

Session 7 • The Guarded Fruits: Gentleness, Faithfulness, Modesty, Self-Control, Chastity

Galatians 5:22-23; Proverbs 25:28; Matthew 11:28-30

Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. The group discovers the fruits that guard the others: gentleness as strength under control, faithfulness as love with a spine, and the trio of self-mastery (modesty, self-control, chastity), and learns honestly why the Catechism counts twelve fruits where their Bible counts nine.

Catholic Touchstone. The tradition of the Church lists twelve fruits of the Spirit, following the ancient Latin text of Galatians: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity (CCC 1832).

What You Need to Know

The nine/twelve question will come up, so put the facts on the table plainly, and keep four texts distinct. The Greek text of Galatians 5:22-23, which the RSV2CE translates, lists nine fruits, and self-control (Greek *enkrateia*, Latin *continentia*) is among them. The traditional Latin text of the Western Church, the Clementine Vulgate, carries twelve: alongside the nine it reads *longanimitas* (long-suffering, patient perseverance) beside patience, and adds modesty and chastity. The Church's current Latin edition of Scripture, the Nova Vulgata, follows the Greek count of nine, and renders one of those nine with that same word, *longanimitas*. The Catechism (1832) deliberately hands on the twelve of the Latin tradition; where its Latin text reads *longanimitas*, its English edition says generosity, so Session 6's teaching on generous giving follows the English Catechism's name, and generous giving and patient perseverance are related expressions of charity rather than identical word meanings (Aquinas treats the twelve-fruit list in *Summa Theologiae* I-II q. 70 a. 3). This is not the Church miscounting or padding Scripture; it is the Church handing on the list as the Western tradition prayed it, and the added fruits are scriptural realities repeatedly commended elsewhere (*longanimity* in Colossians 1:11, *modesty* in 1 Timothy 2:9, *chastity* in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5). Say all of this without embarrassment; hedged honesty is stronger than pretended tidiness.

Gentleness (*prautes*, also rendered meekness) is not weakness; preachers have long illustrated it as a great animal under perfect discipline, full strength fully directed, an image rather than an etymology, and the substance is proved by Christ himself. Jesus applies it to himself: "I am gentle and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29), the same Jesus who overturned tables. Faithfulness is love extended through time, promises kept when keeping them costs. (The tradition also discusses this fruit, Latin *fides*, in connection with faith in God; our focus here is faithfulness, the wording the English Catechism uses: CCC 1832; *Summa Theologiae* I-II q. 70 a. 3.) The final trio, modesty, self-control, chastity, are the fruits that guard the person: they keep the self collected so it can be given, not grabbed.

Frame the self-mastery fruits positively or lose the room. Chastity is not the hatred of the body (Session 2 already buried that error); it is the successful integration of sexuality within the person (CCC 2337), love in right order. Said plainly: chastity means living our sexuality according to God's plan and the dignity of every person; everyone is called to it, the unmarried by abstaining from sexual intercourse, the married by faithfulness to their spouse. And one safeguard belongs in the room before any story is told: sexual assault is never the victim's sin; being assaulted does not destroy a person's chastity or God-

given dignity, and the guilt belongs to the attacker alone (CCC 2356). Self-control is not repression but self-possession: only a self you possess can be given away. Proverbs supplies the image: a man without self-control is a city breached, without walls, defenseless against whatever wanders in.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Moses, the man who confronted Pharaoh and shattered the tablets, is called the meekest man on the face of the earth (Numbers 12:3): Scripture's own proof that gentleness and strength are not opposites. God's hesed, his steadfast love, is a pervasive Old Testament witness to his covenant faithfulness; our faithfulness is the family resemblance again.

Proverbs 25:28 gives the walls image for self-control, and Joseph in Egypt gives the narrative: fleeing Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39), he loses his cloak and keeps his integrity, choosing prison over betrayal of trust. In Joseph, chastity shows its true face: not prudishness but faithfulness, to God and to a trust; the reflection, ours to draw, is that bodies keep promises too.

Voices of the Church

St. Francis de Sales

Introduction to the Devout Life, Part 3, ch. 9 (summary)

The bishop of Geneva, famous for winning back hearts that controversy had hardened, taught that gentleness must begin at home: we are to be gentle even with ourselves after our own falls, correcting our faults with calm repentance rather than furious self-attack. Harshness toward oneself, we might say, is often pride wearing a hair shirt; his counsel is calm, prompt repentance instead. Gentleness practiced first on oneself is then ready for everyone else.

St. Thomas More

Witness of his martyrdom, 1535 (summary)

The King's chancellor kept every faithfulness he owed, to his family, his king, and his conscience, until the king demanded the one thing conscience could not give. The earliest account of his execution, the Paris Newsletter of 1535, records his final self-description on the scaffold: the king's good servant, and God's first. Faithfulness is love with a spine; when loyalties collide, it knows their order.

St. Maria Goretti

Martyrdom, 1902; canonization testimony and early accounts (summary)

Eleven years old, attacked by a young man she knew, Maria resisted him for the sake of his soul as much as her own purity, and, dying of her wounds, forgave him by name. Her attacker repented in prison and died a lay brother. Hold two truths together when telling her story: an assault is never the victim's sin, and no attacker can take a person's chastity or dignity (CCC 2356); and forgiveness like Maria's never requires a victim to stay in danger, conceal abuse, or trust an offender again.

Catechism Connection

CCC 1832 hands on the twelve fruits of the tradition: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity, calling them perfections the Spirit forms in us as first fruits of eternal glory.

CCC 2337-2347 on chastity: the successful integration of sexuality within the person, a long apprenticeship in self-mastery, which is a training in human freedom; the alternative stated bluntly: man governs his passions and finds peace, or lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy.

CCC 2521-2524 on modesty: it protects the intimate center of the person and the mystery of persons and their love; it is decency, discretion, and patience ordered to love.

CCC 1809 on temperance, the cardinal virtue behind self-control: it moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods.

Thread Watch

Threads in play

Vine. The orchard is now complete: all twelve fruits named. Next session asks where fruit actually comes from, and the sealed guesses open. Tell the group only this: bring your memory of everything since Session 1.

Sealed guess. Confirm privately that every envelope is in hand for next week, and keep each one sealed and unread, exactly as promised in Session 1.

Session Goals

1. Handle the nine/twelve question with full honesty and no embarrassment, including the steelman.
2. Redefine gentleness as strength under control using Moses and Matthew 11:29.
3. Frame modesty, self-control, and chastity positively as self-possession ordered to self-gift.
4. Complete the twelve-fruit orchard in preparation for Session 8.

Time Note

Runs 80-90 minutes; the steelman needs its full time, so if short, cut Build question 4 (Joseph narrative) and assign Genesis 39 as reading before next session instead.

Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, and finish the orchard in us. Give us gentleness that stays firm in doing what is right, faithfulness that outlasts cost, and possession of ourselves complete enough to give ourselves away. Amen.

Win · Opening Questions

1. Think of someone you would describe as gentle but nobody would describe as weak. What makes the combination work?
2. What is the longest promise anyone has kept to you?

Build · Into the Text

Read Galatians 5:22-23 aloud one final time. Then read CCC 1832's list of twelve aloud. Let the group notice the difference before you explain anything.

Steelman · Your Catechism adds to Scripture

At full strength: a Protestant friend opens your Catechism, counts twelve fruits, opens your own RSV2CE, counts nine, and says: here is the whole problem in miniature. Rome cannot leave the word of God alone; where Scripture says nine, tradition says twelve, and the extra three have simply been added to the Bible's list. If the Church will pad a fruit list, what else has she padded?

Press the group: where do the twelve actually come from? Not from a Vatican committee but from the traditional Latin text, the Clementine Vulgate line of the Western Church, whose text of Galatians carries the longer reading. The Church is not adding to Scripture; she is handing on the text as the Latin tradition received and prayed it, while her own approved translations, like the RSV2CE in your hands, print the nine of the Greek. Then press further: are longanimity, modesty, and chastity inventions? The group can find each commended in Scripture within a minute (Colossians 1:11; 1 Timothy 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5). The list differs; the doctrine does not. And note what the objection assumes: that the Church must be caught either contradicting Scripture or copying it. A Church comfortable printing both lists side by side is a Church confident they are one teaching.

1. Jesus says "I am gentle and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29). Set that beside the cleansing of the temple. Is this a contradiction? What is gentleness, on the evidence of Jesus?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

No contradiction: gentleness is strength under perfect control, not the absence of strength. The classic illustration, a powerful animal fully disciplined to its rider, is an image, not a definition; the definition is Jesus. Jesus has all power and perfect placement of it: fierce where fierceness heals, tender where tenderness heals, never once out of control. Moses, the meekest man on earth (Numbers 12:3), confronted an empire. Mere harmlessness is not yet gentleness; gentleness is strength placed at the service of love.

2. Faithfulness is love extended through time. Why is it listed as fruit of the Spirit rather than simply as willpower, and what does St. Thomas More's ordering, the king's good servant, and God's first, teach about competing faithfulnesses?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

Because promises outlast the feelings that made them, and only a life fed from beyond itself keeps loving when the feeling is gone: the Holy Spirit sustains faithfulness when keeping a promise becomes difficult. More shows that faithfulness is not flat loyalty to everything at once; it is loyalties in right order. He served the king faithfully precisely because he served God first; had he inverted the order, he would have betrayed both.

Live Discovery

Send the group to Proverbs 25, hunting for a verse that describes a man without self-control as a piece of ruined architecture. They should land on 25:28: like a city breached, without walls. Ask: what actually happens to an unwallled ancient city? Anything that wants in, gets in.

3. Using the city image: what are modesty, self-control, and chastity actually for? Answer without using the word "no."

ANSWER · share after the discussion

They are the walls that keep a self intact so there is a self to give. Self-control keeps appetites serving the person instead of ruling him; modesty guards the intimate center of the person from being made a spectacle; chastity integrates sexuality into love that can make and keep promises. All three are ordered to gift: self-control keeps us free to choose how to love and serve others. The Catechism says it without flinching: govern your passions and find peace, or be dominated by them and become unhappy (CCC 2339).

4. Genesis 39: Joseph flees Potiphar's wife, loses his cloak, gains a prison cell. By every worldly measure he lost. What did his chastity actually preserve, and for whom?

ANSWER · share after the discussion

His integrity before God ("how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?", 39:9), his faithfulness to a master who trusted him, and, in God's providence, the very character through which Egypt and his own family, and many peoples besides, would be fed in the famine. Chastity kept Joseph whole; a whole Joseph could be trusted with Egypt. The fruits that guard the person are never only about the person.

Dig Deeper · Modesty is bigger than hemlines

The Catechism's treatment of modesty (2521-2524) barely mentions clothing. Modesty protects the mystery of persons: it governs how we look, speak, joke, post, and pry. There is immodest curiosity, immodest conversation, immodest scrolling. A culture of exposure makes everything visible and nothing sacred; modesty is the fruit that remembers some things are holy precisely because they are not on display.

Send · Closing Questions

1. A friend pressures someone to share a private photo. How could modesty, self-control, and respect for the person shape the response?
2. For private reflection this week, not discussion: which wall needs rebuilding, self-control, modesty of eyes and speech, or chastity? Bring it to prayer, and to Confession if it belongs there.

Live It This Week

- Choose your weakest wall and set one concrete, measurable guard on it this week.
- Practice de Sales' counsel once: after your next fall, correct yourself gently and immediately, without the rage.
- Keep one small promise this week that circumstances would excuse you from keeping.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, gentle and lowly in heart, teach us your kind of strength. Rebuild our breached walls, order our loyalties with you first, and make us whole enough to be given away. Amen.

Scripture Memory Verse

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.

Leader Reference Card

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

- Galatians 5:22-23
- Matthew 11:28-30
- Proverbs 25:28
- Numbers 12:3
- Genesis 39:1-12
- Colossians 1:11 (steelman)
- 1 Timothy 2:9 (steelman)
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 (steelman)