

Introduction

At District Assembly this year, our DS invited us to consider how vital it could be to cultivate the Fruit of the Spirit. What would our witness look like in the world if we were people who were following Jesus, allowing God's grace to help us, and being filled with the Spirit so we bear fruit? To accomplish this we need to partner with God. She said, "While we don't believe in works righteousness, we also don't believe in passive discipleship. We get our hands dirty in the soil with our God who is the gardener." This document is a way for us to partner with God in our own transformation! Each month you will be provided with a variety of tools to help cultivate the Fruit of the Spirit. You can use these personally or with a group.

The format is a shared spiritual practice and then a three-fold invitation to go deeper--deeper in Scripture, deeper with others, and going deeper with self. You will also find a variety of book recommendations to help you to explore the fruit that is being studied each month.

The truth is Galatians 5 says the "fruit" of the Spirit, not the "fruits." This matters because we are to allow God to help us cultivate all of them, not just the easy ones, not just the ones we like, but we are to be people who bear all the fruit of the Spirit. Join us on this adventure with God as we seek to go deeper together.



Shared practice:

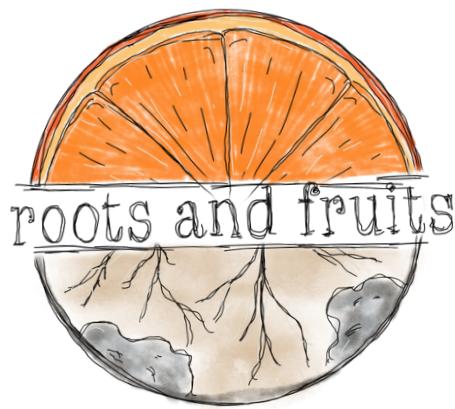
Purposeful Acts of Kindness: This is similar to Random Acts of Kindness, but is an invitation to discover what the needs are in the lives of your friends, family, and neighbors. What might the teachers at the school need that you could provide? Is there a neighbor who can't keep their lawn mowed and you could volunteer to do it each month? What does law enforcement need in your community? Have you heard a friend or loved one say they need something? Could you meet this particular need with the hope to help someone feel loved and seen?

When you find a need you want to meet, pray this prayer: God, help me to have an opportunity to deepen a relationship with the person/people I am helping. Help me to be a person who can be trusted. Help me to be someone they will come to when they have a need. Help them to see You through me. Amen

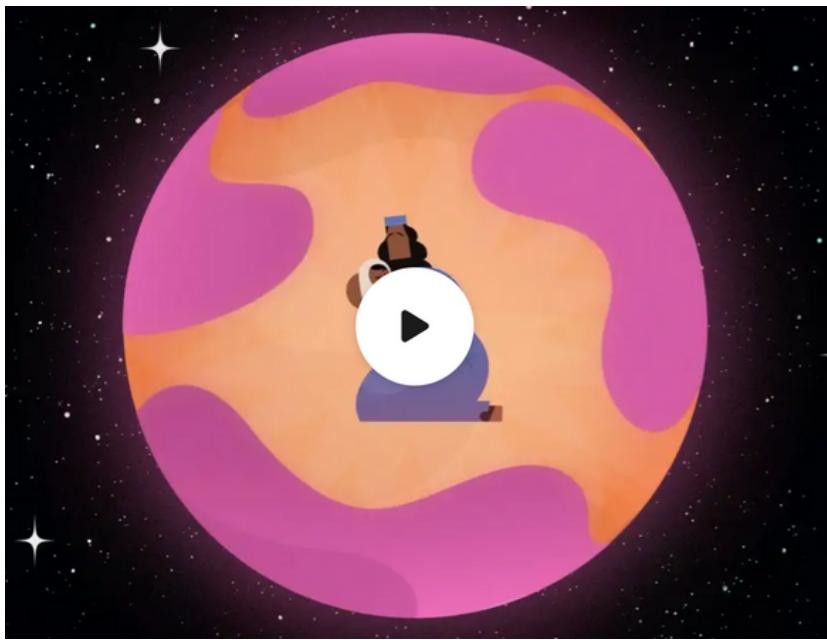
You could do this with your congregation, Sunday School Class or Small Group, your family, or all by yourself.

Share the stories of how you are seeing needs, meeting needs, and building bridges with people by meeting them right where they are in their needs.

This life-hack article has some great ideas of things to try!



Going Deeper with Scripture & Prayer: The Fruit of the Spirit of Kindness



With Scripture: The Bible Project has another good video to consider:

- Kindness and Compassion are closely related. How does Scripture talk about these things?
- What is something you've learned about this study of the word Compassion that you could put into practice?
- Compassion is in short supply, how can Christians be models of compassion and kindness in a divided world?

Prayer: This month, consider praying Psalm 145 each day. As you reflect on the character of God, how might God be wanting to help you to develop the Fruit of the Spirit as a whole, and kindness and compassion in particular?

Psalm 145:8-9

The Lord is gracious and compassionate,

slow to anger and rich in love.

The Lord is good to all;

he has compassion on all he has made.

Resources to Cultivate Kindness

From the Church of the Nazarene--We often see people being particularly unkind around political issues. The Foundry has a variety of great resources to navigate the reality of these tensions in a way that glorifies God. What if in our politics we were known to be kind and compassionate?

A Charitable Discourse, book, small group videos. Written by Rev. Dr. Dan Boone, president of Trevecca, these are incredible resources for you and your church.

Kings and Presidents, In Kings and Presidents, authors Tim Gaines and Shawna Songer Gaines helps us recast our political hope by challenging the claim that history is written exclusively by the powerful. Through a careful study of 2 Kings, we will find that trusting in God's faithfulness is plenty political, and it has real implications for our communities, the world, and the kind of political hope we can find in it all.

Other Resources:

Love Kindness, by Barry Corey Kindness is not what we have been taught it is. It isn't a soft virtue, expressed only by sweet grandmothers or nice Boy Scouts. Kindness is neither timid nor frail. Instead, it is brave and daring, willing to be vulnerable with those with whom we disagree. It is the revolutionary way that Jesus himself called us to live. The way of selfless risks. The way of staggering hope. The way of authenticity.

Dr. Barry Corey, president of Biola University, believes we tend to devalue the importance of kindness, opting instead for caustic expressions of certainty that push people away. We forget that the essence of what God requires of us is to "love kindness." In this book, filled with stories from his travels around the globe, Barry shows us the forgotten way of kindness. It is a life that calls us to put ourselves at risk. A life that calls us to hope. A life of a firm center and soft edges. It is the life Christ invites us to follow, no matter what the cost.