

## The Gracious Life, Part 4 | be gentle

**I. Gentleness is required to be gracious.**

- James 3:17
- Wisdom is the practical outworking of our biblical knowledge and understanding. Therefore, in order to live in a Christ-honoring way, we need to be pure, peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, and without hypocrisy. Both mercy and gentleness are requirements of God to live a wise life.
- In addition, no one deserves gentleness. That means that to graciously treat someone in a way they don't deserve, we are going to have to be gentle.
- We also mustn't forget that as disciple of Christ we are to imitate Jesus, and He was perfectly and eternally gentle.
- Therefore, as with kindness and compassion, no Christ-honoring believer can dismiss the responsibility to be gentle.

**II. Gentleness is not weakness.**

- Two of the Greek words translated "gentleness" in the New Testament refer to something that is mild and/or meek, but it must be understood that meekness is not weakness.
- Merriam-Webster defines meekness as "enduring injury with patience and without resentment."
- A seasoned martial artist who is deadly in their ability but who is also able to control that strength—that is an accurate picture of meekness.
- Anyone can drop something heavy, but you have to be very strong to set that very heavy item down without breaking it. Meekness requires a great level of strength *and* control.

**III. God gets to define gentleness.**

- **Gentleness is power under control.**
  - Matthew 5:5, 11:29, 21:5; Zechariah 9:9; I Peter 3:3-4
  - According Matthew 5 the gentle are those who have recognized that they are spiritually destitute, are grieved over their state, humbly ask God for forgiveness, and then mature in their Christ-likeness. They are willing to set aside their perceived rights, desires, and "ability" to make life work on their own, and they are willing to submit to God.
  - In Matthew 11:29, 21:5 and Zechariah 9:9 we're introduced to a meek King who is not weak. This King brings salvation, cuts off armies, and overcomes His enemies. Jesus was the perfect example of humble meekness. The very God-man King Himself submitted to the will of the Father, submitted to His human parents, and submitted to the wicked men who murdered Him. He could have not only called 12 legions of angels to protect Him, with a thought He could have vaporized any of those people from existence. But He was gentle.
  - I Peter 3:3-4 describes the controlled strength required for wives to submit in marriage.
  - Do you exhibit strength under power, or do you retaliate when attacked? Do you lash out? Do you get vengeance? Do you use your strength to manipulate and control?
- **Gentleness is appropriate care.**
  - I Thessalonians 2:7
  - Mothers are strong; they are so much stronger than their infants, and yet good mothers are tender and careful. They bathe and change and dress and feed and rock and lay the baby gently to bed. Mothers who use their strength against their children are monsters. They're not as strong as those able to endure the crying and questions and constant needs and the disobedience and the care.

- Like a mother who cares for her helpless child, like Jesus who cares for His undeserving followers, a gentle person is going to be gracious to others by doing what's in their best interest. He is going to compassionately and gently be kind because he humbly recognizes his position before God and the need of the person in front of him.
- Do you care for people? Do you seek after their best interest? Do you recognize that the rebellious child in front of you doesn't need a selfish, offended response from you, they God's truth in God's love? Do you realize that call-center employee is likely an unbeliever, and no amount of threatening and yelling and impatience from you is going to glorify God in that conversation. Instead, you need to be patient and self-controlled.
- But remember, that doesn't mean that we let people "walk all over us." Jesus didn't stop being gentle when He spoke harshly to the Pharisees or drove the money-changers out of the the temple. No. He was still gentle. He still had His power under control. There were far worse things He might have done or said had He no been the perfect Messiah. He did exactly what needed to be done in the right way and for the right reason, and He had to exercise restraint and care to do it.
- **Gentleness doesn't retaliate.**
  - In II Timothy 2:24 the word translated "kind" is a picture of power under control. When someone is trying to argue, fight, and quarrel, the Lord's bond-servant is gentle, meek, and kind. They don't lose their temper because they're strong enough to keep it. They don't blow up because they have the Spirit's power to refrain. They are able to teach the unteachable, and they are patient when wronged.
  - To retaliate is to make an attack or assault in return for a similar attack. Gentle people don't do that. They're strong enough through the power of the Holy Spirit to respond, but they don't retaliate.
  - Jesus didn't strike down His crucifiers. He prayed for them, and in so doing triumphed over Satan, death, hell, and sin. No one else was powerful enough to accomplish that, and Jesus did so by gently submitting.
- **Gentleness is reasonable.**
  - Philippians 4:5; I Timothy 3:1-3; Titus 3:1-2; James 3:17; I Peter 2:18
  - This word has been translated reasonable, forbearance, moderation, gentleness, sweet reasonableness, equitable, fitting, and non-insisting. It expresses that considerateness that looks humanely and reasonably at the facts of a case and is contrasted with contentiousness.
  - Gentleness is also contrasted with being pugnacious. Pugnacious means eager or quick to argue, quarrel, or fight.
  - Titus 3:1-2 contrasts the word with a person who maligns others. Instead of taking the opportunity to retaliate—to do the thing you could do or say the thing you could say—you possess the power to say and do the right things; which doesn't include maligning anyone.
  - Gentleness is not weakness or frailty.