

Got Fruit? Gentleness

Ready (*Plant the seed*)

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. —Proverbs 15:1

Set (*Get the conversation started*)

We can get a better picture of what gentleness is by looking at what it is not. Gentleness is not prideful, arrogant, angry or vengeful. We can find a beautiful example of God's gentleness in John 8 when the Pharisees bring a woman who had sinned to Jesus. They said that the Law commanded them to stone her. Instead, Jesus replied, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." (John 8:7) After they all left, Jesus said to her, "Go and leave your life of sin." (John 8:11). Gentleness is forgiving, loving and humble. Just as Jesus treated the sinful woman gently, we should treat others the same. God loves us this way in that he has forgiven us our sins and sent His son to die for us so that we may be with him forever.

Playing sports can oftentimes cause us to get caught up the moment and react without gentleness. Have you ever heard an adult yelling angrily at the television when his favorite team is losing? What about when you are at a football game on Friday night and the spectators start berating players when they make mistakes? How do you feel when an opposing player gets rough with you on the field; or worse, when they hurt one of your teammates? It is so easy to react with anger. The Bible directs us to "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love." —Ephesians 4:2. It can be so hard to react with gentleness when someone wrongs you; but you have a secret weapon to help you- the Holy Spirit! Remember that once you accept Jesus, the Holy Spirit dwells within you giving you the fruit of gentleness. It gives you the strength to rise above anger and vengeance to respond with humility and love.

Grow (*Talk it over*)

-Can you share a time when someone wronged you and you reacted with anger? What happened after? What do you think would have happened if you responded with gentleness?

-Why do you think the Pharisees left instead of stoning the sinful woman?

-What can you do in moments of anger to stop and react with gentleness?

Pray

Father God, you love us so well and so gently. We thank you for giving us the fruit of gentleness and reminding us that we can always choose to react with love. We admit that sometimes we react harshly and invite you to grow and strengthen us in this. In Jesus name, Amen.

Overtime (*Optional object lesson as time permits*)

Materials: Empty water bottle (or you can use a rolled up paper), piece of Kleenex or toilet tissue, straw

-If using paper, roll it up to an inch or less. Close one end by folding it over- trick will only work if an end is closed.

-Rip off a small piece of tissue and roll into a ball. Set it inside the opening of the roll or the neck of the water bottle.

-Say: *Who can blow this tissue as hard as they can into the bottle (or paper roll)?*

-Let them take turns blowing as hard as they can at the piece of tissue. It will fly right back out at them.

-Say: *Hmmm. Blowing harshly isn't really working is it? Maybe we should try being more gentle. Where does our gentleness come from again? Yes, the Holy Spirit!*

-Pull out the straw.

-Say: *This straw will represent the Holy Spirit. I think it will help me be gentler and more effective.*

-Use the straw to direct the flow gently into the bottle and the tissue will go to the end of the bottle.

-Say: *Yes, that worked much better! Just like our harsh words can bring about anger, the tissue flew right back into our faces. When we used the straw (the Holy Spirit) to guide our gentleness, we were successful! What a great lesson to remember when we are angry. We can stop and use the Holy Spirit within us to be gentle with others.*