

## Step By Step

---

### Gentleness

- If you have your bibles, turn with me to the book of Galatians chapter 6.
  - If you're just joining us, we are continuing our series entitled Step by Step in which we are walking through each of the Fruit of the Spirit that Paul lays out for us in Galatians 5.
  - Today, we're on the second to last of this list as we're going to talk about Gentleness.
  - If you have missed any of the weeks of this series and would like to get caught up before we end it next week, you can find all of our sermons on our website, [hopehickory.org](http://hopehickory.org), on the sermons tab we have links to our apple podcast and spotify accounts that you can listen it for free, and we also have the written notes for every sermon on there as well for further resources for you.
- And throughout this series we have been intentional about pointing out that none of these Fruit of the Spirit originate from us.
  - Now, in your personality, there may be some on this list that come more naturally to you, but we all need the power of the Holy Spirit to consistently walk out these Godly attributes
  - That's why Paul tells us in Ephesians 5, To not be drunk with wine, for that is debauchery (or causes you to lose control), but rather be filled with the Spirit.
    - You see, when someone drinks to the point of intoxication, they begin to act out in ways that they don't normally do. Drunkenness leads you to act out of Character.
    - So Paul says, instead of doing that, you should rather be filled with the Spirit. Now, being filled with the Spirit will also lead you to act out of character, but in a positive way.
    - Because whenever you are filled with the Spirit now you begin to act in love, joy,

peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control.

- And that word FILLED in the Greek, means to filled to the point of overflowing
- The word is also used to give the picture of a woman who is pregnant and on the verge of giving birth.
- He's not talking about first trimester pregnant, he's talking about Kelsey Christenbury pregnant, two Sunday's ago, whenever she showed up to help serve and set up in church and she was having contractions while she was back there serving with the kids.
- And Praise God little Brooklyn came to 4 days later
- But when we are filled with the Spirit, we will unmistakably be showing the Fruit of the Spirit in our lives.
- But these are things that we have to intentionally ask God for, and practice

regularly. Because we are not naturally prone to these attributes

- I don't know about you, but I am not naturally prone to gentleness
  - I'm naturally prone to be argumentative, I'm naturally prone to abrasiveness because I'm naturally prone to pride
  - So these are things I have to pray against and instead pray for the Spirit to fill me and humble me so I can be gentle when I need to be.
- I heard it said: **GENTLENESS IS HUMILITY LIVED OUT IN PUBLIC**
  - CS Lewis once said, "humility isn't thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less."
  - You see, we don't pray for the fruit of the Spirit for our benefit, but rather so that we can benefit others.
  - So we can be the best we can be for the people around us whenever they need it

most because that is exactly what Jesus does for us.

- Furthermore, there is inevitably going to come a time whenever we need someone, but if we are never there for others whenever they need us, we can't expect anyone to be there for us when we need them.
  - I say it all the time, what you want other people to be for you, you first have to be for other people.
- So Paul, right on the heels of giving us the fruit of the Spirit, gives us some instruction of how we can live this out in public, and in our church. He writes in Galatians chapter 6, beginning in verse 1:
- ***“Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks they are something when***

***they are not, they deceive themselves.”***

***-Galatians 6:1-3 (NIV)***

- PRAY
- *I’m not a big car guy. Now don’t get me wrong, I appreciate a good vehicle as much as the next guy, but whenever it come to having my personal vehicle, I value gas milage and having little to no car payments over anything else.*
- *Many of you have seen my car, Rachel refers to it as the “Ole horse and buggy,” it’s nothing fancy, being a pastor of a portable church one of it’s main functions is to serve as the church’s storage unit. So I’m not really worried about keeping it all nice, clean, and tidy, and if I’m honest, I have a tendency to drive it like a stole it.*
- *Now, Rachel’s family on the other hand, they are car people. They enjoy investing in nice vehicles and keeping them in tip top shape. They’re a big Bronco family, all three generations of men in that family have restored*

Sunday, June 18, 2023

a classic bronco themselves, and Rachel's mom has a beautiful 2023 Bronco.

- And not one of the Bronco sports, I'm talking about the full packaged, 4 door, soft top, stripe down the side, brand new wheels, big time Bronco.
- Now there was one time where Rachel and I were out in Lexington with her family, and her mom was going to come back to Hickory with us, but we needed to take 2 cars so she should be able to get back. Now Wendy wanted to ride with Rachel, (really more so she wanted to ride with Fletcher if we're being honest) So she told me to just drive the Bronco.
- Now I'm not one of those guys that got all hyped like, "Yea, i'ma look awesome drivin' this bronco." No, I think I threw up in my mouth a bit. I didn't want to! I didn't want the pressure! But of course I couldn't say that, because I couldn't admit that I was scared to drive the big vehicle in front of my father in law, and her

brother who can build a truck with his bare hands.

- So I just had to pretend like I was cool with it and took the keys. Now, I promise you I did not drive that vehicle like a stole it. No I drove it like there was a bomb in the back seat. I felt uncomfortable even going the speed limit. I didn't want to get close to any other cars. If I had to park it I was gonna take like three spots just to be safe!
- Now it wasn't because I wasn't confident in my ability to drive. I was just overly cautious because I appreciated the value of that vehicle and how much it meant to those that owned it.
- Here's the point:
- **YOU ARE GENTLE WITH WHAT YOU VALUE**
- So often, many people and many Christians are not gentle with others because we forget their value. Even more so, we forget how valuable they are to God.

- Jesus went as far to say in Matthew 5, that if you come before the altar to pray, and you remember that you have an unresolved issue with another person, you need to go reconcile that first and then come back and try to communicate with a Holy God.
- God values His people
- He says that people are fearfully and wonderfully made
- He told Jeremiah, “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and had a purpose for you.”
- He said that we are His Workmanship, means “the work of a Creator.”
- And God values His work. And if we value God, we will value what He value’s, and He value’s people.
- Pastor Bryan Loritts said, “When I see that a person is created by God, and made in His image, I will in turn handle with care.”
- Similarly, Peter speaks to us men, in 1 Peter 3, **“Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.” -1 Peter 3:7 (ESV)**
  - Now this verse is often misunderstood. Because Peter is not talking about women being in a place of inferiority. No he says they are heirs with you, a place of equality.
  - And Peter says we are to live in an understanding way, we are to show honor... and when he says, “Weaker vessel” he’s giving the picture of something like the fine china in the house.
- We’ve probably all been to that thanksgiving or Christmas dinner, when the good china gets brought out. And if you are tasked with doing the dishes, someone is going to let you know, “Son, if you break one of those plates, Ima break you...”

- And you don't just put the china in the dishwasher with the common dishes...no you're hand washing them, very gently and thoroughly, and you carefully place them back in the cabinet, because they are so much more valuable.
- Peter wants us to know men, that our wives, are the most valuable thing in our household. And we are to be gentle, understanding, caring, and honor them.
- *You see, a strong Father will never make their kids question whether or not their mother is valued in their house.*
  - I tell every young man I do premarital counseling with, one of your top jobs as a man in a relationship is to never do or say anything that would lead your lady to be insecure.
  - So we ask God for gentleness, when we're not prone to be, because we are gentle with what we value
- And FURTHER than that we need to understand who your wife really belongs to. She belongs to God first and foremost, and He values her so much that the Bible says if we aren't gentle, caring, understanding, and honoring with her it's going to hinder our prayers.
- He won't even listen to us until we get that relationship right.
- And this same principle is to be lived out in every relationship and every communication that we ever have with another human being.
  - And this doesn't mean we just act like everything is all sunshine and rainbows all of the time.
- Because when Paul talks about living out this gentleness, he's talking about it in the context about whenever someone else is in a bad situation. He's talking about how to handle yourself whenever you need to get real with somebody.

- And I think from this passage we can talk about three areas where we need to be intentional with gentleness.
  - Be Gentle in Restoration
  - Be Gentle in Confrontation
  - Be Gentle in Reception
- He says in verse 1, “Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently.”
- So First: **BE GENTLE IN RESTORATION**
  - And it should be noted first that this is specifically for the fellow believer
  - Too many Christians have a tendency to get all up in arms and bent out of shape and demonize unbelievers, for acting like unbelievers!
  - That doesn’t make any sense! We have the Holy Spirit, they don’t. We’ve been given the mind of Christ and a new sense of morality

and right and wrong through the leading of the Holy Spirit.

- We’ve been brought from death to life in Christ.
- You cannot restore something that hasn’t been brought to life yet.
- So if we do nothing but try to change the actions and mindset of someone who does not have the Holy Spirit, if we are not gentle with those who our faith already doesn’t make sense to, then our faith will never be attractive to them and all we are going to do is lead them to distance themselves even further away from the love of God.
- But that is an entirely different issue.
- The issue at hand, is when a fellow believer has begun to act out of a character. Whenever a brother or sister in Christ has begun to drift away from the body of Christ
  - The word Restore means: To Make One What They Ought To Be

- We've all had someone in our lives, where we know their potential, we've seen what they're capable of, but they just started making bad decisions and you just want to shake them!
- Like get it together!!
  - We see someone slippin' away and we just want to jerk them back and knock some sense into them!
  - But that doesn't work. If not handled gently, you're just going to hurt them and push them further away.
- You see, Restoration isn't about giving someone advice, it's about coming along side them.
  - It's easier to just give advice, rather than spend some time with them
  - It's easier to just invite them to church and hope they come someday, rather than take them to coffee, or share a meal with them.
- No one will care anything about your opinion if they don't know that you genuinely care about them.
  - They won't care about your advice if you don't know exactly what their going through.
  - Pastor Chip Ingram said, "Everyone is going through more than you know and more than they show."
  - And he also said, "You can help more than you know, and more than you show."
- Jesus said it this way: ***"Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."***  
**-Matthew 11:29 (ESV)**
- Now the yoke was a farm tool that farmers would use to join two oxen together at the neck, to ease the burden of plowing the field.

- And they would normally pair a strong experienced ox with a young inexperienced ox. That way you wouldn't have two strong oxen fighting for who would take the lead, instead the older one could just gently lead the younger one and once the younger one would grow and gain enough experience, then that one would be paired with a new young ox to teach it.
- This gives us a good example of what it's like to do life with another. You come along side that person, and gently lead them by example in the hopes that they would grow into living out their purpose and growing into their identity in Christ.
- But Paul also says, "But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted."
  - You see in this endeavor we have to make sure we are staying yoked to Christ. That's why Paul once said, imitate me as I imitate Christ.
- Wouldn't you love to be able to confidently say that to another person.
- But we have to stay yoked to Christ and keep the main goal in mind.
  - Because yes, restoration is about establishing a relationship, but the main goal of that relationship is not to get the person to like you, its about them yoking themselves to Christ
  - And they may not respond the way you hope or in the timing that you hope. But if you are faithful and gentle with them, you can keep the relationship open. So if and when the Holy Spirit grips their heart, they know that they can come walk along side you.
- Pauls says to **"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."** -Galatians 6:2 (NIV)
- What is the law of Christ? We talked about it at the beginning of this series when Jesus told

Sunday, June 18, 2023

His disciples in John 13, “To love one another, just as I have loved you.”

- We see Jesus offering Himself to be yoked to us, and we know how gently He’s lead us, and now we are to do the same for others.
- There are some of us that need to be willing to help carry the burden of another, and there are some of us that need to let someone else help carry our burden.
- As difficult as it is to open ourselves up, to make ourselves available to carry the burden of another, sometimes it’s even more difficult to open ourselves up in a way that allows other people to carry our burden with us.
- But Paul says that’s what the church is supposed to do.
- And you may see someone that you know needs help with a burden or a sin that their entrapped in

- And it’s a lot easier just to say, “*Hey, I’m here for you whenever!*” Or just say, “*If they want to talk about it, they know where to find me.*”
- But sometimes a hard conversation needs to be had.

- *Gentleness is not avoiding conflict. It’s handling conflict with grace.*

- And we all need people in our lives that care enough about us to call us out when we need it, and we need to care enough about others to call them out when needed.
- But we can be really bad at how we call people out. So we need to learn how to:

- **BE GENTLE IN CONFRONTATION:**

- It’s weird because we are probably the most confrontational generation that the world has seen in a really long time.
- And it’s weird because the confrontation rarely happens face to face, instead it happens from a distance, or it happens behind a screen.

- People feel so much more comfortable confronting people through a text or through a comment on a social media post, which never leads to anything good.
- Confrontation should always be face to face or eye to eye, or at least done with a phone call
  - Because it will always be true: It's not what you say, but how you say it.
  - And if I handle confrontation through a text or through a post, that person is not going to hear the care in my tone, or see the love in my eyes.
  - If they can't hear my voice or look in my eyes, no matter how intentionally I mean to be gentle, rarely ever will it be interpreted as gentle and it will just make the situation worse.
- Solomon speaks to the importance of this in Proverbs 15 when he writes, ***“A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare. The tongue of the wise***

***makes knowledge appealing, but the mouth of a fool belches out foolishness...Gentle words are a tree of life; a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.” -Proverbs 15: 1-2, 4 (NLT)***

- Also, it should be clear that confrontation should only ever be done in the context of restoration
- Because restoration is about establishing a relationship, and you will never be able to effectively confront someone you do not have a personal relationship with.
  - Way too many people only interact with someone or give someone the time of day if they see an opportunity for confrontation.
  - And that's not being loving, that's not being caring or gentle, that's just getting up in somebody's business. That's being a busy body. That's just about me wanting to feel important.

- That's why Paul warns in verse 3, ***"If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves."*** -Galatians 6:3 (NIV)

- *I remember back during my last couple of years being on staff at Hope Shelby, I had transitioned out of the student ministry and college ministry and had transitioned into a Teaching Pastor role.*
- *And that was a very strange season for me, because I didn't have any areas of ministry that I was overseeing anymore, I was just the third guy on a teaching rotation between our two campuses.*
- *And that was very uncomfortable to me because I didn't feel like a pastor anymore, I was just a preacher. So a lot of times I didn't know where my place was or what I was supposed to do with myself.*
- *And there was one day where I overheard about an issue in the student ministry that was going to need to be resolved. Now,*

*Avery who had taken over the student ministry, who is awesome at what she does, I'm a big fan of hers. She was still pretty new in it, so I felt like I should help.*

- *Now she didn't ask for my help, but I inserted myself anyway. I walked into her office and just "You just need to do this, this, and this...."*
- *I said what I felt like I needed to say and then I walked out.*
- *And I felt good about myself for about 10 seconds. And then I thought to myself, "Was that helpful?"*
- *And then I went back into her office and asked her, "Was that helpful?" And she is so sweet and very non confrontational, so she said, "Ummmmm, not really??"*
- *So I sat down and we talked through some things, and we didn't even talk about the issue with the students, we needed to talk about our relationship, and how I could best communicate to her, and be helpful to her,*

rather than just being domineering and sticking my nose in her business.

- Because why did I really insert myself into that situation? If i'm honest, it wasn't about me being helpful, it was about me wanting to feel important, it was about me wanting to state my opinion so I could feel better about me and my situation
  - So I needed to get real with myself and humble myself. Because I would have given the same exact advice, if I had handled it the right way. I still think the advice was right, but it wasn't helpful because of the way I handled it.
  - So I needed to make things less about getting my point across, and focus more on how I could best help the people around me because I wasn't good at it.
  - And I needed to be called out, even if in this case I was calling myself out.
- But we're going to have those times when we need to be called out.

- Maybe we've been feeling ourselves a little too much and can't see the pride we're allowing to develop.
  - Maybe we've slowly been allowing a sin to creep in our lives that's beginning to affect our relationships.
- Or maybe we have someone calling us out where it doesn't feel gentle, or justified for them to do so. In any case, we still need to learn how to
- BE GENTLE IN RECEPTION**
- We need to learn how to be gentle when we are confronted or criticized, regardless of whether the other person is being gentle.
  - Because whenever we are living out our faith, whenever we are walking in the Spirit, we don't ever fight fire with fire. We don't need to!
  - Because someone else may confront you and be drilling into you and they may have

absolutely no idea what they're talking about.  
You don't have to fight that fire with fire.

- Paul says, "Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse them"
- He goes on to say in Romans 12, ***"Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."*** -Romans 12:17-21 (ESV)
- You don't have to fight fire with fire, no we fight fire with good. We fight fire with care, with serving, and in doing so, you'll really make that person burn up. You'll get their

blood boiling. You'll leave them confused and flustered

- We've all had those times when someone said something to us, and we couldn't think of the comeback until like 45 mins later.
- And we're kicking ourselves, like "UGH! That's what I should have said!"
- We want the satisfaction of the good comeback, but Paul gives us the best comeback.
- And I love how honest Paul is with it. Because we feel like we're supposed to be like, "Oh we just need to pray for that person. We want the best for them..."
- Paul's like, let's be honest. No you don't. You wanna get back at them, you wanna get them all flustered and frustrated because that's what they did to you.
- We're all human, we can be honest about it. But this is the way you handle it.

Sunday, June 18, 2023

- And our hearts and our motives may not be 100% pure, but the result will be you will have handled it the right way, your testimony is intact, and you're still gonna get under that person's skin.
  - It's a win-win-win
- James probably gives us the most practical advice when being gentle in reception, when he says, ***"My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."*** -James 1:19 (NIV)
  - *You know I was in youth ministry for 8 years. And if you're in youth ministry long enough, you're going to deal with some difficult teenagers, but even worse, you're going to deal with some difficult parents*
  - *Every youth group in America has, has had, or will have those parents in the church that nit-pick everything the leader does, tells them all of the things they're doing wrong all of the time, and wants to have 4,000 meetings*

*about why their kids are angels and all of the other kids in the church are devils.*

- *And as a young man in my early 20's those meetings used to take a toll on me.*
- *But I had begun to make the practice of, every time I would go to one of those meetings, where I knew exactly how it was going to go, knew exactly what was going to be said, I was going to have another session of just being a verbal punching bag, and punching back would do nothing but make the situation worse*
- *I started making the practice of the entire car ride to the meeting I would just repeat over and over, "Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry..."*
- *And whenever I would go into those meetings with that mindset, I wouldn't feel the need to argue, I wouldn't feel the need to justify myself, I wouldn't feel the need to be defensive.*

Sunday, June 18, 2023

- You, see defensiveness is an epidemic in this day and age, but it should never be a mark of a person who has the Holy Spirit within them.

- I say it all of the time, we as Christians, would be the most un-offendable people on the planet.
- Because what is someone going to say about me that hasn't already been covered by the love and grace of God??
  - You gonna call me inadequate? I know, I'm definitely inadequate. Why God would use me to be a pastor I'll never understand. But His power is made perfect in my weakness.
  - You gonna call me a hypocrite? Well I know! I do my best to practice what I preach but I'm still going to fall short. That's why I need His mercies that are new every morning
  - You think I'm naive for believing the Bible? You think it's just a set of outdated rules and rituals? Well, have you read it?

Because man, I did. And it changed my life and gave me a whole new perspective.

Why don't you try reading it?

- And you know, we as Christians should be the least defensive people around because we should be the most open to asking ourselves, "What if I'm wrong?"
  - If someone is to come to me, telling me how something I said or did hurt them or offended them, I can either get mad, defensive, and try to justify myself.
  - Or I can stop and ask myself, what if I'm wrong? What if I didn't handle that the right way? What if what I meant to say didn't come across the way I thought it did?
  - And I can have that conversation from a gentle, loving, and apologetic place and try to reconcile it and share my heart rather than making it a fight.
- Can you imagine what our world would look like, if we were all willing to at least

Sunday, June 18, 2023

acknowledge the possibility and ask ourselves, "WHAT IF I'M WRONG?"

- What would our relationships, our society, the political scene, even social media look like, if we could all stop at least for minute and ask ourselves, "What if I'm wrong?"
    - What if we valued the truth more than winning an argument.
    - What if we valued People more than our Opinions.
    - What if we valued relationships more than being "right."
  - I'm telling you we would be so much more gentle in how we handled, restoration, confrontation, and our reception of confrontation if we could at least, for a moment, consider that I might be wrong before we came to a conclusion.
  - This is a question that causes me as a Pastor to lose sleep on Saturday nights before I preach on Sunday morning.
- I have to ask myself this question hundreds of times throughout sermon preparation, that leads to hours and hours of reading a research, and picking the brains of my pastors, and looking at things from every angle I can think of before printing these pages.
    - Because I am terrified that I could get up here and say something that might be wrong. And I'm sure I have before, but I want to do so as little as possible.
  - I remember a long time ago I was talking with a guy I used to be very close with, and he was adamantly against Christianity, and the message of the Gospel. And He asked me, what if you're wrong?
  - And I had to consider that, "Ok, if I'm wrong, Jesus didn't raise from the dead, the gospel is a fairy tale, and when we die either nothing happens or we just all go to heaven..I've just chosen to lead a life of loving others more than myself, a life of forgiveness, of joy, and pursuing unity. I'm still good."

Sunday, June 18, 2023

- But then I had to ask him, “What if you’re wrong? What if Jesus really is the only way, what if Hell is a real place, what if all of the fulfillment and purpose you’re looking for in this life can really be found in Him.”
- So I echo Paul to all of those working through those questions, I implore you, as if Christ were pleading through me, be reconciled to God!
  - Consider this! That God came down in the Person of Jesus Christ, and He poured His blood out on the cross to bridge the gap of separation that our sin and our selfishness had created, so that You could live in a relationship with your Creator.
- You see the true Christian, walking in the Spirit of God, cannot be prideful or defensive, because true Christianity begins with admitting that I’m wrong.
- That I’ve always been wrong. It’s admitting I can’t be the captain of my own ship or the master of my domain. It’s a cry for help admitting that I need a Savior. I’m helpless and hopeless without Him. So the only boasting I can do is boasting in The God who is my only source of strength, wisdom, purpose and direction!
- Who’s love is beyond measure, Who covers my weaknesses and shame, Who does **EXCEEDINGLY AND ABUNDANTLY** more than I ask or think!
  - What if, HE really is who He says He is.
  - Would you say yes to Him?