Activity Booklet

BUT THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS LOVE, JOY, PEACE, PATIENCE, KINDNESS, GOODNESS, FAITHFULNESS, GENTLENESS AND SELF-CONTROL. AGAINST SUCH THINGS THERE IS NO LAW.

Galatians 5:22-23

OVERVIEW

The 9 Challenge

Create nine experiences at
home over the coming nine weeks with a focus on each of the nine fruit of the Spirit.

Ideas and resources to
help make the process fun and practical can be found at *homepointe.org/the9* and in this booklet. Feel free to adjust these ideas to your family's needs or come up with your own.

FOUNDATION REMINDER

The fruit of the Spirit grows out of an abiding relationship with Jesus Christ. Fruit is produced in us not by us. But we have a part to play by submitting ourselves to God and inviting Him to nurture His character in us and in our homes.

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LOVE

Bearing fruit at home

What is love?

Love is a choice, not a feeling or emotion.

It is a choice to meet the needs of others.

We can learn about love from the

One who is love.

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.
John 13:34

Couples

BEST USE

A date night discussion to engage in constructive conversation about growing more love in to your relationship

ADVANCE PREP

A Bible, pen, notebook, and two rubber bands

Step One

Spend five minutes working together to create a list of songs that include the word "love" in the title or lyrics. Google lists thousands; you may search if you get stuck.

Step Two

Agree on one song from your list to sing together in a karaoke setting (e.g. Play the song on your mobile device while in the car and belt it out together)!

Step Three

Discuss whether the song gives a healthy image of love.

- Does it portray love as something based on emotions or feelings?
- Does it represent love as commitment to the well-being of another without conditions?
- Does it show love as self-sacrifice or as self-centeredness?

Step Four

Read 1 John 4:7-12 where love is mentioned about a dozen times. Share one practical way you can "love one another" like God has loved us (e.g. forgive quickly rather than giving the silent treatment, sacrifice my wants for your needs, initiate affection rather than waiting for you to do it, etc.).

Step Five

Put the rubber bands on your wrists. Hold hands and ask God to use these as a reminder to demonstrate love in practical ways this week.

Parents / Kids

BEST USE

A family activity to talk about how love grows when we stay connected to God

ADVANCE PREP

A Bible and a deflated balloon

Step One

Read Galatians 5:22-23. Start your family time by discussing that the fruit of the Spirit is something that you will be talking about over the next several weeks. This first week will be a focus on the first fruit, love.

Step Two

Give each person 30 seconds to name things they love...they can be as simple as Legos, individual family members by name, favorite foods, fun activities, etc.

Step Three

Hold up the deflated balloon and explain that it represents human love. It is nice, but could be much more by connecting to God's love. When He breathes into our version of love (the deflated balloon), it becomes something much, much better.

Step Four

Read 1 John 4:16. Talk about some ways that you can "live in God" (e.g. spending time in His Word, talking to Him in prayer, obeying and trusting His commands, etc.). As each way is shared, blow a small amount into the balloon to inflate it. When we connect to God, He helps us make our love more like His.

Step Five

Play a game with the inflated balloon. Throw the balloon in the air and whoever catches it shares one way they can show love to someone else. For a more challenging game: Take turns tapping it into the air and see how long the family can keep it up by naming one way to show love to each other with each tap. Try not to run out of ideas or the balloon will fall to the floor.

Step Six

Pray together asking God to help each of you stay connected to Him so that you will grow in love.

Parents / Teens

BEST USE

An activity for a parent and teen to compare Biblical love with various things in the physical world

ADVANCE PREP

A smart phone or computer with web access for each person, paper and pen/pencil for each person and a favorite treat to award the winner

Step One

Gather at a table, living area or office in the home. Each participant will need a device to search online. You can use a family friendly search engine like *kidrex.org* for safety.

Step Two

Say, "Today we are going to have a contest to see who can list the most types of apples in three minutes. Use the agreed upon search engine to discover as many as you can. You must be able to show a picture of any apple you list if asked for proof." Set a timer giving everyone three minutes to complete the task. Identify who won the contest and provide proof if needed. Award the treat to the winner. Ask the following questions...

- What was your favorite apple and why?
- What do all the apples have in common?
- What was the most unique type of apple? Describe it.

Step Three

Now do the same activity WITHOUT a web search. Instead open the Bible to 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Using these hints, spend three minutes listing different expressions of love. Ask, "What do all these expressions of love have in common?" Examples may include "Not about self" and "Meets another's need."

Step Four

Have each person describe one way they can show love this week from the list in the 1 Corinthians passage.

Step Five

Finish your time praying together asking God to help each person show love in a variety of practical ways this week.

JOY

Bearing fruit at home

What is joy?

Joy comes from the Lord in good times and bad. It is a deep sense of well-being that is not determined by our circumstances. Gratitude and joy go hand in hand as we focus on Him and all that He has done for us.

The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.
Psalm 126:3

Couples

BEST USE

A fun challenge to help couples discover how to nurture more joy in their lives and relationship

ADVANCE PREP

A Bible, two glass jars labeled with each spouse's name and a bag of cotton balls

The Reason

Joy is a gift we receive from God and a gift we can give to others. We become a better spouse by embracing and displaying the gift of joyfulness.

The Start

Read the words of Jesus in John 15:11. What is the source of our joy and what is it supposed to look like? Pray for each other that God would help you both grow in joy and choose joy.

The Challenge

See who can show the most joy in the next week. Try to catch each other choosing joy. Place a cotton ball in the jar for each time you see the Holy Spirit working in them as they choose joy. Follow these simple rules:

1. Both of you must diligently watch for joy in the other person. The best part of the challenge is catching each other doing something well.
2. No faking joy, that is just bad form.
3. You may not point out to the other person when you choose joy. They must notice without being told.
4. No stealing cotton balls or withholding a cotton ball that is deserved.

The Source

Every morning, and as often as you remember, ask God to grow the fruit of joy in you. "Lord, I want Your joy to be in me and I desire that joy be evident in my choices and my attitude no matter the circumstance."

The Prize

Agree upon a significant prize before you begin. The person with the most cotton balls at the end of the week wins. But in reality you both win as the challenge causes your marriage to grow in joy.

After the Challenge

Continue to seek the Lord to develop joy in your life. Feel free to start the challenge again and again.

Parents / Kids

BEST USE

A family time activity exploring the difference between happiness and joy

ADVANCE PREP

Food coloring, a clear glass of water, cooking oil, a spoon, and a Bible

Step One

Read John 15:11 and discuss the difference between joy and happiness. Joy is a gift from God that doesn't change with circumstances. Happiness is often in response to happenings.

Step Two

Pour a couple of drops of food coloring in the cup of water and stir with the spoon. The food coloring colors the entire cup of water. The color in the water is just like the joy we have from God when we ask Him to come into our lives. Our joy is found in Him and what He has done for us.

Step Three

Discuss some things that seem to make you happy (e.g. winning a game, a good grade, a special treat, etc.). Happiness is good, but temporary. Pour some oil into the glass of colored water. Notice how the oil just stays on the surface. The oil is like happiness. It is only temporary and is just on the surface. Would you rather have joy or happiness?

Step Four

Talk through the following questions:

- What reasons do we have to be joyful?
- Do others see joy in us even when we face disappointments?

Step Five

Conclude your time together with a family laugh party. Try to make each other laugh. (Consider tickles and watching funny videos, etc.) As the laughter starts it can quickly spread, getting bigger and louder. As we experience God's joy it grows deeper and stronger in our lives and is contagious, spreading to others.

Pray

Ask God to help each member of your family connect to God's joy in good times and in hard times.

Parents / Teens

BEST USE

An activity with older children/teens to discover joy from a Biblical perspective and understand it is possible to have joy regardless of circumstances

ADVANCE PREP

A Bible or device that has a Bible and a dry erase marker

Step One

Ask everyone what comes to mind when they hear the word joy. Ask if there's a difference between joy and happiness.

Step Two

Read James 1:2-4. Would a person be happy when they are going through a trial or hard time? (Not likely.) So how could they have joy? What does this passage say about trials or the testing of your faith?

Step Three

Joy is available regardless of circumstances. What are some tough things you or those you know have experienced in the last few years? Did you/they seem to have joy in the midst of those tough times?

Step Four

Joy is not something we can just muster up on our own. We must look to the source of joy in order to receive it and practice it throughout life. Read Romans 15:13. How is God described in these verses? What is God filling a person with?

Step Five

According to Romans 15:13, God is full of hope and is the one who can fill you with joy. Using a dry erase marker, write the word JOY on your bathroom mirror. Every time you see it on your mirror over the next few weeks, remember that God can offer you the gift of joy.

PEACE

Bearing fruit at home

What is peace?

Peace is not the absence of conflict, but rather the awareness of the sufficiency of God in every circumstance. Peace is found as we rest and rely on Him. Worry and anxiety often come as we take our eyes off our all-sufficient God. We can have peace even in times of trouble.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.
I do not give to you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled
and do not be afraid.
John 14:27

Couples

BEST USE

A good conversation about helping peace grow in your own life and in your relationship

ADVANCE PREP

A Bible

Step One

Read Romans 15:13 together.

Step Two

Discuss the following questions:

- What would our home be like if there were more peace?
- What might we be doing that is hindering God from filling our lives with peace?
- Are we willing to work to remove those obstacles that may be hindering from God filling us with peace?
- What is one thing we can agree upon that is an immediate step for us to allow God to fill us with His peace?

Step Three

Talk through the acronym below. How could you use this acronym to rely on God for more peace?

P - Pause. Slow things down.
E - Eliminate. What needs to be cut out?
A - Allow. Make room to be filled with God's peace. Romans 15:13
C - Challenge. Challenge the things that disrupt peace in your life.
E - Enter. Enter into the peace that Jesus offers. John 14:27

Step Four

Share with each other if there is a certain letter of the acronym that stands out the most; an area that you want to ask God to help you with. Take a photo of this with your phone or write it onto an index card to look at every day this week to assist as you cooperate with God to develop the fruit of peace.

Parents / Kids

BEST USE

A family time activity to talk about peace

ADVANCE PREP

A Bible, balloon and a hair dryer

Step One

Read John 16:33. Jesus is telling His followers that there will be trouble but that we can trust Him for peace because He is in control.

Step Two

Blow up a balloon and tie it off. Have someone hold the balloon stem below the knot and tell them the objective is for them to hold the balloon very tightly and keep it still while the hair dryer or family member blows air on it. They will not be very successful. Tell them to hold on tight to try to control the balloon so it stays "peaceful in the storm."

Step Three

Now, have someone hold the balloon by gripping the top of it. Try blowing the balloon now. (Blowing on it should not be able to affect the balloon.) This illustration represents the peace that God can bring when we allow Him to be in control. The circumstances may not change, but who we are trusting for peace does.

Step Four

Peace greatly involves letting go of control and allowing God to be our ultimate peace. As a family we can create an aroma of peace in our home as we team up with God and seek peace in Him.

Step Five

Allow each person to share one thing that they feel worried or "not-at-peace" about. Pray together specifically for those items shared. Thank God that He is in control and ask that He would give peace in each situation.

Parents / Teens

BEST USE

An activity with older children/teens used to discover and understand peace from a Biblical perspective

ADVANCE PREP

A Bible or device that has a Bible, paper and something to write with

Step One

What comes to mind when you hear the word peace? Does peace always have to do with the absence of war or conflict?

Step Two

Read Philippians 4:6-7. God does not desire that we are worried or anxious about anything. The spiritual fruit of peace is the opposite of worry. Peace comes from God. We can tap into the peace that passes all understanding through prayer.

Step Three

Have each person make a list of things that cause him or her anxiety or worry. Discuss each one and the reasons behind them. It is important to not dismiss anything from a person's list, which could be easy to do if one does not have the same worry or anxiety.

Step Four

Take turns praying for one another's worries, asking God to bring peace to that area of each other's lives.

Step Five

During the next week check in with one another either at dinner or through a text message asking if they are worried or anxious about anything. Pray for one another on the spot or through text based on their response.

PATIENCE

Bearing fruit at home

What is patience?

Patience is the ability to wait on God. We can trust that God is working for our best and His glory in His perfect timing. Patience with others grows as we are reminded that God is patient with us.

But if we hope for what we do not yet observe, we eagerly wait for it with patience.
Romans 8:25

Couples

BEST USE

A date night conversation to discuss depending on God to develop more patience

ADVANCE PREP

A printed or online dictionary, Bible, pen, and two index cards

Step One

Look up the definition of patience together. What meaning sticks out most to each of you?

Step Two

Write "Patience" at the top of your index cards. Each share several ways God is patient with you and write them on your individual index cards.

Step Three

Read Proverbs 14:29. Each share one recent incident when you observed your spouse being patient. Now each share one recent incident in which you know you acted impulsively or quick-tempered.

Step Four

Brainstorm some "patience-stretching activities" you could use this week to practice intentional patience. Pick from the list below or come up with your own. Now, add those to the reverse side of your index card.

- Get in the longest checkout line at the store.
- Park in one of the furthest spots from the entry door.
- When approaching a stoplight get in the lane with the most vehicles.
- While driving, stay at or just below the speed limit.
- Sit in silence for five minutes each day.

TIP: Don't purposefully cause your spouse to wait on you and say that you were helping them develop patience!

Step Five

Decide where each of you will keep your index card for the coming week to help remind you of God's patience and His desire to grow this fruit in your life.

Parents / Kids

BEST USE

A family time activity to learn about patience

ADVANCE PREP

A Bible, ingredients and the recipe to bake a special treat such as cookies or brownies

Step One

Work together to mix all the ingredients to bake. Put the mix in the oven and then sit on the floor near the oven to watch and wait.

Step Two

As you wait, read Isaiah 40:31 together (King James Version if possible). Talk about the meaning of patience – to be content while waiting for God's timing. Try to come up with a list of characters in the Bible who needed to wait for God's timing (e.g. Waited well = Joseph in prison, Jacob waiting for his wife, Abraham, Prodigal son's father. Not so well = The children of Israel waiting in wilderness, prodigal son).

Step Three

If you have the time, go ahead and read a few of the character's stories together in the Bible. Discuss if the character(s) "waited well" for God's timing? Were they patient? Did they complain and grumble while waiting or did they choose to trust God and be content?

Step Four

Once your yummy treats are finished baking and are ready to eat, spend some time talking about ways your family can "wait well" and areas in which each of you may need to practice the art of patience.

Pray

Thank God that He is faithful and we can trust His plans. Pray that He will give each of you the grace needed to grow the fruit of patience.

Parents / Teens

BEST USE

An activity with older children/teens used to discover and understand patience from a Biblical perspective

ADVANCE PREP

A Bible or device that has a Bible, index cards and something to write with

Step One

Talk about a time each of you were impatient over the last few days. What were the circumstances? What happened as a result of your impatience? How could things have gone differently if you would have shown patience instead?

Step Two

Read James 5:7-11 and Galatians 6:9. What do these passages teach us about patience? What do we know about a farmer and his crops? How does this apply to the situations in which we become impatient?

Step Three

Discuss situations where you struggle the most with patience like in your car, at school, on your team, or with a family member or friend.

Step Four

Each person take an index card and write out Ephesians 4:2. Then put the card in a place where you might need the reminder to practice patience the most (e.g. car, school locker or binder, etc.). Let this verse remind you to be patient with others and in every circumstance as God is patient with you.

KINDNESS

Bearing fruit at home

What is kindness?

Kindness is expressing to others the same mercy and grace that God has given to us in Christ Jesus. This can be shown in both words and actions to those around us without merit.

Be kind to each other, sympathetic, forgiving each other as God has forgiven you through Christ.
Ephesians 4:32

Couples

BEST USE

A date night to plan a week filled with an onslaught of random acts of kindness (RAOK)

ADVANCE PREP

A Bible, paper and something to write with

Step One

Read Ephesians 4:32.

Step Two

Discuss the following:

- What are the clear directives found in that scripture?
- How can we nurture a home that is filled with kindness?
- What does this verse say is the kindest thing that Christ has done for us?
- How can I show more kindness to you in my words and my actions?

Step Three

Create a list of RAOK you would enjoy doing together this week. Mimic this sample list...

MONDAY
Go to a restaurant and scan for a young family with kids. Secretly pay for dessert to be sent to their table.

WEDNESDAY
Send an email prayer or card to someone you know is struggling or lonely.

SATURDAY
Make a special breakfast for a family or take an elderly relative out for breakfast.

SUNDAY
Bring an anonymous thank you note or treat to a fire station, police station or to a specific public servant.

Pray

Thank God for His amazing kindness toward us. Ask Him to bless your RAOK actions this week and that they will bless others.

Parents / Kids

BEST USE

A family time activity to learn about God's kindness toward us and the difference our kindness makes to those around us

ADVANCE PREP

Bowl of water, pepper shaker, bar of soap, and sugar

Step One

Take the bowl of water and pour in pepper representing people in our lives. Now take the bar of soap; this represents being unkind. As you stick the bar of soap in the center of the water, talk about ways that we are sometimes unkind to others. (The pepper should move away from the soap; move it around a little bit if doesn't immediately.) When we are unkind, others don't want to be around us and we don't show God's love to those people.

Step Two

Now take the sugar representing kindness. Pour the sugar where you had placed the soap before. (The pepper should be drawn to the sugar.) What happens to the people (pepper) when you are kind (sugar)?

Step Three

Read Ephesians 4:32, "Be kind to each other, sympathetic, forgiving each other as God has forgiven you through Christ."

Pray

Ask God to help each member of your family to grow in loving kindness toward each other and those God places in your lives.

Optional

Choose random acts of kindness to do for others. Search for ideas online or come up with your own (e.g. bake a treat for a friend, smile at as many people as you can, give someone a compliment, draw a picture for someone, pick up trash at the park, etc.).

Parents / Teens

BEST USE

An activity with older children/teens used to discover and understand kindness from a Biblical perspective

ADVANCE PREP

Bible or device that has a Bible

Step One

Read Ephesians 4:32. Why should we be kind to others? What did we do to deserve God's kindness?

Step Two

This week we are going to practice the ideas in Ephesians 4:32 through random acts of kindness.

Step Three

Pick three random acts of kindness from the list below and make a plan when you will do them over the next week:

- Open the door for someone.
- Tape change to a vending machine.
- Donate food to your local food pantry.
- Do a chore for someone in your family.
- Leave a kind note for someone to find.
- Give a compliment to a stranger.

Step Four

At the end of the week come back together to discuss the random acts of kindness.

- Were you able to complete three acts of kindness?
- If not, what prevented you from doing so?
- Did anyone do more than three? If so, why?
- How did it make you feel to do something kind for someone else?

Step Five

We did nothing to earn God's kindness or forgiveness; it was all based on God's love in Christ. Since we have received the kindness of God in Christ, we can show kindness to others even if we don't think they deserve it.

Optional

Choose one or two acts of kindness to do together as a family.

GOODNESS

Bearing fruit at home

What is goodness?

God is good! His integrity and moral perfection are flawless. His goodness to us is evident through His grace and love. Apart from Him, there is nothing good in us. Although this side of heaven we will never be perfect, through His Spirit, God can begin the process of purifying our lives.

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.
Galatians 6:9

Couples

BEST USE

A game to foster the fruit of goodness in your marriage

ADVANCE PREP

Set aside 15 minutes to establish the rules of a game you will play together the rest of the week.

Discuss

Goodness is doing the right thing for the right reason. Easier said than done! Read Matthew 12:35 and discuss how a person brings forth good. (Hint: It has to do with the good treasure of the Holy Spirit within a person who is connected to Jesus Christ.) Next read Hebrews 10:24 and discuss what it means to "provoke" one another toward good works.

Game Rules

OBJECT

Foster a culture of goodness at home by making it easy for your spouse to do good things. The person who "provokes" his/her spouse toward goodness most successfully throughout the week wins.

CATEGORIES

Any and all of the following qualify...

- A gentle touch that calms anxiety
- A soft word that dispels tension
- An apology that invites forgiveness
- An affectionate wink that prompts one in return
- A question that opens conversation
- A muted phone that reduces distraction

SCORING

Keep a dry-eraser marker by your bathroom mirror in order to tally successful provocations throughout the week. If there are any marks on your side of the mirror at the end of the week, you win a good back rub or foot rub. If there are marks on both sides, you both win a great hug and passionate kiss!

Pray

After the rub or kiss, briefly ask God to help you continue provoking goodness at home.

Parents / Kids

BEST USE

A family night activity to celebrate and share the good gifts of God

ADVANCE PREP

Prepare or identify 5-10 items/foods/experiences that your child(ren) can sample (e.g. a slice of their favorite fruit, a fun song, the wind from a fan, a flower, a board game, a warm hug, etc.).

Step One

Read Matthew 7:9-12 together.

Step Two

Tell your family member(s) that you have planned a 15-minute goodness expedition. Give them clues to locate/connect to the items/experiences you have planned for them.

Step Three

For each stop along the expedition, pause to give God thanks for good gifts, then discuss:

What does this good gift tell us about God's goodness?
Examples may include:

- He is an artist so He gives us beauty.
- He is joy so He gives us pleasure.
- He is love so He gives us relationships.

How might we fill our home with more of this good thing?
Examples may include:

- Play beautiful/fun music in the car while driving together.
- Eat meals together and enjoy the food/company.
- Hug/kiss/touch more often.

Pray

Thank God for His goodness. Take time to focus on specific gifts that He has given that you talked about during your family time. Ask Him to help grow the fruit of goodness in your home.

Parents / Teens

BEST USE

An activity with older children/teens to have meaningful conversation about the goodness of God

ADVANCE PREP

A device with Internet connection, a Bible, pen, and paper for each person

Step One

Pull up Chris Tomlin's song "Good, Good Father." You can find it on YouTube, itunes, etc. Listen for things that are good about God and write them down on a piece of paper.

Step Two

Discuss everyone's favorite part of the song. According to the song, why is God a good Father? What is true about us only because He is a good Father?

Step Three

Read Psalm 31:19 together. This verse tells us that God has an abundance of goodness and that there are two things we can do to receive that goodness.

- Respect: How do we model respect for God?
- Trust: How do we model trust in God?

Step Four

Goodness toward others, as a fruit of the Spirit, grows out of a response to God's goodness toward us. Discuss ways that goodness will show itself in someone's life.

Step Five

Pray together thanking God for His goodness to you and ask for the grace to reflect that goodness in your home/daily life.

FAITHFULNESS

Bearing fruit at home

What is faithfulness?

Faithfulness is the characteristic of reliability and the trait of loyalty. God is faithful and we can always count on Him. A faithful person is one who does what they say.

One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.
Luke 16:10

Couples

BEST USE

Date night discussion on the fruit of faithfulness

ADVANCE PREP

A Bible, pen and paper

Step One

Read Luke 16:10 together. This verse tells us being a faithful person starts in small ways.

Step Two

Each of you create a list of "little big things" in which your spouse has shown himself or herself faithful in your relationship and in life. The following examples may prompt other ideas...

- Shows up to work on time and works hard
- Makes being home for dinner a priority
- Spends within our means
- Avoids time alone or connection with the opposite sex
- Shows the kids affection

Step Three

Read the list to your spouse and explain why this "little" thing is "big" to you. Examples may include...

- "You avoid time with the opposite sex which makes me feel more secure."
- "You work hard on your job showing me you are willing to sacrifice for your family and that brings us a sense of stability."
- "You help us spend our money wisely which keeps us out of serious debt."

Step Four

Celebrate one another's "little big things" by sharing a favorite specialty coffee or dessert.

Step Five

Pray and thank God for His faithfulness and the ways your spouse models faithfulness.

Parents / Kids

BEST USE

Conversation during drive time about faithfulness and how we can trust God

ADVANCE PREP

A Bible and a vehicle

Step One

Take a drive to run errands or to go get a special treat. Before you leave, have someone in the family read Deuteronomy 7:9. God is faithful! We can trust Him and His Word. When times are tough or we don't understand things, we can trust that the God who loves us is in control.

Step Two

While driving, be on the lookout for old cars or trucks. Those vehicles must be faithful for the owner to still be driving it around. Look for other old things like trees or buildings. Discuss how they have stood the test of time. If something is faithful, we trust it. The same is true of people. Faithful people are trustworthy.

Suggestion

If you are stopping to get a special treat, use the remaining step as you eat together. If not, use it when you arrive at your destination.

Step Three

Luke 16:10 says "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much." What are some little ways you can be faithful? What are some bigger ways you can be faithful (e.g. telling truth, do what you say you will do, obeying parents, obeying God's Word)?

Pray

Finish your time as you pray and ask God to help your family connect with Him so that you can be more faithful and dependable. Thank Him that He is trustworthy, in control and that we can trust Him.

Parents / Teens

BEST USE

An activity with older children/teens to consider the faithfulness of God and how our ability to display this fruit overflows from His faithfulness to us

ADVANCE PREP

Find a setting to take pictures of different sports teams. Bring a digital camera/smart phone, pen and paper.

Step One

Parents and teens should take five pictures of different sports teams found on signs, bumper stickers, in stores, yards, houses, or anywhere outside the home. The only rule is that you cannot take a picture of the same team more than once.

Step Two

After the pictures have been taken, make a list of all the sports teams represented.

Step Three

Each person explain which two teams they think have the most loyal fans. Discuss why these fans would be more loyal. Is their loyalty most likely a result of the team or the fans?

Step Four

It is easy to be loyal when your team is winning but harder when they lose. Faithfulness is similar to loyalty but goes so much deeper. It means to be loyal and reliable. Read Psalm 86:15 to see that God is abounding in love and faithfulness. Part of His character is a never-ending supply of faithfulness.

Step Five

Each person name at least one person who has proven themself loyal and reliable. Describe what that has meant in your life.

Step Six

Go around and speak one-sentence prayers thanking God for being faithful and for those named in step five that model faithfulness to us.

GENTLENESS

Bearing fruit at home

What is gentleness?

Gentleness is power under control. It is humility and restraint that derives from a position of true strength in Christ.

Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.
Philippians 4:5

Couples

BEST USE

A date night to discuss the fruit of gentleness and talk about ways to move towards more gentleness in the home

ADVANCE PREP

A Bible, a pillow and a rock

Step One

Read Proverbs 15:1. Talk about the difference between delivering a message that is gentle compared to one that is harsh.

Step Two

Look at the pillow and the rock. Consider together what both are used for, what they are made of and what it would be like to be hit across the head with both. (NOTE: A pillow fight might be fun at this point, but please don't hit each other with the rock!)

Step Three

Each spouse share ways that you feel your own words/actions can sometimes come across more like a rock than a pillow. Be sure to take this time to focus on yourself and not your spouse.

Step Four

Read Matthew 11:29 where Jesus described himself as gentle. He was anything but weak. It takes great strength to portray a gentle spirit during moments of anger, stress or fear. Now, each spouse come up with a couple of ways that your own words/actions can come across more like a pillow in the future.

Step Five

Pray together asking God to mold and shape you into a person who is gentle and to help you control any potentially harsh reactions at home.

Parents / Kids

BEST USE

A family time activity to discover and talk about God's gentleness with us and how we can be gentle with others

ADVANCE PREP

Spoons, eggs (raw or hard boiled) and a Bible

Step One

What is gentleness? Gentleness is often confused with being weak. Read Matthew 11:29. Christ said, "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." God has all the power in the universe, yet He is gentle with us, and He wants us to learn to be like Him.

Step Two

Let's put gentleness to the test and have an egg race! You can use real eggs (you might want to go outside or someplace that can get messy) or you can use hardboiled eggs. Before you race, discuss what would happen if you are too rough and not gentle with the egg? Now, let the races begin.

Step Three

Did any of the eggs fall? What happened when the eggs fell? When we are not gentle with our words or our actions it can cause damage too.

Step Four

Philippians 4:5 tells us to "Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand." Just as God is gentle with us, He wants us to be gentle in our words and actions with others.

Step Five

Talk through the following questions:

- Was I gentle in the situations I faced today? Did I use gentle words/actions?
- Do I show the same gentleness to others that God shows to me? How?

Pray

Ask God to help each member of your family as you connect to Him and learn about His gentleness, to grow in gentleness in your words and actions.

Parents / Teens

BEST USE

A mealtime activity with older children/teens to consider how the Bible describes gentleness and how this fruit of the Spirit results from God's own gentleness

ADVANCE PREP

A device with Internet connection

Step One

Discuss what comes to mind when you hear the word gentleness. Gentleness is often misunderstood. It is a characteristic that is best understood by seeing how the Bible gives it meaning.

Step Two

Have your teen navigate to a Bible passage search tool such as *openbible.info/topics* to find what the Bible says about "gentleness."

Step Three

Take turns reading some of the verses given in order to answer the following questions:

- How often do the verses talk about how we relate to others?
- How does God relate to us?
- What other characteristics do you see alongside gentleness?

Step Four

Gentleness involves how we relate or respond to others. Read Psalm 18:35 and James 3:17 to discover that we are able to show gentleness to others out of the overflow of God's gentleness toward us in Christ.

Step Five

Discuss how each of you have responded in gentleness toward others in the last few weeks. Be ready to share a personal example of how you could have been more gentle toward someone. Determine together to continue pursuing gentleness with others.

Optional

Check back in with each other throughout the week and report the ways that God has given you the grace and strength to be gentle in those opportunities.

SELF-CONTROL

Bearing fruit at home

What is self-control?

Self-control is displayed when we show discipline in our emotions, words and actions. It provides a protection for ourselves and others as we follow God's commands.

Like a city whose walls are broken down
is a man who lacks self-control.
Proverbs 25:28

Couples

BEST USE

A date night discussion to navigate the challenges of self-control

ADVANCE PREP

A Bible, pen and a piece of paper

Step One

Read 2 Timothy 1:7 and discuss what is available to us because of what God has given us.

Step Two

Read James 1:19. This passage gives us a clear picture of self-control with our emotions and our mouths. Discuss the three essential elements to self-control.

Step Three

Discuss what might change in your home if you were more intentional about self-control following the guidelines in James 1:19. Some examples might include...

- We will not yell at each other or the kids.
- We will not watch as much television.
- We will be quick to listen.
- We will take a five-second pause before responding during a conflict.
- Each strive to be the first to apologize and quick to forgive.

Step Four

Pray together and ask God to give each of you the grace to develop more self-control.

Parents / Kids

BEST USE

A family time activity to talk about self-control and making right choices

ADVANCE PREP

Open area for playing a game, and a Bible

Step One

Read Proverbs 25:28, "Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control." Explain how ancient cities needed walls for protection. If the walls were broken down, it meant that the city could be in danger. In the same way, when we lack self-control we put ourselves in danger.

Step Two

Play a game of "Simon Says." Talk about how it is important to try and have self-control when responding to the words of others. Coach them to use a three-step process with the words "Pause, Think, Act." You can add motions to go along with the words as follows...

- Pause: Arm extended with hand out flat like a traffic officer
- Think: Finger pointed to the head
- Act: Dramatic walking motion

Step Three

Allow each family member to share one area with which they would like God's help when it comes to self-control. It can be as simple as biting nails, limiting video game or mobile device time, not yelling, hitting, grabbing, etc.

Step Four

Ask God to help each member of your family be more self-controlled in the areas mentioned.

Optional

Consider checking back in with each other throughout the week. Celebrate times you catch each other using self-control; especially in the areas mentioned above.

Parents / Teens

BEST USE

An activity for a parent and teen used to discover and understand self-control from a Biblical perspective

ADVANCE PREP

A computer or device to show an online video

Step One

Today we are going to consider the fruit of the Spirit – self-control. Visit *homepointe.org/the9* to watch the video, "Marshmallow Test."

Step Two

Each person describe what they think they would have done as a child in the same situation.

Step Three

How about today? What if it was your phone sitting on the table and you kept getting notifications of new text messages or updates from Facebook or Instagram? Could you resist? What if you had to avoid looking at your phone for the next two hours, two days or even two weeks? No video games for a week? No chocolate or dessert or fast food for a month? Each person share one or two areas in which they find self-control difficult such as food, money, use of time, relationships, temptations, etc.

Step Four

Read Proverbs 25:28. How is the person without self-control described? When we develop self-control in the areas mentioned above, we become like a protected city.

Step Five

Read 1 Corinthians 10:13. According to this verse, how does God help us when it comes to self-control during temptation?

Step Six

Have one person pray that God would help each person with self-control this coming week.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

The Apostle Paul writes to the church in the book of Galatians that the Spirit of God inside the life of a believer desires to produce fruit. These fruit serve as evidence of God's transformative work inside of an individual. God does not produce this fruit on His own and we do not manufacture fruit apart from the work of the Spirit. Thankfully, as we cooperate with God's Spirit, fruit is produced and displayed in our lives.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.
Galatians 5:22-23

This assessment is designed to help you determine some potential growth areas. The goal is for you to discover two or three areas in which you could seek God's help for further fruit-bearing in your life.

Take some time to go through the self-assessment as individuals. Additional copies can be found at *homepointe.org/the9* for your convenience or you can make additional copies for each family member. Consider sharing your results with your spouse/family and begin praying for one another in each of those areas. Take time to notice and celebrate when you see more fruit-bearing in your home in the days to come.

Circle a number to record how you are experiencing or expressing each particular fruit.

1 = I am not seeing much of that fruit displayed in my life right now.
5 = I am experiencing much of this fruit in my life right now.

Love

Love is a choice to meet the needs of others with no expectation of return. Are you choosing to show love because you are being led by God's Spirit?

1 2 3 4 5

Joy

Joy comes from the Lord in good times and bad. Do you have a deep sense of well-being that is not determined by your circumstances? Are you choosing joy with God's help?

1 2 3 4 5

Peace

Peace is found as we rest and rely on God. We can have peace in times of trouble. Are you choosing to be aware in every circumstance that God is sufficient and also striving for peace in your relationships?

1 2 3 4 5

Patience

Patience with others can grow as we are reminded that God is patient with us. Patience is the ability to wait on God and knowing that we can trust that He is working for our best in His timing. Are you showing patience in your daily life?

1 2 3 4 5

Kindness

Kindness is expressing to others the same mercy and grace that God has given to us in Christ Jesus. Are your words and actions kind? Are you showing kindness regardless of how you are treated?

1 2 3 4 5

Goodness

God is good, and His integrity and moral perfection are flawless. God's goodness is on display through grace and love. We can participate in that goodness when we distribute grace and love through the empowerment of God. Are you showing a goodness that shows God's love?

1 2 3 4 5

Faithfulness

God is faithful, and we can always count on Him. A faithful person is one who does what they say. It is a pure dynamic of reliability and loyalty. Are you reliable, loyal and a person of your word?

1 2 3 4 5

Gentleness

Gentleness is power under control. It is humility and restraint that derives from a position of true strength in Christ. With God's help do you show gentleness and restraint?

1 2 3 4 5

Self-control

God's Spirit helps us have the ability to display self-control. Self-control is displayed when we show discipline in our emotions, words and actions. Are you showing self-control in your life?

1 2 3 4 5

Based on your self-assessment, which two or three would you like to put intentional effort into over these next 120 days? Remember these are not developed by you trying harder, but by cooperating with God's Spirit in your life. Spend some time seeking God and asking Him for help in these areas.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Notes

BUT THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS

LOVE, JOY, PEACE, PATIENCE,

KINDNESS, GOODNESS,

FAITHFULNESS, GENTLENESS AND

SELF-CONTROL. AGAINST SUCH

THINGS THERE IS NO LAW.

Galatians 5:22-23

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Building Strong Families

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