 2 3 4 5

I don't make people feel guilty for being less serious about their faith than I am

My answer: 0 1 2 3 4 5

My friend/spouse: 0 1 2 3 4 5

I seek to change someone's wrong opinion or attitude by persuasion and kindness, not by domination or intimidation.

My answer: 0 1 2 3 4 5

My friend/spouse: 0 1 2 3 4 5

I don't threaten people, either directly or indirectly

My answer: 0 1 2 3 4 5

My friend/spouse: 0 1 2 3 4 5

I avoid blunt speech and an abrupt manner.

My answer: 0 1 2 3 4 5

My friend/spouse: 0 1 2 3 4 5

I talk to people with sensitivity and respect.

My answer: 0 1 2 3 4 5

My friend/spouse: 0 1 2 3 4 5

I'm not threatened by opposition or resent those who oppose me.

My answer: 0 1 2 3 4 5

My friend/spouse: 0 1 2 3 4 5

I don't degrade or belittle or gossip about someone who falls into sin. Instead, I will grieve and pray for that person.

My answer: 0 1 2 3 4 5

My friend/spouse: 0 1 2 3 4 5

I am fair and generous rather than rigid and exacting.

My answer: 0 1 2 3 4 5

My friend/spouse: 0 1 2 3 4 5

I listen to people and invite them to share their stories rather than just speaking about me.

My answer: 0 1 2 3 4 5

My friend/spouse: 0 1 2 3 4 5

Doing this exercise might help you become aware of areas in your life of encouragement or discouragement in regard to how gentle your impact is on those around you.

With this awareness, run to the God who is gentle with us. In our repentance, we can pray that God would forgive and help us in these areas.

For further help, raise some of these challenges for prayer and support at growth group.

STUDY SEVEN | GENTLENESS

1 Minute Warm-up: Who do you think of when you think of someone who was gentle?

Before we start: Has anyone had a chance to participate in the weekly exercise? How was your experience?

Read: *John 10:14-18, Isaiah 40:10-11*

Think/pair/share

Spend 5 minutes thinking about:

How does the imagery of Shepherd speak of God's power?

How does the imagery of Shepherd speak of God's gentleness?

What moments in your life would you identify as the place where you most often experience the gentleness of Jesus?

Break into 2/3s and discuss those questions.

Big Group:

Read: *Matthew 11:28-30*

Have you ever taken up Jesus' invitation to find rest? What was that experience like?

Why is being dealt with gently by Jesus so important?

Going deeper with Gentleness:

Definition: Gentleness is an active trait, describing how we should treat others. Gentleness is illustrated by the way we would handle a carton of exquisite crystal glass; it is the recognition that the human personality is valuable but fragile and must be handled with care.

The opposite: To be superior or self-absorbed.

The counterfeit: Timidity, cowardice.

What thoughts do you have about that definition of gentleness? How does it align with what we've seen and experienced in Jesus?

Do you agree with the following statement: The harshest responses come from a place of superiority and self-absorption. Tell us why/why?

Sometimes timidity and cowardice can appear gentle. How might time reveal its true fruit?

Going practical with gentleness:

Why does it take strength to be gentle?

2 Timothy 2:24-25 says - Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth

What does this teach us about conflict and addressing people we disagree with?

Why is it that communication online makes this very difficult? What can we do about that?

Prayer

(One way to show love to people is to pray for them throughout the week, to help we've given enough room to write their prayer points down below)

How are you going at practising the fruit of the Spirit with others around you?

What can we pray for from the study tonight?

How has God been at work in your life this week?

How are you going with God?

Who are you on mission to and what can we pray for them this week?

SELF-
SELF-CONTROL.
CONTROL

STUDY EIGHT | SELF-CONTROL

Personal Devotion

Monday:

Proverbs 17:27

Proverbs 19:19

Proverbs 20:22

Proverbs 21:23

Proverbs 25:28

Spend time reflecting on these Proverbs.

Set a reminder on your phone this week to draw your mind back to these verses.

Discuss with someone in your growth group what your favourite verse was and how it can be applied to your life this week.

Friday:

Read: *Colossians 3:1-2*

What are some of the things above you could focus your thoughts and desires on?

What would this look like today?

What would this look like tomorrow?

Who can you talk to about this to help with accountability over this desire?

Weekly Exercise:

Our phones are psychologically designed to entice us to pick them up. Once we've picked it up, our body releases hormones that make us feel good and entice us to stay on them and do more. We can also begin to have muscle memory with our hands... Sometimes we open an App without any conscious intention of doing so.

But our phones interrupt our ability to practice the fruit of the Spirit by distracting us from the present situations. It's worth pursuing greatness with self-control regarding our phones.

Identify at least one big, one medium, and one small of the following practices to do this week to help foster self-control around our phones.

Big:

- Waiting until after you've read the Bible and prayed to look at your phones.
- When you're with your kids, leave your phone in another room.
- When you're with your spouse/friends, leave your phone in another room or your bag/pocket.
- Installing software that helps you be accountable for sexual sins (search google for covenant eyes)

Medium:

- Deleting social media that doesn't build you up or help you follow Jesus.
- Deleting social media off your phone to force you to use a computer.
- Turning notifications off all devices, especially when you are at home with people.
- Limiting your social media use to a 30-minute period, once a day.
- If your phone tracks your usage, look at how much you're spending on your phone and chat with your spouse/close friend about whether that is healthy.

Small:

- Turning notifications off of social media apps.
- Deleting the 'email' app to either force us to be at the computer or at work to do our emails.
- Charging your phone in the kitchen at night and using an alarm clock to wake you up.
- Using a physical Bible instead of your phone to help minimize distractions.
- Re-order your phone's apps so that you don't see certain apps on your front screen.

As you identify one way from each list to practice self-control on your phone, it's worth messaging someone to invite some accountability to what you're pursuing.

STUDY EIGHT | SELF-CONTROL

1 Minute warm-up: What food do you find hardest to say no to?

Before we start: Has anyone had a chance to participate in the weekly exercise? How was your experience?

Read: *John 8:48-59*

Think/pair/share

Spend 5 minutes thinking about:

What strikes you about the self-control of Jesus in this passage?

Why do they try to kill Jesus? And why does he hide?

Have you considered the self-control shown while the living God hung on a cross? What strikes you about that truth?

Break into 2/3s and discuss those questions.

Big Group:

Read: *Galatians 5:19-26*

How do we put off the works of the flesh and put on the fruit of the Spirit (v24-25)?

Why is self-control important not simply as a virtue in itself, but as the base where every other fruit can flourish or die?

Going deeper with Self-control:

Definition: Self-control is control of one's self, the governing of one's desires.

The opposite: Impulsive, Reactionary, uncontrollable

The counterfeit: Willpower which is based on pride.

What thoughts do you have about that definition of Self-control? How does it align with what we've seen and experienced in Jesus?

In what environment do you find yourself most impulsive or reactionary? Does that reaction come from outside or inside of you?

The people who appear the most self-controlled can at their heart be driven by pride. Why is this a problem?

Going practical with Self-control:

In what areas of self-control are you most vulnerable?

- Gluttony
- Sexual immorality
- Laziness toward spiritual things
- Sexually impure thoughts
- Envy
- Greed
- Selfish-ambition
- Resentment
- Outburst of temper
- Self-pity

Why do you think you are vulnerable in those areas?

Which of the following have you found most helpful in the pursuit of self-control? Are there other ways that have helped you in the past?

- Telling a prayer partner about your struggles
- Thinking about practical solutions to overcome it
- Having someone message throughout the week to encourage you
- Writing it down as a goal somewhere you can see it every day
- Praying through the struggle and repenting of it often

Prayer

(One way to show love to people is to pray for them throughout the week, to help we've given enough room to write their prayer points down below)

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What can we pray for from the study tonight?

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