

“Let Your Gentleness Be Evident to All”

There are days when it feels like the world is against us, piling one stress on top of another. These are the days when it's tough to give a gentle response to anyone. We all have our own trials to face. But no matter whether those trials are big or small, justified or not, you have a choice as to how you will perceive and react to them. When stressful times come, you will be tempted to release angry outbursts, a rash of accusations, or fiery retaliation of hurtful words. Unchecked anxiety can unleash an Enola Gay of destruction that levels everything in its way. Just think about how many people have been wounded as a result of unbridled stress. But also think about how many disasters have been averted because one person, like the Apostle Paul, refused to buckle under the strain. It is this composure that he is summoning in the first of a triad of directives that he gives in Philippians 4:5-6: *“Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything...”*

The Greek word translated here as, “gentleness,” describes a temperament that is seasoned, mature, level-headed and steady. When the storms of life are raging and the ship is breaking apart, the others on the boat may freak out, but the gentle person is sober-minded and clear-thinking. Like Paul, they look to God for the solution, and they remain contagiously calm. The contagiously calm person is the one who reminds the others that God is in control. The key to gentleness is remembering that the Lord is near. You are not alone. There is never a moment in which you face life without help. When the stress rises and we find ourselves in situations over our head, why don't we call out to God? We can calmly take our concerns to God because He is as near as our next breath. This was the reassuring takeaway from the miracle of the bread and fish. They were only one request away from the solution, but they acted as if Jesus wasn't even present. The solution to the disciples' problem was standing right next to them, but they didn't go to Him. The disciples were overwhelmed by Jesus' assignment to feed the multitude, but anxiety was needless because Jesus was near. Jesus promised us that we would have trouble in this world. But instead of starting with what we have, we should start with what Jesus has. Before you lash out in fear, look up in faith. Take a moment and turn to your Father for help.

Discussion Guide/Action Steps

1. Think of someone in your life who is contagiously calm. How does that person display gentleness even during tense times?
2. Again and again throughout His Word, God promises to be with us. Think about a time when God's presence calmed you in the middle of a storm. How did God's presence change you emotionally, spiritually, and/or physically?
3. When have you, like the disciples, faced a trial and took actions into your own hands before turning to the Lord?