

DAY 1 - (week beginning 29 July 2019)

Read - Isaiah 40:9-11

“He will take care of His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs together and carry them in His arms; He will gently lead their mothers.” vs 11



What is your picture of God? If you described Him, would you use the words “meek or gentle”? English children used to be taught the prayer beginning: “Gentle Jesus, meek and mild...” but we think that this gives us a weak picture of Jesus. How wrong we are. Jesus wants us to know that He is kind and gentle with us. We are loved - we are held tightly in His strong arms. Let’s rest in the strength of His gentleness as we surrender ourselves to Him and His love for us.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, our Good Shepherd, may we get to know You as the One who is gentle, meek and kind. May we feel Your gentle, strong arms holding us and helping us to know that You love us and that You will never let us go.

DAY 2

Read - Matthew 11:25-30

“Take my yoke and put it on you, and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit; and you will find rest.” vs 29

In the King James Version, the eighth attribute among the fruit of the Spirit is translated as “meekness”. Meekness is, apparently, a closer word to the Greek translation of the word.

We are to be meek (submitted, teachable, responsive) first of all in our relationship with God, and secondly meek (humble, gentle, respectful) in our relationships with other people. To become this kind of person, we need to yield to God. We need to do as Jesus teaches. We should take His “yoke” and put it on us. For horse-riders, the vocabulary used would be to put His “bit” in our mouths and allow Him to hold the reins and lead us.

Nowadays the word “meek” is no longer a popular or commonly used word. So we use the very similar word, “gentle” instead.

The problem with this, however, is that “gentleness” refers mostly to our actions, whereas “meekness” refers to our attitude - our whole state of mind as well as actions. Meekness produces gentleness. That’s why meekness is one of the Beatitudes of Jesus: “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” Matthew 5:5.

Only the infilling of the Holy Spirit can produce this fruit within us. Only His indwelling power can transform our attitudes, our “whole state of mind”.

Prayer: Almighty God we pray, once again, for the infilling of Your Spirit. Help us to take Your yoke upon us and learn from You.

DAY 3

Read - Galatians 5:16-25

“But the Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility and self-control”. vs 22-23

I think we all acknowledge that “what our human nature wants is opposed to what the Spirit wants” [v 17], but we long to know HOW we can be filled with the Holy Spirit so that we can be led by Him.

Bill Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade, wrote a booklet entitled “Have you made the Wonderful discovery of the Spirit-filled life?” He says that the Bible tells us that there are three kinds of people:

1. The Natural Man - the people who have not received Christ.
2. The Spiritual Man - the people who are directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit.
3. The Carnal Man - the ones who have received Christ, but who live in defeat because they are trying to live the Christian life in their own strength.

He has three clear diagrams showing the Natural Man with the cross outside the circle of his life, the Spiritual Man with the cross on the ‘throne’ of his life and the Carnal Man with the cross inside the circle, but not on the ‘throne’. Perhaps this prayer from the booklet will be helpful:

Prayer: Dear Father, I need You. I acknowledge that I have been directing my own life and that, as a result, I have sinned against You. I thank You that You have forgiven my sins through Christ’s death on the cross for me. I now invite Christ to take His place on the throne of my life. Fill me with the Holy Spirit as You commanded me to be filled, and as You promised in Your Word that You would do if I asked in faith. Thank You.

DAY 4**Read - Colossians 3:1-17**

“You are the people of God; He loved you and chose you for His own. So then, you must clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience”. vs 12

Jesus tells his followers: “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” John 10:10. In some Bibles, “to the full” is translated as “abundant life”. Jesus promises an abundant and fruit-filled life as the result of being filled (directed and empowered) by the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit-filled life is the Christ-directed life by which Christ lives His life in and through us in the power of the Spirit. In John 15 we are told that we must remain “in Him and His words should remain in us”.

From the moment of our spiritual birth (when we accept Christ into our lives), we are filled with the Holy Spirit, but, unfortunately, sometimes we do not allow the Holy Spirit to overflow, direct and empower us. We are filled by faith and then we need to hand over the direction of our lives to Jesus. I like to tell children, when I explain conversion to them, that we get out of the driver’s seat of our car (our lives) and allow Jesus to take over the driving. This is not easy, in reality, we presumptuously believe that Jesus needs our help and we take back control time and time again!

If we truly want to evidence the spiritual fruit of gentleness in our lives, we have to continually allow the Holy Spirit full control over our thoughts, words and actions.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, Spirit of strength and gentleness I surrender my mind to You.

DAY 5**Read - 1 Peter 3:8-17**

“Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you, but do it with gentleness and respect”. vs 15b-16a

It is clear that many churches are struggling. We seem to have lost the evangelical fervour of previous generations. The Billy Graham-type crusades of the past no longer exist and, if they did, they would not be well attended. We cannot look to great preachers to attract people to an experience of Jesus. We have to do it.

When I was a student, I was trained to knock on fellow student’s doors and ask them if they knew where they were going when they died! Oh dear, what a brash, uncaring way of bringing people to Jesus.

Now-a-days we are encouraged to be actively involved in “Friendship Evangelism”. This, however, is a long, slow, demanding process. It is when one commits oneself to befriend someone who is far from the Lord and to walk alongside them, eventually introducing Christ to them. It may take years of friendship before the person is willing to commit themselves to the Lord.

I believe this is the kind of evangelism which Peter is writing about. We cannot all be evangelists, but we can all be a friend. Peter encourages us to be ready to speak with “gentleness and respect” about our faith and our hope in Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, there are so many people who need You. Life is very tough and times seems to be getting tougher. Please fill me with courage to speak out about Your love, Your grace and Your strength. Help me to draw people to You gently and respectfully.

DAY 6**Read - 1 Titus 6:11-21**

“But you, man of God, avoid all these things. Strive for righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness”. vs 1

Paul wrote this letter to Titus and I love this encouragement he gave him. I think society expects men to be strong, courageous and even, aggressive at times. This challenge Paul gives Titus is not easy. Don Hooser from the United Church of God says: “hair-trigger angry reactions are considered “normal”, yet Christian strength is shown by a secure person who stays cool, thinks first and then responds in the way that will best help the other person. ‘A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger’ Prov 15:1.”

A great trick when dealing with noisy, upset children is to speak softly and gently. Our natural reaction is to shout louder than them in order to be heard, but the opposite works far better. If we are quieter and speak softly, they wonder what they’re missing, so they usually quieten too to hear us. As we speak softly and give clear, helpful directions kindly and gently, the children settle and relax.

In 1 Kings 19:11-13, we read the story of how Elijah was sent by God to the top of a mountain. The Lord sent furious winds, an earthquake and fire, but He was not in these dramatic noisy events. “After the fire there was the soft whisper of a voice” [v 12]. Elijah covered his face and went to speak with God.

Prayer: Holy Spirit, please give me the gentleness and meekness that empowers me with the ability to love others the way that You love them. Teach me the skill to give “a soft answer” and to speak only in love.