

A SUMMER UNDER THE VINE

Discovering the Fruit the Spirit Grows

Study Guide Week Four

Five Weekly Sessions for Small Groups

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WEEK FOUR / THE TEST

Faithfulness · Gentleness · Self-Control

It's Not How I Planned It

Book Reading

Read Chapter Four before you meet (pages 83–114, about 30 minutes).

Chapter Four opens with years of hoping for children, a surgery, an answer to prayer, and an ending no one planned. From there it turns to faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, the fruit that shows up when no one is applauding. They test whether everything else the Spirit has grown is real all the way down.

Scripture Readings

Faithfulness

22 The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; 23 they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

Lamentations 3:22–23 (ESV)

Gentleness

28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Matthew 11:28–29 (ESV)

Self-Control

28 Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control.

Proverbs 25:28 (NIV)

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,

Titus 2:11–12 (ESV)

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How They Fit Together

[15] Though he slay me, I will hope in him; yet I will argue my ways to his face.

Job 13:15 (ESV)

[68] Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life,

John 6:68 (ESV)

Between You and God

Take your time with these questions, as you read or after, before your group meets. You can write, pray, or simply sit with one. You won't be asked to share your answers.

1. God's faithfulness doesn't depend on ours, and it's where the faithfulness the Spirit grows in us begins. Where have you seen Him stay faithful to you? And where have your own commitments worn thin, not all at once, just slowly, the way most things actually fall apart?
2. Is there a hope or an unanswered prayer you've been carrying for a long time? Abraham waited twenty-five years for a promise God had specifically made to him. Our hopes don't come with that same assurance of a particular outcome. What would it look like to keep trusting God while being honest with Him about what you long for?
3. Jesus, with all the power of heaven, described His own heart as "gentle and lowly" (Matthew 11:29). Gentleness is strength under control. Think about how you act when you feel threatened, criticized, or backed into a corner. Who are you in those moments? Is that someone you're proud of?
4. Proverbs 25:28 compares a person who lacks self-control to a city whose walls are broken through. At first doing whatever you want can feel like freedom, until something or someone else moves in and starts running the place. What or who, right now, is telling you what to do that isn't God? When did it first start having that kind of authority?
5. Titus 2:11–12 says it's God's grace that trains us to say no. Where have you seen His grace train you, maybe in a failure He met with kindness, or a change you only noticed later? Does your own struggle right now look more like straining harder, or like staying closer to the vine?

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What You Noticed

Last week you were asked to notice someone who keeps showing up, or who stays gentle under pressure. What did you see? Your time in Between You and God is yours to keep, but if something stood out, you're welcome to share it.

To Discuss with Others

The Story

1. Chapter Four's title says it plainly, "It's Not How I Planned It." Has there been a time when your life didn't go the way you planned or prayed? What was still true?

Faithfulness

Read Lamentations 3:22–23

2. Lamentations was written in the rubble of Jerusalem, with the city destroyed and the people in exile. Yet the writer anchors himself in God's character instead of his circumstances. Why does that matter when circumstances are as bad as they get?
3. In Genesis 15, only God passed between the pieces of the covenant. Later, Abraham and Sarah both laughed at His timing, and the promise still came. Second Timothy 2:13 says, "if we are faithless, he remains faithful." Can you point to a time in your life when God was faithful even when you were not? What does that mean to you?

Gentleness

Read Matthew 11:28–29

4. When Jesus describes His own heart, He calls it "gentle and lowly." We usually hear gentleness as weakness. The chapter pictures a trained horse, and a fighter who lets go the moment his opponent taps out. Who in your life is gentle in that sense, strong but under control?
5. "Gentleness is being the same person in the argument that you are in the apology." Galatians 6:1 (NIV) says to restore someone gently, then adds, "watch yourselves," because we're capable of the same failure. The book warns that "you can be completely right and completely destructive at the same time." Why is it so hard to stay gentle when we're sure we're right?

Self-Control

Read Titus 2:11–12

6. Titus 2:12 says grace trains us, and Paul elsewhere compares that training to an athlete's (1 Corinthians 9:25–27). The chapter puts it this way: "Self-control was never the absence of desire. It's desire rightly ordered around what actually matters." How is that different from

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white-knuckling your way past temptation? Where do you see the counterfeits, like rule-keeping, or looking disciplined only where people can see?

7. Jesus could have called more than twelve legions of angels and chose not to (Matthew 26:53). In the wilderness and in Gethsemane, He refused to use His power for Himself. What does His restraint teach us about self-control? Who was He holding back for?

How They Fit Together

Read Job 13:15 and John 6:68

8. Faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control show up when no one is applauding. Job kept trusting while he wrestled, and Peter stayed when others walked away. What keeps someone standing when life isn't how they planned it? Where have you seen it?

Close in Prayer

The Week Ahead

The epilogue looks at the small things that can spoil a harvest, and at what keeps fruit growing. This week, notice what's shaping you, the voices you listen to, the things you watch and read, and the habits that fill your days. Which of them help you stay connected to the vine, and which ones pull you away? When you meet again, share what you noticed if you'd like.

Before you meet again, read the Epilogue, "Almost Fruitless" (pages 115–129, about 15 minutes).

Find the book and the complete study guide at asummerunderthevine.com, or scan the QR code.