Marriage & The Fruit Of The Spirit
TEXT: Galatians 5:22-23...But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

INTRODUCTION: Marriage is not merely about our earthly happiness, but about our spiritual education. Marriage is about spiritual growth. In every circumstance, God is much more concerned about our holiness than our happiness. Why should marriage be any different? Why should marriage be left out of God’s overall plan to sanctify us for himself? Marriage does that. It almost compels you to grow spiritually. At least it forces you to see your weaknesses more clearly. To find any happiness or contentment in marriage at all, you’ve got to identify your own faults and try to improve.

Marriage demands a change in your basic orientation. You can’t think according to the flesh (a me-centered orientation) and expect your relationship with your mate to do very well. Husbands and wives who only think about themselves will find marriage to be a miserable experience. Successful marriages are those where at least one partner has surrendered his or her rights to personal happiness and self-gratification. They have given up on the works of the flesh and have instead sown the fruit of the Spirit into their character.

When the stress of bills and kids and illnesses and uncertainties begins to rob them of all their energy, they should rely on love and joy and peace. When mates are insensitive and boorish, they ought to rely on patience and kindness. When contentious discussions about finances, in-laws and kids come up, they do well to rely on goodness and gentleness. When the tiresome familiarity that comes from dealing with the same annoying quirks and character flaws over the years tempts them to seek greener grass, they might rely on faithfulness and self-control. And as they rely on the fruit of the Spirit to endure these trials in
marriage, it makes marriage a kind of training ground; a gymnasium for the soul. They exercise godliness in marriage because they're forced every day to put the fruit of the Spirit into practical use.

So what are your expectations in marriage? Are you waiting for him to get a clue or for her to see the light? Are you waiting for God to transform your mate into something he or she is not right now? Or are you looking for personal transformation? Do you see your marriage as an opportunity to grow up in Christ Jesus? That little change in perspective makes all the difference in the world!

And here’s a little secret—If your only goal is personal happiness, you won't grow and you won't be happy. Change your focus to personal growth and you will not only produce the fruit of the Spirit inwardly, you'll find marriage to be an exceedingly satisfying relationship that only gets better and better!

**MARRIAGE & LOVE**

There are different kinds of love mentioned in the bible. And they all can be part of holy matrimony. There is love as friends...“my wife is my best friend” is a fine part of a good marriage relationship. Then there is romantic love. The bible describes this kind of love not only between two who are infatuated with each other, and who may be looking to marry, but a sort of love to be kept strong even after married. And there are other kinds of love, too. But, for this lesson and the kind described as a product of the Holy Spirit’s influence is different.

This love is not something that just happens. It is a choice, a conscious decision, an act of the will. And it is the love mentioned in wedding vows...that each spouse
promises before God and witnesses to possess for the other until death do them part.

This love is unconditional. Marriage partners are to love with no strings attached. Some wedding vows will say for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, for better or worse, etc. It is not tied to performance. It is the kind of love that Christ has for the church that is held up to us as a pattern to follow in marriage (Ephesians 5:22-33).

And should a spouse even become an enemy, then “love your enemy,” Christ says. “Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who abuse you. To the one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also. As you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.” (Matthew 5:38-48 & Luke 6:27-36). But can a spouse really be an enemy? Jesus said that as a result of his teaching that a person’s enemies may be those of his own household (Matthew 10:36). Some of our worst enemies might live under our own roof. The closer someone is to you, the more they can hurt you. When sharp disagreements arise over finances or children...when feelings have been blatantly trampled on or your mate has judged motives unfairly...when in-laws have made unwanted intrusions and your mate won’t do anything about it (and doesn’t even seem to care)...when intimate secrets have been revealed or a serious breech of trust is made...when there is constant teasing, belittling, or harsh criticism (even in public)...when there is infidelity...or even when one tires of the other who is now a believer in Jesus...then enemies they may become. When Jesus says, “Love your enemies”, that includes marriage mates.

We need to see love in marriage in a different way. Will it help our home be a happier place? Yes. Will it make your relationship with your husband or wife stronger? Sure. Will it help your mate so that they will want to love you more? Maybe so. But we need a greater motive. What do you do when there is little hope
of your marriage improving? What if you’re married to an absolute loser? What if you realize you made a big mistake in marrying your husband or wife? What if you realize they might not ever change? What do the self-help books have to offer then? What do the self-help books promise once marital bliss seems to be impossible? God says, LOVE!

FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Read Ephesians 5:22-33 and describe the kind of love commanded of a husband for his wife?

2. Who ought to teach young wives to love their husbands? (Titus 2:3-4) Elaborate.

3. Why, what and how do wives need to be taught to love their husbands?

4. Explain how First Corinthians 13:4-8 applies to marriage.

Patient:

Kind:
No Envy:

No boasting:

Not arrogant:

Not Rude:

No insistence on own way:

Not irritable:

Not resentful:

No rejoicing in wrongdoing:

Rejoice in truth:

Bear all things:
Believe all things:

Hope all things:

Endure all things:

Never ends (until death parts):

**MARRIAGE & JOY**

Joy can be exhilarating and refreshing! You feel as though you are literally bursting at the seams, as though you are elevated to a level of almost inexpressible happiness! Joy at times just brings a quiet warm feeling of inner contentment. Joy is a fruit of God’s Spirit! God wants you to delight yourself with Him in your marriage and all of life. He wants us to view our relationship with our spouse as a joy all the time. This does not mean that marriages won’t go through some difficult things, it certainly will. But, being open and honest with one another and continuously making your marriage a priority and joy will help you weather the tempestuous storms of life as they arise. You can learn to rise together to challenges, realizing that they are but for a season and do not define your marriage! Endeavor together to not allow discouragement to take up residence, but that joy will reign.

Unlike happiness, joy is gladness that is completely independent of the good or bad things that happen in the course of the day. In fact, joy denotes a
supernatural gladness given by God’s Spirit that actually seems to show up best during hard times. This is a product of fixing your focus on God’s purposes for the events in your life rather than on the circumstances. Question: Am I experiencing a joy of life on a regular basis, or is my happiness dependent on things going smoothly in my day?

Joy has everything to do with attitude! Double- and triple- check your attitude throughout the day. It is unnecessary to respond to your spouse from a heart of frustration caused by something unrelated to him...for if it happens, tension is sure to grip your relationship. Allow joy to flow from your heart and bless your spouse. Deliberately seek to not suck the joy out of your spouse and the marriage of you both, and you may discover your own joy increasing.

The joy of the LORD is your strength (Nehemiah 8:10). And that applies to marriage, as much as anywhere. Most people have the wrong idea about Christian marriage. They think it is a simple process of learning a few rules in scripture. The New Testament has relatively little to say about marriage. We’re told something about the permanence of marriage (Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18). We’re told what the roles in marriage are (Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-19). And we’re told about what our attitudes in these respective roles ought to be (1 Peter 3:1-7). Now, we understand that these passages are packed with information about marriage, but we do not think it is an oversimplification to say that all the New Testament says directly about marriage is: It is between a male and a female. It is for life. The wife is to submit to her husband. The husband is to love his wife. And if we are not careful, we can walk away from those passages thinking marriage is a relatively simple formula: follow your roles, stick together, and God will be happy.

But it is not that simple. God wants more. He is just as concerned about who we are as he is about what we do. What that means for us in our marriage is that we
need to think outside the box a little bit when we’re thinking about what God expects from us. And that is what we are doing in this study of the fruit of the Spirit and its application to marriage. Some of us are maybe going through financial stress right now. Others are dealing with physical ailments or handicaps (which can add to the financial stress). Problems can come from almost any direction in marriage: in-laws, kids, past sins, uncertainty about the future. Though some of those things are out of our control, often times we create our own problems. You may be dealing with a mate who refuses to budge on anything. So stubborn is your mate, in fact, that it appears things will never get any better. How can you find any joy in all of this?

Before we answer the question, consider this… “Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth.” (Proverbs 5:18). We are instructed to rejoice with our spouse…something that can be chosen to do. This is not something that has to just happen, but can be decided. So, relish their love, cherish them dearly, do not take them for granted. It is a choice that you will never regret.

Ecclesiastes 9:9 says, “Live **joyfully** with the wife whom you love all the days of the life of your vanity, which he has given you under the sun, all the days of your vanity: for that is your portion in this life, and in your labor which you take under the sun.” God says much of your joy in life will proceed from the joyfulness you experience with your wife, or husband. A spouse who is glad at home, is likely glad elsewhere.

Consider what Philippians has to say about joy, and how these principles might apply in marriage.

...always in every prayer of mine for you all making my **prayer with joy** (1:4) The family that prays together stays together. And it is a joy. Pray for your mate.
Thank God for their good qualities. Tell God what is bothering you. Ask God to help you respond the right way. Prayer itself can itself be a joy.

...Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others (2:4). When you get up off your knees in intercession for your mate, what do you do next? You serve them. You fix them a cup of coffee. You fix that leaky faucet you’ve been promising to fix for weeks. You go iron his shirt. You pick up the dry cleaning on your way home from work. You offer to keep the kids Friday night so she can go out with her friends. When you serve your mate, and especially when that service is undeserved, you will be blessed (it is more blessed to give than to receive) and the receiver is glad, too.

...Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. (2:17) Paul found joy in getting nothing in this life, but giving his heart away to people he barely knew. He would expose his heart to people who would judge him and treat him unjustly. He would be mocked and beaten and thrown into prison. And now he sees a future destiny with death. And he can’t wait. He is ready to be poured out as a drink offering. He is ready to sacrifice everything. He is rejoicing at the thought of it.

Try this in your marriage. Don’t do the dishes because you think you’ll get something in return. Do it for Christ’s sake. Don’t forgive in hopes they will do the same. Don’t listen with a secret desire that you might be heard. Don’t show consideration or kindness or patience or humility or anything else with a selfish motive. Just give yourself away to your mate. Pour out your life as a sacrifice for them. Take the regulator off of your heart. Don’t be careful or cautious anymore. Do something bold and daring and reckless. Wash their feet. Slave for them. Try to learn what the mind of Christ is through service to your mate. And discover joy you never thought possible.
FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What will praying for your mate do to your marriage? How will it turn a grumbling, selfish attitude in marriage into a selfless, joyful attitude?

2. What do you do when your mate quits trying to improve your marriage? What if they give up altogether? Can you still find joy in a marriage like that?

3. Love your mate —recklessly and be —wasteful in your love? Do you agree or disagree? What does it mean to be reckless and wasteful in your love? Why do you think that being that way would lead to abundant joy?

4. We sometimes call it brownie points...or love investments...but whatever it is, we are going above and beyond for future benefit. Comment.

5. Read III John 3,4. Joy is found in walking in the truth. How does this translate to joy between spouses. Rejoicing that each other are walking in the truth?
6. Genesis 24:67... “Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death in his love and marriage of Rebekah.” One of the greatest joys of marriage is the shared consolation when dealing with loss. Discuss how shared experiences, happy or sad, is joy.

MARRIAGE & PEACE

The fruit of the Spirit includes peace. God is a God of peace. When God is reigning supreme in a husband or wife, preferably both, then peace will made and maintained. Peace brings you a sense of inner calmness and serene tranquility! Desiring peace within your marriage is a noble aspiration. Life can become difficult and very complex. It’s important to have a place where you both can retreat from life’s pressures and hectic schedules and just relax. The home should be a place and environment that is peaceful. Creating it will not be easy, but a worthwhile venture.

In marriage both partners get to know the other spouse on a much deeper level, so that there can be sensitivities to various things, sometimes for good, sometimes for bad. Will peace reign supreme, or will things gradually crumble? It is a choice. In Colossians 3:15, the Bible says let the peace of God rule in your heart. The word for rule there is umpire. In other words let peace determine the balls and strikes of your life and in this case, marriage. Two living together peacefully in harmonious co-existence is best realized when both parties allow the influence of God’s Holy Spirit to influence and produce this fruit.

Time is precious so you do not want to spend the majority of it in marriage unhappy, mad, stressed or living on pins and needles. When either one of the two
spouses has to walk around on eggshells it is not good! They both should want to learn how to become transparent with one another. This is how you create a healthy bond. You allow one another to see the "real you!" Home can be a place to "let your hair down" so to speak, but if not careful, pent up emotions of the day can come out when the hair is let down that makes it hard to keep the peace. We know how to maintain peace in the workplace, or else we may be out of work soon. Well, how important is your marriage? More important than work? The desire for peace in marriage is an attainable realistic goal.

Peace is not the absence of turmoil, but the presence of tranquility even while in a place of chaos. It is a sense of wholeness and completeness that is content knowing that God controls the events of the day. There are many ways we can promote peace in marriage. But, choose to be a peacemaker with your spouse, and in the relationship generally. Marriage is what you make it. And "blessed are the peacemakers," the Lord says.

FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How can we MAKE peace in our married relationship?

2. Peace is said to take place when the Christian does what? (Phil. 4:7)

3. Describe some attributes and blessings of peace in marriage.
4. Talk about what things which most jeopardize peace. What makes it hard to get along with each other continuously?

5. As spouses age, what could threaten the peace once had? How is that best dealt with?

**MARRIAGE & PATIENCE**

God’s Spirit dwelling in the hearts of both marriage partners is going to be evidenced through patience. It is not hard to see the immeasurable benefits of embracing patience within your marriage. When you begin to embrace patience in your marriage you make it a priority to think things through...hold off for a bit on crucial decisions...postpone being critical...spread out the criticisms at all. Whenever either spouse becomes angry he/she should acknowledge and realize the need to activate patience. If you are not a patient person this is not at all easy. You may blurt out however it is you are feeling and think later. This can cause you to say and do a lot of things that you later regret...especially when grief results. You may even become callous and insensitive to how your spouse feels. It is important to know you are hurting your spouse and creating an unhealthy home environment. Your spouse will not readily share as much with you because they dread or fear how you might respond.

Some other words that describe this fruit are lenience, long-suffering, forbearance, perseverance, and steadfastness. It is the ability to endure ill treatment from life or at the hands of others without lashing out or paying back. Patience can
sometimes require quite a lot of restraint and control, but the more we practice it, the more easily it will come.

Often, parents are very patient with their children, knowing they are young, they are limited in some ways, and that they have a future big picture in mind, etc. Parents must go slow, take time, endure disappointments, etc. This study is not about parenting, but is an illustration of how we understand what and how to do this. Question: Do both spouses fail to do the same with each other? Sometimes, it seems. Patience from God helps a wife stand by her man, though he can be so aggravating. Patience from God helps a husband love her just as she is, though she can’t do everything mother used to do.

**FOR DISCUSSION:**

1. What does Proverbs 14:29; 15:18 say about patience?

2. What kinds of things can be a test of patience in the home?

3. How does our society encourage impatience?
4. “Don’t sweat the small stuff” (Proverbs 17:14). What are some of the small things in marriage that tend to irritate wives? Husbands?

5. Listen, listen, listen (Proverbs 18:13). What does it mean to listen? Why does this require patience?

6. If you must speak, be careful what you say (Proverbs 29:22). What are some words that maybe should not be used and why?

7. If you must speak, be careful how you say it (Proverbs 15:1). How important is our tone? What does a harsh tone communicate? What about a soft tone?

8. Watch your emotions (Proverbs 15:18). Are we always the reason our mates are upset? Why do we tend to take everything so personally then? How do humility and love help keep our emotions under control? How does prayer help us to be more patient?
9. Wait (Proverbs 20:22). Why are we so childish in marriage, so impatient? When resolution to a problem does not come immediately, how should we respond? Are there things that will never be changed? Look at the lifetime BIG picture.

10. What sins are sometimes committed when a spouse loses all patience?

11. How does God say patience is produced in James 1:3? Apply this to marriage.

MARRIAGE & KINDNESS

In this lesson we talk about a facet of the fruit of the Spirit, namely kindness. Titus 2:4-5 says, "and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, **KIND**, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled." Wives are to be trained to be kind in their relationship with their husband. Hmmm. Interesting. And I have no doubt that the same is expected by God of husbands. The fruit of the Spirit (God) includes kindness. And it ought be shown in marriage as much, if not more, than anywhere. Amen? Proverbs 31:26 says of an excellent wife, “She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of KINDNESS is on her tongue.”

When women love their husbands and children, when they are kind and submissive, when they are self-controlled and pure (in heart), God’s Word cannot
be reviled. If a wife is not submissive, not self-controlled, is un-pure and unkind, and doesn’t love her husband or children, this reflects badly on God. Non-believers can speak contemptuously about such women, their statement of faith in Christ is damaged; in fact they bring shame to the name of Christ because if they call themselves a Christian and yet act carnally, it is seen as hypocritical.

And what goes for women also goes for men. Husbands ought to seek to outdo their wives with kindness. This is healthy competition. A happy game lovers play. A great way to show kindness in marriage is through random acts of service toward your spouse. Seek ways to meet her needs before a request is even made. Sure, there will be honey-do lists, but don’t let them get so long. Keep regularly getting some of them done.

Kindness is thoughtful. Kindness is proactive. Kindness is responding well to anger. Who is God kind toward (Luke 6:35)? “But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is KIND to the ungrateful and the evil.” And kindness gives with no strings attached. The acts of kindness are a one way street. Performed with no thought of reciprocation. Kindness is often seen as beyond what expected. Or unusual. Or totally unexpected. A kind of one-way street.

How can more kindness in marriage harm or make worse? It can’t, and won’t. It is one of the best insulators against bad things coming...or at least bad things sticking to each other or the marriage as a partnership. Kindness is not bribery or if in speech it is not flattery necessarily. It may be done by some to gain advantage over the other, but it may also be done out of God’s spiritually blessing within. Let it be this.

FOR DISCUSSION:
1. Why do we often fail to show kindness in our marriage? What do we mean when we say our mate doesn't deserve our kindness to them?

2. Kindness greets. Why is it sometime difficult to be cheerful and happy when we reunite at the end of the day? What makes our kind greeting so important?

3. Kindness praises. Why is praise important to a man? Why is praise important to a woman (Proverbs 31:28-29)?

4. Kindness dresses up. Which is more important, inner beauty or outward beauty (1 Peter 3:1-5)? How does a godly woman dress (1 Timothy 2:9-10)? But, does this mean a godly woman is totally unconcerned with her appearance (Proverbs 31:22)? Explain. Why does a woman in kindness for her husband wish to appear nice to his sight?

5. Kindness listens. Why is listening so difficult for men? Why is it important for men to listen to their wives? In I Peter 3:7 husbands are told to understand their wives. Elaborate on what it means to dwell with your wife in an understanding way. Just how is that done?
6. Kindness meets sexual needs. How important is sex to a man (Proverbs 5:15)? Does a wife have the right to neglect this need of his (1 Corinthians 7:3-5)? Is this mutual? How is this an act of kindness?

7. How does kindness build up an account? How is it an investment?

8. What are some common acts of kindness that we can practice most days?

MARRIAGE & GOODNESS

Though it may sound redundant, God’s Holy Spirit produces goodness in man’s spirit. And in marriage it ought to be seen. After God created everything and saw that it was good; God saw that the man He had made did not have a helpmeet. The animals, the beasts of the field, the livestock, as well as the birds of the air all had someone to be with...but Adam was alone as a man without someone to help him and just to be with him on a human level that he could relate to personally. He, too, needed someone to be by his side. God said it is NOT GOOD that man be alone. Then the Lord created marriage as a gift to Adam & Eve for their good always. And marriage ever sense is to be seen as a good thing. Hebrews says it should be held in honor (13:4).
While kindness might be viewed as the softer, gentler side of goodness, the fruit of the Spirit in goodness desires to see goodness in others and in situations, and is not always pleasant or sweet. “He is a good man.” “She is a good woman” This is good or not good. Goodness is found at the core of a person’s will. A husband can seek goodness in marriage and the wife likewise. And when they both do, God is well pleased.

Proverbs 18:22...“He who finds a wife finds a GOOD thing and obtains favor from the LORD.” — Proverbs 31:12...“She does him GOOD, and not harm, all the days of her life.”

**FOR DISCUSSION:**

1. What made it NOT good that Adam be alone? What then made it good when a wife was created? How does this describe well what goodness in marriage of any age ought to include?

2. Jesus once said, “One is good, God.” With that in mind, what is a primary way goodness will be demonstrated in marriage?

3. Ecclesiastes 4:9...”Two are better than one, because they have a GOOD reward for their toil.” Explain.
4. Name some ways goodness can be physically displayed in marriage?

5. Name some ways goodness can be demonstrated in word?

6. Name some other ways goodness can be seen in the home?

**MARRIAGE & FAITHFULNESS**

If a spouse is bearing the fruit of the Spirit, he or she will be faithful. If both are doing so, even better. Faithfulness is a very important aspect of building a strong healthy marriage. Of course, being faithful to marriage vows, and keeping faithful to each other sexually is the first area that comes to mind. Both spouses need to make a conscious, genuine and earnest attempt to honor their marriage vows. Fornication is the one reason God indicates may be the grounds for divorce and remarriage. Infidelity can literally end up dissolving the union.

But, faithfulness is in other areas of a husband and wife’s relationship, too. Marriage is the ultimate partnership between a man and a woman! A good marriage embraces loyalty, trustworthiness...faithfulness. It is important to learn to become transparent with your spouse. Nothing is done that will produce suspicion in the other...at least not purposely. Things will be avoided that might make the other jealous. Proverbs 31:11 says...“The heart of her husband TRUSTS in her, and he will have no lack of gain.”
Both know that no matter what; that they can trust the other and that they are there for one another. Even when they disagree they have inner peace about their marriage because there is a deep well of trust built into the foundation of their relationship. Life is complex and at times very difficult...everyone has a bad day from time to time...so its okay to allow each other to vent when needed, for faithfulness allows each to give the other some space whenever necessary, without it threatening the relationship longterm.

Faithfulness says that vows to a spouse and to God are being taken seriously. That no matter what, the two can count on each other to be there. It can be trusted through poor times, sick times, and worse times...as well as rich times, health times, and better times. Dependability is a fruit of the Spirit that should shine in marriage. Faithfulness is believing in the power of God to see positive change in your marriage, hope for better days, and loyalty to commitments made. God says to all mankind, be thou faithful to Me, and you will receive eternal life. And so marriage partners say to each, I will be faithful to you, till death do us part.

FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Read I Cor. 7:1-5. Discuss faithfulness sexually. How is it best maintained? What are troubles to be wary of?

3. Be faithful even when your mate isn’t. Are the marriage vows unilateral? Explain.

4. An elder's children need to be faithful children, they are not guilty of what? (Titus 1:6). How would this apply to his wife, or even himself?

5. How is faithfulness to others seen in the help we provide? (III John 5-8) Apply this to marriage.

6. How is keeping our word a part of faithfulness to our spouse?

7. Money is one of the top problems in marriages. Explain how faithfulness in handling of money will be seen in marriage.

**MARRIAGE & GENTLENESS**

Gentleness is a fruit or product of God’s spiritual influences. Gentleness is important in marriage. Marriage is meant to be an endearing, beautiful, romantic, sometimes velvety relationship between a man and a woman. Marriage should be
equally cherished by both and one way is through the tender expressions of feelings. Being sensitive, caring and gentle will help build a delightfulness in marriage. Gentleness allows both to let their guard down with one another and that closeness in the bond and develops trust, as each handles the other with care.

Gentleness is important because it allows each to be able to not always be hiding behind the hard shell of a personality...that shell or thick skin that is developed in order to protect one’s self from the world and its influences. Instead a spouse allows the other to embrace them in a most intimate way that is vulnerable. Sure, it is vulnerable, but the heart of love needs to be exposed to vulnerability to reach its highest heights.

Gentleness is also meekness. Meekness is not weakness, but power, which chooses to defer to others...in this case the other spouse. The husband needs to be a man of steel...with courage and strength, resolve and determination, but he also needs to be a man of velvet...with the softer and gentler qualities of personality and character. Gentleness is that. It is power that is toned down. And the man likes that...he likes one with whom he can tone it down. He may only let her be that one, in fact.

And the wife likewise needs this gentleness, though maybe not for the same reason. She may need it because she is a weaker vessel and does not deal best with rough edges all the time. Her gentle womanliness is emphasized by how she “babys” him, soothes him, pampers him, etc.

Gentleness can also be seen through physical touch. Physical intimacy is a key element for a thriving marriage. Initiate gentle touches often. Initiate gentle words often. Gentleness is also seen in lending a hand, being a GENTLEman, shielding the wife from certain harsh realities of life, etc. Elaborate.
FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Just how gentle is God thinking we ought to be? (I Thessalonians 2:7) Discuss.

2. In 2 Timothy 2:24-26 we learn that gentleness exhibits itself when and how? How will this then be seen in marriage? See also Titus 3:2.

3. What does gentleness demonstrate? (James 3:17) How do the the aspects of heavenly wisdom which James says follow in the wake of gentleness within marriage?

4. Just how valuable does God view this spiritual quality? (I Peter 3:3-4) Comment on the connection of gentleness and a quiet spirit.

5. Where ought gentleness to be seen? (Proverbs 15:1) Some translations say “gentle tongue” in 15:4. Comment on what is taught there and how that applies to marriage.

6. I Timothy 6:11 says gentleness, among other things, is to be pursued. So, if gentleness is a lacking quality in marriage, how ought it to be developed?
MARRIAGE & SELF-CONTROL

The final aspect of the fruit of the Spirit to be addressed in this study and how this applies to marriage is self-control. Titus 2:4-5 says, “train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be SELF-CONTROLLED, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.”

When women love their husbands and children, when they are kind and submissive, when they are self-controlled and pure (in heart), God’s Word cannot be reviled. If a wife is not submissive, not self-controlled, is not pure, is unkind, and doesn’t love her husband or children, this reflects badly on God. Non-believers can speak contemptuously about such women, their efforts to win others to Christ is weakened; in fact they bring shame to the name of Christ because if they call themselves a Christian and yet act carnally it is seen as hypocritical.

And what goes for the wife, goes for the husband. For instance, husbands are told by God to control their eyes lusting after other women. Matthew 5:27-29 teaches husbands to control their eyes along these lines and it is emphasized...pluck it out! But, that is just one example. Self control as influenced by God’s Spirit will show itself in all kinds of ways in marriage. Controlling time spent away from her. Controlling money spent on own pleasures. Controlling places visited. Controlling who is “hung out with”. All kinds of things.

First Corinthians 7:5 says, “Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of SELF-CONTROL.” Even in sexual relations within marriage, self-control is emphasized. God wants both spouses to control their sexual urges, and says one way to assist this is to not refrain from such for long and only is mutually agreed upon and for a special noble purpose. Another way is to yield control of your body to the other spouse as their sexual needs may be.
Both spouses ought to let God influence their speech. Control what said, when said, and how said. Both spouses ought to control everything. Abstaining from bad things of course. But, also over doing good things, or inexpediently doing them.

Our fleshly desires, Scripture tells us, are continually at odds with God’s Spirit. Therefore, self-control is going to be necessary to make certain that God rules in our life. This is a very powerful characteristic to have, one that is required if you are working toward improving your marriage. Controlling your body, actions, and words determines the direction of your marriage, and it is necessary to be able to consciously practice all the other parts of the fruit of the Spirit.

**FOR DISCUSSION:**

1. What are some areas of greatest difficulty exercising self-control in marriage?

   Husband:

   

   Wife:

2. Why is it important for husbands to control their eyes looking at girls (Job 31:1)?
3. Why is it important for wives to control, through moderation, their outer adornment? (I Timothy 2:8-10)

4. Christianity is governed by self-discipline (I Corinthians 9:27). Just how easy a task is this?

**CONCLUSION:** Marriage and the fruit of the Spirit. Sounds good, but it will only be good when we walk in the Spirit...are lead by the Spirit. This is more than wise marriage counseling, it is inspired words of God. May He bless our efforts to be doers of the Word, and not hearers only. Amen?