

## 8. The Fruit of Gentleness

Ephesians 4:1-6 & Galatians 5:23

### Intro

“There was once a lady who worked in a high rise office building in London. Every day for her coffee break she went down to the first floor cafeteria and purchased a Kit Kat candy bar from the vending machine, and a cup of coffee. This day was no different. After finding a small table in the corner and seating herself, she leaned over to search for something in her purse. When she sat up again a gentleman had seated himself across from her at the table.

He had a cup of coffee, a doughnut and her Kit Kat bar in his mouth. He didn't apologize or offer any explanation. He simply ate it. She was surprised and irritated, but said nothing. As quickly as possible she drank her coffee. The more she thought about it, however, the angrier she became.

Finally she stood to leave and stomped over beside him, grabbing the remnant of his doughnut and stuffing it in her mouth. As best she could she said, “There now. How does that feel?” and marched back to her office, where once again she opened her purse. To her horror, there on top was her Kit Kat candy bar.” (Source: by Doris Sanford, *A Candy Bar*, More Stories from The Heart, 1997)

You see, gentleness is a humble and meek attitude that is patiently submissive in every offense, and at the same time being free of any desire for revenge.

Gentleness is more needed today than perhaps ever before because we live in a world where there is anger, rage and violence. Violence and rage in movies and TV, computer games, road rage, flight rage, and domestic rage in the home. We need to demonstrate a spirit of gentleness and meekness.

### Defining Gentleness - Meekness

**Gentleness:** (Greek, *PRAOTES*) the term means meek, gentile, mild or soft. Different Bible translations use either meekness or gentleness but it means the same.

In the ancient Greek language the word was sometimes used to describe a soothing medicine or a soft breeze.

### **Gentleness or Meekness is Power under Control**

The word was used in other Greek literature to refer to the breaking of an untamed animal like

#### 1) A Wild Horse

We see the same concept in reference to a horse. As long as the horse runs wild and free, its power is out of control and it serves no useful purpose to humanity. But when its power is brought under control, it can be used for helpful purposes.

#### 2) A Lion

There is a big difference between the lion running free in the wilds of Africa and the one responding to the lion tamer at the circus. The lion in the circus has all the same ferocity, energy, power, and strength of the one in the wild, but he is under the control of the lion tamer. The same is true of meekness. No longer does the lion in us seek its own causes and ends; it is submissive to the control of the Master. So to be meek means we don't lose our power; we harness it.

### Illustration of the Wind

When the wind blows with hurricane force, it wreaks havoc. But when it is a quiet breeze, it catches the windmill, which pumps the water, which waters the crop, which feeds the masses. Only power under control is useful. Don't think for a moment that meekness is characterized by cowardice, weakness, or fearfulness. Jesus was meek (Matt. 11:29) and He certainly wasn't powerless or cowardly.

### Christ's Example

True gentleness and meekness is best seen in Christ. He was submissive, never resisting or disputing the will of God. His absolute trust in the Father enabled Him to show compassion, courage, and self-sacrifice even in the most hostile situation.

The spirit of gentleness and meekness is the Spirit of Christ, who defended the glory of His Father, but gave Himself in sacrifice for others. Leaving us an example to follow, *"He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth. When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly."* (1 Peter 2:22-23).

Jesus did not raise a finger or give a single retort in His own defense, though at any time He could have called legions of angels to His side. *"Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?"* (Matt. 26:53). He refused to use either natural or supernatural power for His own welfare.

Although Jesus was God, while He lived on earth in the flesh, Jesus was gentle and humble in heart. Matthew 11:29 we read, *"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."*

2 Corinthians 10:1, *"By the humility and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you—I, Paul..."*

To emulate Christ's example is to have a humble and gentle attitude that is patiently submissive in every offense, while being free of any desire for revenge or retribution. Gentleness is closely related to humility. It is not weakness but rather the willingness to suffer injury instead of inflicting it.

### How do we Practice Gentleness?

#### **1. By being submissive to the Will of God.**

This is where it all begins. If we are going to be gentle, we must relinquish our power and will to God. If we cannot be submissive to the will of God, we will have trouble being gentle because we will be under our own control and eventually lose control.

Jesus was the best example of being submissive to the will of the Father. In the garden before His crucifixion, He told the Father that He would be submissive to His will.

Matthew 26:42, *"He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done."*

#### **2. By having a teachable spirit.**

If we do not have a teachable spirit, we will not be able to receive the instruction we need to be able to be like Jesus.

If we think we know it all, we will never grow, and if we cannot grow, we will not be able to be the

gentle person God wants us to be.

James 1:21, says, *“So put out of your life every evil thing and every kind of wrong. Then in gentleness accept God’s teaching that is planted in your hearts, which can save you.”*

We must be willing to learn, we must be willing to grow. Many do not have teachable spirits and in the end they are more concerned with being right than in possessing the truth.

A teachable spirit is part of being submissive to the will of God. It is God’s will for you to grow. Are you willing to learn so you can be submissive to His will for you? That’s the spirit of gentleness.

### **3. By being considerate of others.**

We need to be considerate of others; we need to be able to put ourselves in their shoes; and we need to be able to empathize with them.

Ephesians 4:1-2 says, *“Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love.”*

Our walk with Jesus is not worthy if we are not showing consideration for one another.

You can call yourself anything you want, but if we cannot show patience, love, and gentleness, we cannot call our walk worthy. Talk means nothing without the walk!

I like what Max Lucado wrote, *“I choose gentleness... Nothing is won by force. I choose to be gentle. If I raise my voice may it be only in praise. If I clench my fist, may it be only in prayer. If I make a demand, may it be only of myself.”*

### **4. By helping a struggling fellow believer**

It is easy to feel morally or spiritually superior around people who do not share our particular convictions. But the Scriptures teach us to beware of spiritual pride and to seek to restore those caught in a sin in a "spirit of gentleness." What attitudes do you have toward people caught in sin? How would God have you speak to sinners, remembering that you were once a slave to sin?

Galatians 6:1 teaches, *“Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.”*

### **5. Being gentle in defending the Faith**

We also should be gentle when defending the faith against those who oppose it and us as believers. 2 Timothy 2:25 says, *“Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth...”*

Also in 1 Peter 3:15 instructs the same, *“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...”*

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- **3. By being considerate of others.**
- **4. By helping a struggling fellow believer.**
- **5. Being gentle in defending the Faith.**

## Conclusion

I think one of the most powerful stories of gentleness is the incident of a woman caught in the act of adultery by determined harsh religious fanatics who wanted not only to stone her but to trap Jesus and discredit Him and His ministry...

### **John 8:1-11**

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.<sup>2</sup> At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them.<sup>3</sup> The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group<sup>4</sup> and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery.<sup>5</sup> In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?"<sup>6</sup> They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger.<sup>7</sup> When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."<sup>8</sup> Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.<sup>9</sup> At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there.<sup>10</sup> Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"<sup>11</sup> "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

The meek prosper because they are the ones who have power under control. You may be trying to live in this world by your own power. Let God teach you meekness so that you can live in and depend on His strength.

Meekness is a path worth following. It may not lead you to a spot on "American Idol" or you may not win a political campaign, but you'll find the reward of God is yours in abundance. Jesus promised, "*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth*" (Matt. 5:5).

Christian author and writer Philip Yancey shares a story while he spoke at a conference in Toronto. He writes,

"Once, while speaking on the topic of grace in Toronto, I asked the audience about their own experiences conveying grace to others. One woman shocked us all, she said: *'I feel called to minister to telephone marketers. You know, the kind who call at inconvenient hours and deliver their spiel before you can say a word.'* Immediately I flashed back to the times I have responded rudely or simply hung up. She continued: *'All day long these sales callers hear people curse at them and slam the phone down. I listen attentively to their pitch, then I try to respond kindly, though I almost never buy what they're selling. Instead, I ask about their personal life and whether they have any concerns I can pray for. Often they ask me to pray with them over the phone, and sometimes they are in tears. They're people, after all, probably underpaid, and they're surprised when someone treats them with common courtesy.'*

Hearing such stories, I am aware how often I miss possible hinge moments in my own interactions with people. I marvel at the Toronto woman's gracious response and think of the times I get irritated with marketers and with employees on computer help lines who don't speak good English. I catch myself treating store cashiers and Starbucks servers as if they were machines, not persons ... Subtly or not so subtly, I let the other person know that I've been interrupted and need to get back to work. In the process, I miss golden opportunities to dispense grace." (Source: Philip Yancey, *Vanishing Grace*, 2014, pp. 75-76)

Humanly it is difficult to exemplify gentleness or meekness but as believers we need the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit that produces in us the fruit of gentleness. We need to be filled and controlled by the Spirit.