

Thoughts on Gentleness in Our Actions and Words
All Saints 50+ Class – 3/13/22
Handout

Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV) "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Matthew 11:28-30 (MSG) "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

Matthew 11:28-30 (ESV) 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. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Do you think that these two ideas of "learning from Him" and being "gentle" are connected?

1. What is gentleness? What does it look like in real life?

What does gentleness look like as we live it out? Here are several quotes...

"To be gentle is to be tender, humble, and fair, to know what posture and response is fitting for any occasion. It indicates a graciousness, a desire to extend mercy to others... It is a rare trait, but one we know and love when we see and experience it." Tim Challies; *The Character of the Christian*; Blog 2/18/16

"Gentleness is the quality or characteristic of being kind, tender, mild-mannered, compassionate, and considerate. To be gentle means that you show love and care for others in the way you act and speak."
10 Ways You Can Live Out Gentleness in the Bible; Gentle Christian Parent Blog; 8/21/20

"Gentleness basically means one's strength or power under control, self-control. The gentle person exhibits a gentleness of attitude and behavior instead of any kind of harshness. ...Gentleness is the opposite of harshness. ...As you touch other people in interaction with them, you fail to leave any marks."
5 Key Characteristics of Walking with Christ; Kevin Carson; 6/19/20 Blog.

Our gentleness, or a lack thereof, will always show up in our actions and in our words. The challenge of Scripture is that we lead gentle lives, lives marked by gentleness.

What is your definition of gentleness? Where are some places where you are gentle? Where are some places where you are not as gentle as you should be?

2. Jesus' heart... The life of Christ as our best example...

Matthew 11:28-30 (ESV) 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. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

In verse 29 Jesus challenges us to learn from him, and then shares in His next thought that He is gentle and lowly. Are we really to be still learning, from the example of Jesus, to be gentle and lowly?

"But in only one place—perhaps the most wonderful words ever uttered by human lips—do we hear Jesus himself open up to us his very heart.

"In the one place in the Bible where the Son of God pulls back the veil and lets us peer way down into the core of who he is, we are not told that he is 'austere and demanding in heart.' We are not told that he is 'exalted and dignified in heart.' We are not told that he is 'joyful and generous in heart.' Letting Jesus set the terms, his surprising claim is that he is 'gentle and lowly in heart.'"
Dane Ortlund; *Gentle and Lowly*; p. 17 – 18.

“And when Jesus tells us what animates him most deeply, what is most true of him—when he exposes the innermost recesses of his being—what we find there is: gentle and lowly. Who could ever have thought up such a Savior?”
Dane Ortlund; *Gentle and Lowly*; p. 19.

A further reflection of Jesus' heart would be the words of the Beatitudes, from the Sermon on the Mount, are recorded in Matthew 5 and Luke 6.

Matthew 5:1-9 (NIV/Sermon on the Mount / The Beatitudes)

- Blessed are the poor in spirit
- Blessed are those who mourn
- Blessed are the meek
- Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness
- Blessed are the merciful
- Blessed are the pure in heart
- Blessed are the peacemakers

Although Jesus doesn't specifically use either the word “gentle” or “gentleness” in the Beatitudes, do you think that it is possible to live out the character traits of the Beatitudes without being gentle?

Peter's reminder of the example of Christ...

1 Peter 2:21 (NIV) To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

3. The Fruit of the Spirit...

Where else in Scripture do we see this challenge for gentleness?

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

As Christians, we demonstrate the Spirit is at work in our lives when we show gentleness.

In Galatians 5:22 we are told that the fruit of the Spirit is... The word fruit is singular, yet Paul lists 9 characteristics of that fruit. Why does Paul use the word fruit which is singular and then list 9 different character traits?

4. Gentleness in living out the Christian life... All through the New Testament are words and challenges to live our lives marked by gentleness. Let's look at the thoughts of Paul and Peter...

Paul's words...

Ephesians 4:2 (NIV) Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Philippians 4:5 (NIV) Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

Philippians 4:5 (ESV) Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand;
Note: The ESV footnote says that the word reasonableness can also be translated as gentleness.

Colossians 3:12 (NIV) Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Peter's words...

1 Peter 3:3-4 (NIV) Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. ⁴ Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.

1 Peter 3:15 (NIV) ...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...

All the way through the Bible, somewhat in the OT and deeply ingrained in the NT, we as Christians are called to live lives marked by gentleness.

5. Gentleness is to be one of the defining characteristics for any a church leader.

In the books of 1 & 2 Timothy and the book of Titus. Paul outlines the character traits that all NT churches are to look for when appointing or selecting leaders. Paul speaks repeatedly that being gentle must be one of the character requirements for anyone appointed to church leadership.

1 Timothy 3:2-3 (NIV) Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.

1 Timothy 6:11 (NIV) But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness...

2 Timothy 2:25 (NIV) Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth...

The bottom line, then as now, is that no one should be in church leadership unless their manner of influence, their lives, are characterized by gentleness.

6. Application... Let's imagine what gentleness should look like in our lives... How do all these Bible passages apply to us?

Here are some thoughts from the well-known Christian author and leader, Jerry Bridges.

"A profile of gentleness as it should appear in our lives will first include actively seeking to make others feel at ease, or 'restful,' in our presence. ...we should be sensitive to others' opinions and ideas..."

"Second, gentleness will demonstrate respect for the personal dignity of the other person. Where necessary, it will seek to change a wrong opinion or attitude by persuasion and kindness, not by domination or intimidation..."

"Gentleness will also avoid blunt and abrupt speech, instead seeking to answer everyone with sensitivity and respect, ready to show consideration toward all. Gentle Christians do not feel they have the liberty to 'say what I think and let the chips fall where they may.' Instead they're sensitive to the reactions and feelings of others..."

"Finally, gentle Christians will not degrade or belittle or gossip about the brother or sister..."

Jerry Bridges; Navigator Blog 6/3/21.

I read a prayer recently that was written by Navigator missionaries in the Middle East; certainly one of the hardest places in the world to live faithfully for Christ. One of the lines in their prayer caught my attention. It read:

"We seek the grace to prioritize worshipping You individually and as a body. To thereby draw close enough to perceive Your true nature and loving heart more clearly..."

They are asking God to work into their own hearts a deep understanding of God's true nature and God's loving heart and to do that as a foundation for their own walk with and experience of God our Father. The gentleness of God the Father is one of those important characteristics of His true nature that they are seeking to understand and know. In knowing the true nature of God, they realize that their lives are to be, must be, characterized by this same gentleness as our heavenly Father.

Self-Evaluation – Here are some questions to ask yourself...

- Does your life reflect gentleness?
- How do you view gentleness? Is it a quality that you desire to see in your life?
- When someone wrongs you, is your response gentle?

- Would your family and friends say that you are a gentle person? Would they say that you treat them with gentleness?
- What would your social media presence indicate?"
- Are you gentle online?

Here are 10 ways we can show gentleness:

- "Be considerate of others' feelings and needs.
- "Show empathy. Empathy is acknowledging another person's point of view, to understand their feelings.
- "Be Patient. As Ephesians 4:2 says, 'Be patient with each other, making allowances for each other's faults because of your love.' (NLT)
- "Remember the Golden Rule: Treat others the way you would like to be treated.
- "Speak respectfully to everyone. Consider others as important and worthy of kind regard. Watch your tone so that what you have to say will be well received.
- "Seek peace. Search for solutions and common ground, to not be divisive
- "Be a calming presence in the midst of turmoil
- "Act with tenderness and love
- "Listen more than you speak or act (James 1:19).
- "Be humble as you serve and care for others."

10 Ways You Can Live Out Gentleness in the Bible; Gentle Christian Parent Blog; 8/21/20

"All who are truly godly and are real disciples of Christ have a gentle spirit in them." Jonathan Edwards

7. Why Is Gentleness So Important?

As a Christian, you demonstrate the Spirit at work in your life when you show gentleness.

Then and Now: You will be blessed and rewarded for our gentleness by God when you get to heaven. But we also and receive His peace and favor when we exhibit gentleness here and now.

There are many benefits of gentleness. When you treat others gently you gain trust and respect. Being gentle makes others more willing to listen to you.

Often, we earn the right to speak into someone's life by our gentleness and concern.

Fighting destroys relationships and takes so much time to repair. You can prevent inciting anger by choosing to respond with gentleness. Doing so creates a closer connection and as an added bonus, will save you time and hardship.

As parents, gentleness as one of the most important character qualities we need to focus on in our families.

So much of the peace and harmony we seek is correlated to how we treat others.

8. How do we put it into practice?

Essentially anything we do or say as Christians should reflect a gentle spirit. Why? Because of our love for Christ and our desire to follow His example.

2 Corinthians 10:1 (NIV) By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you...

Proverbs 15:1 (NIV) A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

9. Issues of conscience... Disputable matters... How are we to respond?

What is an "issue of conscience" or a "disputable matter?"

Romans 14:1-12 (NIV) Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters.

² One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables.

³ The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat

everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. ⁴ Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

⁵ One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. ⁷ For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. ⁸ If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

⁹ For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. ¹⁰ You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. ¹¹ It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'"

¹² So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

10. Q & A... Last thoughts...

May gentleness be a true characteristic of all our lives.

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