

Lutheran Women in Mission

BIBLE STUDY

Fruit of the Spirit- Gentleness by Alice Schuman

Opening

Sing "The Lord's My Shepherd, Leading Me" (LW 417) or "Oh, that the Lord Would Guide My Ways" (All God's People Sing 191, TLH 416, LW 392).

A Litany from Galatians 5:22-26

Leader: The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

People: Lord, we pray that the fruit of Your Spirit may grow in us.

Leader: Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

People: Lord, help us to destroy any passions or desires that turn us away from you. Transform our sinful natures and teach us Your way.

Leader: Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

People: Lord, walk ahead of us and help us to follow you. Lord, walk beside us and hold us up in difficult times. Lord, walk behind us and protect us.

Leader: Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

People: Lord, help us not to think too much of ourselves. Lord, help us not to make those around us angry. Lord, help us to rejoice with our sisters and brothers in their joys, and keep us from envy. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

In an age when road rage, boom boxes, angry voices and abuse abound, what images does the word "gentle" bring to mind? Wimp? Christian? Or ...?

The dictionary says "gentle" may mean to be easily taught or led, or it may mean to be without violence, sternness or harshness. Let's examine some Bible passages to help us understand gentleness. (If time is short, divide into four groups, with each taking one of the following four sections to study and report back. Then do parts 5, 6 and 7 together.)

1. Following Our Shepherd-Read Psalm 23. Even those of us who are unfamiliar with sheep know that a little lamb is a vulnerable animal and needs a strong shepherd to guide and protect it.



According to Psalm 23, how does our strong Shepherd show His gentleness and care for us? How can we be more in tune with the leading of our Shepherd?

2. The Parable of the Good Samaritan-Read Luke 10:25-37. It's obvious that the Samaritan's gentleness toward the man on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho is in stark contrast to the violence of the robbers who had attacked him. But what about the lack of gentleness on the part of the priest and the Levite? Why do you suppose they ignored the victim?

What types of needy people in our society do we ignore or avoid? Why?

What did the Samaritan do and say that showed his gentleness?

What attitudes and behaviors might the Holy Spirit want to create in us so we more closely reflect the Samaritan's behavior?

3. The Birth of Jesus Christ-Read Matthew 1:18-25. If Joseph had strictly adhered to the law, he had the right to publicly condemn his fiancée Mary, an unwed teenager who was pregnant with a child that wasn't his. But even before the angel came to assure Joseph that the Holy Spirit conceived this child and he should marry Mary, Joseph had already decided to treat Mary gently, not to sternly invoke the law. Even when we're right, we can be wrong when we become unduly stern or rigid. What does the Lord expect of us when others sin against us? (See Matthew 6:14, 15.)

Why is forgiveness difficult? Share examples of situations in which mercy and forgiveness may be required in our family relationships. In our church. In our LWML groups.

4. The Woman Caught in Adultery-Read John 8:1-11. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees were itching to put Jesus on the spot and to punish the adulteress. They dragged her before a crowd of people, making a public spectacle of her, treating her in the harshest possible way. Jesus put a stop to their frenzy. He forced them to examine their own hearts, to recognize their own sins and to walk away in shame. Then He forgave her and encouraged her to make the changes needed in her lifestyle. He didn't condone or ignore her behavior, but He treated her gently.

When are we likely to speak or act in a harsh way?

How can we deal with our frustrations, our anger, our irritability? Read Matthew 11:28 - 30.

Discuss practical ways to manage over-busy schedules and exhaustion.

5. Inner Beauty-Read 1 Peter 3:1-4. This is advice that is valuable not only for married women, but for singles as well. The "unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit" does not only influence unbelieving husbands; it has an effect on everyone with whom we come in contact. How can we cultivate "a gentle and quiet spirit"?

6. Women in Mission-Read 1 Peter 3:15-16. What part does gentleness play in our witness to unbelieving acquaintances in our workplaces, our social groups, our community organizations?

How can we "be prepared" to witness gently to the people with whom we come in contact? See James 3:17.

7. Gentle Reminders-Read the following verses and write them in your daybook or on your calendar or on a card you can carry in your purse or stick on your refrigerator door. Use them daily to remind yourself to pray for and practice gentle behavior.

Proverbs 15:1

- **Ephesians 4:2**
- **Philippians 4:5**
- **Colossians 3:12**

Closing

Sing "I Am Jesus' Little Lamb" (*LW 517, TLH 648*) or "Take My Life, O Lord Renew" (*All God's People Sing 223*).

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