

Session 6 • The Fruits That Build: Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Generosity

Colossians 3:12-14; Luke 6:27-36; Galatians 5:22

Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. The group discovers that the middle fruits are the load-bearing walls of life together: patience that absorbs, kindness that initiates, goodness that holds firm, and generosity that opens the hand because God's hand is open.

Catholic Touchstone. The corporal and spiritual works of mercy are these fruits with sleeves rolled up: charity made visible in deeds toward the neighbor's body and soul (CCC 2447).

What You Need to Know

Tonight's four fruits shape the way we treat people in ordinary situations. Love, joy, and peace get the poetry; patience, kindness, goodness, and generosity get the dishes done, the apology accepted, the check written, the sharp reply swallowed. They are the fruits by which a parish, a marriage, or a friendship actually survives contact with reality.

Definitions matter. Patience (*makrothumia*, literally long-temperedness) is the capacity to absorb provocation and delay without retaliation; God himself is its model, "slow to anger." Kindness (*chrestotes*) is active benevolence, warmth that moves first. Goodness (*agathosune*) includes moral firmness; it can rebuke, as Jesus does, precisely because it wills the good. A note on the names: the English Catechism lists generosity among the twelve fruits, while its Latin text uses *longanimitas*, meaning long-suffering or patient perseverance (CCC 1832; Aquinas treats the twelve-fruit list in *Summa Theologiae* I-II q. 70 a. 3). This session follows the Catechism's English name and explores Scripture's teaching about generous giving; generous giving and patient perseverance are related expressions of charity, but they are not identical word meanings. The Greek text your RSV2CE translates names goodness and kindness here rather than generosity; say so plainly if asked, answer briefly, and note that next session lays out the lists side by side. The underlying reality, benevolence that opens the hand, is commended on every page of Scripture.

The engine of all four is the same and Jesus states it outright: "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36). We are patient because God has been patient with us; we give because everything we have was given. Cut that cord and these four collapse into exhausting niceness. Keep it connected and they are simply what God's own character does when it inhabits a person.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Exodus 34:6 from last session already contains tonight: "slow to anger" is patience, "abounding in steadfast love" is kindness in motion. The Psalms make God's open hand a refrain: "You open your hand, you satisfy the desire of every living thing" (Psalm 145:16).

The prophets tie generosity to worship itself: the fast God chooses is to share bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into the house (Isaiah 58:6-7). Long before the works of mercy had a name, they had a commandment.

Voices of the Church

St. Cyprian of Carthage

On the Good of Patience (summary)

Writing to a church under persecution, St. Cyprian devoted a whole treatise to patience, arguing that it is not passivity but the strength that keeps every other virtue intact under pressure. Charity without patience, he observed, does not last a single injury. God's own patience, delaying judgment so that sinners may repent, is the pattern.

St. Vincent de Paul

Witness of his life and conferences (summary)

The seventeenth-century apostle of the poor organized charity across France: the Confraternities of Charity, the Congregation of the Mission, and, with St. Louise de Marillac, the Daughters of Charity; foundlings rescued, galley convicts served. His conferences return to a hard realism about serving the poor with humility and perseverance, without counting on applause. The lesson his life presses on us: kindness that requires gratitude is commerce; fruit gives anyway.

St. Lawrence of Rome

Tradition handed on by St. Ambrose, De officiis II.28.140 (On the Duties of the Clergy)

Tradition holds that when Rome's prefect demanded the Church's treasures, the deacon Lawrence assembled the city's poor and presented them: these are the treasures of the Church. The account comes to us from early tradition rather than court records, and we hand it on as the Church received it: a deacon who understood that wealth in the kingdom is measured by what has been given away.

Catechism Connection

CCC 2447 defines the works of mercy: charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities. Instructing, comforting, forgiving, and bearing wrongs patiently sit beside feeding, clothing, and sheltering.

CCC 1832 lists patience, kindness, goodness, and generosity among the fruits the Spirit forms in us (the full list arrives next session).

CCC 2544-2547 on the open hand: Jesus asks his disciples to prefer him to everything and to entrust their cares to God; poverty of spirit is the soil where generosity grows without fear.

Thread Watch

Threads in play

Vine. Tonight's fruits are conspicuously interpersonal, which quietly raises the question of where a person gets the sap to keep absorbing and giving. Answer briefly if asked, from union with Christ, and note that Session 8 opens that answer in full.

Darkness-to-light. The works of mercy are light made visible. No need to say so yet; the commissioning in Session 12 will.

Session Goals

1. Define the four fruits clearly, including the distinction between generosity in the English Catechism and longanimity in its Latin text.
2. Root all four in God's own character via Luke 6:36 and Exodus 34:6.
3. Connect the fruits to the works of mercy as their public form.
4. Have the group identify the one fruit their closest community most needs from them.

Time Note

Runs 75-85 minutes. If short, cut Build question 5 (Isaiah 58 cross-check) and let the Lawrence tradition be read rather than discussed.

Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit. You are patient with us beyond all reason and kind to us beyond all merit. Grow in us tonight what we cannot manufacture: long tempers, warm hearts, firm goodness, and open hands. Amen.

Win · Opening Questions

1. Who is the most patient person you know, and what has their patience cost them?
2. Describe a small kindness someone did for you years ago that you still remember. Why did it stick?

Build · Into the Text

Read Colossians 3:12-14 aloud, then Luke 6:27-36. Ask the group to listen for what garment imagery and mercy language have in common.

1. Colossians 3:12 says to put on compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, like clothing. What does the clothing image teach about where these fruits come from and how they show up in an ordinary day?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

Clothing is received, then worn daily, then becomes how people recognize you. Paul addresses the Colossians as "God's chosen ones, holy and beloved" before the imperative: he first reminds them that they are loved and chosen by God, then tells them how to live. And clothing must be put on again each morning; nobody wears yesterday's patience. The fruits are grace received and then deliberately worn into the day's situations.

2. Patience translates makrothumia, long-temperedness. Whose long temper does Scripture appeal to as the model, and why does that change how we treat the people testing ours?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

God's: "slow to anger" is his self-description (Exodus 34:6), and Peter says the Lord's forbearance means salvation, giving time for repentance (2 Peter 3:9, 15). Every person testing our patience is a person God is currently being patient with, ourselves included. Patience is not weakness holding its tongue; it is strength imitating its Father.

3. In Luke 6:27-36, list what Jesus commands toward enemies. Which fruit does each command exercise, and what single reason does Jesus give at the end for all of it?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

Love enemies, do good to haters, bless cursers, pray for abusers, turn the cheek, give without demanding return, lend expecting nothing. Patience absorbs the blow; kindness initiates toward the undeserving; goodness refuses to mirror evil; generosity opens the hand to the ungrateful. The reason is verse 36: "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful." The fruits are the family resemblance under hostile conditions. One clarification to make aloud: patience and turning the other cheek never mean that anyone must remain in an abusive or unsafe situation; getting help

and getting safe are acts of goodness, not failures of mercy.

Live Discovery

Send the group to Psalm 145, hunting for a verse about God's hand. They should land on 145:16: "You open your hand, you satisfy the desire of every living thing." Ask: what does this verse show about God's generosity, and how could that shape the way we use our time, money, and abilities?

4. Goodness (agathosune) is not the same as niceness. Where in the Gospels does Jesus' goodness look sharp rather than soft, and what keeps sharpness from becoming a work of the flesh?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

He rebukes Peter, overturns the money-changers' tables, and calls religious hypocrisy what it is, all while being goodness itself. What keeps the edge clean is charity and justice governing it: goodness rebukes for the other's good and for the repair of what sin disorders, never for the pleasure of winning. The moment sharpness starts enjoying itself, it has changed teams; enmity and strife are on the other list.

5. Read Isaiah 58:6-7. What does God call the worship he actually wants, and what does that do to any gap between our piety and our generosity?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

The fast he chooses is loosing bonds, sharing bread with the hungry, housing the homeless poor, clothing the naked. God refuses to accept devotion as a substitute for mercy; the prophets will not let piety and generosity live in separate rooms. The works of mercy are not an elective for advanced Christians; they are the fast God chooses.

Dig Deeper · The works of mercy as a training program

Catholic tradition enumerates fourteen works of mercy, seven corporal and seven spiritual; the Catechism describes and exemplifies them at CCC 2447. They are tonight's fruits turned into a checklist a beginner can start on Monday. Feed, give drink, clothe, shelter, visit the sick and imprisoned, bury the dead; instruct, counsel, comfort, forgive, bear wrongs patiently, admonish, pray. Fruit grows with exercise: pick one corporal and one spiritual work and the Spirit has room to work.

Send · Closing Questions

1. Which of tonight's four does your household or closest community most need from you right now, and what has been blocking it?

2. Jesus says to lend expecting nothing in return. What is one thing, money, time, or forgiveness, you have been keeping on the ledger?

Live It This Week

- Choose one corporal and one spiritual work of mercy and do both before next session.
- Identify your most predictable patience-test of the week and pray for the person involved by name each morning first.
- Give one gift this week that is genuinely anonymous.

Closing Prayer

Father, merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love: what you are, make us. Clothe us in compassion, lengthen our tempers, warm our kindness, steady our goodness, and open our hands. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture Memory Verse

Colossians 3:12

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience.

Leader Reference Card

Every passage read or discussed in this session, in order of appearance, with key leader background.

- Colossians 3:12-14
- Exodus 34:6
- Luke 6:27-36
- Galatians 5:22
- Psalm 145:16
- Isaiah 58:6-7
- 2 Peter 3:9, 15 (leader background)