

The Fruit of the Spirit is GENTLENESS

What types of actions do you use when you touch a basketball? a hammer? a baseball? action figures? (*encourage responses like bouncing, pounding, throwing, flying, jumping, fighting wars, etc.*)

Here's a new list of objects. What types of actions do you use when you touch a newborn baby, a fancy vase made of glass, a butterfly? (*encourage responses like hold with two hands, be careful, be gentle, move slowly, etc.*)

The difference between these two groups of items is that when touching basketballs, hammers, and action figures you don't really have to be careful or gentle. They are meant to be handled with muscle, with strength, and with power. But when you hold a baby or handle a glass vase or delicate butterfly you must be very gentle because these things could easily be broken or injured.

God has amazing strength and power. He shows his awesome power in the storms of nature. We read in the Bible about how God used his power when people chose to turn away from him and acted in ways that weren't right. But God is also a God of extreme gentleness. He uses his gentleness with people who love him and desire to follow him by living his way. Listen to how God is compared with a shepherd:

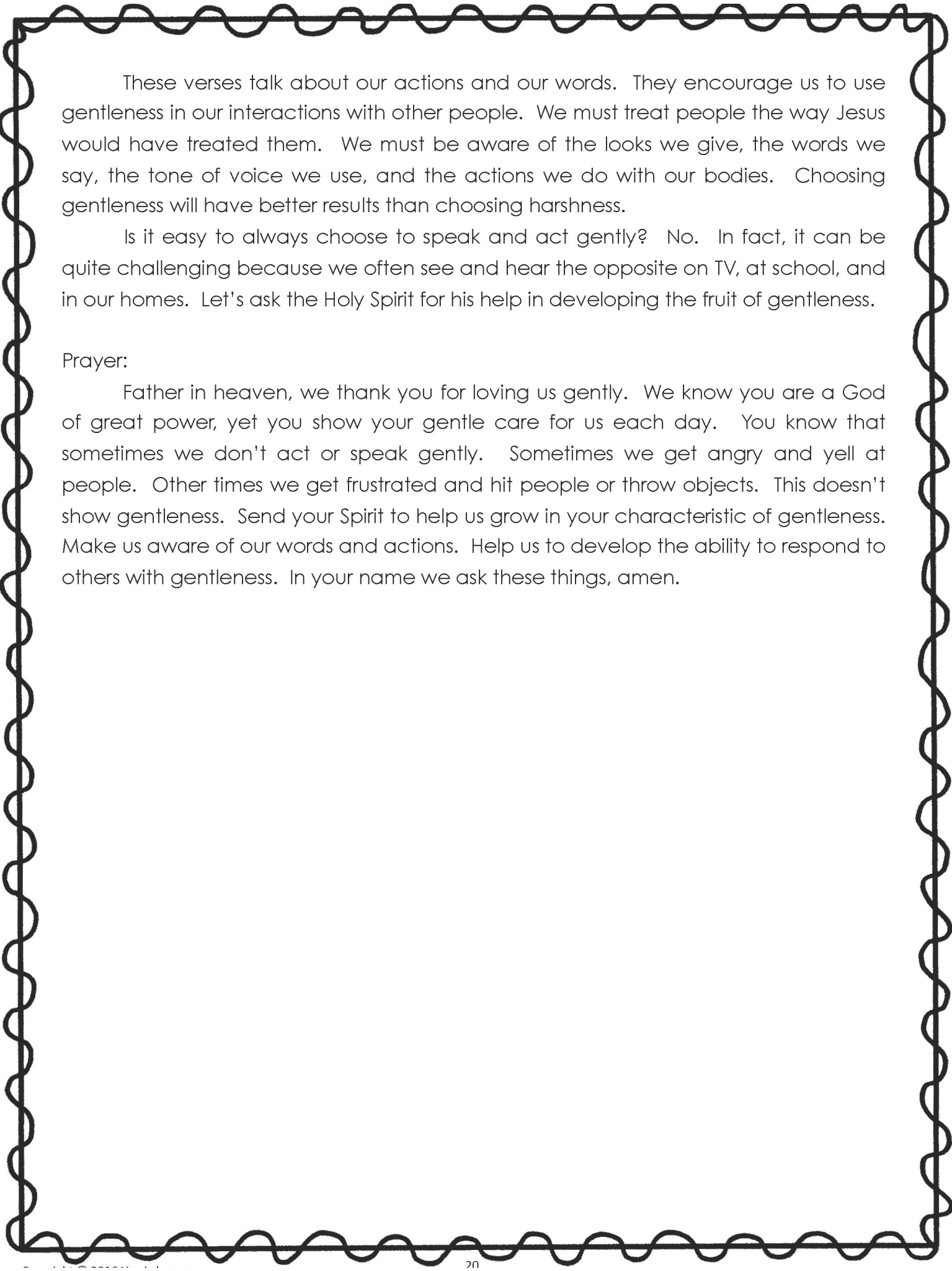
• *Isaiah 40:11 – “He tends his flock like a shepherd: he gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.”*

After hearing about God's gentleness in this verse, would it feel nice to be carried like a lamb close to his heart?

When the Holy Spirit lives in us, he helps us to grow in gentleness. Sometimes it can be hard to find examples of gentle behavior in the world around us. Think for a moment about what you see on TV. Do you see a lot of violence? Do you hear a lot of mean, teasing, and sarcastic words between actors? Do these words and actions show gentleness? Most of the time they don't. God's word tells us to act and speak differently. Listen to these words:

• *Philippians 4:5 – “Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.”*

• *Proverbs 15:1 – “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”*



These verses talk about our actions and our words. They encourage us to use gentleness in our interactions with other people. We must treat people the way Jesus would have treated them. We must be aware of the looks we give, the words we say, the tone of voice we use, and the actions we do with our bodies. Choosing gentleness will have better results than choosing harshness.

Is it easy to always choose to speak and act gently? No. In fact, it can be quite challenging because we often see and hear the opposite on TV, at school, and in our homes. Let's ask the Holy Spirit for his help in developing the fruit of gentleness.

Prayer:

Father in heaven, we thank you for loving us gently. We know you are a God of great power, yet you show your gentle care for us each day. You know that sometimes we don't act or speak gently. Sometimes we get angry and yell at people. Other times we get frustrated and hit people or throw objects. This doesn't show gentleness. Send your Spirit to help us grow in your characteristic of gentleness. Make us aware of our words and actions. Help us to develop the ability to respond to others with gentleness. In your name we ask these things, amen.