

CHRISTIAN WORKER

"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Corinthians 6:1)

VOLUME 112, NUMBER 1

LOVE

Billy Camp

Every human knows intuitively that love is a good thing. People often say, "the world needs more love" or maybe an adage like "love what you do and do what you love." Of course, the word is used in a wide spectrum of ways. People describe their feelings toward pizza, dogs, and their grandmother with the same word. Some people equate love with permissiveness, while others say discipline is a part of love. How can humans agree upon what love is unless they have a standard?

For Christians, there is an easy identification for the standard of love – God (1 John 4:8). A person may claim that they do not need to know God to have love, but they are missing a critical point. Think about it this way, people may want their own definition of love, but love is cheapened if no one can agree upon its expectations. The reason love has so much universal value is because all humans know at a base level that love is more than a subjective feeling. They seek a higher standard for love that is not based on human emotions. If love is subjective, then there is no way to expect people to love in a certain way because everyone chooses their own standard. As a result, friendships, marriages, religions, and societies are all over the place because people "love in their own way." However, if there is a universal example for what it means to love, then everything gets to filter through it.

God is the ultimate example for what it means to love. Without God, there would be no standard for love. Since He is the Creator of everything and is positioned above all things, He is the one who decides how people should love. John, by inspiration, says, "let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18). The world has a hard time understanding love because they do not understand

truth. As Jesus states, "[God's] word is truth" (John 17:17). For humans to live out love correctly, they need a complete picture of love, which is shown fully in God's word.

The reason why John 3:16 is so impactful is because it shows the epitome of love that all people can admire. For Christians, we love God and others because God first loved us (1 John 4:19). When we love from God's perspective, we can practice patience, show kindness, rejoice with others,

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JANUARY 2026

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FROM THE EDITOR:

A LIFE OF PEACE AND JOY

Ross Haffner

Do you expect that if you live right, God will remove your troubles, sorrow, and pain? We sometimes fall into the trap of thinking that suffering is always because of sin, and blessings are always because you're obeying God. But just because you did the right thing does not mean you will avoid suffering. Romans 15:13 teaches us that we can be filled with peace and joy through the hope found in God's salvation. What would you give for a life full to the brim of peace and joy?

The Bible describes peace in three ways. Spiritual peace, or peace with God, is described as the result of justification (Rom. 5:1). Emotional peace, a comfort within us, is a blessing that comes from being a child of God (Col. 3:15; Phil. 4:7; cf. Eph. 1:3). Relational peace with others is something we can learn how to promote and preserve using the principles of the scriptures (Rom. 12:18).

Joy is often used synonymously with happiness, but a distinction needs to be made. Happiness is based on circumstances, whereas joy can be experienced whether things are going well or poorly at the current moment. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning" (Ps. 30:5). Joy cannot be the opposite of pain, trouble, or sorrow according to Jesus' example (Heb. 12:2). Instead, joy is delight in the good that can exist alongside the bad (Rom. 8:28). If you have lost a loved one you can be full of joy that they lived a full Christian life while being grieved at the same time because of the loss.

You can notice several culprits that steal your peace and joy. Guilt, stress, fear, worry, and weariness are all related and can intermingle to take away joy and peace. However, the Bible gives you the answers to deal with these problems. If you are struggling with guilt, you can turn to the law of God (Ps. 119:165-167). Obeying the gospel is the solution to your guilt (Acts 2:37-38).

After being added to the Kingdom of God, you must stay the course so you don't create new reasons to feel guilty (Acts 2:47; Ps. 85:8; 1 John 1:7-9). Too many turn to alcohol, drugs, materialistic impulse purchases, sex, or power to try to self-medicate their guilt away when God's solution is full of peace and joy.

If stress is robbing you of peace and joy turn to the Refuge of the soul (Ps. 91:1-4, 14-16). If fear and anxiety are eating away at you remember that God was with David, He will be with you too (Ps. 3:1-8). Weariness often requires the blessings of rest and nourishment that God provides us all as He did Elijah (1 Kings 19; cf. Matt. 11:28). Like Elijah, you should not forget to get back to the work God has set for us once we have rested.

God has not promised to remove all difficulties from the life of the Christian, but He will be with you (Matt. 28:18-20). Truly there are many blessings that come from following God. If you have a lack of peace and joy in your life, it doesn't necessarily mean you are an unfaithful Christian. It does mean that your focus needs to be redirected to the Savior and the healing He offers through salvation.

CW

Tuesday Morning

**10-11 a.m. Bible
Study**
Men's & Ladies' Classes

September-May



PATIENCE

Andrew Spivey

In nature, every fruit grows on its own timetable. Some fruits, like passion fruit, papaya, strawberries, and blackberries, can bear fruit in their very first year. But if you plant a pear, cherry, or plum tree, you might wait five to seven years before you ever taste a single harvest. When it comes to growing the fruit of the spirit, you might say patience feels about the same as waiting for a plum tree to grow fruit.

Patience may feel small and slow growing, but the Bible tells us that it carries some incredible and life-changing powers. For example, Proverbs 15:1 says, “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” This truth is repeated in Proverbs 15:18, “A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention” Simply put, anger creates more anger, but patience diffuses it. Although we may naturally want to respond to harshness with the same kind of attitude, God called us to something better.

A gentle answer, a calm tone, or simply slowing down before we reply can be the difference between healing a situation or blowing it apart. Patience doesn’t just prevent conflict, it represents Christ. Paul echoes this truth in Ephesians 4:29, “Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear” So before we speak, God asks us to run what we say through three filters. First, do these words build up? Second, do they fit the moment? Third, do they give grace? By doing this, we put patience into practice and make a conscious decision to speak in a way that blesses others instead of wounding.

The book of Proverbs teaches us that patience has the power to overlook and show true wisdom. Proverbs 19:11 says, “Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense” Wise people don’t feel the need to react to every irritation or mistake and instead can let things go. Why? Because we all have moments we regret, words we shouldn’t have said, or responsibilities we’ve forgotten, and remembering our own flaws helps us extend grace to others (Eccles. 7:22). Much too often, when we think of strength, we imagine force and anger, but God shows us quite the opposite. Proverbs 16:32 says, “Whoever

is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city”

Conquering a city may take military strength, but controlling your emotions takes spiritual strength. Without patience, we are open to spiritual attack. That is why Paul warns us, “Be angry and do not sin... and give no opportunity to the devil” (Eph. 4:26-27). Anger creates an entry point for temptation. Patience shuts the door. So, we can certainly see the importance and advantages of patience in the Christian life, but the big question is how do we develop patience in our daily lives?

Scripture gives us three steps to do so. First, we need to see that patience is not optional. We cannot fool ourselves that patience is not something required for God’s people. God expects self-control. Second, we must slow down and listen. James 1:9 says, “Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger” Third, we must let love lead the way. 1 Corinthians 13:4 tells us that “love is patient” Impatience reveals a lack of love for others. Finally, we must remember that patience grows as the Spirit grows in us (Gal. 5:22-23). We cannot manufacture patience on our own. We grow it by walking closely with God and filling our hearts with His word. By God’s Spirit, patience becomes more than a virtue, it becomes power, peace, and a living testimony of Christ at work within us.

CW

KINDNESS AND GOODNESS

Mel Hutzler

What are the differences and relationship of these words? Goodness (*Agathos*) is the inner quality of moral integrity, virtue, and uprightness; a commitment to God’s will and what is right. The focus is the heart, character, and motives. For example, choosing to honor God and live righteously even when it’s difficult. On the other hand, kindness (*Chrestotes*) is the outward demonstration of goodness through compassionate action, helpfulness, and generosity. The focus is on the actions

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SEEING GOD

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and how we treat others. For example, offering a meal to someone in need, helping a stranger, or showing patience and forgiveness. Even though the terms are different, they also show a relationship: Goodness is the foundation; kindness is the manifestation. A person can do kind acts without being truly good (kindness without goodness), but a genuinely good person, empowered by the Spirit's Word, will naturally express kindness (Matt. 7:21-23). Jesus perfectly embodies both: His character (goodness) led to His actions (kindness).

From giving Peter a chance to undo his three denials (John 21:15-17), to praying for the souls of those crucifying Him (Luke 23:34), to interacting with all kinds of unclean and diseased people (Luke 8, 17), Jesus models active, useful, unstoppable kindness that should drive our every interaction. Does an honest look at your daily interactions similarly reveal the fruit of kindness in your heart, or does an unpleasant image emerge? Is the stain of anger choking out your kindness? This does not have to continue! Stop feeding the weeds in the garden of your heart. Do not give place to anger or allow Satan a foothold in your heart (Eph. 4:26-27). We can do several things to protect our fruit of kindness from the blight of bitterness. As we study kindness in Scripture and honestly examine our hearts (internal causes), let us look for the roots of unkindness and bitterness, to root them out (Heb. 12:15; 1 John 3:20; Job 13:23). We also need to examine our lives and see why we are struggling with kindness (external causes) and thin out those things. This could mean letting go of excessive commitments that overwhelm us to the point we snip at others or neglect opportunities to be kind. It could mean we stop watching our favorite show because of the unwholesome attitudes of characters that foster and feed our unkindness (Gal. 6:7-8). It could even mean spending less time with "friends" who encourage us in unfruitful behavior (1 Cor. 15:33).

While present as God in the flesh on earth, Jesus also manifested the goodness of the character of God, committing no sin (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; 2:22; 1 John 3:5). As the Word, He overcame evil with good through relying on the revealed, written will of God (Luke 4:1-13). His ministry comprised going about doing good (Acts 10:38), which was clearly defined by His works. He performed miracles, healing many incurable diseases and ailments, casting out demons and unclean spirits, and raising people from the

dead. Almost as astounding as these miracles, Jesus showed a depth of compassion, even for strangers and sinners. He gently forgave sins and patiently taught all who came to Him, including even those who stood in opposition to Him. Developing the fruit of goodness involves the intentional pursuit of God's way. Filling our minds with good things that are approved by God, our hearts are transformed so that He approves our character (Phil. 4:8). Our first steps toward righteousness are to turn our hearts, minds, and feet away from evil. Yet, goodness must go much further. If we repent of sin but fail to fill our lives with the substance of God's ways and words, the production of God's fruit is hindered, and we may end up even worse than before (Matt. 12:43-45; 2 Pet. 2:20). Conversely, by continually walking in the goodness that is taught by God, we can overcome even the power of evil (Rom. 12:21). Pursuing goodness leads to good conduct that is both honorable and observable (1 Pet. 3:13). By choosing to imitate what is good, clearly exhibited for us by Jesus Christ, we demonstrate by external action that our hearts belong to God (3 John 11). Pursuing goodness involves more than intent. It involves more than desire. Pursuing goodness requires work, labor, effort, and striving (Rom. 2:10; Eph. 4:28). It involves doing (Gal. 6:10; 1 Pet. 3:11). It involves proving (Rom. 12:2). It involves clinging (Rom. 12:9; 1 Thess. 5:21).

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FAITHFULNESS

Andrew Patterson

This word (*pistis*) is usually translated “faith” or “trust” throughout the NT. It often refers to trust in God and belief in His promises (Heb. 11:1-6). However, in the fruit of the Spirit, it means something a little different. Paul is contrasting two patterns of behavior toward fellow Christians in Gal 5: those who upset others’ Christian journeys (Gal 5:7-12) versus those who “through love serve one another” (Gal. 5:13-15). Paul says the first group carries out the deeds of the flesh (Gal. 5:16-21) while the second group produces spiritual fruit (Gal. 5:22-24).

In other words, the fruit of the Spirit is all about how we treat other people. “For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Gal. 5:14). This is why most translations interpret *pistis* in Galatians 5:22 to mean “faithfulness” or “trustworthiness” instead of “faith” or “trust” as in the rest of Galatians.

The two concepts are not disconnected, however. Dishonest people tend to rarely believe what they’re told. Even if we are trustworthy, the lack of others’ reliability teaches us to avoid putting our confidence in people we don’t know. Think about how this idea fits into Paul’s point: When we aren’t honest or don’t follow through with our commitments, we become a stumbling block by training our brothers and sisters to doubt.

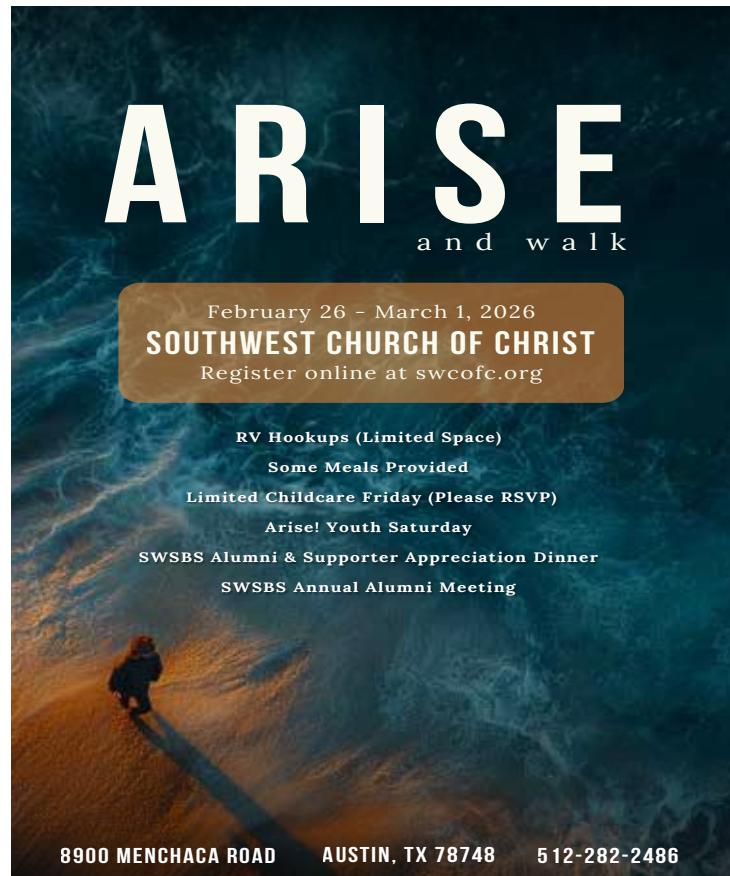
Immediately after this section, the apostle tells us: “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself” (Gal. 6:2-3). One of the biggest issues in the church is that Christians don’t lean on one another for support. You want to know why? Because it’s not always safe. “Like an aching tooth and a slipping foot is trust in a treacherous man in a day of distress” (Prov. 25:19). Many Christians stay guarded even around their spiritual family because they’ve learned not to trust them. Perhaps you feel this way yourself. The solution to the lack of *pistis* (trust) in one another is to be full of *pistis* (trustworthiness) yourself. “He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets, but he who is faithful in spirit conceals a matter” (Prov. 11:13).

God is perfectly reliable. It’s one of His greatest characteristics. God cannot lie. It’s such a big deal, God even swore an oath to make sure we would trust Him (Heb. 6:16-20). God wants us to be images of Him, honest and reliable.

Jesus instructs us to be truthful with or without an oath, just like God is. “But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; anything beyond these is of the evil one” (Matt. 5:33-37). Elsewhere Jesus addressed the commonplace use of loopholes to get out of fulfilling obligations (Matt. 23:16-22; Mark 7:9-13). Don’t live your life in loopholes, but with simple honesty, for “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” (Luke 16:10).

The fruit of the Spirit is faithfulness. Be honest, trustworthy, and reliable. Teach people you know that “true” doesn’t just describe facts, but your character—and God’s.

CW



GENTLENESS AND SELF-CONTROL

John Haffner

The apostle Paul lists gentleness and self-control among the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23, presenting them as essential marks of a life surrendered to the

will of God. These two qualities are closely connected and understanding them will help us to live in a way that better honors God and builds up others.

The word translated “gentleness” in Galatians 5 comes from a Greek term which conveys humility, meekness, and a mild disposition toward others. It is not weakness, as some might assume, but strength under control. Numbers 12:3 described Moses as “very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.” He did not assert his authority out of pride but out of a desire to obey the Heavenly Father and lead His people. A gentle person is strong enough to restrain anger, yet humble enough to serve and forgive. Gentleness, then, is a deliberate choice that reflects the Lord’s own character.

Self-control (temperance in the KJV) is the ability to govern one’s impulses. A temperate man demonstrates restraint, having a command of his desires and passions, especially his sensual appetites, in accordance with God’s will. Gentleness could not exist apart from self-control, because responding harshly or impulsively demonstrates a lack of mastery over one’s spirit. A gentle person demonstrates self-control by responding to offense, conflict, or provocation with patience and humility rather than the aggression that may seem more natural. Proverbs 16:32 underscores this connection: “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.” Gentleness and self-control, then, are not separate and distinct virtues, but they could be described as two sides of the same coin—one directs outward behavior, the other manages inner impulses.

Many Christians struggle with self-control in specific areas of life. Guarding one’s speech is frequently a challenge; short temper, gossip, or harsh words can harm any relationship in a hurry. Frustration, jealousy, or pride can easily provoke unkind responses. Another area would be our desire, whether for material possessions or forms of entertainment and recreation. If we are not careful, these can supersede higher priorities and the discernment that must accompany all our decisions. Spiritual disciplines, such as prayer and Bible study, require self-control as well, demanding consistency even amidst distractions or weariness.

Growth in gentleness and self-control begins with reliance on the Lord. Prayer for strength and guidance is essential, as is meditating on Scripture to internalize God’s truth. Daily self-examination will help to identify triggers for anger or indulgence, while accountability with fellow believers

encourages consistency. Practically, Christians can practice gentleness by pausing before responding in conflict and always striving to choose words that build rather than tear down. For self-control in matters of desire, setting limits, planning carefully, and prioritizing spiritual disciplines can help align desires with God’s will. Old Testament wisdom literature supports these approaches: Proverbs 25:28 warns that “whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls,” reminding believers that personal mastery is foundational to godly living.

Gentleness and self-control are not optional traits for Christians. They are the fruit of the Spirit that reflect God’s character in our daily lives. Gentleness tempers strength with humility, while self-control governs impulses to honor God and serve others. When men and women of God cultivate these righteous virtues, God will be glorified, and the Christian family will be edified. Let us intentionally model Christ’s love and restraint in a world that too often favors impulsive force.

CW



Young Professionals/College
Connect Monthly Devotional

See Mark Speir or Ty McClellen for details

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speak humbly, and seek the good of others (1 Cor. 13:4-7). Therefore, we work hard to love genuinely and to love with brotherly affection that is based on God as the standard (Rom. 12:9-10). We practice God’s love when we patiently work with the new Christian who is trying to deal with the consequences of their past. When we do good deeds for those who are in need, we display God’s care. The hurting family who lost a loved one can know the love of God as Christians surround them and lift them up. Once we know the love of God, then we get to show others that his love sets the bar in all things

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From the Director's Desk

The Critique

Currently, our first-year male students are flying through their first chapel lesson, Wednesday night devotionals, and outside preaching. While we try to break them in slowly, these are usually nerve-racking times.

Each one of the thirteen first year guys will have to deliver a chapel lesson every other week or so. This gives them invaluable experience prepping and preaching. After chapel is over, each student faces the dreaded public critique. While we don't publicly critique every lesson, the first few will receive this direct, immediate feedback. In a world that might see this as confrontation or harmful, it is important to know the benefit of the critique:

- the wise receive correction (Prov. 19:20)
- those who hate correction are fools (Prov. 12:1)
- we want to know if something incorrect was said (cf. Acts 18:26)
- we need to be good listeners (Prov. 2:1-2)
- we want to listen first and act later (Prov. 18:13; cf. James 1:19)
- it is good to have a different perspective (cf. 1 Cor. 5:1-2)
- good things need to be brought out (cf. Phil. 3:17)
- teachable moment for all the students (cf. 1 Cor. 10:11; Prov. 15:31)

The purpose of our critiques is not to tear down but to build up (2 Cor. 13:10).

Honestly, we all need people in our lives to help “critique” us (Prov. 27:17). None of us has everything: doctrine, presentation, attitude, speech, conduct, and LIFE perfect all the time (cf. Rom. 3:23, but also consider the weaknesses we have as humans!). When brethren who have the kingdom and our best interests in mind, we should listen carefully to what they say. If what they say is good and helpful, we can hold to it (1 Thess. 5:21). Our chapel critiques are not personal attacks. They are meant to make better preachers, better men, and better Christians.

It could be possible that you or someone you know needs this type of Proverbs 27:17 friend in their life. Are you interested in devoting two years to the study of God's Word? Would you like to learn how to present God's word in an effective and powerful way? If so, now is the time to apply to SWSBS!



Trent Kennedy
Director
SWSBS