

# The Fruit Of The Spirit

By Sandy Simpson

## LESSON 1 – LOVE

### Love Examples In The Bible

There are many people who give us a great example of love in the Bible. Ruth teaches us love in her relationship to Naomi and Boaz.

*Ru 1:16 But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God."*

Though Ruth was a Moabite and Naomi a Hebrew, Ruth was willing to give up her homeland to go with Naomi whom she loved. When they went back to Naomi's homeland of Israel, Naomi sent Ruth to glean wheat in the fields of Boaz. Boaz noticed her and later found out Naomi had sent her. Boaz was their kinsman-redeemer. Naomi told Ruth to go lay at Boaz feet and in so doing Ruth showed her love for Naomi and for Boaz as this was a pledge to become the wife of Boaz. Boaz really felt that love because Ruth had not run after younger men.

*Ruth 3: 9-11 "Who are you?" he asked. "I am your servant Ruth," she said. "Spread the corner of your garment over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer." "The LORD bless you, my daughter," he replied. "This kindness is greater than that which you showed earlier: You have not run after the younger men, whether rich or poor. And now, my daughter, don't be afraid. I will do for you all you ask. All my fellow townsmen know that you are a woman of noble character."*

So we can see from the story of Ruth that love means obedience. If you love someone you will do what they ask. You will go wherever they go, perhaps not always in body, but in spirit and in prayer.

When we talk of love we also think of the story of Jonathan, son of Saul, and David. The Bible says that Jonathan loved David.

*1 Sam. 17:57-18:4 As soon as David returned from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul, with David still holding the Philistine's head. "Whose son are you, young man?" Saul asked him. David said, "I am the son of your servant Jesse of Bethlehem." After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return to his father's house. And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.*

From the day that David stood up for the name of God against Goliath, Jonathan loved David and did everything he could to protect him, and God used him to save David's life. We see that to love someone we care about them more than we care about ourselves. We put their needs above our needs.

But it is impossible to find anyone in the Bible who matches the love of Jesus Christ our Lord. Of course Jesus is our model in all the fruits of the Spirit, but when you talk about love Jesus just keeps coming to mind.

*John 15:13 Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.*

Paul, Peter and all the disciples laid down their lives for their friends, becoming martyrs. But Jesus Christ laid down his life for every person in the world who would simply place their faith and trust in Him. He did that

because of how much He loves us. He loved us so much that He did not want us to perish in our sins, but make a way for us to escape the wrath of God. The only way for Him to do that was to lay down His life for his friends.

*Joh 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

Jesus is our pattern. Since Jesus has done so much for us, we should in turn want to show God's love to others.

*1Jo 4:11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*

There are so many people in the world who need the love of Jesus Christ. How will they know about it unless we tell them, and how will they see it unless it is demonstrated in our loves?

## **Love Examples In Life**

### *Bad Beginnings to Happy Endings*

*A young man lay in the corner of a dirty, roach-infested death row cell in a South Carolina prison. His body curled up in a fetal position, he seemed not to notice all the filth and stench around him. His name was Rusty, and he was sentenced to die for the murder of a Myrtle Beach woman in a crime that left four people dead.*

*Police arrested twenty-three-year-old Rusty Welborn from Point Pleasant, West Virginia in 1979, following one of the most brutal killings in South Carolina history. Rusty was tried for murder and received the death penalty for his crime. Bob McAlister, deputy chief of staff to South Carolina's governor, became acquainted with Rusty on death row. Bob had become a Christian a year or so earlier and felt a strong call from God to minister to the state's inmates—especially those spending their last days on death row.*

*Bob's first look at Rusty revealed a pitiful sight. Rusty was lying on the floor when he arrived, a hopeless picture of a man who believed he mattered to no one. The only signs of life in the cell were the cockroaches who were running everywhere, including over Rusty himself. He made no effort to move or even to brush the insects away. He stared blankly at Bob as he began to talk, but did not respond.*

*During visit after visit, Bob tried to reach Rusty, telling him of the love Jesus had for him and of his opportunity—even on death row—to start a new life in Christ. He talked and prayed continuously, and finally Rusty began to respond to the stranger who kept invading his cell. Little by little, he opened up, until one day he began to weep as Bob was sharing with him. On that day, Rusty Welborn, a pitiful man with murder and darkness behind him and his own death closing in ahead of him, gave his heart to Jesus Christ.*

*When Bob returned to Rusty's cell a few days later, he found a new man. The cell was clean and so was Rusty. He had renewed energy and a positive outlook on life. McAlister continued to visit him regularly, studying the Bible and praying with him. The two men became close friends over the next five years. In fact, McAlister said that Rusty grew into the son he never had, and as for Rusty, he had taken to calling McAlister "Pap."*

*Bob learned that Rusty's childhood in West Virginia had been anything heaven. His family was very poor, and Rusty was neglected and abused as a young child. School was hard both for him and for his teachers. Throughout his junior high years he wore the same two pair of pants and two ragged shirts. Out of shame, frustration, and a lack of adult guidance, Rusty quit school in his ninth grade year, a decision that was to be just the beginning of his troubles. His teenage years were full of problems as he was kicked out of his home many times and ran away countless others. He spent most of his youth living under bridges and in public rest*

rooms.

*Bob taught Rusty the Bible, but Rusty was the teacher when it came to love and forgiveness. This young man who had never known real love was amazed and thrilled about the love of God. He never ceased to be surprised that other people could actually love someone like him through Jesus Christ. Rusty's childlike excitement was a breath of fresh air to Bob, who came to realize how much he had taken for granted in the love of his family and friends.*

*In time Rusty became extremely bothered by the terrible pain he had caused the family and friends of his victim. Knowing that God had forgiven him, he desperately wanted the forgiveness of those he had wronged. Then a most significant thing happened: the brother of the woman Rusty had murdered became a Christian. God had dealt with him for two years about his need to forgive his sister's killer. Finally, he wrote Rusty a letter that offered not only forgiveness but love in Christ.*

*Not long before his scheduled execution, this brother and his wife came to visit Rusty. Bob was present when the two men met and tearfully embraced like long-lost brothers finally reunited. Rusty's terrible crime ten years earlier had built an enormous wall between himself and the brother. The love of Christ tore that wall down and enabled both men to realize that, because of Christ, they truly were brothers reunited on that day. It was a lesson Bob would not forget.*

*Not only did Rusty teach Bob McAlister how to love and forgive, he also taught him a powerful lesson about how to die. As the day of his execution approached, Rusty showed a calm and assurance like Bob had never seen. On his final day, with only hours remaining before his 1:00 A.M. execution, Rusty asked McAlister to read to him from the Bible. After an hour or so of listening, Rusty sat up on the side of his bed and said, "You know, the only thing I ever wanted was a home, Pap. Now I'm going to get one."*

*Bob continued his reading, and after a few minutes Rusty grew very still. Thinking he had fallen asleep, Bob put a blanket over him and closed the Bible. As he turned to leave he felt a strong compulsion to lean over and kiss Rusty on the forehead. A short time later, Rusty Welborn was executed for murder. A woman assisting Rusty in his last moments shared what Rusty had said to her before he died. Rusty looked at her and said, "What a shame that a man's gotta wait 'til his last night alive to be kissed and tucked in for the very first time."*

*(From Bad Beginnings to Happy Endings, by Ed Young, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publ., 1994), pp. 3-5.)*

Sometimes people need our help. They may be having a hard time in life. They may have even been Christians and have backslidden into sin. They may have committed terrible sins against God and men, maybe even you personally. But we should reach out to them because Jesus would reach out to them. Our goal as Christians should never be to push people away but to do everything in our power to bring them to the foot of the cross. Sometimes one kind word from a Christian brother or sister can make all the difference in the world.

### Three Letters from Teddy

*Teddy's letter came today and now that I've read it, I will place it in my cedar chest with the other things that are important to my life.*

*"I wanted you to be the first to know."*

*I smiled as I read the words he had written and my heart welled with a pride that I had no right to feel.*

*I have not seen Teddy Stallard since he was a student in my fifth grade class fifteen years ago. It was early in*

*my career, and I had only been teaching for two years.*

*From the first day he stepped into my classroom, I disliked Teddy. Teachers (although everyone knows differently) are not supposed to have favorites in a class, but most especially are they not to show dislike for a child, any child. Nevertheless, every year there are one or two children that one cannot help but be attached to, for teachers are human, and it is human nature to like bright, pretty, intelligent people, whether they are ten years old or twenty-five. And sometimes, not too often, fortunately, there will be one or two students to whom the teacher just can't seem to relate.*

*I had thought myself quite capable of handling my personal feelings along that line until Teddy walked into my life. There wasn't a child I particularly liked that year, but Teddy was most assuredly the one I disliked. He was dirty. Not just occasionally, but all the time. His hair hung low over his ears, and he actually had to hold it out of his eyes as he wrote papers in class. (And this was before it was fashionable to do so!) Too, he had a bad smell about him which I could never identify. His physical faults were many, and his intelligence left a lot to be desired, also. By the end of the first week I knew he was hopelessly behind the others. Not only was he behind; he was just plain slow!*

*Any teacher will tell you that it's more of a pleasure to teach a bright child. But any good teacher can provide work to the bright child, keeping him challenged and learning, while she puts her major effort on the slower ones. Any teacher can do this. Most teachers do it, but I didn't, not that year. In fact, I concentrated on my best students and let the others follow along as best they could. Ashamed as I am to admit it, I took pleasure in using my red pen; and each time I came to Teddy's paper, the cross marks (and there were many) were always a little larger and a little redder than necessary.*

*"Poor work!" I would write over and over again.*

*The boy quickly became the class "goat," the outcast: the unlovable and the unloved. He knew I didn't like him, but he didn't know why. Nor did I know—then or now—why I felt such a dislike for him. All I know is that he was a little boy no one cared about, and I made no effort on his behalf.*

*The days rolled by. We made it through the Fall Festival and the Thanksgiving holidays, and I continued marking happily with my red pen. As the Christmas holidays approached, I knew that Teddy would never catch up in time to go on to sixth grade. He would be a repeater. To justify myself, I went to his school folder. He had very low grades for the first four years, but no grade failure. How he had made it, I didn't know. I read the following personal remarks but somehow closed my mind.*

*First grade: Teddy shows promise by work and attitude, but has poor home situation.*

*Second grade: Teddy could do better. Mother terminally ill. He receives little help at home.*

*Third grade: Teddy is a pleasant boy. Helpful, but too serious. Slow learner. Mother passed away end of the year.*

*Fourth grade: Very slow, but well behaved. Father shows no interest.*

*Well, they had passed him four times, but he will certainly repeat fifth grade! Do him good! I said to myself.*

*And then the last day before the holiday arrived. Our little Christmas tree on the reading table was colorful with paper and popcorn chains. Many gifts were piled underneath, waiting for the big moment. Teachers always get several gifts at Christmas, but mine that year seemed bigger than ever. There was not a student who had not brought me one. Each unwrapping brought shouts of delight, and the proud giver would receive*

*many thank-yous.*

*His gift wasn't the last one I picked up; in fact it was in the middle of the pile. Its wrapping was a brown paper bag, and he had colored Christmas trees and red bells all over it. It was stuck together with masking tape. "For Miss Thompson, from Teddy" it read. The group was completely silent and for the first time I felt embarrassed because they all stood watching me unwrap the gift. As I removed the last bit of masking tape, two items fell to my desk: a rhinestone bracelet with several stones missing and a small bottle of cheap cologne-half empty.*

*I could hear the low laughter and whispers, and I wasn't sure I could look at Teddy. "Isn't this lovely?" I asked, placing the bracelet on my wrist. "Teddy, would you help me fasten it?" He smiled shyly as he fixed the clasp, and I held up my wrist for all of them to see. There were a few ooh's and ahh's, but as I dabbed the cologne behind my ears, all the little girls lined up for a dab behind their ears.*

*I continued to open gifts until I reached the bottom of the pile. We ate our refreshments, and the bell rang. The children filed out with shouts of "See you next year!" and "Merry Christmas!" but Teddy waited at his desk. When they had all left, he walked up to me with his gift and books in his hands. "You smell just like my mom," he said softly. "Her bracelet looks real pretty on you too. I'm glad you liked it."*

*He left quickly. I locked the door, sat down at my desk, and cried. It was then and there I decided to make it up to Teddy and give him the teacher he deserved.*

*I stayed every afternoon with Teddy from the end of Christmas holidays until the last day of school. Sometimes we worked together. Sometimes he worked alone while I drew up lesson plans or graded papers. Slowly but surely he caught up with the rest of the class. In fact, his final grades were among the highest in the class, and although I knew he would be moving out of the state when school was out, I was not worried for him. Teddy had come to the point where he could handle any school work no matter where he went. He had some good success, and as we were taught in our teacher training courses, "Success builds success."*

*I did not hear from Teddy until seven years later, when his first letter appeared in my mailbox.*

*"Dear Miss Thompson,*

*I just wanted you to be the first to know, I will be graduating second in my class next month.*

*Very Truly Yours, Teddy Stallard"*

*I sent him a card of congratulations and a small package, a pen and pencil gift set. I wondered what he would do after graduation. Four years later, Teddy's second letter came.*

*"Dear Miss Thompson,*

*I wanted you to be the first to know. I was just informed that I will be graduating first in my class. The university has not been easy, but I liked it.*

*Very Truly Yours, Teddy Stallard"*

*I sent him a pair of sterling silver monogrammed cuff links and a card, so proud of him I could burst! And now today—Teddy's third letter.*

*"Dear Miss Thompson,*

*I wanted you to be the first to know. As of today I am Theodore Stallard, M.D. How about that!!?? I'm going to be married in July, the 27th. I wanted to ask if you could come and sit where Mom would sit if she were here. I'll have no family there as Dad died last year.*

*Very Truly Yours, Teddy Stallard"*

*I'm not sure what kind of gift a person should send to a doctor on completion of medical school and state boards. Maybe I'll just wait and take a wedding gift, but I should write a note.*

*"Dear Ted,*

*Congratulations! You made it, and you did it yourself! In spite of those like me and not because of us, this day has come for you. God bless you. I'll be at the wedding with bells on!*

*- Elizabeth Silance Ballard*

*(More Stories for the Heart, compiled by Alice Gray (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1997), pp. 55-59.)*

We can learn a lesson from Mrs. Ballard. Sometimes the people God is calling us to love are not pretty. They may have many problems. They may even not love us. But if we show them God's love through our lives, the Lord can and often does use our love to touch the lives of others.

## **Love Is Action**

*Newspaper columnist and minister George Crane tells of a wife who came into his office full of hatred toward her husband. "I do not only want to get rid of him, I want to get even. Before I divorce him I want to hurt him as much as he has me. Dr. Crane suggested an ingenious plan "Go home and act as if you really love your husband. Tell him how much he means to you. Praise him for every decent trait. Go out of your way to be as kind, considerate, and generous as possible. Spare no efforts to please him, to enjoy him. Make him believe you love him. After you've convinced him of your undying love and that you cannot live without him, then drop the bomb. Tell him that you're getting a divorce. That will really hurt him." With revenge in her eyes, she smiled and exclaimed, "Beautiful, beautiful. Will he ever be surprised!" And she did it with enthusiasm. Acting "as if." For two months she showed love, kindness, listening, giving, reinforcing, sharing. When she didn't return, Crane called. "Are you ready now to go through with the divorce?" "Divorce?" she exclaimed. "Never! I discovered I really do love him." Her actions had changed her feelings. Motion resulted in emotion. The ability to love is established not so much by fervent promise as often repeated deeds.*

Love is not only words but actions.

*1 John 3:18 Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.*

It sometimes calls for sacrifice. But many times that sacrifice yields a deeper love than we would have imagined. Love also takes the effort of more than one person.

*Heb 10:24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds.*  
Sometimes love is a sacrifice; we must give something up. Have you made a sacrifice of love recently?

Let me pose this hypothetical situation: If we discovered that we had five minutes left to say all we wanted to say to anyone we know, what would happen? I venture to say every telephone booth. would be filled by people calling other people to tell them that they love them.

The question is: Why wait until the last five minutes?

## **Love Is Eternal**

*1 Cor. 13:1-13 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*

Love is the only thing that will remain in eternity. Faith and hope will no longer be needed because the object of our faith, Jesus Christ, will be there with us. We will no longer need hope because our hope of eternal life will be a reality. But love never dies. I believe that the love you show to others will continue on into eternity.

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## LESSON 2 – JOY

### **Biblical Examples Of Joy**

One of the examples in the Bible of the joy of the Lord is the life of David. We often find David writing psalms of joy to the Lord.

*Ps. 98 A psalm. Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. The LORD has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations. He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Shout for **joy** to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music; make music to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing, with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn--shout for **joy** before the LORD, the King. Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for **joy**; let them sing before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity.*

David found his joy in the Lord. We can also see David being joyful on many occasions. One in particular stands out.

*2 Sam. 13-15 When those who were carrying the ark of the LORD had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the LORD with all his might, while he and the entire house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouts and the sound of trumpets.*

You may remember that David was full of joy because the ark was finally coming back to the City of David. It had been delayed because the priests, David and Israel had not followed the commands of God and Uzzah had died in the process. But now that they were obedient to the Lord, David is overjoyed. He is dancing in front of the ark of the covenant with all his might. Michal his wife, Saul's daughter, sees him and despises him for it. But David's joy is in the Lord. He is not doing it for the benefit of Michal or anyone else in Israel for that matter. His is happy that the blessing of the Lord is coming back to rest on Israel after they have been disobedient. Our joy in the Lord is a very private thing. It is between us and the Lord. But it is also apparent to the world. As a Christian you should be living in a deep state of joy. That does not mean that you are happy all the time, or laughing uncontrollably. The Bible says there is a time for laughter and a time for sorrow. But true joy is something deeper than happiness.

*2Co 8:2 Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.*

Joy is also a deep contentment, inexpressible.

*1Ti 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain.*

*1Pe 1:8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,*

God is also able to bring you to the ultimate joy, the joy of His presence, if you continue to place your faith in Him.



*Jude 1:24 To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy--*

## **Stories Of Joy**

### *Let Your Balloon Go*

*A conference at a Presbyterian church in Omaha. People were given helium-filled balloons and told to release them at some point in the service when they felt like expressing the joy in their hearts. Since they were Presbyterians, they weren't free to say "Hallelujah, Praise the Lord." All through the service balloons ascended, but when it was over one-third of the balloons were unreleased. Let your balloon go. (Bruce Larson, Luke, p. 43)*

The moral of this story is to let your balloon go. Let people see the joy of the Lord in your face, in your life. It is a powerful witness. It also can be a form of worship when our joy turns into praise.

### *Christians*

*As a man living around 300 A.D. was anticipating death, he wrote these last words to a friend: "It's a bad world, an incredibly bad world. But I have discovered in the midst of it a quiet and holy people who have learned a great secret. They have found a joy which is a thousand times better than any pleasure of our sinful life. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They are masters of their souls. They have overcome the world. These people are the Christians—and I am one of them." (Moody Bible Institute's, Today In The Word, June, 1988, p. 18)*

Christians are the only people who truly have joy and peace. They understand that this world is simply a short space in eternity. They are content to suffer and even die for the cause of Christ because they know that they are laying up treasures in heaven.

### *Jesus, Man of Joy*

*While Jesus was a "Man of Sorrows," Luke also paints a scene where Jesus "rejoiced very greatly in the Spirit" (Luke 10:21) - which implies more than just smiling. The occasion for this joyful outburst was the return of the 70 from their successful mission. They had been given spiritual authority over all the powers of the enemy and had liberated many from the hold of the enemy. There was good reason to celebrate.*

*But Jesus cautions them, "Do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (10:20). No matter how much power they exercised in their ministry, the ultimate source of their joy was to be rooted in the fact that their names were written in heaven. Ministry is temporary. Life in heaven is permanent. Then Jesus joyfully thanked the Father for opening the hearts of the disciples to see this and to enter into the fellowship of the Father and the Son (10:21-24). ...*

*On the eve of his execution, Jesus told his disciples that all he had revealed to them was so that "my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full"*

*John 15:10-11 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*

*They should abide in his love as he always abides in the love of the Father*

*John 17:13 "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have*

*the full measure of my joy within them.*

*They should be one as he and the Father are one. Here again joy is found in our relationship to the Son, and through the Son to the Father.*

*Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, was also the Man of Joy. He obeyed the will of the Father and endured the cross by focusing on the joy set before him—the joy of unshakable love relationships in the heavenly Jerusalem.*

*Heb. 12:2-2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

*Heb. 12:22-23 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.*

### Finding Lost Joy

*Many years ago, a little boy was given a gift beyond price: his dead grandfather's gold pocket watch. How he treasured it! But one day, while playing at his father's ice plant, he lost the watch in all the ice and sawdust. He searched and scratched, and even became very upset, but no watch. Then he suddenly realized what to do. He stopped running around and became very still. In the silence, he heard the watch ticking. God has given each of us a priceless gift of joy in Jesus. How easy it is to lose our joy in the running around of life. Yet it is always there to find, if we will just pause and listen to the still small voice of the Spirit. (Submitted by Steve Morrison, Bremerton, Washington.)*

One way to bring joy back is to meditate on the Word of God. Let Him speak words of wisdom into your life. Read the Psalms when you are hurting or sad. Remember that the joy of the Lord is pleasing to God and approved by men.

*Rom. 14:17-18 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.*

### **Conclusion**

*Ps. 126 A song of ascents. When the LORD brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them." The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like streams in the Negev. Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.*

One of the great joys in the Lord is sowing the seeds of the gospel of Jesus Christ. When you see the tears of repentance on the faces of those who have placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you come to know the meaning of a joy that is "sown in tears". When we return to our Creator, it is my hope that it will be with the "sheaves" of many lives who have been saved because we carried the seed. Someday those who have been faithful witnesses for Christ will return with songs of joy.

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## LESSON 3 – PEACE

### Biblical Examples Of Peace

*1 Chr. 22:9 But you will have a son who will be a man of peace and rest, and I will give him rest from all his enemies on every side. His name will be Solomon, and I will grant Israel peace and quiet during his reign.*

Solomon was the man of peace after the bloody time of King David. David was a great man of God and did the Lord's will in putting down the enemies of the people of God such as the Philistines. Since David was obedient to God, and repented when he sinned, God promised David that his son, Solomon, would have peace and rest from all the enemies of Israel. Solomon was probably the richest king who ever lived. He was the wisest also because he was obedient to the Lord in asking not for riches but for wisdom to govern the people of Israel righteously. Because of the peace of Solomon Israel became the greatest kingdom on earth during that time. Kings and queens came from all over the world to see Solomon, and get his advice and counsel. Solomon's writings were inspired by God, writings such as Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes. Proverbs is probably the most valuable book of virtues and precepts for moral living.

When we walk in peace, God will bless us with wisdom. Many blessings come from peace. Of course we know that Solomon sinned in his later years and God took away the peace of the reign of Solomon in short reign of his son, Rehoboam. So if we do not live in peace, God can also take his blessings away. As Christians we are to be equipped to spread the gospel of peace.

*Eph. 6:13-18 Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled round your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, **and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.** In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.*

We are also to be subject to authorities in society and in the church, with our highest authority being the Lord. We should always endeavor to live peaceably and be considerate to all people.

*Titus 3:1-2 Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no-one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility towards all men.*

You may remember how it is important to show love and joy in our lives as Christians, not only for ourselves but because it is part of our witness and will result in a harvest of believers in Jesus Christ. Being peace-loving has the same effect.

*Jas 3:17-18 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.*

Being a peacemaker, however, does not mean that we stop discerning and try to be in unity with those who do not believe. We are called to separate ourselves from unbelievers and false believers. But we still reach out to

them in love and peace. We do not curse them but rather pray for them. We try to pull them from the fire.

*Jude 1:23 snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear--hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.*

We are to be in perfect unity with those who are true believers, and be a witness to those who are not through peace, not through strife and conflict. Jesus Christ continues to strive through His Spirit to reach those who have never believed or who have turned away. We can do no less.

## **Stories Of Peacemakers**

### Conflict

*The Fort Worth Star-Telegram reported that firefighters in Genoa, Texas, were accused of deliberately setting more than forty destructive fires. When caught, they stated, "We had nothing to do. We just wanted to get the red lights flashing and the bells clanging."*

*The job of firefighters is to put out fires, not start them. The job of Christians is to help resolve conflict (Matt. 5:9), not start more of it.*

*Matt. 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.*

### A Pig for a Pig

*It was the 1930's on a northern Canadian prairie. The height of the Great Depression. Jansen family was share-cropping but then lost their farm. A friend told them of a farm across from Jud Brewster. Few lasted there because Jud was so mean. But Mr. Jansen said, "I'll just kill him."*

*They moved to the new farm. One week later, Brewster appeared at their door in a rage. Their chickens were bothering him, and he threatened to kill them. The family locked them up in the henhouse.*

*There was peace for a time, then he showed up again. "Jansen, your pigs have been in my garden. They'll never get in my garden again!" There, in Brewster's wagon, was their herd of young pigs, all dead. He had shot each of them. Without saying a word, Mr. Jansen buried the pigs.*

*A few weeks later one of the Jansen boys came rushing into the house. "Daddy, go get a gun quick. Jud Brewster's pigs are in our garden!" The kids could already taste revenge. The father replied, "We won't need a gun. Round up the pigs."*

*After a lot of trouble getting them in the wagon, they headed over to Brewster's farm. "Good evening, Mr. Brewster. Your pigs have been in my garden. I've brought them back." The color drained from Brewster's face. "My pigs, my pigs in your garden?" "That's right. Where do you want us to put them?" Brewster's body sagged against the door and he said, "Just dump them over behind the barn."*

*Jansen replied with a slight grin, "OK, but they'll just get out again." When it had sunk in that Jansen had not killed the pigs, Brewster went over and shook Jansen's hand. They talked for a long time. Brewster gave him half the pigs to keep, and on Sunday he came to church. From that point on, he was a changed man.*

*Later one of his boys asked him what he meant when he said he would kill Brewster when they moved by him. Jansen replied,*

*"Not with a gun. I planned to do it another way - by heaping coals on his head. That old mean neighbor is as dead as a doornail, just like I'd said he'd be. And we're glad to be alive to see it."*

*Ro 12:20 On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."*

Most people respond to kindness and peace, particularly if they have been fighting you or being mean to you. Peace against enemies is probably the best witness you could have.

### *The Pineapple Story*

*"The Pineapple Story" is actually a book written by a missionary. The story deals with anger and peacemaking. A missionary and his family asked for a man to plant a garden of pineapples for him. The missionary was going to pay the planter with goods and services. The pineapples took 3 years to ripen. Before they ripened, the pineapples were all stolen. The missionary got angry. He finally found out that the planter was the one who stole the pineapples. He was still angry. The missionary tried to punish the planter several times, but this only made the missionary and his message unpopular. Eventually, the missionary asked God what he should do. Through His Word the missionary was reminded to yield the fruit to God. The missionary decided to do that but the pineapples still get stolen. But this time the missionary didn't get angry. The planter noticed the lack of anger and asked why the missionary didn't get angry anymore. The missionary then had an opportunity to witness to the planter. The planter then realized that he was really stealing the pineapples from Lord ... so he stopped stealing them. In the end they all shared the ripened pineapples.*

There is more to this story but the moral is that we need to give everything we have to God. Sometimes to keep the peace we must give up our rights. Being a peacemaker sometimes means we must give up our rights in order that the truths of the gospel can come through to people.

### *The Last of the Gladiators*

*Telemachus was a monk who lived in the 4th century. He felt God saying to him, "Go to Rome." He was in a cloistered monastery. He put his possessions in a sack and set out for Rome. When he arrived in the city, people were thronging in the streets. He asked why all the excitement and was told that this was the day that the gladiators would be fighting and killing each other in the coliseum, the day of the games, the circus. He thought to himself, "Four centuries after Christ and they are still killing each other, for enjoyment?" He ran to the coliseum and heard the gladiators saying, "Hail to Caesar, we die for Caesar" and he thought, "this isn't right." He jumped over the railing and went out into the middle of the field, got between two gladiators, held up his hands and said "In the name of Christ, forbear."*

*The crowd protested and began to shout, "Run him through, Run him through." A gladiator came over and hit him in the stomach with the back of his sword. It sent him sprawling in the sand. He got up and ran back and again said, "In the name of Christ, forbear." The crowd continued to chant, "Run him through." One gladiator came over and plunged his sword through the little monk's stomach and he fell into the sand, which began to turn crimson with his blood. One last time he gasped out, "In the name of Christ forbear."*

*A hush came over the 80,000 people in the coliseum. Soon a man stood and left, then another and more, and within minutes all 80,000 had emptied out of the arena. It was the last-known gladiatorial contest in the history of Rome.*

Sometimes the Lord may even call us to be peacemakers at the cost of our lives. There may be persecution coming where Christians will be put into prison, persecuted, tortured and killed. But remember always how powerful the witness of Paul and Silas was when they were in prison:

*Acts 16:22-34 The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved--you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptised. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God--he and his whole family.*

# The Fruit Of The Spirit

By Sandy Simpson

## LESSON 4 – PATIENCE

### **Biblical Examples Of Patience**

There are many examples of people who were patient in the Bible. The prophets were patient men, waiting on God, sometimes for years. They sometimes had to wait for God to speak or to act. This took faith, patience, and perseverance. One man who had these traits perhaps more than any other was Job. James speaks of Job this way:

*James 3:10-11 Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.*

Job was a rich man and blessed with family and friends. He would regularly sacrifice on behalf of his children after they got together for a feast in case they had sinned. But as you all know the story, Satan challenged God's blessings on Job by saying that Job would curse God if God took away those blessings. The God allowed Satan to take his children, possessions, and even physical health away. Job's friends then came when Job was in terrible pain and added to it by accusing Job of doing something wrong to deserve the judgment of God. In the middle of this trial Job makes one of the strongest statements of faith we have in the Bible.

*Job 1:21 "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."*

Job was content to place his faith and fate in the hands of his Creator. Job recognized that God had the right to do anything in this universe because it is His Creation. This should be enough for us also. But in modern times we seem to need more. And there is more. God would not allow Job to suffer without just cause. He used the suffering of Job to prove Satan wrong and as a witness to Job's friends and everyone who has heard his story since that time. Sometimes God uses trials to build our faith and accomplish higher purposes that we may know nothing of. We should learn to be patient and wait on the Lord. The Lord will bring everything to justice, if not now then in the end. God was merciful and not only accomplished his purposes but blessed Job far more than he had before with new sons and daughters, possessions and a name that would never be forgotten in the history of mankind.

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

God's chosen people are dearly loved. Job was dearly loved, so much that God trusted Job to show Satan that there are men who place their full trust in God. If we cloth ourselves in compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience the Lord can use us to accomplish great things in His Kingdom and we will surely be rewarded, not only in this life, but in eternity to come with a crown.

*2Ti 4:2 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction.*

A Christians, followers of Christ, we should always be prepared to preach the Word with patience. Many times people do not come to faith in Christ for many years. They watch our lives, they listen to what we teach, they look for the evidence of Christ in our lives first. If, like Job, we show that our actions are as strong as our

words, then people will be persuaded of the Gospel message. Allow God to put you to the test. Out of the fire comes pure gold, out of hot water comes cleanliness.

## **Examples Of Patience Today**

### Outside The Reef

*This is a story from my life. I grew up in Palau and one day I was fishing outside the reef with two of my friends. I was spear fishing while the other boys were line fishing from the raft. Very quickly, a storm came up. It came up so quickly that within minutes the waves at the reef were over ten feet high. I was pretty far away from my friends and as I looked up I saw them paddling for the reef. The last I saw of them was the long bamboo raft tumbling lengthwise, end over end, and disappearing on the other side of the reef waves. One of the boys was only 8 years old and I was afraid that he had probably died. But, at the moment, I had myself to worry about. I looked at the gigantic waves on the reef and the blowing rain and I decided that I would probably not be able to make it over the reef. I looked at the channel but I knew that the tide was still coming out and I would not be able to swim in the channel, especially with the added currents brought about by the storm. My only chance was to swim on the very edge of the channel. I knew I had to swim in far enough so that I could begin to grab the rocks on the side of the channel and pull myself in to safety. It was then my struggle began. I swam as hard as I could in between waves simply to not lose ground, then let the waves push me in a couple of feet. Then I would swim as hard as I could, and then let the waves push me another couple of feet. I did this for about 45 minutes. I had almost given up hope of seeing the coral by the channel when I spotted my first rock. I began to haul myself in, hand over hand, until I reached the inside of the reef. When I returned I discovered that the boys had made it in safely and that people were worried about me. I will never forget this experience for it taught me some lessons.*

*Life is made up of a series of small, day to day struggles. But to strive against the problems and pressures we face today without a goal, or if we lose sight of the goal, can be disastrous. What kept me swimming toward the inside of the reef was the fact that I had faith that the rocks would be there for me to grab on to. God gives us in His Word the Bible, not only instructions for how to deal with the day to day struggles of life, but the BIG picture. Seeing life clearly through God's Word can save us a lot of heartache and wasted energy. When we begin to see things from God's perspective, our struggles take on a different light. No longer are they strivings in vain, but rather we can see ourselves running a race with a firm goal in mind. We then can run with patience. Paul said of himself in Philippians 3:13-14 "Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus." To see where God wants to take you in life, you must trust in Him, put on patience, put your life in His hands, read His Word, talk to Him in prayer, and follow Him where He leads. Hang on to Jesus the Rock, and He will guide you through the storms of this world to the peaceful waters of eternal life.*

### Love never gets tired

*A mother took her six-year-old boy into a doctor's crowded waiting room. As they waited their turn, he began to ask her all kinds of questions. In half an hour he managed to cover almost every subject known to humanity. To the wonder of all the others sitting in the room, his mother answered each question carefully and patiently.*

*Inevitably, he got around to God. As the other people listened to his relentless "how's" and "why's," it was plain to see by the expressions on their faces that they wondered: "How does she stand it?" But when she answered her son's next question, she answered theirs too. "Why," he asked, "doesn't God ever get tired and just stop?" "Because," she replied after a moment's thought, "God is love; and love never gets tired."*



Our goal as Christians is to be more like Christ. God never gets tired because of His love for us. His Spirit continues to strive with us, long after we would have given up. Don't give up on people. Continue to pray for them. When God gives you the opportunity to talk to them about spiritual things, take it. Don't let the opportunity pass you by. But be patient as your Lord Jesus Christ is patient with you.

### Spell "Czechoslovakia"

*Some saints must be a pain even for God to endure.*

*It's like three women who arrived at the Pearly Gates at the same time. St. Peter came but said he had some pressing business and would they please wait. He was gone for a long time, but finally he came back and called one of the women in and asked her if she minded waiting.*

*"No," she said, "I've looked forward to this for so long. I love God and can't wait to meet Jesus. I don't mind at all."*

*St. Peter then said, "Well I have one more question. How do you spell 'God?'"*

*She said, "Capital-G-o-d."*

*St. Peter said, "Go right on in."*

*He went out and got one of the other women, told her to come on inside, and said, "Did you mind waiting?"*

*She said, "Oh, no. I have been a Christian for fifty years, and I'll spend eternity here. I didn't mind at all."*

*So St. Peter said, "Just one more thing. How do you spell 'God?'"*

*She said, "g-o-d. No, I mean capital-G."*

*St. Peter said that was good and sent her on in to Heaven.*

*He went back out and invited the third woman in and asked her if she minded waiting.*

*"Yes, I did," she said huffily. "I've had to stand in line all my life--at the supermarket, when I went to school, when I registered my children for school, when I went to the movies--everywhere--and I resent having to wait in line for Heaven!"*

*St. Peter said, "Well that's all right for you to feel that way. It won't be held against you, but there is just one more question. How do you spell 'Czechoslovakia?'"*

This is just a joke but it has a good point. Will God see that we have endured with patience till the end?

*2Ti 2:12 if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us;  
Re 3:10 Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.*

God is looking for good soldiers who can endure patiently till He comes.

*2Ti 2:3 Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.*

## The Purposes of God

*The purposes of God often develop slowly because His grand designs are never hurried.*

*The great New England preacher Phillips Brooks was noted for his poise and quiet manner. At times, however, even he suffered moments of frustration and irritability. One day a friend saw him angrily pacing the floor like a caged lion. "What's the trouble, Mr. Brooks?" he asked. "The trouble is that I'm in a hurry, but God isn't!" Haven't we felt the same way many times?*

*Some of the greatest missionaries of history devotedly spread the seed of God's Word and yet had to wait long periods before seeing the fruit of their efforts. William Carey, for example, labored 7 years before the first Hindu convert was brought to Christ in Burma. Adoniram Judson toiled 7 years before his faithful preaching was rewarded. In western Africa, it was 14 years before one convert was received into the Christian church. In New Zealand, it took 9 years; and in Tahiti, it was 16 years before the first harvest of souls began.*

*Thomas a Kempis described that kind of patience in these words: "A person does not deserve to be called "patient" who is only willing to suffer as much as he thinks proper, and for whom he pleases. The truly patient man asks (nothing) from whom he suffers, (whether) from his those over him, his friends and family, or those in his care...But no matter what is done to him by anyone, he accepts it all as from the hand of God, and counts it gain!"*

Sometimes patience is a matter of how we view things. Sometimes we need to look at the bigger picture to help us gain patience. Here is the story of a man who finally realized a bigger picture.

## Contentment

*Once upon a time, there was a man who lived with his wife, two small children, and his elderly parents in a tiny hut. He tried to be patient and gracious, but the noise and crowded conditions wore him down.*

*In desperation, he consulted the village wise man. "Do you have a rooster?" asked the wise man.*

*"Yes," he replied.*

*"Keep the rooster in the hut with your family, and come see me again next week."*

*The next week, the man returned and told the wise elder that living conditions were worse than ever, with the rooster crowing and making a mess of the hut. "Do you have a cow?" asked the wise elder. The man nodded fearfully. "Take your cow into the hut as well, and come see me in a week."*

*Over the next several weeks, the man -- on the advice of the wise elder -- made room for a goat, two dogs, and his brother's children.*

*Finally, he could take no more, and in a fit of anger, kicked out all the animals and guests, leaving only his wife, his children, and his parents. The home suddenly became spacious and quiet, and everyone lived happily ever after.*

I realized that some of you can really relate to this story. But keep in mind that our family and relatives are our first mission field. They may be hard to get along with at times, but remember that there are always people who have it worse than you do. If you are impatient with your living situation, think about the 500,000 Tutsies in Rwanda who have been killed and those who survive now are in fear of their lives, starving to death packed into places you would not want your pet dog to live in.

Seven principles for erasing selfishness

*Dietrich Bonhoeffer's seven principles for erasing selfishness in churches:*

- 1) Hold your tongue and refuse to speak unlovingly about a Christian brother or sister.*
- 2) Cultivate humility by understanding that you, like Paul, are the greatest of sinners. You can only live in God's sight by his grace.*
- 3) Listen long and patiently so that you will understand your fellow Christian's need.*
- 4) Refuse to consider your time so valuable that you cannot be interrupted to help with unexpected needs, no matter how small or menial.*
- 5) Bear the burden of your brothers and sisters in the Lord, both by preserving their freedom, and by forgiving their sinful abuse of that freedom.*
- 6) Declare God's word to your fellow believers when they need to hear it.*
- 7) Understand that Christian authority is characterized by service and does not call attention to the person who performs the service.*

# The Fruit Of The Spirit

By Sandy Simpson

## LESSON 5 – KINDNESS

### **Biblical Examples Of Kindness**

Everyone knows the story of the good Samaritan.

*Luke 10:30–37 In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."*

A very clear point in this story is what Jesus said at the end. "Go and DO likewise". Not go and think likewise, or go and understand likewise. We need to put kindness and mercy into action or else it is nothing but pity which leads to pride. Kindness without action is useless. It does no good for the person that needs the kindness. The priest and the Levite knew all about kindness, but they did nothing about it. Because they did nothing about it the man continued to suffer and would have most likely died if not for the Samaritan. Anyone can be kind. Samaritans were the lowest class of people around Israel. As Christians we are to help the less fortunate, no matter how rich or poor we are. We can always be of some help, even if it is just to be a friend.

*Mark Twain once wrote, "Kindness is a language that the deaf can hear and the blind can read." He was right, of course. Everyone can understand the language of love. It can be spoken in any dialect and still be comprehended by a person of any nationality, by the rich and the poor, by the old and the young, by both male and female. Kindness is a universal language for it does not speak to the intellect, but directly to the heart.*

### **Examples Of Kindness**

Many times we are blind to the needs of others around us.

*A contemporary mother of five lost her vision through illness. She struggled with her blindness. She had always been self-sufficient, doing things for herself. Now she had to depend on other people to do the things she once did for herself. Through this experience she realized how much she needed other people.*

*After losing her sight she began to notice things around her that she had never noticed before. There was a young man who had been born blind who stood on the street corner. When she had her sight she never paid any attention to him, but now that she could not see she spoke to him and eventually became his friend. She discovered that he'd never had a birthday party. "So I baked him a cake and organized a party," she said. "He blew out the candles he couldn't see." He was delirious with joy. She describes her experience in most interesting terms. She says, "I felt so happy. I had come from that blind person on the corner to someone who had seen a need and done something about it." You see what she was saying? It was she who was blind -- blind to the needs of others, but now she could see.*

*"I've told people something that sounds a little cruel," she says now. "Everyone should experience temporary blindness, to see how our vision can give us such hangups, how we judge and condemn, and what that does to us all." She was able to help that young blind man on the street corner with love and kindness.*

*She gave him a birthday party. He met a blind girl and was beginning to fall in love with her when someone with sight told him that she was unattractive. As a result he stopped seeing her. "It brought tears to my eyes," the woman said. "He'd been seeing fine." (2) Yes, he had been seeing fine -- until some so-called seeing person misguided him. There are two kinds of blindness -- of the eyes and of the heart. That is the first thing we need to see.*

## **Taking Up The Towel**

But there is something very important about kindness that we need to remember as Christians. We are to show kindness and mercy to our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

There is a traditional service that some churches in the States have and it is called a foot washing service. It is a church service where people wash one another's feet. The origin of this service they have taken from a passage from John 13 where Jesus washed the disciples feet. He told them "if I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet . (Jn. 13:14) Unfortunately these types of services sometimes become a tradition and the true meaning of foot washing is lost. After Jesus washed the disciples feet he asked them, "Do you know what I've just done for you?" In other words, do you know the SPIRITUAL significance of what I have done in washing your feet? I don't think that Jesus was starting an ordinance that must be observed by the church such as communion or baptism when He did this. Otherwise I believe that He would have submitted to a foot washing Himself, as He did when He was baptized and ate communion with His disciples. All the commentaries I have seen comment on this scene by saying that Jesus was trying to teach His disciples humility by His example to them. But I believe that this is only part of the truth of what Jesus was trying to teach His disciples, and us.

I believe that what Jesus is trying to teach us in this passage is that He wants us to "take up the towel". Many times we read Scripture and do not search hard enough for it's deep meanings. All Scripture is inspired by God and has layer upon layer of deep meaning. For example, Scripture tells us "... by love serve one another" (Gal. 5:13) and "Submit yourselves one to another in the fear of the God" (Eph. 5:21) It may be easier to picture how we can submit to one another for instance in marriage between a wife and husband or for children to submit to their parents. But how can we submit to each other as the body of Christ? I believe that we can understand this better by looking at this how Jesus taught us to "take up the towel". Submitting to each other in love and godly fear is much more than just obeying a higher authority. There are three words in this example by Jesus that give us some idea of how to "take up the towel". The words are "dirt", "comfort" and "unity".

The disciples were 12 men beloved of God and who loved Him. But they also had dirt on their feet. Jesus was showing them that maybe their hands were clean but not their feet. It's like walking on the hills to go to a garden. We can walk all the way there and our hands can remain clean but our feet are going to get dirty. Jesus says that you, as a born again Christian, don't need your whole body washed, just your feet. This is not your literal feet He is talking about but your spiritual feet. When you walk through life as a Christian, you are saved and God has already washed you with his blood and saved your soul, but because there are temptations in this life, your soul still needs to be washed from time to time.

Let me tell you that no matter how dusty and dirty the roads in Jerusalem were at that time, the roads of our day are much more filthy! I am not talking about actual dirt roads, but the roads of worldly temptation and immorality. Perhaps you can see this in the life of a brother or sister in Christ. Perhaps you have gotten your own feet dirty this week. This doesn't necessarily mean you have turned your back on God, unless you are

unwilling repentant of your sin. You need someone to wash your feet. You fell, you hurt yourself, and you need your dirty feet washed. Scripture says "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in a fault, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering yourself, lest you also are tempted." (Gal. 6:1)

We are commanded as Christians to restore every other Christian who falls into sin, if there is a repentant heart. What do you do when you are face to face with another brother or sister who has fallen into a sin? What you do has everything to do with what your Christianity and walk with Christ is all about! Do you serve others in love and kindness and submit to them in the fear of God? Or do you talk about them behind their back and pull them down while boosting yourself up? People who call themselves Christians can be very cruel sometimes. Sometimes these so-called Christians even delight in seeing dirt on others. But let me tell you, when they spread the dirt around that is the dirtiest sin of all! There have been many pastors I have seen or heard of who have resigned from churches because of a sin they fell into and the people of the church were simply unwilling to restore him, even when he was repentant. I have been to a number of places where, when I arrive there, all I hear is destructive talk about others in ministry. This really makes me sick sometimes, and I want to tell those people "Don't say another word! Let's stop right now and pray for that brother or sister, then go talk to them and clear this up." Isn't that what the Bible tells us to do? Taking up the towel takes commitment and courage. It means -- I am committed to helping him or her clean off the dirt -- I will get down on my hands and knees and do it myself through prayer and humbleness, if that is what it takes. I will work to restore their reputation, their family, to do everything I can to keep them alive in Christ!

We must take up the towel of God's mercy and go to that hurting one. We should not just stand around and spread the dirt. We should not just judge that person when we have our own sins and faults before God. We need to go directly to that person in the special love of Jesus. We need to submit all of our human inclinations to ignore him, judge him, expose him, lecture him or find fault with him. Instead we are to commit ourselves to being his deepest friend. We are told to wash away his sins by sharing the correcting, healing, washing, comforting Word of God.

We are not talking about Christians here who are not repentant or who are living in continual sin. We are not talking about false teachers who are teaching destructive heresies and leading other Christians to shipwreck their faith. We should pray for them but allow God to work in their lives through our prayers. I am afraid that this way is also not seen too much in Micronesia today because it conflicts with culture. But where culture conflicts with God's Word, it is wrong. If a brother is not repentant they are to be warned two or three times. They are to be confronted with the sin with one, then two or three witnesses. If they are still unrepentant, the Bible says they should be disfellowshipped from the church and given over to Satan for a season. There is good reason for this. If someone is unrepentant or living in habitual sin, if they are allowed to just continue to fellowship with those who are following Christ, they will believe that what they are doing is really okay. They may also infect others with their sin. It is better for them to find out what it is like to live in darkness for awhile, because chances are that they will come to their senses through tragedy and really come back to the Lord. But when a brother or sister in the Lord are repentant and in need of love and kindness we must "take up the towel" of kindness and mercy!

I know a man right now who is in need of being disfellowshipped from a church. I fear for his soul. He is living in sin and unrepentant. Yet the church is just ignoring him and talking behind his back. The church should be up front with him. Either put him out of the church entirely for being an unrepentant sinner -- or if he is repentant WASH HIS FEET!

I heard a story about an associate pastor of a big church in the US whose teenage daughter became pregnant outside of marriage. The senior pastor of the church demanded that the associate pastor go before the whole church and tell them what his daughter had done. Because he was being obedient to the senior pastor, he did it, but devastated his daughter. It broke the family's heart. The congregation wallowed (like a pig who rolls around in the mud) in all the details of the poor teenage girl's sin. A year later the senior pastor's daughter also

became pregnant out of wedlock. But the senior pastor did not follow his own advice and did everything in his power to cover it. It seems very easy to throw dirt into the wind but when some of it gets on us we begin to understand what it is like to need love and mercy. Jesus also taught the concept of comfort -- in this case comfort of sins removed. In 1 Cor. 5 we read the story of a man in the church who fell into the terrible sin of incest. Evidently the man was unrepentant because Paul directed the church to turn him over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh (and hopefully to the saving of his spirit). Paul did not say the man was lost and going to hell. No, he wanted him isolated from fellowship and given over to Satan's devices so that he would remember what it was like to live in darkness and perhaps come to the end of his rope, to his wit's end, and be driven back to repentance. Later, in 2 Cor. 2, Paul found the same man had become repentant and that the church had forgiven him. Satan had, indeed, brought him to despair. The lust of his flesh had been broken and he had come back repentant. And now Paul writes to the Corinthian church "... you ought rather to forgive him, lest such a one as this be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I ask you that you would confirm your love toward him". (2 Cor. 2:7-8) The church came together and comforted this man. The world gives us just the opposite picture and teaches us the wrong way to deal with these issues.

Look at how when a politician announces he is running for office, the press turns into a swarm of mosquitoes, trying to bother him and dig up anything from his past life that looks a little bit dirty. When they find it they print it in all the headlines for all to see. Even politicians and political parties do this to each other. You especially see this during election time. This world has gone crazy with slander! TV is full of talk shows featuring gossip, exposure, mockery. The wicked seem to get a thrill from destroying people, families and reputations. The more dirty the dirt, the more people like it.

This kind of thing has NO PLACE in God's church! The church ought to be different. It ought to be a house of cleansing. I suggest that if you want to restore a brother or sister -- you don't need to know all the details of how that person got dirty. Jesus didn't ask his disciples "How did you get such dirty feet?" He wanted only to clean their feet. His love for them was unconditional -- in other words, He did not love them because they had or had not committed certain sins against Him or others. We should not be asking about the dirt, we should be cleaning it off!

Often Christians want to delve into all the gory details. They come to a Christian who has dirty feet and say "I want to wash your feet but first tell me what happened. How'd they get so dirty?" This is called voyeurism in English, a need to feast on the sins of someone else. Sometimes as the person begins to tell their story the Christian will realize "Oh my, this is worse than I thought. I can't get involved in this! I can't handle it." After a few minutes of details the Christian comes to the end of the tiny bit of mercy and kindness he started out with and begins to judge the person as too evil, beyond help. Many Christians then just drop the towel and walk away. Let me tell you now -- you can't wash someone else's feet while wearing judges robes! You have to take off your self-righteous garments -- your holier-than-thou attitude -- your Pharisaical mind set -before you can do any cleansing. Like Jesus did in the passage where he washed the disciples feet, you must lay aside your garment and put on love. Off with self-righteousness, pride, thoughts that you could never stoop so low as that other person. A true Christian will have the attitude of "I don't care what you did. If you are repentant and want to hear God's Word, I'll be kind to you. I will stick by you!

Let me remind you that Jesus even washed Judas feet. Christ stooped and washed his feet with the rest of the disciples, knowing full well that Satan had already begun to put betrayal in his heart. Even a modern-day Judas can come to repentance. Such habitual sins, sins that people choose to live in day after day, such as homosexuality, lesbianism, adultery we think of sometimes as sins that have people hopelessly hooked. But Paul says of them "Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind (homosexuals), nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such WERE SOME OF YOU: but you were WASHED, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God." (1 Cor. 6:9-11) Such were some of

us -- but we had our whole bodies washed by Jesus. Everyday Jesus continues to wash out feet. If Jesus is willing to forgive, why not us?

*"And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (2 Tim. 2:24-26)*

We must be tenderhearted with everyone, because God may have mercy on them yet.

Finally, we come to the word "unity". Jesus was trying to teach us a lesson about unity. As Jesus approached Peter, the disciple drew back and said "...Lord, will you wash my feet?" Jesus answered "If I do not wash your feet, you have no part with me." Peter, if I don't wash your feet we have very little ground for fellowship or unity. Unity in a church does not come from great preaching, good programs, buildings -- it comes from taking up the towel! Think back on what Jesus did for you when he washed your feet? He wiped away your guilt, your fault, He cleansed the remnants of sin, you were made whole, clean. He put gratitude back into your heart, thankfulness, joy in your soul. He filled you with so much love that you would follow Him anywhere and do anything for Him. All you wanted to do was to be in communion and communication with Him because of all He did for you. This is the secret of unity!

When you take up the towel of mercy for a fallen, hurting brother, you encourage him by embracing him in his hurt -- by submitting in godly fear, washing away his feelings of worthlessness, anguish and despair, and by loving and caring for him. What will happen by your doing this for him? You have built a bridge. You have constructed a firm foundation for true unity and a lasting and glorious relationship between you and him. You are now one by your common experience, that is you have both acknowledged that you are washed in the water of the Word. You have not seen gratitude and friendship until you have done this. That Christian will be your friend for LIFE! He will defend you, do anything for you. He will now stand by you in your hard times just like you stood by him. Can you imagine a church full of such caring people, who refuse to hear a single dirty word about a brother, who hurt when their brother hurts, who rally around every despairing, fault-ridden brother or sister with a word of love and hope?

You may ask, "How do I find people whose feet need washing? My answer to you is: the same way you found them when you gossiped about them! Now, whenever you hear anything negative about someone, merely ask, "Who are you talking about? Name only, please!" Then go to that hurting person quickly with your mercy towel -- and start washing his feet. Tell that person, "I care about you, Jesus cares about you, and I want to pray for you -- but I don't need to know any details. I just want you to know I still love you -and I'm going to stand with you!" Jesus said "if I then, as your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet ... If you know these things, happy are you if you DO them." (Jn. 13:14, 17) Now that we "know these things" as Jesus said, we can DO THEM. I ask you -- are you willing to DO THEM? Are you ready to take up your towel of kindness in love?



# The Fruit Of The Spirit

By Sandy Simpson

## LESSON 6 – GOODNESS

### Biblical Examples Of Goodness

There are many examples in the Bible of people who had, because of their relationship with God, goodness as part of their character. We are not talking about people being basically good for the Bible says that men are basically wicked.

*Jer 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? (NIV)*

*Jer 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? (KJV)*

*Mr 10:18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No-one is good-- except God alone.*

But when a man has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and been born again of the Holy Spirit, he is changed. He then begins to show the fruit of the Spirit, one attribute of which is goodness. When men put their faith in God, His character shows through their lives in righteousness, truth and goodness.

There are two men that I want to focus on whom the Bible specifically states had goodness as part of their character. The first is Abel, son of Adam. He is called a righteous man. A righteous man is a man who is right or good.

*Heb. 11:4 By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.*

As we see from the short life of Abel, a good man is a man of obedience and faith. Abel brought a blood sacrifice that he knew God wanted. Cain did not. An obedient son is called a good son, a disobedient son is called an evil son. God saw the faith of Abel that caused him to be obedient to God. Adam and Eve, his mother and father, had disobeyed God. Abel was the first man to obey God fully. And by that faith his righteousness still speaks today. The story of Cain and Abel is a story of one who was obedient, and one who was disobedient. It is the story of one son who, when God commended him for his obedience, continued to walk with God; and one son who when disciplined by God further rebelled and became the first murderer in the history of mankind. So in this one story we have the knowledge of good and evil showing itself in one man who chose to follow God, and one who chose to follow sin. The blood of Abel crying out from the ground was ultimately answered in the sacrifice of God's only Son, Jesus Christ in His death on the cross to purchased pardon for all sinners who would place their faith in Him, just as Abel placed his faith in God.

The second man mentioned as being good is Barnabas.

*Acts 11:22-24 News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord.*

The marks of goodness in the life of Barnabas were that he was (1) joyful (2) an encourager (3) full of the Holy Spirit (4) full of faith (5) a witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As we have already studied, one of the fruit of the Spirit is joy. Barnabas was glad at what he found among the believers, the Gentiles of Antioch. Barnabas was an encourager, urging them to remain true to the Lord. This is called discipleship. No man can be called good without the Holy Spirit, and Barnabas was called good because he was full of the Spirit. He

was also full of faith. His faith overflowed in the sight of men, so much so that many placed their faith in Jesus Christ because of his witness.

Let's look at some other evidences of a good man are to be found in Proverbs and Matthew.

*Pr 12:2 A good man obtains favor from the LORD, but the LORD condemns a crafty man.*

A good man is blessed by the Lord. A crafty or devious man, one who schemes and makes plans to help only himself, is not a good man. Men's schemes will ultimately lead to judgment from the Lord. But goodness leads to God's favor.

*Pr 13:22 A good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children, but a sinner's wealth is stored up for the righteous.*

When a man takes care of his family he will be seen among men as being good. Ultimately the wealth of the crafty sinner will belong to the righteous, if not in this life then certainly in the new heaven and earth, because a good man lays up his treasure in heaven.

*Pr 14:14 The faithless will be fully repaid for their ways, and the good man rewarded for his.*

Those who have faith will be rewarded. Those who are faithless will be repaid, often right here and now. The Bible says that hypocrites have their reward in full here on earth. Those of faith often give up their reward now for a heavenly reward that will last for eternity.

*Mt 12:35 The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.*

A good way to recognize a good man is to see what comes out of his mouth. The mouth is a rudder that is impossible to steer without the help of the Holy Spirit. If a man does not have control of his tongue then the chances are pretty good that he is not in submission to the Spirit.

## **Examples Of Goodness**

Sometimes when you decide to do something good for someone else, it spreads out to many more people and will effect your own life as well.

### *Tombstone Generosity*

*A tombstone cutter was busy in his shop when his friend dropped in for a visit. The friend, while looking about the shop, noticed a headstone which had been there for several years. The inscription had been cut on it, but the words were useless, for the stone had been in storage all that time. Curious, the friend asked why. "The people who ordered it were not able to pay for it," replied the tombstone cutter. "And it stays here until they bring the money." "But what good is it doing you here?" the friend asked. "No good! No good at all!" replied the cutter with some anger. "Well, then," continued his friend, "if those folks haven't been able to pay for it yet for years -- your chances of collecting are pretty slim. Did it ever occur to you that you might place that stone where it belongs? At least it will be doing some good. It just takes up valuable room here." "That's poor business!" was the curt comment of the stonecutter. "It's never poor business to be kind to people and to go out of your way to help people who are in trouble." Having said this, the friend walked out of the shop. A month passed before he returned to that shop. He looked around the room. The stone was gone. "Well, I see you got rid of that stone," he commented. "Did they pay you for it?" "No!" replied the stonecutter. "But I placed the stone where it belongs anyhow." "That's poor business!" reminded his friend with a smile. "I know it is,"*

*replied the stonecutter. "But after your last visit here, my conscience started to torment me about it. I got to putting myself in that family's place, for I know that they haven't had the money to pay for it. Every time I came into this shop, that white stone haunted me like a ghost until finally I took it out and put it where it really belongs. Then, afterwards, when I found out how happy it made the family, I lost my head completely." "How?" "Well, yesterday when they came in here to pay me for the stone, do you know what I did? I refused the money. That's how foolish I'm getting to be." "Foolish? I wonder?" replied his friend. (From More Sermons in Stories, by Rev. William Stidger, published by Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1944, pgs. 64 & 65, submitted by Josephine Green, Dubuque, Iowa)*

Unfortunately today in our modern world being a good Samaritan is not often rewarded. Instead people are sometimes rewarded for not helping at all.

### AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?

*In 1928, a very interesting case came before the courts in the state of Massachusetts. It concerned a man who had been walking on a boat dock when suddenly he tripped over a rope and fell into the cold, deep water of an ocean bay. He came up sputtering and yelling for help and then sank again, obviously in trouble. His friends were too far away to get to him, but only a few yards away, on another dock, was a young man sprawled on a deck chair, sunbathing. The desperate man shouted "Help, I can't swim!" The young man, an excellent swimmer, only turned his head to watch as the man floundered in the water, sank, came up sputtering in total panic, and then disappeared forever. The family of the drowned man was so upset by that display of callous indifference that they sued the sunbather. They lost. The court reluctantly ruled that the man on the dock had no legal responsibility whatever to try and save the other man's life. In effect, the law agrees with Cain's presupposition: I am not my brother's keeper, and I have every legal right to mind my own business and to refuse to become involved. (Gary Inrig, Quality Friendship, page 105. Submitted by Rick Mandl, Eagle Rock Baptist Church, Los Angeles, California.)*

Remember how Abel is called a good and righteous man? Even in this story Cain is called an unrighteous man who did not care for his brother but killed him. These two brother's attitudes and actions live on even till today.

Sometimes returning good for evil can have amazing results.

### Good For Evil

*According to the Associated Press account, in September 1994, Cindy Hartman of Conway, Arkansas, walked into her house to answer the phone and was confronted by a burglar. He ripped the phone cord out of the wall and ordered her into a closet.*

*Hartman dropped to her knees and asked the burglar if she could pray for him. "I want you to know that God loves you and I forgive you," she said.*

*The burglar was amazed and apologized for what he had done. Then he yelled out the door to a woman in a pickup truck: "We've got to unload all of this. This is a Christian home and a Christian family. We can't do this to them."*

*As Hartman remained on her knees, the burglar returned furniture he had taken from her home. Then he took the bullets out of his gun, handed the gun to Hartman and walked out the door.*

*Praying for our enemies can disarm the worst of sinners.*

## TOTAL COMMITMENT

*The mother of the family was celebrating a birthday and the rest of the family was treating her to a party. When the time for the presentation of the gifts arrived, she was instructed to sit in her favorite living room chair. One by one, the father and the two older children came in from the kitchen bearing their gifts on a tray, solemnly presenting them to her as to royalty. The smallest girl, really too little to have had much of a role in the gift selection, had been left out of these joyous plans. But watching the process, she rose to the occasion. For when the others thought the party was over, she appeared from the kitchen bearing an empty tray. Approaching her mother she placed the tray on the floor, stepped upon it herself, and with a childish wiggle of joy said, "Mommy, I give you ME!" (Charles Krieg, St. Joseph's Seminary, Princeton, NJ.)*

This story is funny but it illustrates a good point. The good things we do are not to earn our way to heaven, because they cannot. The good that we think and do should be our gift to the Lord. We offer up our whole lives to the Lord Jesus Christ, a living sacrifice.

*Ro 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.*

Holy, good, righteous gifts are a sacrifice pleasing to God. We worship God with our good sacrifices, those that come out of a kind and loving heart and a love for our Lord. Holy sacrifices are out of thanksgiving for the biggest sacrifice of all, that is, Jesus death on the cross for us.

# The Fruit Of The Spirit

By Sandy Simpson

## LESSON 7 – FAITHFULNESS

### **Biblical Examples Of Faithfulness**

Many people in the Bible are great examples of faithfulness. Noah was faithful to build an ark as God had commanded him even though surely people thought he was crazy. Joshua was faithful to carry out the Lord's commands to conquer and possess Canaan. Elijah was faithful to bring God's messages even when it put him in danger of his life. Job was faithful to trust God when it seemed that God had abandoned him. Paul was faithful to spread the gospel while enduring all kinds of persecution and harm. There are many more. But probably the person we think of most when we think about faith and faithfulness is Abraham. Abram was obedient to God and left the land of his fathers to go to Canaan.

*Heb 11:8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.*

He continued in faith and God blessed him with many riches and herds. When Lot and Abraham had to split, Abraham gave Lot the first choice and Lot took the best. Abraham took his portion without protest and went and built an altar to the Lord to worship him. He was later faithful to rescue his nephew Lot from warring kings. He was faithful to ask the Lord not to destroy Sodom if only 10 righteous people could be found, which there were not. He was faithful to believe God for the promise of a son by his wife Sarah, who was Isaac.

*Heb 11:11 By faith Abraham, even though he was past age--and Sarah herself was barren--was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise.*

He was faithful to give his birthright to his second son Isaac as the Lord instructed him. He was also faithful to take him up on a mountain to sacrifice him, but the Lord having tested his faithfulness provided a ram for that offering.

*Heb. 11:17-19 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.*

Because Abraham was faithful through his lifetime, God made promises to him that he would be the father of the great nation Israel, in fact two great nations. Not only that but through his offspring that whole world would be blessed.

*Ac 3:25 And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.'*

We can all thank Abraham for the blessings that have come down to us because of his faithfulness.

### **Stories Of Faithfulness**

### Charles Spurgeon – Faithful In The Small Things

*Charles Spurgeon preached to thousands in London each Lord's Day, yet he started his ministry by passing out tracts and teaching a Sunday school class as a teenager. When he began to give short messages to the Sunday school, God blessed his ministry of the Word. He was invited to preach in out of the way places in the country side, and he used every opportunity to honor the Lord. He was faithful in the small things, and God trusted him with the greater things. "I am perfectly sure," Spurgeon said, "that, if I had not been willing to preach to those small gatherings of people in small country places, I should never have had the privilege of preaching to thousands of men and women in large buildings all over the land. Remember our Lord's rule, "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Wycliffe Handbook of Preaching & Preachers, W. Wiersbe, p. 221)*

### DVBS – Faithful In The Long Haul

*Norman Geisler, as a child, went to a VBS because he was invited by some neighbor children. He went back to the same church for Sunday School classes for 400 Sundays. Each week he was faithfully picked up by a bus driver. Week after week he attended church, but never made a commitment to Christ. Finally, during his senior year in High School, after being picked up for church over 400 times, he did commit his life to Christ. What if that bus driver had given up on Geisler on the 395th trip? What if the bus driver had said, "This kid is going nowhere spiritually, why waste any more time on him?" (God Came Near, Max Lucado, Multnomah Press, 1987, p. 133)*

### Robert Moffat – Faithful To Preach The Gospel

*An elderly preacher was rebuked by one of his deacons one Sunday morning before the service. "Pastor," said the man, "something must be wrong with your preaching and your work. There's been only one person added to the church in a whole year, and he's just a boy."*

*The minister listened, his eyes moistening and his thin hand trembling. "I feel it all," he replied, "but God knows I've tried to do my duty." On that day the minister's heart was heavy as he stood before his flock. As he finished the message, he felt a strong inclination to resign.*

*After everyone else had left, that one boy came to him and asked, "Do you think if I worked hard for an education, I could become a preacher—perhaps a missionary?"*

*Again tears welled up in the minister's eyes. "Ah, this heals the ache I feel," he said. "Robert, I see the Divine hand now. May God bless you, my boy. Yes, I think you will become a preacher."*

*Many years later an aged missionary returned to London from Africa. His name was spoken with reverence. Nobles invited him to their homes. He had added many souls to the church of Jesus Christ, reaching even some of Africa's most savage chiefs. His name was Robert Moffat, the same Robert who years before had spoken to the pastor that Sunday morning in the old Scottish church.*

*Lord, help us to be faithful. Then give us the grace to leave the results to you.*

### The Starfish – Faithful To Care About Even One

*I recently read about an old man, walking the beach at dawn, who noticed a young man ahead of him picking up starfish and flinging them into the sea. Catching up with the youth, he asked what he was doing. The answer was that the stranded starfish would die if left in the morning sun.*

*'But the beach goes on for miles and miles, and there are millions of starfish,' countered the man. 'How can your effort make any difference?'*

*The young man looked at the starfish in his hand and then threw it to safety in the waves. 'It makes a difference to this one,' he said.'* (Hugh Duncan, Leadership Journal)

## **Faithful To One Master Only**

Faith is the victory that overcomes the world. That is a famous song. It is based on a couple of verses in the Bible.

*1 Jo 5:4-5 for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.*

But faith cannot be split between the things of this world and God. If it is, then it is not really faith in God alone. By splitting our faith between God and money, we are saying to God, "I don't trust you to take care of my needs."

*Lu 16:13 "No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other You cannot serve both God and Money.*

God has promised to take care of those who trust Him, have faith in Him, just like He takes care of everything else. God created this universe, He sustains every atom of this universe, and He sent His only Son to die for all men.

*Col. 1: 16-20 For by him all things were created - things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the first born from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

Since God has done it all and continues to do it all, we ought to place all our trust in Him. He takes care of His creation, why can't we trust Him to take care of His creatures?

*Luke 12:22-31 Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, Why do you worry about the rest? "Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink, - do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.*

Don't be double minded. A double minded person is unstable in all his ways.

*James 1:5-8 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind That man should not think he will receive anything from the*

*Lord,- he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.*

The Lord wants our complete trust in Him. We need to choose to trust in the Lord fully. Choosing to have one foot in the world and one foot in Christ will not work either. Let me give you some examples of the kind of trust the Lord wants us to have.

### Two Rowboats

Imagine that you are out in the middle of a lake and there are two rowboats and you are standing with one foot in each boat. One boat, however, is filled with holes and is sinking fast. It is obvious that unless you do something you will soon be in the lake. The boat with the holes represents ourselves with all of the leaks caused by sin. The boat without holes represents Christ. It should be obvious that with one foot in each boat we shall end up in the same place that we would have ended up in we had had both feet in the boat marked "self." The only safe place to be is to have both feet firmly planted in the boat marked Christ.

### The Cliff

Or to change the picture,, suppose that you were trying to cross from one cliff to another one which is a hundred feet away. It is five thousand feet down to the rocks below. You have, however, a one inch thick piece of rope which is capable of holding up several tons. There is a difficulty though, for you have only fifty feet of rope. I say, "Do not worry! I have fifty feet of thread. We can tie my thread to your rope and then tie that to trees on either cliff and then you can go across." You decline my offer and I respond, "What is the matter? Do you not trust the rope?" "Yes, you say, "I trust the rope but I do not trust the thread." Then let's change the story and make it ninety feet of rope and only ten feet of thread. You're still not comfortable. Then suppose we make it ninety-nine feet of rope and only one foot of thread. One inch of thread? You see, if you have one inch of thread, you will be just as dead on the rocks below as if you tried to cross on a hundred feet of thread. The rope obviously represents what Christ has done and the thread represents what we have done.

We can do nothing to save ourselves and if we trust in works or the things of this world, we will still die. We must trust in Christ alone.

We need to recognize that it is only by the grace of God that we are saved. When we realize that we also realize what wretched sinners we are. This realization almost always brings us to repentance. Then we must build up our faith in Christ. The indwelling Holy Spirit will help us with that. But we must not go back to trusting in the things of this world or our own righteousness to save us. Our righteousness is like filthy rags to God. We must allow God to give us new white clothes and then we must keep them from being soiled by the world.

God requires that we have faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God.

*Heb 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

We must believe and continue to believe.

*Re 21:7 He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.*

God sent His Son to die for our sins. We cannot do anything to buy that salvation. It is through Jesus Christ alone. But God does expect us to have one thing ... faith!

*Faith is the victory! Faith is the victory!  
O glorious victory, that overcomes the world.*



# The Fruit Of The Spirit

By Sandy Simpson

## LESSON 8 – GENTLENESS

### Biblical Examples Of Gentleness

*1 Thes. 2:6-8 We were **not looking for praise from men**, not from you or anyone else. As **apostles of Christ** we could have been a burden to you, but **we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children**. **We loved you so much** that we were **delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well**, because **you had become so dear to us**.*

Paul is mentioned in the Word as being an example of gentleness. Now we don't normally think of Paul as being gentle, as certainly his character before he was saved was the opposite of gentleness. He was a man who delighted in persecuting Christians and even stood by as Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, was stoned to death. But when Jesus Christ reached out and saved him on the road to Damascus, Paul began to be a changed man. That is what a relationship with Jesus Christ and believing in Him as your Savior and Lord will do for you. It will change you. I am not the same person I was when I was 21, and neither is anyone else who has been saved. The indwelling Holy Spirit changes the believer!

To be gentle is defined in the dictionary as: kindly, amiable, mild not severe, rough or violent, honorable, respectable, polite, refined, noble. But we also have a definition of what gentle means in the verses we just read about the apostles.

(1) “**Not looking for praise from men**“. Those who are gentle do not look for fame and applause for what they say and do. They do what they do because they “do it unto the Lord“.

*1 Pet. 4:11 If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.*

Any true believer knows that it is God to whom belongs all the praise. When we serve the Lord, we truly serve Him and not ourselves. This lets out most of the preachers on TV who make a big show but do not have a gentle spirit that does not look for praise from men. The kind of attitude of many modern preachers today does not reflect the fruit of the Spirit that was in the original apostles.

(2) “**We were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children.**” Gentleness is illustrated most commonly and most accurately by the picture of a mother caring for her children. A mother does not throw her young children at the wall, does not allow them to go out and play in the street, does not ignore their needs. She is patient with them, she feeds them, she clothes them, she teaches them, she holds them when they cry and laughs with them when they are happy. God is the perfect picture of gentleness because God does the same things for His children that a good mother does for her children. The apostles cared for those they brought the gospel to. They did this by being patient to explain fully the Gospel of Jesus Christ to them, to feed them the Word of God, to cloth them in acts of righteousness, to teach them sound doctrine, and to be there with them to share in their joys and sorrows.

(3) “**We loved you so much**“. Gentleness as a fruit of the Spirit comes from a heart full of love. We are told to love the brethren, those who belong to the body of Christ.

*1Pe 1:22 Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.*

Sometimes it is very difficult to love our brothers and sisters in Christ. But we are told to treat them with gentleness, even when they stray from the truth. We are to pull them from the fire and save them even as they are falling with gentleness. But the Lord goes further telling us that we are to even love our enemies.

*Lu 6:35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.*

The reason we are to love our enemies is because even God is kind to the wicked by giving them every chance to repent and turn to Him. We ought to do the same keeping in mind that God is not willing that any should perish but all come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. When we have the fruit of gentleness in our lives we turn insults and hatred into love. We react in a gentle way toward those who hate us.

(4) ***“delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well”*** As gentle servants of God we should be happily sharing the Gospel to everyone. That is the mark of a true believer. But we don't stop there. We also share our lives with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We uphold one another in prayer, we help each other with our needs, we cry with those who cry and laugh with those who laugh, we sharpen one another in the things of the Lord. We don't tear one another down and gossip behind people's backs. We don't ignore people's needs when they are hurting. We have true compassion for them and our actions come out in gentleness.

(5) ***“you had become so dear to us.”*** Anything that is dear or precious to you, you will treat with gentleness. If you just bought a new tape player, you don't go out and throw it against the wall. If your children borrow it you are careful to tell them not to drop it or spill Coke on it. When something is dear to us we treat it with gentleness. It should also be that way with our brothers in Christ. They should be dear to us so that we don't treat them violently, or harshly, or with anger, but we treat them as though they are a prized possession. Gentleness shows itself in the way we treat others. If we love them and consider them to be of value, we will treat them the same way God treats us.

## Stories Of Gentleness

### The Fishtank

*At their school carnival, our kids won four free goldfish (lucky us!), so out I went Saturday morning to find an aquarium. The first few I priced ranged from \$40 to \$70. Then I spotted it--right in the aisle: a discarded 10-gallon display tank, complete with gravel and filter--for a mere five bucks. Sold! Of course, it was nasty dirty, but the savings made the two hours of clean-up a breeze.*

*Those four new fish looked great in their new home, at least for the first day. But by Sunday one had died. Too bad, but three remained. Monday morning revealed a second casualty, and by Monday night a third goldfish had gone belly up. We called in an expert, a member of our church who has a 30-gallon tank. It didn't take him long to discover the problem: I had washed the tank with soap, an absolute no-no. My uninformed efforts had destroyed the very lives I was trying to protect. Sometimes in our zeal to clean up our own lives or the lives of others, we unfortunately use "killer soaps"--condemnation, criticism, nagging, fits of temper. We think we're doing right, but our harsh, self-righteous treatment is more than they can bear.*

This is a good story to illustrate that we need to be careful to always be gentle in our dealings with people. This does not mean that we do not stand up for the truth, or even separate ourselves from false teaching warning others to stay away. But we treat people with gentleness keeping in mind that God is looking for repentance from them. Sometimes this involves being careful not to offend someone because it may push them further

away from the truth. Sometimes it means being pretty blunt with them, not in a harsh way, but in a way that will challenge them to return to the Lord. John the Baptist called the Pharisees “snakes” as they were coming to be baptized by John, but he did so to challenge them to repent instead of doing it for a show to look holy. We think what he did was not loving but he knew what kind of people they were and realized that they needed to know who they were, which was hypocrites. What he said did not hurt them but I believe the because he challenged them to truly repent a few of them did later on. We must always balance two things in our walk with Christ ... telling the truth and doing it with gentleness. James S. Hewett said: *“Tact is the art of making a point without making an enemy.”* As we study the character and teaching of the apostles we can see good examples of how this plays out in real life. Lao-Tse said: *“I have three precious things which I hold fast and prize. The first is gentleness; the second is frugality; the third is humility, which keeps me from putting myself before others. Be gentle and you can be bold; be frugal and you can be liberal; avoid putting yourself before others, and you can become a leader among men.”* Charles Haddon Spurgeon also wrote: *While preaching on John 13:14, the duty of disciples to wash one another's feet, Mr. Finlayson of Helmsdale observed, "One way in which disciples wash one another's feet is by reproofing one another. But the reproof must not be couched in angry words, so as to destroy the effect nor in tame, so as to fail of effect. Just as in washing a brother's feet, you must not use boiling water to scald, nor frozen water to freeze them."* This is a good example of how to balance rebuke and reproof when trying to help brothers in the Lord or enemies alike. *1Pe 3:15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. **But do this with gentleness and respect,***

## **No Substitutes**

*A woman was suffering from depression, so her concerned husband took her to a psychiatrist. The doctor listened to the couple talk about their relationships, and then said, "The treatment I prescribe is really quite simple." With that he went over to the man's wife, gathered her up in his arms, and gave her a big kiss. He then stepped back and looked at the woman's glowing face and broad smile. Turning to the woman's husband, he said, "See! That's all she needs to put new life back into her." Expressionless, the husband said, "OK, Doc, I can bring her in on Tuesdays and Thursdays."*

This amusing story is to illustrate that there is really no substitute for love and caring. As we have already learned love is evidenced in gentleness. When we care for those we love we will be concerned for their needs, even above our own. This should be the case in marriage relationships as well as with our children, our friends, our brothers and sisters in Christ, and even those who hate us.

## **Conclusion**

As Christians the fruit of the Spirit will come out in our lives, and one of those fruits is gentleness. We are to clothe ourselves in the fruit of the Spirit. It is a conscious choice we make to submit ourselves to Christ and to serve Him and His purposes in our lives rather than giving in to our carnal nature.

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

If we are living in the Spirit in the love of Christ, gentleness will be evident to everyone.

*Php 4:5 **Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.***

# The Fruit Of The Spirit

By Sandy Simpson

## LESSON 9 – SELF-CONTROL

### Biblical Examples Of Self-control

Daniel is one of many good examples from the Bible of a man who was self-controlled. He had many opportunities to act in a disorderly or impatient way, but he always showed self-control. When he was a young man he could have eaten like a glutton on the king's food, but he was self-controlled and followed the Law of Moses. Because of his stand for what he believed in he and his friends were put into service to the king himself.

*Dan. 1:19-20 The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.*

When Nebuchadnezzar asked Daniel to interpret his dreams, Daniel never took personal credit for the interpretations but always gave the full glory to God.

*Dan. 2:27-28 Daniel replied, "No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come.*

Later in the kingdom of Darius the administrators and the satraps devised a plot to have Daniel killed by having Darius sign a law that prevented anyone from praying to any other god or man except himself for thirty days. Daniel could have become angry and gone to the king, but instead he continued his daily prayers for Israel.

*Daniel 6:10-11 Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened towards Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help.*

We all know how God delivered Daniel from the lion's den. God delivered Daniel because he was a faithful servant and to show that He alone was the one true God to the rulers of Persia. Because of Daniel's self-control in the face of impossible circumstances, death and lions God did miraculous things through him.

The Bible teaches self-control throughout.

*Pr 25:28 Like a city whose walls are broken down is **a man who lacks self-control.***

*Pr 29:11 A fool gives full vent to his anger, **but a wise man keeps himself under control.***

This teaching continues into the New Testament Gentile church. Christians were to control their fleshly lusts.

*1Th 4:4 that each of you should **learn to control his own body** in a way that is holy and honourable,*

*Tit 2:12 It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to **live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,***

Leaders in the church were to be men of self-control.

*1Ti 3:2-3 Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, **self-controlled**, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.*

The qualities of the true believer included self-control.

*2Pe 1:5-8 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, **self-control**; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Self-control is God's method to keep us alert to deception.

*1Th 5:6 So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let **us be alert and self-controlled**.*

*1Pe 5:8 **Be self-controlled and alert**. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*

*Self-control also prepares us for action, for witness.*

*1Pe 1:13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action; **be self-controlled**; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

*Self-control allows us to be ready for the return of Christ and to be able to pray with a clear head. In a moment we will read verses that totally destroy the false doctrine taught in many churches today that you must quit praying to receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit teaches us to have a clear mind and have self-control, not to get slain in the spirit, roll around on the floor, and make animal noises.*

*1Pe 4:7 The end of all things is near. Therefore **be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray**.*

*1Co 14:33 For **God is not a God of disorder but of peace**. As in all the congregations of the saints,*

*Jas 3:16 For **where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder** and every evil practice.*

What are we to do with those Christians who are disorderly, not under self-control?

*2Th 3:6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye **withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly**, and not after the tradition which he received from us.*

We know that in the last days, which we are now in, it will be a time without self-control.

*2Ti 3:1-5 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, **without self-control**, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God -- having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.*

We are to be self-controlled, having nothing to do with those who are not self-controlled. This is because those who practice no self-control tend to infect those who have a desire to live godly lives of self-control. Pretty soon everyone is out of control and God is out of the picture.

### **Stories Of Self- Control**

*Marshmallow Experiment*

*The most important thing about emotional self-control is the ability to delay immediate gratification or desires in favor of reaching a goal in the future. The importance of this fact was shown in an experiment begun in the 1960s by psychologist Walter Mischel at a preschool on the Stanford University campus. Children were told that they could have a single treat, such as a marshmallow, right now. However, if they would wait while the experimenter ran an errand, they could have two marshmallows. Some preschoolers grabbed the marshmallow immediately, but others were able to wait what, for them, must have seemed an endless 20 minutes. It is hard for those who chose to wait so in their struggle, they covered their eyes so they wouldn't see the temptation, rested their heads on their arms, talked to themselves, sang, even tried to sleep. When the experimenter returned they were rewarded with two marshmallows. The interesting part of this experiment came in the follow-up. The children who as 4-year-olds had been able to wait for the two marshmallows were, when they were older children, still able to delay immediate gratification or fulfillment of desires in pursuing their goals. They were more able to deal with social life and were more bold and self-assertive, and better able to cope with life's frustrations. In contrast, the kids who grabbed the one marshmallow were as older children more likely to be stubborn, unable to make up their minds or indecisive, and stressed out.*

Unfortunately we are teaching our children, in fact our whole world today is being taught through TV, movies, music, books, magazines that self-control is something that is undesirable. The world says that you can be much more free if you would just lose your self-control. This has even entered the church, especially with regards to sainthood where it is being taught that you can only have the Holy Spirit if you lose your self-control. But self-control is actually the very thing that brings freedom.

### *Passions Forge Their Fetters*

*British statesman Edmund Burke argued, "men are able to be free only as they are able to put chains on their own appetites. Society cannot exist unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere, and the less of it there is within people, the more there has to be in society. It is an eternal principle of things that men who have no self-control minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters (their lack of self-control makes the chains that bind them).*

I know many of you have been to school. I suppose you remember having to try to arrange your schedule to get your homework and special projects done, as well as all the other activities. This was where you learned about self-control. You could let everything go till the last second, but if you did it became much more painful and you worried about it the whole time until you got it done. One day you decided to get your work done ahead of time and you found out that not only did you have free time on your hands, but you didn't have the worry anymore either.

Self-control also goes over into the area of appetite. I am talking about appetite not just for food but everything in life. If we let our appetites get the best of us, we lose freedom. If we eat too much food we get fat and are not able to do some things we used to do when we were slim.

### *You Can't Run the Country If You Can't Run Yourself*

*During his term as President of the U.S., Lyndon Johnson was somewhat overweight. One day his wife challenged him with this blunt observation: "You can't run the country if you can't run yourself." Respecting Mrs. Johnson's wise observation, the President lost 23 pounds.*

If we take drugs, we get hooked and sick. It even goes for small things. If women wear too much makeup, people get used to seeing them that way and they find they can no longer go without it. If young people start buying expensive clothes then they naturally start hanging out with kids who also buy expensive clothes. The problem is that now they have lost the freedom to wear cheap clothes because they will lose their friends.

This also applies to spiritual things. If we get an appetite for dirty movies where there is sex, filthy language, violence, we soon find ourselves thinking more about those things than about God and His Word. Those images color our whole life and the enemy is able to use them to tempt us to sin. If we get an appetite to listen to and spread gossip about people pretty soon that gossip turns around and hurts us. We lose our witness and we get critical towards other people, and soon our relationship with the Lord suffers. We find that we cannot forgive others, and so how can we expect the Lord to forgive us?

## **Conclusion**

Self-control is so important in the life of the believer, yet today our society and even the church are not doing very well in that department. Yet it is a fruit of the Spirit, and if we do not have self-control we are not Spirit-controlled but rather controlled by the world, the flesh and the devil. I believe this is one of the major battlefields of the enemy in the life of Christians. May we seek to have self-control in our lives, to live them not for our self-gratification but for the glory of God!