

GENTLENESS

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness & self control. Against such things there is no law.
-Galatians 5:22-23

WHAT IS GENTLENESS?

[Gentleness] is a characteristic of peaceable and controlled kindness, the opposite of arrogance or domination. Other Hebrew and Greek words used for gentleness include the idea of gentleness, but also connote graciousness, clemency, kindness, humility, consideration, courtesy and meekness.¹

We may have thought of gentleness as being overly soft, almost a weakness. Instead, think of someone who has a reason to act harsh but instead chooses gentleness. What ultimate self-control! There is more power exemplified in that than in the act of lashing out, being rude, loud, bossy - which are usually are gut reactions and to control those and choose gentleness instead, how impressive!

Ephesians 4:1-3 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (ESV)

Let's see gentleness as a strength and not as a weakness.

A common misconception is that gentleness is weakness or passivity. True gentleness, however, is just the opposite. It requires great strength and self-control. Gentleness comes from a state of humility. Therefore, someone who lacks gentleness is often prideful and easily angered, or feels the need for revenge.²

GENTLENESS IN ACTION

- The way we speak to people.

In God's gentleness, He provides consolation to Job (Job 15:11) and speaks in a gentle whisper to Elijah (1 Kings 19:11-13).¹

- Providing comfort and rest for others.

Matthew 11:29 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (ESV)

- The way we share Christ with others.

1 Thessalonians 2:7-8 But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. (ESV)

¹ Evans, M. J. 2000. "Gentleness." In *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, edited by T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner, electronic ed., 507. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

² Lauren Abraham, "Weekly Devotional: Fruit of the Spirit – Gentleness", 2016 <https://www.gcu.edu/blog/spiritual-life/weekly-devotional-fruit-spirit-gentleness>, (accessed February 18, 2023)

Well-to-do Romans often had slave or free wet nurses to care for young children, as did some, though fewer, lower-class Romans. According to the ideal of the educated Romans who could afford them, wet nurses should be educated so they could teach the young children; their most important trait, however, was their gentleness. They often endeared themselves to young children, who when they grew older frequently freed those nurses who had been slaves. The harshest Cynics criticized those who were gentle like wet nurses or the aged; others, like Dio Chrysostom (a public speaker who lived a generation after Paul), insisted that such gentleness should be cultivated.³

When we are gentle with people, we win them to ourselves and in turn to Christ.

The Results of Gentleness

- **People are led to change**

2 Timothy 2:24-26 And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will. (ESV)

An example of gentleness can be seen in John 8, when the Pharisees bring a woman who was caught in adultery to Jesus. The Pharisees told Jesus that the Law of Moses commanded them to stone such a woman, to which Jesus responds, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7). After everyone left, Jesus did not condemn the woman, and said to her, "Go now and leave your life of sin" (John 8:11). Just like how Jesus was gentle with the woman in this story, God is gentle with us. Even in our sin, He continues to love us. He does not keep record of our wrongs, but offers forgiveness if we come to Him.⁴

In our gentleness toward others, we can example Christ to those around us and lead them to Him, lovingly and gently. People who are coerced into things, won't generally stay there, when the one coercing them is gone. If we want people to stay with Jesus long term, we need to be gentle in our witness to them.

- **Less drama with others**

If you are trying to live a limited drama life, gentleness is a tool that you should lean into. When others are worked up, ready to fight you, trying to stir up contention, your soft answer will dissipate their anger so much quicker than your logical argument and human reasoning.

Proverbs 15:1-4 A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly. The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good. A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit. (ESV)

³ Hazel Offner, et al. A Deeper Look at the Fruit of the Spirit : Growing in the Likeness of Christ. IVP Connect, 2013.

⁴ Lauren Abraham, "Weekly Devotional: Fruit of the Spirit – Gentleness", 2016, <https://www.gcu.edu/blog/spiritual-life/weekly-devotional-fruit-spirit-gentleness>, (accessed February 18, 2023)