

## MEN'S LIFE BLOOMINGTON & GOD @ WORK

Tuesday, April 9, 2019

### Gentle Strength

**Overview:** True gentleness is rooted in strength. It is strength under control and with a vision and consideration of the needs of the other as opposed to ourselves. Jesus shows that gentleness is the path that leads to strength and justice. It is important for all of us to “put on gentleness.” Most of us have experienced how one harsh and quarrelsome person can easily distract attention from the gentleness of many in the church.

**Hearing Our Stories:** Sean Chambers

#### Segment Questions:

- When you think of gentleness, do you think of it as more of a feminine trait? Why or why not? Discuss the importance of men modeling gentleness (consider situations in leadership, mentoring, raising children, relationships with men and women, etc.)
- We have all been involved in discussions about issues we are passionate about and are extremely important. In these situations, do you find the real importance is to prove to the other person you are right? How would demonstrating a gentle strength change your approach to such situations?
- List traits that come to your mind when you think of Jesus, the disciples, and Paul. Where does gentleness and gentle strength fit in those traits?
- Think of a time when you felt someone was against you or betrayed you. Did you think to consider what the other person may be going through or experiencing? How does this perspective change your heart and your response?
- Thinking back on the situation above, how could you have modeled (or did you model) gentleness as taught by Jesus and the scriptures we discussed in the lesson? *[Feel free to share the situation if you are willing and it is appropriate]*
- In stressful situations or situations where you need to correct others (child, friend, spouse, someone you are mentoring), do you find they tense up in your presence, expecting critique, correction, or judgement to be your first and primary response? How does this compare to your image of God?

#### Action Questions:

- When you are broken, struggling with sin or need to persevere in a difficult situation – in what way do you expect to find tenderness and gentleness in the face of Jesus? How should you then respond to others in these situations?
- I am sure all of us have encountered people who seem to oppose us or get in the way of us “doing good and important things”. Given what we discussed today, how can you react in gentleness in these situations? What actions/steps can you take to change your heart in these situations?
- Who in your life most needs to experience gentleness from you today? How can you address this need? *(you can answer and share your thoughts without giving a name)*

**Personal Prayer:** Father, we pray that you would soften our hearts, that you would remind us of the gift of gentleness, and that you would show us through Jesus how to live in love day by day. We pray that you would forgive us of our sins and open our eyes and hearts to forgiveness for others in our lives. We ask that you would help us to guard our speech, that the words we say would be life-giving and glorifying to you. We are so grateful for your example of gentleness in our lives. May we go forth and do the same. Amen.

## Introduction

This year we asked leaders to be more personal in their lesson choices. Our hope is to hear from God as we have in the past but to do it through the hearts and lives of each other. We are asked to start with our testimony. I use to enjoy giving my testimony. It was actually unremarkable and easy to give as I could focus on the many blessings God provided me. I also had the joy of sharing how God used adoption to make my then wife and me parents. I could share that story to talk about how God adopts all of us into His family (**Eph 1:4-6 NASB**. *In love, He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.*). But my story somewhat changed 5+ years ago (share my testimony).

In reaction to this hurt, I struggled a lot with feeling bitter, angry, and trying to be “strong” but God through counsel from my church and great friends from Men’s Life put the importance of gentleness and “gentle strength” on my heart as the best way to respond, heal, and grow – for me, for my sons, and for my now ex-wife.

So what is gentleness and is it a trait that men should model? I hope this seems like an odd question; however, I think if we’re honest, we would admit that society more often teaches boys and men that we should be bold, strong, courageous, etc. and women should be gentle, meek, supportive, etc. Matter of fact, as I looked into the topic of gentleness, I often found references regarding women and the importance of them modeling gentleness to their children and in their marriages (see Peter 3:1-4 which discusses how wives should conduct themselves toward their husbands with “a gentle and quiet spirit”) but little regarding men. It seems that gentle is more often thought to be a feminine trait. However, if you look at scriptures across the Bible, and Jesus’ life, I think you come to a different conclusion – gentleness is a Godly mandate and a defining Christian trait for men and women.

My church has been doing a sermon series on the fruit of the spirit and a few weeks ago, John Mangrum spoke on the fruit of gentleness. He made some great statements in defining gentleness: Greek word for gentle (praus and prautos) have a core idea of not being overly impressed by a sense of one’s own self-importance; gentleness is a strong hand with a soft touch; it is a tender, compassionate approach toward others’ weaknesses and limitations; it handles people in a way that recognizes their need and condition and chooses a response that will impact them for good – not crush and discourage but also not ignore or encourage sin. Consider some of these calls to gentleness in the Old and New Testament:

- **Prov 25:15**, *Through patience a ruler can be persuaded, and a gentle tongue can break a bone.*
- **Eph 4:1-2**, *As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. <sup>2</sup>Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*
- **Col. 3:12**, *Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*
- **Gal. 6:1**, *Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently.*
- **1 Tim. 3:3**, requires elders of the church to be “*not violent but gentle.*”
- **2 Tim. 2:25**, Paul instructs us to correct even our opponents with gentleness: “*Those who oppose him he must gently instruct...*”
- **Titus 3:2**, instructs us “*to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone.*”
- **Phil. 4:5**, *Let your gentleness be evident to all.*

True gentleness is rooted in strength but strength under control and with a vision and consideration of the needs of the other as opposed to ourselves. Jesus shows us that gentleness is the path that leads to strength and justice. It is important for all of us to “put on gentleness” as one harsh and quarrelsome person can easily distract attention from the gentleness of many in the church.