

Leader Guide

Week 5: The Allure of Gentleness

Discussion for week of February 14, 2021

Connecting

Take a few minutes to catch up.

- What is one way you experienced God's kindness in words or actions since we last met?
- Describe your week in 2-3 words and briefly explain.

A Reminder of Purpose

Our mutual purpose is to grow in Christlikeness, learning to love God and others, together. As we approach some harder topics in this series, let's be ready to listen and learn from others' perspectives, respect safety and confidentiality, value our relationships above proving our point, deal with conflict lovingly, and be ready to surrender your ideas to the heart and mind of Christ. We may not always agree, but we will always be respectful and loving.

Prayer

Take a moment to sit in prayerful silence. Invite the Holy Spirit to watch over your time together. Consider praying from Paul's words to the Ephesians:

"Holy Spirit, help us to be completely humble and gentle, be patient, bearing with one another in love. Help us to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:2-3)

Debrief

- Is there anything you remember from Sunday's message that you're still reflecting on?
- What's one thing you hope we talk about in our discussion about gentleness?

The Big Idea

We live in an age of increased outrage, cancel culture, and grave offenses taken because of "micro-aggressions." It can appear that opposing sides of the ideological divide are living on the brink of the "mutually assured destruction." Jesus models a gentle way of engaging with those who oppose us. Let's discover why gentleness is a superior and especially winsome way to represent the truth, and how we can see it cultivated in our lives.

Watch Pastor Matthew's Synopsis (posted on the [Life Group Studies webpage](#)): After watching, take a minute in silence to think about and note anything further that came to mind that you'd like to ponder or discuss.

- What memory or experience is stirred by Matthew's message? As it comes to mind, how do you feel about it?
- When you experience others' disrespect, misunderstanding, anger, or opposition, what is your typical reaction?

Scripture & Discussion

Read Galatians 5:13-26. Then discuss together:

- *How does Paul represent the game of "mutually assured destruction" in Galatians 5?*
- *Where do you observe this game going on in today's culture?*
- *Often the conflicts of our age are described as a "culture war." Why is it important to pay attention to "the war beneath the war" that Paul describes here (5:17-18)?*

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following Jesus in an angry,
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- Are there “works of the flesh/sinful nature” (5:19-21) that Christians ignore or excuse more than others? Why do you think this happens?
- What happens when we act out of our outrage, individually or collectively, or when we excuse such a response in others?
- When do you find it most difficult to allow the Spirit to guide your response to disagreement or offense?
- What would be the result if you allowed the Spirit (5:22-23) to guide your responses (**see Ephesians 4:2-3**)?
- Scott Swain defines gentleness as “**the virtue that tempers our anger, wrath, and desire for vengeance when we suffer or witness injustice.**” He continues: “**Whereas humility is moderate or proper self-regard, gentleness, which follows from humility, is moderate or proper self-restraint.**”^{*} Why do you think humility is so essential to cultivating gentleness?
- **Read Matthew 11:28-30.** How does Jesus’ model inform how we engage with those whose behaviour is offensive or disagreeable to us?
- What does Jesus’ invitation to apprenticeship in gentleness and humility mean to you today?
- Each week, we’re going to brainstorm together how the Scripture can be applied to our relationships as a Life Group. **As a group, what guiding principle can we agree to uphold with each other through the rest of this series (and beyond)?**

Practice: Cultivating Gentleness

Galatians 5 calls us to “walk by the Spirit” and “keep in step with the Spirit.” The Spirit’s most important work is to call our attention to Jesus (John 16:14). To help cultivate gentleness in your own responses to an “outrageous” world, spend some time this week paying attention to the posture and actions of Jesus in 3-4 of the following stories of Jesus from the Gospel of Matthew, guided by the questions provided.

Matthew 8:5-13

Matthew 18:15-20

Matthew 26:6-13

Matthew 9:1-8

Matthew 19:16-22

Matthew 26:57-68

Matthew 12:1-8

Matthew 21:12-17

Matthew 27:32-50

Matthew 14:22-33

Matthew 23:1-39

Matthew 28:16-20

- What is potentially offensive about this scenario or the individual/group Jesus encounters?
- How is this scenario similar to a situation you have recently faced or observed?
- What are some ways Jesus could have responded to offense here?
- How does Jesus actually respond? What result might he have in mind that you might have missed? What is the source of his ability to respond in this way?
- What invitation to you do you sense from Jesus’ example?

Spend some time inviting the Holy Spirit to cultivate Jesus’ character in you. Prayerfully imagine a Christ-like response to a recent or potential experience of offense, and ask the Holy Spirit to make this response a reality in you.

Thank God for the gift of Christ’s righteousness, imputed to you through faith in Him.

Caring for One Another

- What help do you need to overcome anticipated challenges in doing this practice?
- Do you or your family have a need that the Life Group can help meet?

Based on what you’ve shared together, spend time listening to God and praying for one another.

* <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/masters-of-self>

Participant Guide

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