



An Agenda of Gentleness

By Erin Marshall

"Who among you is wise and understanding? Let [her] show by [her] good behavior [her] deeds in the gentleness of wisdom." James 3:13 NASB

"When did I become a fierce person?" I found myself asking a friend recently across a restaurant table.

While my current context is that of a stressed-out, stay-at-home mom of two small children, I wasn't too different before kids. I have a long history of being frequently overstressed and underpatient when my agenda squashes the Fruit of God's Spirit.

Lately I've been grieving my shortage of gentleness in particular. Too often I find myself cringing over my harsh responses and quick-tempered nature. I don't excel at gentleness, but I've sure mastered the dubious skills of eye rolling, sighing in exasperation, fist clenching, speaking too intensely, and responding snappishly. Yay me.

I ache over my failures. I wonder, though, if my heart aches as much as those I've hurt with my fierceness? I want God's Fruit to show through me, I want to be safe for those I love and strangers as well. But like Paul, I fail continually, doing what I don't want to do (Romans 7:15). I guess I'm not making history for letting my sin nature blind me from being all God created me to be.

What is gentleness, really? Gentleness embodies more than my busy brain can grasp at once, so how about focusing on three truths as a simple starting point?

First, gentleness focuses on others. Jesus frequently paused in his busy ministry to engage with people at their point of need, protecting, defending, healing (Matthew 10:42; 18:6; Mark 12:38-44; Luke 8:43-48).

Second, a gentle spirit uses its strength wisely. Ecclesiastes 8:1 (MSG) says, “*Wisdom puts light in the eyes, and gives gentleness to words and manners.*” Jesus knew the place for righteous anger. Remember when he overturned the table of corrupt tax collectors? (Matthew 21:12)

Third, a gentle spirit stays connected to its Source. Gentleness increases with our deepening connection to Christ (John 15:4-5, 8-11; Galatians 5:22-23).

My mind gets it. My heart craves it. So maybe I need to put gentleness front-and-center on my agenda—in fact, **make** it my agenda. If gentleness is ever to be second-nature in my thoughts and behavior, pursuing Christ’s gentleness must top my agenda.

“Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.” Philippians 4:5 NIV

Reflect & Respond:

- 1) On a scale of one to ten, rate the gentleness of your spirit on average. What circumstances challenge your gentleness?
- 2) Do you have any misconceptions about what a gentle spirit is? What are they? What does God’s Word say in answer to those misconceptions?
- 3) What lies at the root of any shortcomings in your gentleness? (Maybe you’ve been hurt by a harsh person, and your protective wall comes across as a lack of gentleness; or possibly you’re overbooked and need to reprioritize. . . .)



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