Good morning, Family. For the past two months, we have studied and digested the fruit of the Spirit, nine attributes of God, all available to us, His children. These characteristics offer evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. They attest to the encouragement of love, joy, and peace of God and to His patience and faithfulness to us. Working in us, they are meant to make us more like Jesus. The Holy Spirit develops in us “love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23) as we walk by the Spirit, and they help us to resist carrying out the desires of the flesh.

Today, Family, we look at gentleness and self-control, two fruit of the Spirit that, along with faithfulness, speak to discipline. *Bakers Evangelical Dictionary* defines gentleness this way: “Sensitivity of disposition and kindness of behavior, founded on strength and prompted by love.” Jesus described Himself in this way: “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:29). Gentleness is based in humility. Paul, for instance, appeals to believers “by the meekness and gentleness of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:1). Those with gentleness and self-control are sensitive to the needs, emotions, and peace of others. They put others before themselves. Gentleness pleases God; it is a reflection of Christ in us, evidence of a spirit of humility. The Greeks used the word for gentleness/meekness as the descriptor for a strong animal that is under control. Meekness is *not* weakness. Jesus was not afraid to flip a table! And, interestingly, there are only two people of scripture that are described as gentle or meek: Jesus, three times, and Moses in \*Numbers 12:3. If the Holy Spirit can help us develop gentleness/meekness, what wonderful company we will be in! Both Jesus and

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Numbers 12:3

Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.

Moses submitted to the will of God. Like them, we must submit to God, intentionally put on the new self, relinquish our will to Him—that is, have a teachable spirit (\*Philippians 2:1-8; \*\*Colossians 3:12-13; \*\*\*James 1:21). All of these considerations, all the fruit of the Spirit that we are to develop as we walk with the Holy Spirit, is about maturing spiritually, and assumes—requires—that a mature Christian be teachable.

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\*Philippians 2:1-8

Therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in very nature[a] God,

did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

7 rather, he made himself nothing

by taking the very nature[b] of a servant,

being made in human likeness.

8 And being found in appearance as a man,

he humbled himself

by becoming obedient to death—

even death on a cross!

\*\*Colossians 3:12-13

Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

\*\*\*James 1:21

Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

Paul tells the Ephesians, “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.” Walk in a manner worthy of the calling.

To walk as worthy of the calling is to be an ambassador for Christ, gentle and with self-control. Solomon tells us in Proverbs 25:28, “Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control.” In ancient times, strong, fortified walls usually surrounded a city; these were necessary for the people to live in freedom, protected from outside threats. Boundaries, instruction found in scripture, and accountability are not restrictive. No, they are protective and result in Spiritual Freedom. The fruit of self-control serves two purposes: 1) Prevention, keeping the enemy from gaining a foothold; and 2) Representation, effective maintenance of your witness. A self-controlled person is a self-aware person, one who does not drift but has anchored the soul to the Rock of Ages. His strength comes from his connection to God and from his motivation to review and guard/control behavior in line with the expectations of a Holy God.

Family, we have been given everything for life and godliness, as Peter tells us: “His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires” (2Peter 1:3-4). We are partakers of His Divine nature. Church, listen! Self-control is not a strive-harder, just-say-no campaign. Piper observes, “The very concept of self-control implies a battle between a divided self.” No, self-control can’t be accomplished by the efforts of the self alone. We ARE called to be diligent, disciplined, determined disciples, but it is God’s enabling grace that changes our hearts and our minds and our behavior—from the inside out. In his second letter, Peter affirms that Grace motivates obedience and that the fruit of the Spirit, if possessed “in increasing measure” . . . “will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ”(1:8). Importantly, Peter adds in verse 9 a clear statement of the perspective we must have if we don’t develop the fruit of the Holy Spirit: “9 But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.”

Self-control comes in the day-to-day saying YES to Jesus. Consistency! And, Church, listen! Grasping this next truth changes everything: What Jesus offers is infinitely better than anything this world can give! The fruit of the world sparkle and shine; the fruit of self pretends to be satisfying. It is all just veneer. The fruit of the Spirit offer lasting treasure. Self-control in our speech, our actions, our habits, our consistency in saying yes to Jesus daily—all yield joy and peace. Finding this joy and

peace requires routine self-examination, a testing by the standards of scripture. Instead of saying to ourselves, “Oh, that’s not me,” our response to potential conviction, confession, and redemption must be, “Oh! Lord! Is that me?” (\*Colossians 3:15-17). When we engage in self-discipline and self-examination, we cooperate with the Holy Spirit. We acknowledge that self-control is preparation for deepening our relationship with Jesus. This preparation settles our hope in the Grace of God and makes us available to the instruction and leading of the Holy Spirit. It makes us willing soil in which the Holy Spirit can grow the fruit of the Spirit in us. Yes, the battle for self-control is a battle of faith. And we work to win that battle by faith in the superior power and to the joy of Christ.

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\*Colossians 3:15-17

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 16 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. 17 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.

Passages in support of this sermon:

Galatians 5:22-25

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Colossians 3:12-17

12 Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 16 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. 17 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.

2 Peter 1:3-11

3 His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. 8 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. 9 But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

10 Therefore, my brothers and sisters,[a] make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, 11 and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.