

Evident gentleness

When my daughter was young, she used to love to squeeze my hand as hard as she could, trying to make it hurt. She could squeeze with all her might, but it never hurt. She didn't need to be gentle because she lacked the power to cause me any pain. Then, just for fun, I'd give her hand a tight little squeeze until she yelped. It's the strong hand, not the weak one, that must learn to be gentle.

Gary Thomas (Focus on the Family)

Matthew 12: 15 – 21

1. The Gentle Christ

- Jesus was sent in love, came in love, and gentleness is an expression of love.
- He was followed by crowds who were in need and he always treated them gently and with care and concern.
- He called the children to himself and blessed them.
 - Mark 10: 13 – 16 People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.
 - People don't normally give their little children to people to touch and bless them unless they're gentle with them.
 - The disciples were still rough around the edges fishermen, tax collectors, zealots who weren't gentle people. We are more often like the disciples than Jesus.
 - Jesus wants to train us to be gentle like him.
- He won't break a bruised reed or snuff out a smouldering wick.
 - The prophet used very delicate items that needed to be treated with extremely gentle care not to break a bruised reed or snuff out a smouldering wick.
 - Many of us a fragile or go through very fragile states. If we're treated harshly in such a state it could send us over the edge and have bad consequences.
 - Let's take someone suffering from depression for example. Many times people harshly tell them to "snap out of it" and other such words. That's the last thing they need to hear. What they need to be understood and for people to walk a road with them.
- Jesus knew that people are fearful and need hope. However he also knew that we need assurance on our journey to receiving that hope. Listen to the way Jesus addresses his disciples:
 - Luke 12: 32 Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.
 - This was dealing with provision and we all fret about our provision. Jesus gently assures us – little flock – a term of care as a shepherd would care for his flock.
- We see how Jesus gently forgave and restored a woman who was caught in adultery when so many wanted to stone her.
- We see him breaking cultural norms by talking to an immoral Samaritan woman in public, and allowing a prostitute to wash his feet with her tears and dry them with her hair.
 - The disciples didn't show any regard for the Samaritan women and the Jewish leaders only showed disdain for the prostitute.
- Jesus healed the only son of a widow.
 - Luke 7: 12 – 13 As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry."
 - Nowadays even ministering to people who are hurting can become a show rather than an act of sensitive compassion for the person. We always see Jesus ministering out of a heart of compassion. And where there's genuine compassion there will be gentleness with the person.
- When Peter, and the other disciples, turned their backs on Jesus He never harshly rebuked them but restored them gently.
 - Do you love me? Feed my sheep.
 - Galatians 6: 1 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.

2. Gentle language and actions

- Gentleness isn't something that is just spoken about but an action in word and deed.
- It has to be both. Kind actions with harsh words are the same as harsh actions.
- Harsh actions with kind words would merely come across as sarcasm.
- Even kind words spoken in a harsh tone can be cutting.
- We learn both from the way Jesus interacted
- We see his gentleness with broken women who had no one else to turn to.
- We see his gentleness when talking to a Roman centurion, an enemy of Israel.
- We see his gentleness in the way he restored his disciples who had abandoned him in his time of need.
- His gentleness was evident to everyone.
 - Philippians 4: 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.
- Is your gentleness evident to:
 - The beggar who asks you for something
 - The person who has wronged you and has come to ask for forgiveness
 - The someone who irritates you on a regular basis
 - The person who isn't performing because of emotional issues that they're dealing with
- When sharing the Gospel with arrogant or obnoxious people answer them with gentleness. Don't answer them in the same way that they act towards you.
 - 1 Peter 3: 13 – 15 Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honour Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.
 - This speaks about being gentle yet firm.
 - Don't mistake being gentle with being weak. In fact it's quite the opposite. It takes strength to be gentle when the circumstances are crying out to you to be harsh.

3. Outcomes of gentleness

- It almost seems paradoxical that we are told that Jesus will be gentle enough not to break a bruised reed not snuff out a smouldering wick, and then bring justice though to victory and give hope to the nations.
- Gentleness gives hope to the hopeless, courage to the downtrodden, restoration of the repentant.
 - When we speak gently to someone they feel that someone cares and they're not alone in what they're going through.
 - Harshness gives the person the idea that they are being helped under obligation and that they're still alone. There's no real concern for their predicament.
- Gentleness also diffuses tense situations.
 - Proverbs 15: 1 A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.
- Let us think of how we would like to be spoken to.
 - How do we feel when something is harsh to us?
 - How do we feel when someone is gentle with us?
- Matthew 7: 12 So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.
 - This isn't only in action, but also in attitude and method.
 - Let us then be imitators of Christ in our gentleness towards other people.