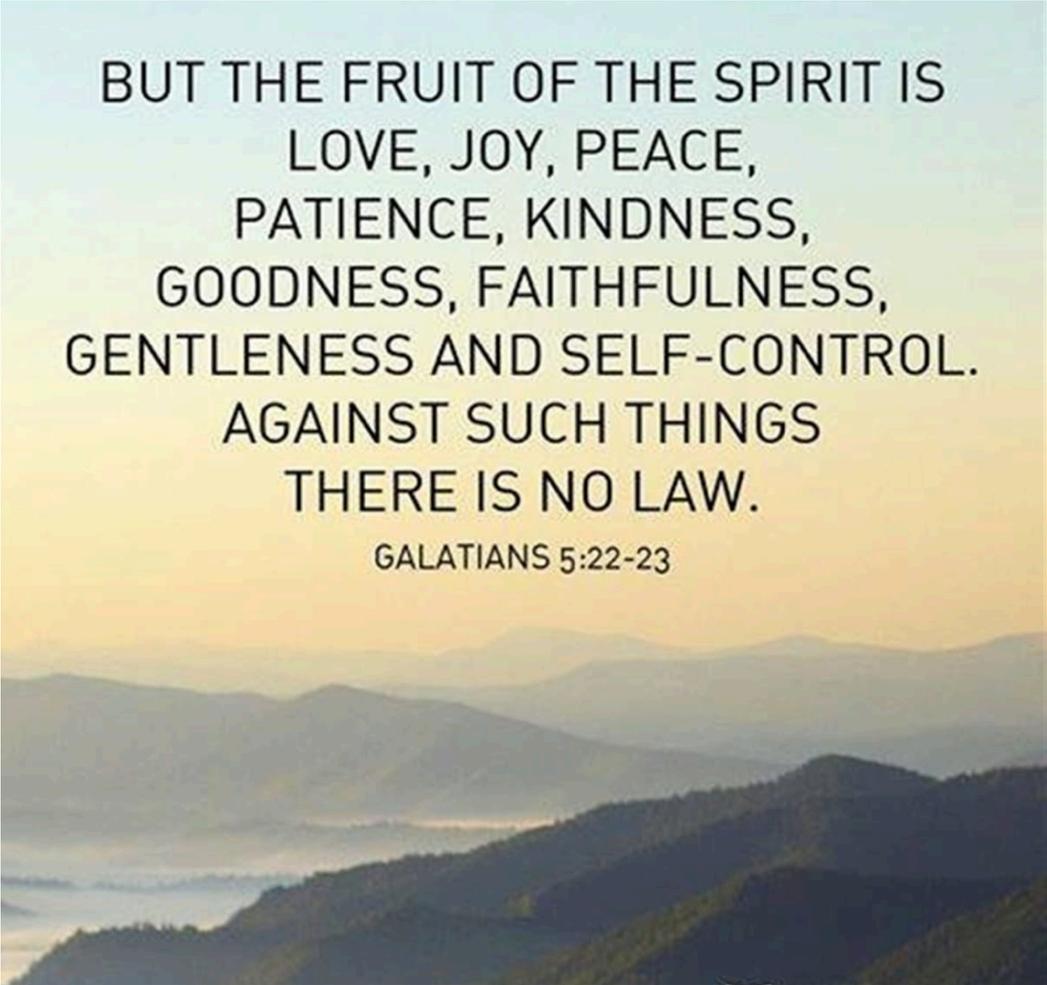


ELEV8 Basketball

2019-20 Devotional – Levels 2-5



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

Fruit of the Spirit

Week 1 – Welcome to Elev8 Basketball

Week 2 – Fruit of the Spirit

Week 3 – Love

Week 4 – Joy

Week 5 – Peace

Week 6 – Patience

Week 7 – Kindness

Week 8 – Goodness

Week 9 – Faithfulness

Week 10 – Gentleness

Week 11 – Self-Control

Week 12 – Review

ELEV8 Basketball has been serving families in Central MD for many years. The program offers a fun, instructional, and competitive basketball program to kids in kindergarten (age 4) through seniors in high school. Our vision is to positively develop strong character in boys/girls and young men/women while seeking to honor and offer life-changing hope found in Jesus Christ. ELEV8 Sports is directed by a Leadership Team (LT) from Columbia Presbyterian Church (CPC), in partnership with Crossroads Church of the Nazarene and Bethel Korean Presbyterian Church.

Note to Elev8 Coaches

The devotions for practices this season will focus on the “Fruit of the Spirit”. The problem with teaching something like Fruits of the Spirit is that likely some of your players are not Christians. You tell your players that God wants us to be loving, kind, have self-control, etc. This is important to do because it’s in the Bible and it’s right, so do it. The issue with this approach is that these are “fruit of the Spirit,” meaning they come directly from God. These aren’t just goals for good living. They are what should grow inside of Christians and be evident in our lives, as a result of having the Spirit live inside of us. In other words, one must first be a Christian to bear fruit of the Spirit.

If you are a Christian coach, you have been called to not just coach your players in the sport itself, but also to share your faith with them. In fact, a player may be on your team by God’s divine placement so you can witness to him. It’s your calling and responsibility to coach kids and share your faith with them where God has uniquely placed you.

This devotional material is targeting a broad range of students (levels 2-5). The discussion questions at the end of each lesson are grouped into two sets: levels 2-5 (L2-5) and levels 4-5 (L4-5). As coaches develop a relationship with their players and understand where each student is in their relationship with Jesus, these questions can be enhanced accordingly. Please see your commissioner or a member of the LT if you have any questions.

Suggestion for coaches leading the devotion:

1. Read the devotional material before the practice
2. Pray for God’s Spirit to use your words to reach the hearts of your players

ELEV8 Basketball would like to thank the Thrive Basketball program for sharing their “Fruit of the Spirit” devotional material for use this year in ELEV8.

Week #1: Welcome to Elev8

Get to know your team!

Introduce yourself to parents and players.

Have players introduce themselves

Idea: Have each player say their name, where they live, and something they like to do in their free time.

Read:

This year our devotions will focus on nine qualities the Bible calls fruits of the “Spirit”. Those are summarized in the Bible here:

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control: against such there is no law.

Each week during devotions we will discuss one of these and seek to understand how God desires for us to produce this fruit, through His Spirit, for His glory.

PRAY WITH YOUR TEAM FOR THE SEASON

Week #2: Fruit of the Spirit

Theme: To bear fruit of the Spirit, you must first trust Jesus as your Savior and Lord.

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control: against such there is no law.

Study Guide

Galatians 5:22–23 lists qualities most would agree are good to strive for (please read Galatians 5: 22-23 above). We want to be friends and work with people who exhibit these. We'd probably also agree we need a lot more of these in society today.

Let's look closer at what the list is, though. They're not qualities or characteristics, like something people naturally have. They're not goals, like something you work hard to try and achieve. Instead, they're called "fruit of the Spirit." What does that mean?

Fruit comes from plants and trees. But not just any plant or tree. A fir (think Christmas tree) will never produce fruit, no matter how much it grows. A plant or tree can only bear fruit if it is a fruit-bearing tree or plant. To bear fruit, it must be from fruit.

So "fruit of the Spirit" means fruit coming from the Spirit. The Spirit is the Holy Spirit, who is God (e.g. Acts 5). To bear fruit of the Spirit then, we must first have the Spirit of God living in us.

Is this possible? The Bible tells us how we receive the Spirit of God so God is inside of us. The only way to do this is to trust Jesus as our Savior and Lord (*John 3:16*). Trust that He died for our sins then rose from the dead to defeat death. Trust that He forgives our sins if we confess them and ask for forgiveness. And ask Him into our heart.

When we do this, we are saved and will forever be with God, even after we die. And even right now, once we trust Jesus, we're promised to receive the Holy Spirit—God living inside of us. Then, and only then, can we bear fruit of the

Spirit.

Discussion Questions

L2-5: Assign each player one of the fruits and ask them to explain what it means to them. You might get disagreement if you give examples of what it means to show these qualities. That's ok. Just seek consensus that these are good characteristics to strive for.

L2-5: Share your faith or testimony with the team. What led you to Christ? How has it impacted your life?

L4-5: Why does Paul mention fruit? In the analogy, where does the fruit come from?

Week #3: Love

Theme: We are to love others as God loves us, not expecting anything in return.

Galatians 5:22:23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control: against such there is no law.

Study Guide

Ask your players to think about what they love. A particular food? A sport? A video game? A type of music?

What kind of love is Paul, the author of Galatians, speaking of when he says “the fruit of the Spirit is love”? We can love food, activities, and family without God guiding us to do so. Almost everyone loves something or someone. But love that comes from the Spirit of God is different. It is unconditional.

Unconditional, or agape love, expects nothing in return. It is love that puts the other person’s interests above ours. It is love that takes care of others even if they will never give something back in return, and maybe not even express appreciation for what you’ve done. That’s the unconditional love the Bible speaks of here. You wouldn’t have agape love for food or an activity.

Consider how God has shown love to us:

“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life” (*John 3:16*)

“God demonstrates his love for us in this: while we were sinners, Christ died for us” (*Romans 5:8*)

The result of receiving this love from God is to then love others that way:

“We love because God first loved us” (*1 John 4:19*).

Discussion Questions

L2-5: What is something that you love? What would you do for it?

L2-5: When the Bible says God loves us unconditionally, what does that mean?

L4-5: Why should we love others unconditionally? Consider *John 15:12*: “ My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”

L4-5: When we love others, it should look differently than someone who does not have the Spirit of God in them. Why? (Because we're not loving to get something in return, or because we have to, but because God first loved us in this same way. That's unconditional love!)

Who do you know that needs your unconditional love today?

Week #4: Joy

Theme: Joy is different and better than happiness because we can experience it even when things are not going our way.

Galatians 5:22:23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control: against such there is no law.

Study Guide

What makes you happy? (a particular activity, food, friends, winning games in your sport)

What makes you sad? (being alone, having to do things you don't like to do, losing a game or not playing well)

What makes you sad may be the opposite of what makes you happy. When Paul says Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, he is not simply talking about happiness. Being happy is a temporary feeling.

Joy is different, though. Biblical joy is a feeling or emotion, but a very different kind of emotion that goes beyond happiness in the moment. It's not dependent on your circumstances because its basis is in God, not the stuff of earth.

What's the difference? Happiness comes from our circumstances (e.g. play well, we win, then I'll be happy). Joy doesn't come from our circumstances. It comes from God. That's why it is a fruit of the Spirit. I can be joyful (and happy) when things are going my way. But I can also be joyful when they aren't. For example, I play poorly in a game. I won't be happy. But I may have joy knowing God blessed me with the opportunity to play, I'm part of a team, etc. God can help me get better and learn even in defeat. This is joy that goes beyond our circumstances, and can only come from knowing that a loving God is in control and can use defeat for his good and a bigger purpose.

Romans 15:13 - May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Discussion Questions:

L2-5: What's the difference between happiness and joy?

L2-5: Can someone give an example of how we can have joy even when things aren't going right?

L2-5: If you're comfortable, share an event in your life that didn't make you happy (e.g. didn't get promoted), but by God's grace you still had joy and are learning to trust him?

Week #5: Peace

Theme: Peace comes from trusting that God is in control and is bigger than anything we are going through.

Galatians 5:22:23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control: against such there is no law.

Study Guide

The word “peace” has various meanings in our culture. Can you name some? (e.g. absent of war, goodbye)

When Paul lists peace as a fruit of the Spirit, he really means none of those things. Biblical peace is a peace of mind and peace in the heart. Where does it come from? (God). How do we get it? By doing two things.

First, we trust God in all our circumstances—big and small. When we trust God, the pressure is taken off of us to succeed. For example, if you want to make a team you are trying out for, and don’t, trusting God makes a big difference. If you don’t trust God, you’ll be frustrated you didn’t make it. You may blame the coaches who didn’t choose you. You may act like you didn’t want to make it anyway. If you trusted God, though, you may not like the decision. But you can still have peace knowing He is in control and must have a different and better plan for you.

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (*Philippians 4: 6-7*)

Second, we work hard with the abilities he has given us. As an example from football, Jason Witten, one of the best tight ends to ever play in the NFL and a committed Christian, explained in his retirement press conference: “I was never the most talented, never the flashiest, I relied on grit. Other players may have been more talented, but I can assure you—no one was gonna outwork me.” This

view is biblical: “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ” (*Colossians 3.23–24*).

When you work “heartily,” you can rest easy knowing you did your best, that he’s in charge and has great plans, whether we get the result we want or not. In other words, trusting God and working hard for Him gives us peace.

Discussion Questions

L2-5: What creates stress in your life? What do you worry about?

L2-5: Why does it make such a difference and give us peace to trust God rather than anything or anyone else?

L4-5: Why does it make such a difference and give us peace to work hard for the Lord rather than for others?

Week #6: Patience

Theme: Patience is impossible without God, and with God, is not only possible but highly beneficial.

Galatians 5:22:23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control: against such there is no law.

Study Guide

What does it mean to be patient? What causes you to be impatient?

We need God's help to be patient. Trusting God is not just trusting that His ways are better than ours, it's also trusting His timing. We're not trusting God if we trust His plan but insist on our timing.

It's not just wise to be patient, but also beneficial. Trusting God for His plan and His timing takes the pressure off of us. We don't have to worry about what's going to happen, when it's going to happen, and even whether it's going to happen. Instead, we trust that the God of the universe knows what's best, and what He has planned will happen in His timing. What a relief for us! Also, good things come to those who wait. In my experience many, if not most, of the best blessings I have received from God required me to wait. This has always proved true for the big things in my life.

God promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations. But when the promise was first given (Genesis 12:1-3) Abraham and his wife Sarah did not have any children. God continued to restate His promise to Abraham through the years (Genesis 13:6; 15:1-6; 17:6-8; 18:10).

Finally, when Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90 years old, God gave them their son Isaac. Though it took years of patiently waiting, they received the promise of God. Hebrews 6:15 says of Abraham, "And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise."

"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer" (*Romans 12:12*)

Discussion Questions

L2-5: Begin with listing some ways or examples in which you have been impatient as a coach. Apologize for them. Then ask players to list some ways in which they or players in general can be impatient.

L2-5: In what area of your life are you the most impatient? (e.g. school, family)

L4-5: How does impatience show a lack of trusting God? Why is being patient more in line with trusting God? (see 1 Peter 3.9)

Week #7: Kindness

Theme: Kindness is best shown by being nice to those who aren't nice to us.

Galatians 5:22:23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control: against such there is no law.

Study Guide

What does it mean to be kind? Is this easy to do in all situations?

It's relatively easy to be kind to people that are kind to us, this type of kindness is pretty common to most people. However, when we interact with people that are unkind, rude, or mean to us, our tendency is to be unkind, rude or mean in response.

Biblical kindness is truly a fruit of the Spirit that can only occur when the Spirit is guiding us in difficult interactions with others. Consider God's kindness toward us:

"Do you presume on the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?" (Romans 2:4)

God has been kind to us to show us how much he loves us, and calls us to show the same kindness to everyone we interact with.

"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." (Ephesians 4:32)

Biblical kindness is being nice when others aren't nice, and even when they may be rude to us. The Bible tells us "if your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink, for you will heap burning coals on his head" (Proverbs 25.21-22a). What does this mean? (God uses kindness, through us being led by the Spirit, to lead many of His enemies to repentance)

Discussion Questions

L2-5: How has God shown kindness to you?

L2-5: How can you show kindness to others on the basketball court? (e.g. helping an opponent off the floor when they have fallen, thanking the referees after the game, etc.)

L2-5: What about off the court?

Week #8: Goodness

Theme: Goodness is doing the right thing all the time, whether someone is watching or not, with God as our example and audience.

Galatians 5:22:23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control: against such there is no law.

Study Guide

Unfortunately, in real life good versus evil, right versus wrong, can be confusing. Good people make bad decisions. What many would think are bad decisions, some claim are good decisions. What is right? What is good? Is it simply what I think or say it is? What if what I say it is differs from what you say it is?

It's easy to see how chaotic it can be for everyone to decide for themselves what's good and what's right. We need a more consistent, objective guide for goodness. The Bible provides that guide. The word "good" or words with the root word "good" in them, including goodness, are mentioned almost 700 times in the Bible. A perfect and loving God created goodness. When Jesus, God in the flesh, walked on earth, He was always good and lived a perfect life. Micah, a prophet of God, summarizes what it is to be good: "... to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (*Micah 6.8*).

First, to do justice. Justice is consistently doing what is right without any favoritism. We don't show goodness if we treat our friends better than others. We don't show justice if we treat people one way some of the time, and another way other times.

Second, to love kindness. Not to sometimes be kind. Not to generally be kind. But to love kindness. To have kindness be what defines us. To be in love with being kind to others, no matter what they can offer us in return or even if others are unkind to us.

Third, to walk humbly with your God. This means to do the right thing as defined by what Jesus would do, not what we want to do or how we think it will impact us.

Goodness is a fruit of the Spirit that requires God’s help for us to do. When (and only when) we walk closely with God, can we show goodness. Biblical goodness is displayed when we do something that doesn’t benefit us at all. Goodness values doing right over how it affects us.

Optional for sharing with your team: There is a viral video footage of a game between Western Oregon and Central Washington softball teams in April 2008. A Central Oregon player hits a ball over the fence, but she trips and tears ligaments in her knee rounding first base. She cannot get up on her own to run around the bases. Her coaches can help her off the field and substitute a pinch runner, but the penalty for doing so would be the play is limited to a single (since that is as far as she was able to run on her own). The umpires do not have any other options, according to the rules. But the unheard of happened instead. Players from the other team picked her up and took her around the bases. No rule prohibits the other team from assisting her. They walked her around the bases, carrying her and stopping at each base for her to tap the base, until she reached home. The home run was legal (and was this girl’s first out-of-the-park home run).

Discussion Questions

L2-5: Legendary basketball coach John Wooden once said, “Be more concerned with your character than with your reputation. Your character is what you really are while your reputation is merely what others think you are.” What are some ways to improve your character based on our discussion about goodness? (e.g. tell the truth, make good on your promises, etc.)

L2-5: Based on Micah 6.8, what are ways to show goodness on and off the court?

Week #9: Faithfulness

Theme: Faithfulness is persistently seeking and following God, trusting His promises in this life and for eternity

Galatians 5:22:23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control: against such there is no law.

Study Guide

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1)

Faithfulness doesn't simply mean believing. It involves a daily, moment by moment decision making process to follow Jesus as Lord of our lives. A way to understand this is through the word loyalty. It is a synonym of faithfulness.

Loyalty is hard to find today. Think about pro sports. Players and teams are involved in free agency and trades, loyalty is not normally a priority. Think about friendships. Friends who come and go, friends who are nice when certain kids are not around them? There are plenty of those. But friends who are loyal — who are nice all the time, who are there for you when you need them? Those are much harder to find (and much better to have).

Faithfulness as a fruit of the Spirit, then, involves loyalty. Loyalty to whom? To God. Sticking with God all the time. Remaining loyal to His commands and what He wants for us. Faith in God that is ongoing and persisting. Why is this so important? Not just a one-time faith, but a persisting, ongoing, loyal faith. This is why in *Revelation 22.13*, Jesus (God) could say “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

God is faithful (loyal) to us. The Father loves us enough to send his Son to die for us (*John 3.16*). Once we accept that love from God, we are compelled to love him in return and faithfully follow his commands each day.

Faithfulness is a strong witness that draws others closer to God. When others see us loyal to God—rather than trying to be popular or acting differently

depending on who is looking—people are curious and take note. This often provides us opportunities to tell others who we're faithful to and "the reason for the hope that you have" (*1 Peter 3.15b*).

Discussion Questions

L2-5: What are you faithful or loyal to in your life?

L2-5: What makes it hard to be faithful or loyal to God? (e.g. being faithful to God often involves going against what the world expects or our human desires)

L4-5: Are there situations in your life today where you struggle with being faithful to your parents? Friends? God? Please share if you're comfortable.

Week #10: Gentleness

Theme: Gentleness is treating others with respect and kindness, even in standing up for what is right.

Galatians 5:22:23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control: against such there is no law.

Matthew 11:28-29

"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 humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

Study Guide

Of all the fruit of the Spirit, gentleness may be the most misunderstood and least admired. Gentleness is often seen as weakness and for those who aren't tough enough to stand up for themselves. Our world does not reward gentleness.

Yet Paul says gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit. What is meant by gentleness here? First of all, it doesn't mean weakness or being a pushover. Aristotle said about the Greek word for gentleness that it is the man who is always angry at the right time and never angry at the wrong time. Even God had righteous anger at times (*Matthew 21.12–13*), but tells us, "in your anger do not sin." (*Ephesians 4.26a.*)

What does this gentleness look like? It means being kind, of course. Not just when it's convenient. Not just to our friends. And most of all, gentleness means making sure we're very careful not to use anger and retaliation as a way to lash out at others. It will be hard sometimes. Especially when people wrong us. Especially when we think others don't deserve gentleness. Like all fruit of the Spirit, it takes God working in and through us. Seek him through prayer and through reading the Bible. Constantly turning to God and seeking His strength to supernaturally act differently than how most of the world acts.

So how do we have gentleness while still caring about what matters and even getting angry when appropriate? We care about what matters, leave alone what

doesn't, and ask God for help in knowing the difference. Sticking up for others matters. It's ok to tell someone at school to stop picking on someone else. Notice that in sticking up for others, you're showing gentleness to the one who is wronged. That's how gentleness and anger work hand in hand.

I must warn you, though. Not everyone will appreciate or respect you for your gentleness. Some might call you weak. Others may even try to take advantage of you. But you're not weak if you're gentle. You're actually strong because you are choosing to be gentle when others can't control their emotions and anger. And you don't have to be taken advantage of. Stay strong and stand up for yourself and others. Just do it in a gentle way. When you do, I can promise one thing: others will take note. And when they do, you'll have a great opportunity to gently tell them how great your God is.

Discussion Questions

L2-5: Ask players how they would define gentleness as a quality on the court. Does it mean not trying to win? Does it mean not playing as hard? If not, what does it mean?

L4-5: Read Matthew 7:12 ("So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets"), then give the players a hypothetical or two asking them how they would like to be treated in that situation. Then challenge them to treat others in this same way.

Week #11: Self-Control

Theme: We can only achieve self-control by fully submitting to God and letting Him have His way inside of us.

Galatians 5:22:23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control: against such there is no law.

Study Guide

Self-control is the last fruit of the Spirit. Remember, we've said that these are fruits of the Spirit (from God). Meaning that these come from God, and that we can only exhibit these with God inside of us (and even then, only with His help).

Which makes our last fruit of the Spirit a little strange at first glance. Self-control comes from God. A word with "self" in it comes from God. How can this be?

Although it sounds a bit strange, it makes perfect sense. Self-control is the ability to control our emotions. The ability to control our anger. Our frustration. Our worrying. Any of our temptations. Whatever it is we struggle with, self-control is the ability to not give into it. And just like all fruit of the Spirit, we can't control these things by ourselves. We need God's help. Self-control is critical to a Christian life. The Bible gives a couple of analogies to the importance of self-control.

First, *Proverbs 25.28* says "a man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls." In other words, we are exposed and easily tempted to over-reaction without self-control.

Second, Paul talks about an athlete having "self control in all things" (*1 Corinthians 9.24-27*). He says an athlete must train in a focused, disciplined, and purposeful way to achieve a desired result.

It's the same way in life. We must be focused, disciplined, and purposeful in how we live our lives so as not to overreact to tense or stressful situations. Being

prepared for situations we may face. Thinking through how to handle situations before they happen.

But here's the good news. God stands ready to help you. Whatever tempts us to lose control, God will help us exercise self-control. Trust Him with it. Rely on Him. Ask Him daily for help. Ask him to have His way inside of us. Only then can we have self-control, not because we're so strong, but because God is.

Discussion Questions

L2-5: What are some things we can control? (e.g. effort, attitude, speech)

L2-5: Discuss with players what self-control is. Ask them to give examples of how coaches or players show self-control, or show lack of self-control.

L4-5: Ask why it matters so much to have self-control. Use it as a teaching opportunity to explain how important self-control is in sports and life.

“The more concerned we become over the things we can't control, the less we will do with the things we can control.” -- Coach John Wooden

Week #12: Summary

Theme: Father God invites you to rest in the finished work of his son Jesus, and he will enable you to be a producer of fruit of the Spirit!

Galatians 5:22:23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control: against such there is no law.

Study Guide

Certain absolutes in life make sense. $2+2=4$. Always. No exceptions. But when it comes to behavior and doing things, we can get in trouble with claiming absolutes. An absolute usually comes with an “always” or a “never.” A few examples: We should always make our bed in the morning. Always? Mom (or Dad) you never let me do what I want to do. Never?

You see, when it comes to behavior and doing things, absolutes are rarely, well, absolutes. Which makes the conclusion of Paul laying out the fruit of the Spirit worth discussing. Paul has laid out 9 fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. Then he states an absolute: “against such things there is no law.”

Rephrased in the negative, it would say “it is never against the law to do such things.” Rephrased in the positive, it would say “it’s always good or right to do such things.” Is that really true? Aren’t there exceptions? The world says yes; God says no.

For example, is it always right to love? When it comes to people, yes. We are called to love people, always. We can hate what they do, we can hate evil, but we’re called to love people. Always. Why? “We love because he [God] first loved us” (1 John 4.19). The other fruit of the Spirit are always right to exhibit for similar reasons. Because to act this way is in line with God’s character and how He treats us.

Notice Paul doesn’t phrase the absolute as “when we do this, we always benefit.” That wouldn’t be true. Sometimes being kind doesn’t benefit us. Mean people

may be mean in response to kindness. What Paul says, instead, is it's always right to do these things, regardless of how others respond to it.

Love others. Live with **joy**, **peace**, and **patience**. Extend **kindness**. Do **good**. Have enduring **faithfulness**. Be **gentle**. Exhibit **self-control**. How often? Always. Why? Because God said so, and because God treats you this way.

One of my favorite quotes from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: "The time is always right to do what is right". Dr. King trusted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior, relied upon God's word to define what was right, and sought to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit at all times in his life.

Discussion Questions

L2-5: Do you know and trust Jesus as your Lord and Savior? (The time is always right to do what is right). He will help you produce fruit of the Spirit!

Jesus said "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. (Matthew 7:7-8)

L2-5: Have players recall at least one thing they learned from this study. Something beyond listing the fruit of the Spirit—an example or practical way to live this out from the study. Challenge them to continue trying to live differently and stand out by bearing fruit.

If you have any questions about the ELEV8 Basketball program or would like to discuss any material in this devotional material, please see a member of the ELEV8 Leadership Team listed below:

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