

**Mom2Mom 2.21.24**  
**The Fruit of the Spirit**  
**Faithfulness & Gentleness TEACHING**  
**TEACHER Notes**

((Teacher, please prepare for this class by rereading Chapters 9-10 of the book *The Fruitful Life* by Jerry Bridges. This will allow you to elaborate on points of the lesson below as you are led by the Holy Spirit.))

**I. ((click)) Faithfulness (I & II - 10 minutes)**

**A. ((click)) The Meaning of Faithfulness –**

The virtue of faithfulness is so important, because it reflects such a vital part of God’s character. In a world where very few people make promises to love and care for others more than themselves, God not only promises that but carries it out *without fail*. Faithfulness is very expensive. Many people promise to be faithful, but few will be able to carry it out, especially when it gets costly. God’s faithfulness cost him his only Son, Jesus Christ.

Faithfulness means “that which is firm and can be counted on.”

Some of the words that are closely related to faithfulness are dependable, reliable, trustworthy, and loyal.

The word faithfulness often means absolute honesty and integrity. “The faithful person is one who is dependable, trustworthy, and loyal; who can be depended upon in all of his relationships; and who is absolutely honest and ethical in all of his affairs.”<sup>1</sup>

Webster’s Dictionary defines faithfulness:

- as “having or showing true or constant support or loyalty;
- deserving trust;
- keeping your promises or
- doing what you are supposed to do.”<sup>2</sup>

Often the words “corrupt” and “negligent” are contrasted with “faithfulness.”<sup>3</sup>

**B. ((click)) Faithfulness – How It is Manifested in Our Lives**

**1. Absolute Honesty** – Someone who is faithful will be known for always telling the truth. God is known for especially hating lying and dishonesty, and God’s people are known for not only not lying, but also being free from deception in any form.

*Prov 12:22 Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, But those who deal faithfully are His delight.*

*Lev 19:11 ‘You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another.*

“Lying has been defined as ‘any deceit: in word, act, attitude, or silence; in deliberate exaggerations, in distortions of the truth, or in creating false impressions.”<sup>4</sup> Absolute

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<sup>1</sup> The Fruitful Life, by Jerry Bridges, page 130

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/faithfulness>

<sup>3</sup> The Fruitful Life, by Jerry Bridges, page 131

<sup>4</sup> The Fruitful Life, by Jerry Bridges, quote from page 131

honesty is often hardest in the smallest details of life. When we pay attention to telling the truth and being absolutely honest in even the smallest parts of life, we will have lots of practice telling the truth in even the great areas. Absolute honesty in all situations is so rare, especially in situations where honesty could cost a price.

*Luke 16:10 "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much.*

**2. Utter Dependability** –A big component of faithfulness is being reliable and dependable. Scripture tells us that an undependable person is lazy and causes exasperation and strong negative reaction. In our modern culture someone being dependable seems like a novelty, especially if following through on their commitment cost them personally.

*Prov 10:26 Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, So is the lazy one to those who send him.*

God views unfaithfulness as closely associated with disobedience. God wants us to be willing to keep our word and honor our commitments even when it hurts. God values those with integrity and those who live righteously *all* the time.

*Psalm 15:1-4 O Lord, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on our holy hill?  
2He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, And speaks truth in his heart.  
3He does not slander [with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor takes up a reproach against his friend; 4In whose eyes a reprobate is despised, But who honors those who fear the Lord; He swears to his own hurt and does not change;*

As we live faithfully, we are representing God's dependability and absolute commitment to following through on all of his promises. The more we understand how much God follows through upon his promises *even to his hurt*, the more we will be willing to do the same.

**3. Unswerving Loyalty** – People who are loyal are known for being committed to sticking with their friends no matter what. True friendships in the Bible are known for their loyalty.

*Prov 17:17 A friend loves at all times,*

The Bible says that truly faithful and loyal friends are very hard to find. That is what makes finding a loyal, dependable friend so special.

*Prov 20:6 Many a man claims to have unfailing love, but a faithful man who can find?*

Truly loyal friends will be faithful to the relationship even when problems need to be addressed and conflict needs to be solved. When you have a high view of relationships, you will be willing to solve problems even if it means saying some hard things. Remember, however, they are always solved lovingly.

*Prov 27:6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.*

*Eph 4:15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,*

## II. **((click))** Biblical Faithfulness

### A. **((click))** God's Faithfulness

#### 1. We are utterly dependent on God's faithfulness:

- For our salvation (I Cor. 1:8-9)
- For deliverance from temptation (I Cor. 10:13)
- For ultimate sanctification (I Thess. 5:23)
- For the forgiveness of sins (I John 1:9)
- For deliverance through time of suffering (I Peter 4:19)
- For the fulfillment of our ultimate hope of eternal life (Heb. 10:23)

Indeed, the entire Bible provides examples of God's faithfulness in every book as an underlying theme.

*Psalm 36:5 Your unfailing love, O Lord, is as vast as the heavens; your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds. (NLT)*

**2. Jesus' entire life is a testimony of perfect faithfulness.** When Jesus was participating in his public ministry, he encouraged his enemies to investigate him to see if he found any sin in Him. If he had even distorted the truth once or told a fib, his enemies would have been able to accuse him of sin. As we grow in Christ-likeness, we will grow in faithfulness to such an extent that someone would not be able to find any deceit in us.

*John 8:46 Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?*

### B. **((click))** Examples of Faithfulness in Bible Narratives

1. **((click))** Daniel – developed convictions from the Scripture and was willing to do what was right and obedient to God even when it cost him position and safety. Daniel did not stop being loyal to God in order to be loyal to the King. He chose loyalty to God over loyalty to the King even though it meant a death sentence.

2. **((click))** Joseph – was loyal to his boss even when the boss's wife was trying to seduce Him. He was willing to obey God even though it cost him his career and could have cost him his life. He was also loyal to the Pharaoh even with enormous power allocated to him. He could have taken the power that Pharaoh gave him and used it to advance himself. However, he wielded his influence in a way that advanced the causes of his authorities and promoted the safety of the Egyptians during the famine.

## III. **((click))** Gentleness (III & IV 10 minutes)

## A. **((click))** Meaning of Gentleness –

George Bethune, famous theologian from the 1800's said "Perhaps no grace is less prayed for, or less cultivated than gentleness. Indeed, it is considered rather as belonging to natural disposition or external manners, than as a Christian virtue; and seldom do we reflect that not to be gentle is sin."

Gentleness is an attribute of power, not timidity or cowardliness. Gentleness is an active trait where we seek to:

- deal sensitively and mildly with others,
- especially considering *their* feelings and reactions to our actions.

The dictionary defines gentleness as:

- "having a mild or kindly nature or character;
- soft or temperate;
- moderate."<sup>5</sup>

## B. **((click))** Manifesting Gentleness

1. **((click))** Treating Others Gently – If we have made gentleness a personal trait, others will feel restful or at ease in our presence. Treating others gently requires containing our own strong opinions and dogmas so that we can be sensitive to others' opinions and ideas. Treating others gently also requires that we do not make our personal expressions of discipleship equivalent to doctrine and treat others poorly if they do not live out their faith with the same habits that we do. Treating others gently requires having genuine respect for the dignity of others, even if they do not live out their Christianity the way we do.

*Col 3:12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*

Treating other people gently may involve working hard to handle those with whom we disagree in a way that is not coercive or threatening. Sometimes our disagreements with people are based on personality conflicts, but sometimes our disagreements are based on wrong opinions or inappropriate understandings of fundamentally important truths. Even in situations when someone needs to be corrected, gentleness must be the foundation for resolving problems or settling disputes. When a brother in Christ is caught in a habit of sin, we are instructed to deal with him gently, carefully considering our own hearts lest we too be caught in sin. When we observe a brother or sister in Christ sinning or struggling, we are to look for ways to serve.

*Gal 6:1-2 Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. <sup>2</sup>Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.*

*Matt 18:15-17 "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. <sup>16</sup>But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. <sup>17</sup>If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.*

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/gentleness?s=t>

Treating others gently will involve sensitive and respectful speech in both words and non-verbal deeds. We must speak in ways that show we are sensitive to the reactions they will have to our words and considerate about the way our conversations make them feel. If a believer must solve a problem in such a way that words hurt, they are quick and careful to bind up the wounds with biblical consolation and comfort, instructing when necessary, without belittling or degrading.

*Heb 12:11-14 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. <sup>12</sup>Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, <sup>13</sup>and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. <sup>14</sup>Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.*

## 2. **Thoughtful Consideration**

Several of the passages that instruct us about the overall trait of gentleness use words different than 'gentleness' to describe it. Those words include the general summary of being "considerate" to those around us or the need to consider the way our actions affect others. Some of the synonyms of consideration are: yielding, reasonableness, big-heartedness, and geniality. Consideration includes yielding our own desires and subduing our own actions in order to better serve and love those around us. We consider them as more important than ourselves.

*Phil 2:3-4 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup>not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*

Consideration of others includes not being so bound to the letter of the law that we are unable to extend grace in any circumstance. The Pharisees were known for being more concerned about *the law* than having concern for *the person* who was affected by that law. They were known for being rigid in the way that they dealt with others, but they were also lenient on themselves. They made allowances for their own failures but did not extend that grace to others. We are instructed to let our gentleness, not our sense of justice, be evident to all. We are repeatedly warned *not* to act like the hypocritical Pharisees.

*Phil 4:5 Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.*

*Titus 3:2 Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, <sup>2</sup>to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.*

God's wisdom is full of gentleness and full of mercy. When we extend God's grace to others it is reasonable, which means "willing to yield." God's wisdom lived out in our lives makes us willing to acquiesce to others and treat them with the gentleness and mercy that Christ is known for.

*James 3:17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.*

#### IV. **((click))** Examples of Gentleness:

##### A. **((click))** God – Isaiah 40

Isaiah 40's description of God shows us that gentleness is born out of power. Among the various depictions of God's powers, comes a beautiful verse that describes the gentle way God cares for his children.

##### **God's Power:**

*v. 10 Behold, the Lord God will come with might, With His arm ruling for Him.*

*Behold, His reward is with Him And His recompense before Him.*

*v. 15 Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, And are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales; Behold, He lifts up the islands like fine dust.*

*v. 25-26 "To whom then will you liken Me That I would be his equal?" says the Holy One.*

*26 Lift up your eyes on high And see who has created these stars,*

*The One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; Because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, Not one of them is missing.*

Are you getting the idea? God is absolutely superior in strength and majesty, but in the middle of these exalting descriptions, verse 11 highlights **God's gentleness**:

*Verse 11 Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, In His arm He will gather the lambs And carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.*

God's gentleness is very eloquently described by King David in the Psalms, when he says that God *stooped down* to help him in his time of need. He sensitively and carefully cares for his children. His great power does not stop him from interacting with his children. In fact, he stoops down to serve them. He condescends to their level to protect.

*Psalm 18:35 You have also given me the shield of Your salvation, And Your right hand upholds me; And Your gentleness (condescension) makes me great.*

##### B. **((click))** Jesus – the incarnate God (in human form)

Jesus was known for being particularly gentle, and the apostles encouraged Christians to follow his example and grow in that trait.

*2 Cor 10:1 Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ...*

Jesus welcomed the weak and weary to himself, and he promised that he would be gentle and humble in heart toward them in such a way that they would find rest for their souls.

*Matt 11:28-30 "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*

Jesus is especially gentle with those who are hurting or who have little faith. Jesus does not condemn or cast out those who need him most. The people who need redemption received Christ's gentleness, not condemnation or berating them for demonstrating that they had a need.

*Matt. 12:20 "A battered reed He will not break off, And a smoldering wick He will not put out, Until He leads justice to victory."*

C. **(click)) Paul** –

In Paul's time as an apostle, he had many instances where he needed to deal with problems, solve conflict, and correct wrong beliefs. Paul was able to do those difficult things while exhibiting the gentleness of Christ, and he encouraged other believers to follow his example. He chose to compare his love for the Thessalonians to the gentle care of a nursing mother who tenderly cares for her children. He was tough on himself, but he was very gentle with others, even when they were caught in sin.

*1 Thess. 2:7 But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children.*

**(click)) Optional Memory Verse:** *James 3:17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, **gentle**, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, **unwavering**, without hypocrisy.*

**(click)) Homework**

Assign Worksheet #6. This should be read and completed this week and discussed next week.

**(click)) Table Discussion Questions** (\*\* is also a Large Group Discussion Question)

**Application Questions for Faithfulness content**

1. \*\*In what ways does God's faithfulness prompt you to trust him?
2. Faithfulness is lived out with honesty, dependability, and loyalty. Which of these has been the hardest for you to exemplify?
3. Are you someone people should depend on?

**Application Questions for Gentleness content**

4. In what ways do you see the need to deal sensitively and mildly with others?
5. How have you grown in thoughtful consideration of others as an evidence of Jesus' character being lived out in you?
6. \*\*How should power and authority rightly lived out produce gentleness?

**Table Time Prayer Request Question:**

In what specific ways can we ask Jesus to help you grow in Faithfulness and Gentleness this week?

**(click)) Large Group Discussion Question**

Table time discussion questions 1 and 6 will be used for large group discussion.