



# In Defense of “Gentle”

June 28, 2026 • 1 Peter #5

## Opening

If there was a word to describe you – an adjective that captured your personality – what would you want it to be?

- Maybe you would want that word to be “brave,” or “clever,” or “ambitious.”
- Maybe you’d like a nickname like some of the famous people in history – Alexander the Great, William the Conqueror, Suleiman the Magnificent.
- Maybe you’d like people to highlight your looks, or your business acumen, or your people skills, or your wealth.

Think of a word. (Mine is “scrumtrulescent.”)

But you know what word I’m guessing nobody or almost nobody chose?

“Gentle”

Steve the Gentle. Gentle Derek. It makes you cringe a little bit, doesn’t it?



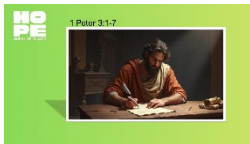
I once got a letter from a good friend of mine from high school in which she was talking about her recent wedding and honeymoon. She and her new husband had gone to Prince Edward Island in Canada, where “they fell in love with the island and its gentle people.”

That line is almost comedic, right?

Deb teased me a lot with that phrase (which is why I remember it), because I used to really like that girl... but that line convinced me that I dodged a bullet. LOL

Who wants to be “gentle?!?”

Yet in today’s passage from 1 Peter 3, that quality of “gentleness” is on full display as he talks about the behavior of husbands and wives.



## 1 Peter 3:1-7

*“In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands. Then, even if some refuse to obey the Good News, your godly lives will speak to them without any words. They will be won over by observing your pure and reverent lives. Don’t be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. You should clothe yourselves instead with the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God. This is how the holy women of old made themselves beautiful. They put their trust in God and accepted the authority of their husbands. For instance, Sarah obeyed her husband, Abraham, and called him her master. You are her daughters when you do what is right without fear of what your husbands might do. In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God’s gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered.” (1 Peter 3:1–7, NLT)*

As we continue to spend time in Peter’s first New Testament letter, it sounds like he is telling us *all* to be “gentle people.”

Now, it’s fine to be skeptical of old girlfriends when they use that phrase, but when Peter says it, we don’t have the luxury of ignoring or laughing at it. This is part of our Bible.

*And the Bible is? (God’s Word).*

*And God’s Word is? (The Truth).*

The Bible is our final authority at TCC. So, if it says we should be gentle, we need to listen.

Today, maybe we should spend some time seeing why Peter shares this viewpoint. Maybe we should spend time considering how gentleness would look among us. Maybe being a “gentle people” wouldn’t be so bad...

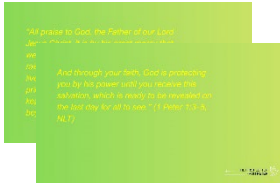
## Recap

We have spent several weeks already listening to Peter and learning from his letter. He has been writing to Christians who are struggling. Life has been

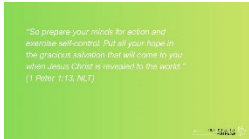


hard, and Peter's goal is to bring them hope! He has been pointing us to build our lives on the Cornerstone of Jesus and find our hope and meaning in Him.

Remember what he said?



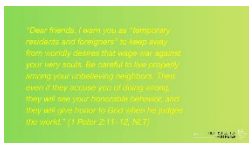
*“All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.” (1 Peter 1:3–5, NLT)*



He also called his readers to holy living, based on that hope.

*“So prepare your minds for action and exercise self-control. Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world.” (1 Peter 1:13, NLT)*

And that holy living shows up in the way we treat and respond to others.



*“Dear friends, I warn you as “temporary residents and foreigners” to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.” (1 Peter 2:11–12, NLT)*

Live as if you don't belong in this world, he says.

Live properly among those who are unbelievers, using your behavior to bring them closer to God, he says.

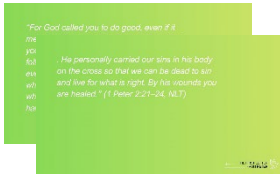
Peter applied that mindset to a couple of different groups in last week's passage. He talked about how we do so when relating to **human authorities** (government, rulers); he talked about how we do so when relating to **household authorities** (master/slave dynamics in ancient Roman culture).

Remember, Peter didn't say:

- **Protest the government's failures!** Highlight their sins by spreading information via social media or local coffee shops! Stand on corners with signs and get people to honk in outrage!

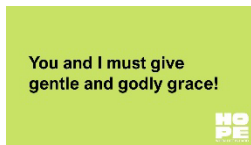
- **Fight back against mistreatment!** Stop serving until they change their ways! Get footage of their abuse and share it to shame them and turn others against them!

No, he said **“submit.”** He said to **“do good.”** He said **“endure suffering.”**  
Why? Because that is the example of Jesus.



*“For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps. He never sinned, nor ever deceived anyone. He did not retaliate when he was insulted, nor threaten revenge when he suffered. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly. He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. By his wounds you are healed.” (1 Peter 2:21–24, NLT)*

Peter’s call for a gentle response in the face of suffering continues in chapter 3 as he addresses the context of marriage. He continues to press his readers to act in a surprising and unnaturally gentle way!



**You and I must give gentle and godly grace,** Peter says.

## Gentleness Defined



I think we need to pause here and make sure we’re talking about the term correctly.

What does it mean to be “gentle?” It’s clearly a good thing! In fact, it is listed as fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5.



*“But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **gentleness**, and self-control. There is no law against these things!” (Galatians 5:22–23, NLT)*

Another word that translates **“gentleness”** is **“meekness,”** or sometimes **“humility.”** Those all mean something quite different than what we normally mean as the definition. We usually define “gentleness” to be the same as “weakness.”

But that’s not true.



Have you ever seen a lion carrying its cub? The lion's jaw is powerful! It can generate upwards of 650-1000 lbs/in<sup>2</sup>. It can break bones...and yet the cub is perfectly safe when mom is carrying him. The lioness is gentle, not weak.



A dad playing catch with his kids could throw a ball HARD at little Timmy. Maybe not MLB speeds, but enough to knock the kid over (or out!). But instead, he does a gentle toss into the kindergartner's glove. The dad is gentle, not weak.

Meanwhile, Timmy could put every ounce of power into his throw back to dad. He could throw with aggression and rage...and it wouldn't faze dad at all. The kid is NOT being gentle...he's just weak!



See the difference? Gentleness is not weakness. Instead, gentleness is really "strength under control."

Jesus himself demonstrates that kind of control, commanding and controlling His strength in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy.

*"Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets; **a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench**, until he brings justice to victory; and in his name the Gentiles will hope."*

(Matthew 12:18-21, ESV)

Jesus can be described as gentle. He is not weak at all, yet He fully controls that strength and chooses how much (or how little) to exert against us.

In the same way, you don't have to consider yourself to be weak. But you can choose to control the strength you have and **deploy it in a gentle way**.



## Gentleness Deployed

Peter talks about **deploying gentleness** with two groups here: wives and husbands.

Even if you're not married, you can learn from this. But if you are married, pay attention!



## Wives

To the wives, Peter ties “gentleness” to their internal attitude. He talks about “submission” and “respect” and “purity.”

Women, do you have **strength**? Of course!

- You are **intelligent** – capable of great thoughts and ideas, capable of learning at the highest levels. Women are valedictorians; women are doctors.
- You are **influential** – capable of swaying opinions and beliefs. Women lead corporations and serve as senators.
- You are **articulate** – capable of saying things with precision and vigor, capable of elevating the human language to inspire and shape. Women are poets and writers; women speak powerfully on stage and behind podiums.
- You are **attractive** – capable of shutting off the brains of men around you, using an outfit or a toss of the hair to get your way. Women win over boyfriends and husbands (and sometimes strangers) with physical beauty.

There is strength among women and wives! But Peter encourages women to deploy that strength with control, choosing to be gentle with their husbands in their conduct.

Rather than maximizing power through beauty, for example, he says

*“Don’t be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. You should clothe yourselves instead with the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God.” (1 Peter 3:3–4, NLT)*

In this, he echoes other biblical teaching on the value of inner beauty vs outward beauty.

*“Charm is deceptive, and beauty does not last; but a woman who fears the Lord will be greatly praised.” (Proverbs 31:30, NLT)*

My wife, Deb, has strength - She knows about subjects with range and depth. She can sway my opinion with a fancy hairstyle or outfit (woot woot!). She



can outtalk me in a fight and get me flustered, tongue-tied, and so confused that I don't even know what I'm saying anymore!

She has strength, but she is at her best when her “hidden person” (3:4) controls that strength and honors God with a “quiet spirit” – when she chooses to walk beside me in gentleness.



It's like the Old Testament example Peter gives – that of Abraham and Sarah – which provides a similar example. Sarah had strength! It was shown in **beauty** (see Genesis 12:14), it was shown in **influence** (see Genesis 16:2), and it was shown through a bit of a **spicy attitude** (see Genesis 16:6).

Sarah had strength, but she chose to be **gentle**.

She went with Abram as he followed God. She followed his direction. She went with his plans. She even went along with his attempt to have a child...when she was 90 years old...and successfully, miraculously, gave birth at that age!

She deployed gentleness.



## Husbands

Peter says a bit less about husbands, but they too are told to deploy gentleness. He ties husbands' gentleness to a relational dynamic, talking about “understanding” and “honor.”

Husbands, do you have **strength**? Of course!

- You are **intelligent** – capable of great thoughts and ideas, despite the way dads are depicted in comedy shows. Men are scientists and scholars.
- You are **persuasive** – capable of leading others and gathering followers. Men lead battalions and boardrooms.
- You are **creative** – capable of innovation and expression. Men invent technology, carve exquisite statues, and create Michelin-star-worthy desserts.
- You are **powerful** - capable of feats of strength and endurance. Men climb mountains and fend off intruders.

There is strength among men and husbands! But Peter encourages men to deploy that strength with control, choosing to be gentle with their wives in their conduct.

Rather than using brute strength to get their way, he says

*“...Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God’s gift of new life. Treat her as you should...” (1 Peter 3:7, NLT)*

In this, he echoes other biblical teaching on the value of restraint.

*“Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly.” (Colossians 3:19, NLT)*

Men, we can be intimidating. We are physically imposing (some more than others), and when we turn on that testosterone-fueled energy...especially when angry...we can impose our will on our wives. Even if you never threaten to hit, kick, or restrain your wife, she lives with that power differential in the back of her mind whenever you let your rage vent.

In that state, husbands, we can probably force compliance. Yet Peter says to act gently. Instead of seeking to dominate, we are to “live...in an understanding way,” seeking to comprehend her thoughts, her emotions, her perspective and her insight. You can choose to “honor” her through praise and encouragement and listening.

Husbands, we can deploy gentleness.

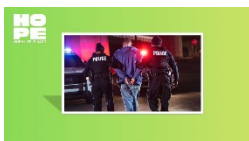
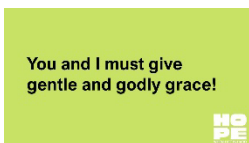
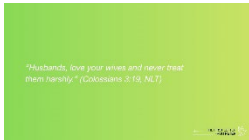
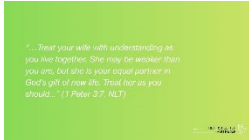
## Gentleness Delivers

**We must give gentle and godly grace... especially in marriage.**

But it isn’t only because Peter says so. We don’t do it just because an apostle of Jesus Christ said so. No, we do it because **gentleness delivers** in a way that strength doesn’t.

Strength can always create *compliance*, but it can’t always create *change*.

- When is the last time you have a **screaming fight** with someone and they yelled back, “*I agree with you now! You were totally right!*”?
- When is the last time we **went to war** with a country and they said, “*Your bombs have convinced us to change our ideology*”?
- When is the last time you **punished** your child for disobeying and they turned around mid-spanking or from the timeout corner and said, “*Thank you for setting me straight and fixing the errors of my way*”?



Never!!! Strength can cause someone to back down, but it can't cause change.

Gentleness, though, can sometimes deliver.

"In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands. Then, even if some refuse to obey the Good News, your godly lives will speak to them without any words. They will be won over by observing your pure and reverent lives."  
(1 Peter 3:1-2, NLT)

*"In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands. Then, even if some refuse to obey the Good News, your godly lives will speak to them without any words. They will be won over by observing your pure and reverent lives."  
(1 Peter 3:1-2, NLT)*

This is the closest Scripture comes to the old saying, *"Preach the gospel constantly. If necessary, use words."*

Some **wives** might relate personally and intensely to this passage. Some of our sisters in Christ in this congregation are wives who are living this out. They have a husband who isn't convinced about the whole "Jesus thing" or the church life. He ignores it, maybe ridicules it. And yet these women faithfully come, and faithfully pray, and faithfully show grace to their husbands. They model a life surrendered to Jesus.

Sometimes, those men turn around. Sometimes, gentleness delivers where threats or nagging or other displays of strength won't.

Some **husbands** might be in a similar situation. They could physically drag their wife here, but they can't force her to love Christ. So, they show patience and kindness. They listen and allow conversation. They try to follow Jesus in their actions. And when they pray, the wife (who might not believe yet) has nothing to ridicule.

"In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. Just as the church is holy, without stain or wrinkle, as we present ourselves to God in holiness."  
(1 Peter 3:7, NLT)

*"In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered." (1 Peter 3:7, NLT)*

Your decision to deploy gentleness – to control your strength – isn't done for your sake; it is done for the sake of others. It opens the door for Jesus to be at work! We might act weaker than we are, but our weakness can and will bring something better.

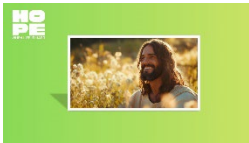
"[God] said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12:9-10, ESV)

*"[God] said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of*

*my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”*  
(2 Corinthians 12:9–10, ESV)

## Closing

Our culture values the bold and brash. We want rock stars, UFC and flaming hot Cheetos! But our culture can't see all ends. The culture of Christ looks different.



And it is gentle.

A suffering Savior provides the perfect example for us, especially in our marriages. Jesus' willingness to set aside strength opens the door for our salvation. His example of foregoing rights gives us a model to follow as we love our spouses closer and closer to the cross! His silence in the face of suffering shows us how to control ourselves.

When we see gentleness in Him, we recognize that "gentle" isn't an insult or a cringy word used to describe island people. No. "Gentle" is a quality we should aspire to!

**We must give gentle and godly grace... especially in marriage...if we want to bring others closer to Jesus.**

Or, in the words of Francois Fenelon:

"We must truly serve those whom we appear to command; we must bear with their imperfections, correct them with gentleness and patience, and lead them in the way to heaven." - *Francois Fenelon*

Will you reign in your own power, deploying gentleness to control your strength...so that your family can be won over to Christ by your conduct?

I ask you: Is your marriage a place where gentleness is on display?

I pray that it is. And if it isn't, pray with me that it might become so.



## Prayer

## Invitation

You and I always need to remember our place, submitting to God's leadership and power rather than trying to rely on our own. Learn to be gentle, whether in your marriage and family, or elsewhere.

Be willing to be weak, so that God's power and greatness can be on display.

Please stand as we sign our Invitation Hymn.

# Sermon Notes

(1 Peter 3:1-7; 1 Peter 1:3-5; 1 Peter 1:13; 1 Peter 2:11-12; 1 Peter 2:21-24)

## Gentleness Defined

(Galatians 5:22-23; Matthew 12:18-21)

## Gentleness Deployed

### Wives

(1 Peter 3:3-4; Proverbs 31:30)

### Husbands

(1 Peter 3:7; Colossians 3:19)

## Gentleness Delivers

(1 Peter 3:1-2; 1 Peter 3:7; 2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

# Sermon Discussion Questions

- If there was a word to describe you – an adjective that captured your personality – what would you want it to be? Would the word “gentle” ever be the word you choose? Why or why not?
- Gentleness can be defined as “strength under control.” How is this different from “weakness.” Give 2-3 examples of what gently controlled strength looks like.
- Read Matthew 12:18–21. How does this show Jesus controlling strength? Has he ever treated you like a “bruised reed”? How did God’s restraint help you?
- In what ways are wives/women strong? How do they sometimes seek to control others with their power?
- In what ways are husbands/men strong? How do they sometimes seek to control others with their power?
- Why is it important for both husbands and wives to keep their strength under control and treat the other person with gentleness?
- Share an example of a time you saw your spouse act with gentleness with you? How did it change you? (If unmarried, think of a close relationship where you experienced or witnessed a similar display of gentleness)
- What are you doing to allow God to produce gentleness in you and through you?
- Read 1 Peter 3:1-7 again. Substitute your own name (and your spouse’s) for the words “husband” and “wife.” Does personalizing the text change its impact? Explain your answer.