

# GENTLENESS (vs.) HARSHNESS

(Foundation Scriptures)

1. "But the fruit of the Spirit is gentleness." (Galatians 5:22)
2. "And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle, showing all meekness unto all men." (II Tim 2:24)
3. "To speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people." (Titus 3:2)
4. "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherishes her children." (I Thess. 2:7)
5. "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." (James 3:17)
6. "Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust." (I Peter 2:18)
7. "You have given me the shield of your salvation, and your right hand supported me, and your gentleness made me great." (Psalm 18:35)
8. "I, Paul, myself entreat you, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away!" (II Corinthians 10:1)
9. "Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom." (II Samuel 18:5)
10. "He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young." (Isaiah 40:11)
11. "Charity suffers long and is kind." (I Corinthians 13:4)
12. "And be kind one to another, tenderhearted forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you." (Ephesians 4:32)
13. "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness and patience." (Colossians 3:12)

## WHAT IS GENTLENESS?

GENTLENESS (from the Greek word CRESTOTES) means: kind, mild, easy, patient, gracious, benevolent, and excellence in demeanor.

This word CRESTOTES for gentleness in Galatians 5:22, is the same word for kind in I Cor. 13:4 and Ephesians 4:32, and kindness in II Cor. 6:6; Colossians 3:12 and Titus 3:4.

## **GENTLENESS (Kindness) IS:**

1. More than an act; but a spirit of kindness which deals with other people with great respect for human dignity.
2. Treating others with a gracious and tender hand.
3. That fruit (or quality of character) that leaves a sweet fragrance or aroma behind after being with other people.
4. Alertness and sensitivity to the heart, feelings and needs of those I speak to.
5. That quality of warmth which exhibits good cheer towards others.
6. Knowing what is appropriate to the emotional needs of people.
7. Learning how to administer direction without impatience, anger, harshness or abrasiveness.

## **AN ILLUSTRATION OF GENTLENESS**

Picture an ocean liner coming into port. It moves towards the dock with great power. No tug boats are available to bring the huge boat up to the dock. So the pilot brings the vessel in, a foot at a time, until at last the vessel which plowed powerfully across the ocean, now touches the dock with gentleness. "Power under perfect control" is the finest definition of gentleness. (Donald Gee)

## **THREE PICTURES OF GENTLENESS**

### **1. A MOTHER WITH HER CHILDREN**

"But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherishes her children." (1 Thess. 2:7)

- ◆ Paul describes his initial apostolic ministry to the believers in Thessalonica.
- ◆ Instead of using his authority, he used only the most gentle and kind methods to win them and promote peace and order.
- ◆ The word "nurse" refers to anyone who nurses a child, whether a mother or someone else.
- ◆ Paul reveals that he felt such affection for these people, the same gentle affection that a mother does for the child at her breast.

### **REMEMBER:**

- ◆ Newborns depend totally upon their mother.
- ◆ Babies are weak and helpless by themselves.
- ◆ A real mom and dad will be gentle and self-sacrificing at all hours to meet the need of a baby.

### **APPLICATION:**

- ◆ New converts demand gentle and kind treatment from established Christians.
- ◆ Rough treatment may destroy, when gentleness may win and motivate for good.
- ◆ No one has the license to be rough, harsh and abrasive to a fellow brother or sister – no one!

## 2. A NURSE WITH THE STICK

“It is of little use to strive, the wise approach is to be gentle unto all, apt to teach, patient.”  
(II Timothy 2:24)

- ◆ In writing to Timothy, Paul mentions those who are spiritually unhealthy through absorption in strife “foolish and unlearned questions”. They really oppose themselves and have been “taken alive” by the devil at his will. (II Timothy 2:23-26)
- ◆ They have been snared into a perilous position, and are in need of help.
- ◆ Many weaker Christians with a poor appetite for the things of God provide a great temptation for rough words and rough treatment.
- ◆ As a nurse is gentle with physically sick people in a hospital, how can we not be gentle with those spiritually ill?

### **GENTLENESS (vs) STRIFE – II Timothy 2:24**

“The servant of the Lord must not strive.” (Which means)

- ◆ We must calmly inquire after truth.
- ◆ We may discuss any point at all, if we do it with a proper spirit.
- ◆ We must remain people of peace at all times.
- ◆ We must never indulge ourselves to the temptation of attacking another to place them in a bad light.
- ◆ We are to never provoke and irritate another by a spirit of contention.
- ◆ We must never struggle for victory in a spirit of war to see another lose.
- ◆ Instead, the fruit of gentleness will enable us to be mild and gracious with all people, at all times, in all places.

The Greek word for strive means:

- ◆ To fight
- ◆ To contend with
- ◆ To be argumentative

God, spare us and keep us peacemakers for your glory!

## 3. A CRAFTSMAN WITH HIS VESSEL

“But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.”

(James 3:14-17)

- ◆ Notice that God says it is wise to be gentle.
- ◆ As we deal with souls, we must be skilled craftsman with the touch of God and training from above.

- ◆ What a delight it is to observe the gentle touch of a skilled craftsman (whether a potter at the wheel or a musician at the instrument).
- ◆ Remember Jesus, our example of gentleness in spiritual craftsmanship, with the woman at the well and Peter after his denial.
- ◆ As a wise craftsman works gently and carefully with the clay, he will be sensitive with the fragile vessel to secure a good finished product.
- ◆ God help you and I to deal carefully (not roughly) with people (so many are fragile, hurting and in need of help).

### **FOUR POWERFUL TRUTHS TO EVER REMEMBER**

1. When a candle is newly lighted and needs to be moved, it must be carried at a slow pace or it will be extinguished.
2. A fire which is almost expiring may be revived by a gentle breath, but it will be blown out if the bellows are plied at their full force.
3. You can drown a little plant by watering it too much.
4. You can destroy a lovely flower by exposing it to too much sun.  
Nothing is so strong as gentleness; nothing so gentle as real strength.

### **PRACTICAL APPLICATION**

1. Do I ever gender strife, or am I gentle with those who do not meet my expectations?
2. Do I deal with other people with deep respect?
3. Do people avoid me when they know they have disappointed me?
4. Do I motivate or discourage those I correct?
5. Do I build friendships (which takes time) along with correction?
6. Have I been harsh with someone in the past?
7. Who are those closest to me that need a gentle hand of encouragement and motivation?

**REMEMBER:** God is gentle with you and I, so we should be gentle and mild with:

Our spouse, our kids, our parents, our employer, waiters and waitresses, those who serve us in various places and those fallen in need of restoration.

**GOD HAS PROMISED "WHAT WE SOW, WE WILL REAP".**