

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT – FAITH UNITED MILTON SUMMER 2020 WORSHIP SERIES

Based on Galatians 5:22-25

INTRODUCTION:

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” [Galatians 5: 22-25 (NIV)]

In the Galatians passage, “the Greek word translated as ‘fruit’ refers to the natural product of a living thing. Paul used ‘fruit’ to help us understand the product of the Holy Spirit, who lives inside every believer. The fruit of the Spirit is produced by the Spirit, not by the Christian. The Greek word is singular, showing that ‘fruit’ is a unified whole, not independent characteristics. As we grow, all the characteristics of Christ will be manifested in our lives.” [3]

A. B. Simpson summarized the Fruit of the Spirit this way:

Love is the summation of the other eight virtues;

Joy is love exulting;

Peace is love reposing;

Longsuffering is love enduring;

Gentleness is love refined;

Goodness is love in action;

Faithfulness is love confiding;

Meekness is love with bowed head;

Temperance is true self-love.

“The nine fruits listed here are a cluster describing the evidence of the life of Christ within us. The fruit is singular here because it is the outcropping of one’s life within. The fruit represents what we are rather than what we do. Here we are reintroduced to the principle of being before doing. What we do is determined by who, or whose, we really are!” [4]

For each of the Sunday worship devotions we are adding a link to a video series designed for kids: “Douglas Talks”. The videos are all fairly short (about 5 minutes each) and because they are written for children, the messages are simple and straight to the point.

LOVE: July 5

OPENING PRAYER:

Creator God, we come today grateful for the gentle breezes of summer and secure in the faith that we live surrounded by your love.

We come here today professing a simple faith:

You are God, and in you, all things are possible. Amen

*By Deborah Ambridge Fisher, Forest Hill United Church, Fredericton, N.B.
The Gathering, Pentecost 1 2020. Used with permission.*

SCRIPTURE: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have 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 do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, 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 completeness comes, what is in part 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 the ways of childhood behind me. For now, we see only a 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.

REFLECTION: The greatest of these is love

Video: "Douglas talks about love" – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rqC21JQBcal>

The first three fruit of the spirit describe the Christian's attitude toward God: love, joy, and peace. Of these, love is the most important. In the scripture passage from Paul's letter to the Corinthians, it is clear that without love we are nothing.

The word translated as "love" here is *agape*, God's own love. This is the highest level of love, the kind that always seeks the other's highest good. It is the same word we found back in the [John 3:16](#) statement that "God so loved the world."

Our understanding of love comes from God: "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). But once we understand this love, we are commanded to emulate it. The greatest commandments are: love God and love your neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40). *Agape* love is beyond us as mere humans, but when the Holy Spirit comes, he changes and enables us: "God

has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." (Romans 5:5)

Love is first of all a supreme devotion to God. Love is a God-given passion to honour the Creator, and to seek the highest welfare for every human being. Love is not simply a warm feeling; it is instead an attitude which reveals itself in action. Real love means "to seek the best for another person, regardless of how the other person treats us."

We can demonstrate *agape* love by helping others even when it's not convenient; by giving when it hurts; by devoting energy to the welfare of others rather than to our own welfare. We can demonstrate love by absorbing hurts from others without complaining. True Christian love will never seek anything but the highest and the best good for the object of that love. When Aristotle wrote of love, he said that only those who are deserving of love can be loved, but *agape* love is much more far-reaching than merely showing respect to those who deserve it.

Agape love is a choice, not a feeling. It deliberately expresses itself in loving ways and always seeks the welfare of others. Biblical love is dependent on the giver's character, not emotion... Love chooses to set aside one's own preferences, desires, and sometimes even needs, to put the other person first.

LISTEN:

In Christ Alone - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjiiF83q7G0>

CLOSING PRAYER:

May the Good Shepherd lead you and equip you.
May the church surround you in love.
Abundant life is yours, and yours to share.
Do so, in the name of our Creator, Christ, and Spirit.
Amen.

*By Elaine Bidgood Sveet, First Lutheran, Rugby & Leeds, North Dakota
The Gathering, Pentecost 1 2019. Used with permission.*

JOY: July 12

OPENING PRAYER:

Gracious God, who creates, sustains and redeems all life, we come seeking your disturbing presence and comforting peace. We praise you for the joy of being your people. May your Spirit be with us and move within us, in this time of worship. Give us hearts that hear your word and minds that are open to the transforming power of your love.
Amen

*By Ryan McNally, St. Mark's United Church, Cannifton, Ontario.
From The Gathering, Pentecost 1 2020. Used with permission.*

SCRIPTURE: 1 Peter 1: 3-9

Praise to God for a Living Hope

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 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, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

REFLECTION: Joy is love exulting

Video: Douglas talks about joy – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UQwHnmRBSHU>

Joy is the second of three graces that describe the Christian experience in relation to God: love, joy, and peace – or gladness, delight, and calmness.

Joy (*Greek, chara*) is a deep inner radiance of the soul, or gladness, resulting from the knowledge that God is with us at all times, whether good or bad. It is a condition of inner satisfaction, an untouchable joy that comes from knowing Christ and walking with him. Joy is not a pleasure due to favourable circumstances, nor is it a happiness that comes from having lots of earthly things. Joy is a delightful result that comes from knowing that God is always with us.

Joy is not something we seek, but an experience of gladness that comes to us in God himself. When God is the source of our joy, then we aren't constantly seeking outward experiences and people to bring us happiness, but we are finding happiness in God himself.

This is both an individual and community expression of the Holy Spirit's presence. Paul exhorts us: "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 5:19-20)

We also read of Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail, "praying and singing hymns to God" at midnight (Acts 16:25). This is an expression of joy in the heart, even in the worst of circumstances.

LISTEN: I've Got The Joy, Joy, Joy Down In My Heart

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z29h7HUcJus>

CLOSING PRAYER:

And may God who brought us into being
to care for creation and one another
bless us as we leave:
may we be blessed in the air we breathe,
the relationships we nurture,
and the acts through which love is shared,
that God's blessing, light, and love
will be known by all.
Go in joy,
blessed to be a blessing.

*By Bob Root, Peterborough, Ont.
The Gathering, Pentecost 1 2019. Used with permission.*

PEACE: July 19

OPENING PRAYER:

Holy God, here we are,
Ready to celebrate this day!
Open our minds to possibility.
Open our hearts to love freely.
Work through us, we pray.
Amen.

*By Jamie Millter, First United Church, Dryden.], Ontario.
The Gathering, Pentecost 1 2020. Used with permission.*

SCRIPTURE: 1 Corinthians 2:9-16 The Message (MSG)

We, of course, have plenty of wisdom to pass on to you once you get your feet on firm spiritual ground, but it's not popular wisdom, the fashionable wisdom of high-priced experts that will be out-of-date in a year or so. God's wisdom is something mysterious that goes deep into the interior of his purposes. You don't find it lying around on the surface. It's not the latest message, but more like the oldest – what God determined as the way to bring out his best in us, long before we ever arrived on the scene. The experts of our day haven't a clue about what this eternal plan is. If they had, they wouldn't have killed the Master of the God-designed life on a cross. That's why we have this Scripture text:

No one's ever seen or heard anything like this,
Never so much as imagined anything quite like it—
What God has arranged for those who love him.
But you've seen and heard it because God by his Spirit has brought it all out into the open before you.

The Spirit, not content to flit around on the surface, dives into the depths of God, and brings out what God planned all along. Whoever knows what you're thinking and planning except you yourself? The same with God – except that he not only knows what he's thinking, but he

lets us in on it. God offers a full report on the gifts of life and salvation that he is giving us. We don't have to rely on the world's guesses and opinions. We didn't learn this by reading books or going to school; we learned it from God, who taught us person-to-person through Jesus, and we're passing it on to you in the same firsthand, personal way.

The unspiritual self, just as it is by nature, can't receive the gifts of God's Spirit. There's no capacity for them. They seem like so much silliness. Spirit can be known only by spirit – God's Spirit and our spirits in open communion. Spiritually alive, we have access to everything God's Spirit is doing, and can't be judged by unspiritual critics. Isaiah's question, "Is there anyone around who knows God's Spirit, anyone who knows what he is doing?" has been answered: Christ knows, and we have Christ's Spirit.

REFLECTION: Peace is love reposing

Video: Douglas talks about peace – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vPv4MqtpfNM>

Peace is the third of the three fruit of the Spirit that describes the Christian attitude toward God. Peace (*Greek, eirene*) is the rest and calmness that result from a harmonized relationship between the human soul and God.

The Holy Spirit brings inner peace, which can exist in the midst of outward conflict. This peace flows from an implicit faith, a trust in God, that he will help us handle all the problems. And this faith itself is augmented by the Holy Spirit, who introduces us to more and more of the depths of God.

There was a sister in London, who, during World War II – when the city was being bombed every night – seemed to be calm and altogether undisturbed. Someone asked her one day how she remained so calm and how she could sleep at night, knowing it was almost certain the city would be bombed sometime during the night. She said, "My heavenly Father never sleeps; He always watches over His children. So, I kneel down beside my bed before I retire for the night, and commend my life to God in prayer. I know He is always watching, and so I lie down and go to sleep. After all, there is no use the two of us stay awake!" It is that kind of confidence in our heavenly Father's care that demonstrates the peace of God.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." (John 14:27)

LISTEN: Peace

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uW6xcmqfiY4>

CLOSING PRAYER:

In the name of the Creator, Spirit,
and Only Begotten,
go in peace to be who you really are,
to do what you were gifted to do.
Fulfill your destiny as
the Beloved Child of God you are.
God bless you! Amen.

*By Jani Francis, St. Andrew's U.C., Indian Head, Sask.
The Gathering, Pentecost 1 2019. Used with permission.*

PATIENCE: July 26

OPENING PRAYER:

This is the day of new beginnings, a day for starting out again – the first day of the week and the day we set aside to worship you, Holy God. We open not only our hearts to you today, O Lord ; to you, we give our lives. Help us with that intention. Bind us to you, so that we do not stray.

This we ask in Christ's name. Amen

*By Kate Gregory, Belwood Metz Presbyterian Church, Belwood, Ontario
The Gathering, Pentecost 1 2019. Used with permission.*

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 12: 1-3

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

REFLECTION: Longsuffering is love enduring

Video: Douglas talks about patience – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgovFZUEORI>

The second set of three “fruit of the Spirit” describes the conduct of a Christian toward other people and includes patience (forbearance / longsuffering), kindness, and goodness. Forbearance and longsuffering are older terms that describe qualities included in our English word “patience”.

Patience is the quality of self-restraint which does not quickly retaliate even in the midst of provocation. It is a quality that most of us wish we had more of – the ability to absorb irritating things (like slowpoke drivers on the highway, and neighbours who let their dogs bark all night) – without becoming paralyzed. A longsuffering person does not have a quick temper, or as we say sometimes, a short fuse. Jesus left us an example: “When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.” (1Peter2:23)

There's a natural kind of patience that comes with age and experience. As we get older, we're not so anxious about things, because we've discovered that some things take time and can't be hurried. And that's a good thing. But there is a Holy Spirit fruit of patience that comes from a trust in God that he will bring something to pass when he's ready. Patience is a product of a maturing faith, and comes from walking closely with the Holy Spirit.

LISTEN: To Act Justly, Love Mercy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yb1HeJoSmT0>

CLOSING PRAYER:

Let us be joyful in hope!

Let us be patient in affliction!

Let us be faithful in prayer!

For this is our calling as the body of Jesus Christ.

*By Kate Crawford, Huron Shores U.C., Grand Bend, Ont.
The Gathering, Pentecost 1 2019. Used with permission.*

KINDNESS: Aug. 2

OPENING PRAYER:

God of Grace, we come with all we have, bodies, souls, minds, all here to worship you. We have come for a glimpse of your kingdom of kindness – a world where love rules over all, a world where enemies embrace and distinctions between enemies and friends evaporate in the light of your love. We dedicate this worship to you and to your kingdom come.

Amen

*By Anita Rowland, Monticello United Church, Grand Valley, Ontario.
The Gathering, Pentecost 1 2019. Used with permission.*

SCRIPTURE: Colossians 3: 12-17

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

REFLECTION: Gentleness is love refined

Video: Douglas talks about kindness – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3FTiWQ9Ihnw>

The second category in the “fruit of the Spirit” listing describes the conduct of a Christian toward other people and includes patience (forbearance / longsuffering), kindness, and goodness. Kindness, or gentleness, is a grace that describes Christian attitude toward others.

"Kindness" (NIV, NRSV), "gentleness" (KJV) is *chrēstotēs*, with the basic idea of “usefulness, helpfulness.” In this case, it means the quality of being helpful or beneficial and generous. The word also has the sense of moral goodness and integrity. The New Testament scriptures focus on four facets of kindness: friendliness, compassion, helpfulness, and forbearance.

The characteristics of “kindness” and “goodness” are closely related. Together they present the picture of one who not only possesses moral goodness and integrity, but also generously expresses it in the way they act toward others. Kindness is thoughtful consideration, which leads to courteous and kindly action. It is the act of being friendly, sympathetic, and polite. It is the opposite of being rude and thoughtless.

“Kindness” is foundation for the golden rule of treating others as we expect them to treat us. An unknown writer once said, “I expect to pass through life but once; if therefore, there be any kindness I can show, or any good thing I can do to any fellow being, let me do it now, for I shall not pass this way again.”

Our model for acting with kindness towards others, is God's friendly seeking us out, putting aside past hurts to restore friendship. We reflect his kindness, “.. for you have tasted the kindness of the Lord” (1 Peter 2:3). Our future also is secured by God's friendship, “that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:7).

LISTEN: What a friend we have in Jesus

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8SCorW9r_Is

CLOSING PRAYER:

Jesus has met us in worship this morning.

We go forth to meet Jesus in those we encounter each day.

God's grace enfolded us in worship this morning.

We go forth to proclaim that grace in all we do and say.

The Spirit has guided us in worship this morning.

We go forth equipped by the Spirit, ready to exercise our calling.

*By Gord Dunbar, Kincardine P.C., Kincardine, Ont.
The Gathering, Pentecost 1 2019. Used with permission.*

GOODNESS: Aug. 9

OPENING PRAYER:

We offer you, O God, our whole selves: our flawed and quirky, incomplete but striving selves. Awaken us to discover the unique service you've placed into our lives. Encourage us to accept the opportunities for helping and healing that lie before us. Thank you for accepting us, just as we are, and using us to do your will in the world. Amen.

*By Gill Le Fevre, Wilton Memorial United Church, Oakville, Ontario.
The Gathering, Pentecost 1 2020. Used with permission.*

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5: 43-48

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

REFLECTION: Goodness is love in action

Video: Douglas talks about goodness – [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= WtPRKPJvno](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WtPRKPJvno)

Goodness is the third grace in this second list of the "fruit of the Spirit" that describes the conduct of a Christian toward other people and includes patience, kindness, and goodness.

Goodness is the generosity and benevolence which causes one to do helpful things for others. It includes helping with the chores when an accident occurs and taking a meal when someone is sick. We are to follow the example of the Lord Jesus who continually "went about doing good" ([Acts 10:38](#)).

The qualities of longsuffering, kindness, and goodness are traits that make a person attractive to others. We cannot do much about the body we were born with. We can trim it and paint it, but it still looks pretty much like the original. However, we can be as attractive as we want to be inwardly. We can exude kindness and goodness in any amount we choose. We may not be able to control our outward looks, but we can control the attractiveness of our character.

Goodness is closely allied with kindness, the difference being that "goodness" is the more all-embracing quality, describing one's character. Goodness does not exist apart from concrete expression. After extolling God's grace, Paul tells us: "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Ephesians 2:10)

LISTEN: Amazing Grace

The Tenors and Natalie Grant - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5fW3rGI93Mg>

CLOSING PRAYER:

Go out in Jesus' name with ready hands
to bring God's kingdom into this world.
Go out to bring love and justice
into a world of hurt and pain,
knowing that God is with us always.
Amen.

*By Fern Gibbard, Penticton U.C., Penticton, B.C.
The Gathering, Pentecost 1 2020. Used with permission.*

FAITHFULNESS: Aug. 16

OPENING PRAYER:

O God, you have been with us in the past and you will guide us into the future. We give you thanks for the lives we have been given, with all of their blessings and challenges. We give you thanks for the life of this community of your people. We pray that we will be attentive to your call in the days and weeks and years to come, the sunny times and the stormy times. Help us to learn your ways and grow more faithful to you in all times.
Amen

*By Jean Leckie, Hearth Lake United Church, Brampton, Ontario.
The Gathering, Pentecost 1 2019. Used with permission.*

SCRIPTURE: 1 Corinthians 4: 1-5

This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore, judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.

REFLECTION: Faithfulness is love confiding

Video: Douglas talks about faithfulness – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iW3ZenpRHxU>

The final three “fruit of the spirit” are virtues relating to our attitude towards ourselves: faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. The lack of life-discipline is one of the “weights” ([Hebrews 12:1](#)) which we sometimes allow to trouble us.

Faithfulness is the quality of reliability and trustworthiness which makes one's word become his bond. God never fails to keep His word. In Lamentations 2:23, Jeremiah says, “Great is thy faithfulness.” God's faithfulness should be deeply reflected in the lives of His disciples, so that they can be known as the “faithful” ones. Faithfulness speaks of loyalty, dependability, and stability.

The word "faithfulness" implies that faith is more than a momentary assent to the truth of God. It is commitment to that truth, and it manifests itself in continued obedience. "Faithful" persons are conscientious about performing the duties that are assigned to them; they stand by the commitments they make.

It is not unusual for someone to promise to do an important task for us, but then never follow through with it. Those who are born of God will take seriously what they tell others they will do for them (for example, a promise to pray for them), and then will be careful to follow through with the promise.

"It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." (1 Corinthians 4:2, KJV)

LISTEN: Find us Faithful

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zesV09UAytk>

CLOSING PRAYER:

Go out in Jesus' name with ready hands
to bring God's kingdom into this world.

Go out to bring love and justice
into a world of hurt and pain,
knowing that God is with us always.

Amen.

*By Fern Gibbard, Penticton U.C., Penticton, B.C.
The Gathering, Pentecost 1 2020. Used with permission.*

GENTLENESS: Aug. 23

OPENING PRAYER:

Cast our net wide, Embracing God. Gather us to you, so that we may also embrace your mission and cast your net wider still. Teach us to centre our lives on your way, in service to your people. Help us gather others in, those who need to know the love you have shown us.
Amen

*By Anna Atkinson, Cedar United Church, Nanaimo, B.C.
The Gathering, Pentecost 1 2020. Used with permission.*

SCRIPTURE: James 1: 19-25 (New English Translation)

Living Out the Message

Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters! Let every person be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger. For human anger does not accomplish God's righteousness. So put away all filth and evil excess and humbly welcome the message implanted within you, which is able to save your souls. But be sure you live out the message and do not merely listen to it and so deceive yourselves. For if someone merely listens to the message and does not live it out, he is like someone who gazes at his own face in a mirror. For he gazes at himself and then goes out and immediately forgets what sort of person he was. But the one who peers into the perfect

law of liberty and fixes his attention there, and does not become a forgetful listener but one who lives it out—he will be blessed in what he does.

REFLECTION: Gentleness (meekness) is love with a bowed head

Video: Douglas talks about gentleness – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cFJgacjfO8M>

The final three “fruits of the spirit” are virtues in relation to oneself: faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Gentleness is most often equated with the Biblical quality “meekness”.

Closely linked to humility, gentleness is grace of the soul. It is not weakness, but instead it is strength under control. For instance, in Paul’s second letter to Timothy, he wrote that the “Lord’s servant” will “correct his opponents with gentleness” (2 Timothy 2:25). Gentleness, being the opposite of self-assertiveness and self-interest, is also a key ingredient in unity and peace within the body of Christ.

Gentleness speaks of a submissive and teachable spirit. The meek person is one who is ready to listen and to learn. It is a tenderness of spirit that enables us to endure persecution graciously, and to witness to others with sensitivity. The apostle James says that we are to “receive with meekness the engrafted [implanted] word” (James 1:21). Meekness is the quality that makes one submissive rather than arrogant and haughty and rebellious. The meek person is ready to listen to others and adapt to the circumstances. Above all, he is sensitive to the leading and the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

LISTEN:

Spirit of Gentleness - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6rgLsoWxwyU>

CLOSING PRAYER:

You were called here to worship, and now you are just as surely called into the world to share the love of God with your neighbours, opening your heart to them, whoever they may be, wherever they may be found, just as Jesus did.

*By George Allan, Chatham, Ont.
The Gathering, Pentecost 1 2019. Used with permission.*

SELF-CONTROL: Aug. 30

OPENING PRAYER:

God of many surprises, we notice the wonder of creation all around us. We seek the excitement of your presence in what we experience day by day. Help us to be alive to your presence and to be excited about the possibilities before us. Be with us in all that we face and do, this day and always. We pray in Jesus’ name.

Amen

*By Bill Steadman, St. Andrew’s United Church, Sudbury, Ontario
The Gathering, Pentecost 1 2019. Used with permission.*

SCRIPTURE: 1 Corinthians 9: 24-27

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

REFLECTION: Temperance is true self-love

Video: Douglas talks about self control – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KoLqyBDT-ik>

The last of the “fruits of the spirit” relating to our attitude towards ourselves is self-control. Unlike the previous virtues, temperance or self-control never occurs with reference to the character of God. Nor is it something that one does in the community. It is an individual virtue.

But note that self-control, or temperance, is not the same as abstinence. While Paul strongly condemns drunkenness, for example, he is not teaching abstinence from wine. He speaks against any kind of legalistic abstinence as a Christian virtue. Although discipline and legalism both concern doing the good and not doing the bad, legalism sees the doing and not-doing simply as ends in themselves, while discipline sees them as means to some further end. The fruit of the Spirit is not legalism but self-control.

As the Holy Spirit works in our lives, he changes us gradually; he sanctifies us – that is, makes us holy in our character. It is sometimes called sanctification or spiritual formation. It is a process that is activated on our part by walking in the Spirit, and on God's part by bringing about change in us by his Spirit.

“Self-control” is never easy because personal discipline runs contrary to human nature – but discipline can be achieved more and more if we choose to be led by the Spirit. We must seek to live day by day under God’s control, and the best way to do that is to become more and more familiar with the message of the Bible – because the Holy Spirit is the author of the Word.

When the nine words that comprise the fruit of the Spirit are fully defined, we have a well-rounded picture of the meaning of the word “Christlikeness.” These qualities are worked in us and through us by the Holy Spirit, but only in proportion to the degree that we are willing to surrender our lives to Him.

LISTEN: Footsteps walking with me

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mvdqZPKTnsl>

CLOSING PRAYER:

We go to turn the world upside down,
trading prestige and power and privilege
for health and mutuality and truth.
Go as pearls of treasure in a world of greed.
We go, led by the Spirit,
to open perceptions, our own and others',
to the wonder and the wholeness of the gospel.
Go as Jesus' yeast in life's dough.
We go as those carrying the name of Christ,
to live out the risen faith we have been given as a gift.

*By Gord Dunbar, Kincardine P.C., Kincardine, Ont.
The Gathering, Pentecost 1 2019. Used with permission.*

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