

# Nine Secrets of Healthy Relationships

## ***Gentleness – Part Nine***

**Galatians 5:22-23 (KJV)** <sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, <sup>23</sup>Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

**Galatians 5:22-23 (NLT)** <sup>22</sup> But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law.

- In the rough and tumble world of our abrasive twenty-first century, **gentleness** is certainly no longer considered a virtue! **Meekness** is not exactly first on the list of character traits for those wanting to succeed in the business world! **Humility** gets trampled in the dust every day by the high achievers, who from the cradle learn to shove and push and scream and scramble just to pull ahead of the pack. These things may be okay for Sunday, but not Monday at the office!
- In North America, we fiercely contend for our rights, believing that to be brazen and bold is best. Our society subscribes to the notion that, if no one else will blow my horn for me, I must blow it loud and long. We are completely convinced that unless we make a big splash in the world, we will be forgotten in the crowd.
- From the hour we begin to take our first feeble, frightened steps as tiny tots, we are told to “stand on your own feet,” “be your own man” and “never let them see you cry!” Independence, aggressiveness, self-assertiveness and self-assurance are the attributes they tell us will lead to ultimate greatness and success.
- In the face of all this, what a shock it is to hear the words of Jesus ...  
**Matthew 18:4 (KJV)** Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.  
**Matthew 23:11-12 (KJV)** <sup>11</sup>But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. <sup>12</sup>And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.
- So where does the truth lie? Who really has the secret of success? Do we adopt the view of contemporary culture or the rather unpleasant proposition of Jesus? I think you know the answer instinctively ... **it all depends on whose standard of “success” you want to adopt as the guiding principle of your life!**

- The King James Version calls this part of the Fruit of the Spirit “meekness,” while many of the new translations call it “gentleness.” The root word in the Greek language is “**PRAOS**” which the NIV translates into three different English words – **meekness**, **humility** and **gentleness**. It means “a disposition that is even tempered, mild, tranquil, unpretentious, and has its passions under control.”
- **PRAOS** (from the *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon, electronic version*): Meekness toward God is that disposition of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting. In the OT, the meek are those wholly relying on God rather than their own strength to defend them against injustice. Thus, meekness toward evil people means knowing God is permitting the injuries they inflict, that He is using them to purify His elect, and that He will deliver His elect in His time. (Isaiah 41:17, Luke 18:1-8) Gentleness or meekness is the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest. It stems from trust in God's goodness and control over the situation. The gentle person is not occupied with self at all. This is a work of the Holy Spirit, not of the human will. (Galatians 5:23)
- **Unfortunately, the word ‘meekness’ rhymes with ‘weakness’ and the two are synonymous in many people’s minds!** Ironically, meekness in its true form is far from weakness, because to exhibit this trait requires unusual strength! The Greeks used the word “praos” to describe a wild animal that had been tamed for service.
- **GENTLENESS IS THE POWER OF YOUR POTENTIAL UNDER GOD'S CONTROL.** (without it, we'll never be all God wants us to be)

## **Five Qualities of a Gentle Person (P.O.W.E.R.)**

*(If we will put these things into practice in our lives, it will revolutionize the relationships that we are in, radically changing them for the good. Gentle people can take a relationship that is weak or dying and resurrect it. They can take a healthy relationship and make it even more dynamic.)*

### **P - PERSONALITY**

- Gentle people have their personalities under God's control. Our personalities are made up of our character traits, which can make or break any relationship. What are some positive character traits that you like to see in other people? Things like honesty, humility, sense of humor, compassion. What are some negative character traits that you don't like to see? Things like rudeness, temper, vindictiveness, stubbornness.

- If we're honest, we all have to admit that we have some character traits that need to have the rough edges smoothed off! Here's some hope for us – Jesus' three closest friends each had major character flaws and He didn't give up on them! Peter, James and John were Jesus' best friends; they were His inner circle. Luke 9 and Mark 10 give us a good example of their faults ...
  - **Peter's Arrogant Boasting in Mark 10:28** (after Jesus' conversation with the rich young ruler) ... "Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee."
  - **James and John's Self-Promotion in Mark 10:37** (right after Jesus speaks of His coming crucifixion in Jerusalem!) ... "Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory."
  - **Peter's Impulsive Speaking in Luke 9:33** (on the Mount of Transfiguration) ... "Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."
  - **James and John's Vindictiveness in Luke 9:54** (when the Samaritan village would not receive Jesus) ... "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?"
- No wonder Jesus said, "You people are stubborn and don't have any faith! How much longer must I be with you? Why do I have to put up with you?" (Luke 9:41, CEV)
- The same thing that enabled Jesus to stick it out with the disciples is exactly the same thing that we can utilize to help us in our relationships. It's this – Jesus saw the power of their potential! And He knew that as they would give Him control over their personalities, as they would be realistic and honest about character defects, they could become powerful for the kingdom of God. And that's exactly what happened if you look at history! Because Jesus didn't give up!

**Ephesians 3:20 (KJV)** Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

**Ephesians 3:20 (TM)** God can do anything, you know – far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us.

- Gentle people are people whose have allowed their personalities to be under God's control. **What do you need God to work on?**

- Here's the catch – God works within us when His Spirit fills us. We must have the Holy Ghost to produce the Fruit of the Spirit!

**John 15:4 (LB)** Take care to live in me, and let me live in you. For a branch can't produce fruit when severed from the vine. Nor can you be fruitful apart from me.

## **O - OUTLOOK**

- As we allow the Holy Ghost to control our character traits, it has an incredible affect on our outlook, on how we see other people. How we see other people will determine two things: (1) our attitudes toward them, and (2) our actions toward them.
- When our outlook comes under God's control, we suddenly begin to see others in a positive light and work for their benefit instead of merely our own.
 

**Philippians 2:4-8 (NLT)** <sup>4</sup> Don't think only about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and what they are doing.<sup>5</sup> Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had. <sup>6</sup> Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. <sup>7</sup> He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form. <sup>8</sup> And in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal's death on a cross.
- When your outlook comes under God's control you all of a sudden start to become a little more understanding. Gentle people are understanding of the weaknesses and limitations of others
 

**2 Peter 1:6-7 (LB)** <sup>6</sup> Next, learn to put aside your own desires so that you will become patient and godly, gladly letting God have his way with you. <sup>7</sup> This will make possible the next step, which is for you to enjoy other people and to finally you will grow to love them deeply.
- People whose outlook has remained outside of God's control are very selfish people for the most part, and the number one way to destroy any relationship is to be selfish!

**James 3:16 (CEV)** Whenever people are jealous or selfish, they cause trouble and do all sorts of cruel things.

## **W - WORDS**

- Every human being that is old enough to talk instinctively knows the power in words (that's why we talk so much!). But words can either be devastatingly destructive or enormously encouraging.

- **James 3:6-8 (NLT)** <sup>6</sup> And the tongue is a flame of fire. It is full of wickedness that can ruin your whole life. It can turn the entire course of your life into a blazing flame of destruction, for it is set on fire by hell itself. <sup>7</sup> People can tame all kinds of animals and birds and reptiles and fish, <sup>8</sup> but no one can tame the tongue. It is an uncontrollable evil, full of deadly poison.
- *Mike Murdock song:* The kindest word is an unkind word unsaid, The kindest letter is an unkind letter unread, Words unspoken leave hearts unbroken, The kindest word is an unkind word unsaid.
- No human being can tame the tongue – that’s why we have to bring our words under God’s control. Do you know how God controls your words? He first tames your heart by filling it with His Spirit!  
**Luke 6:45b (LB)** Whatever is in the heart overflows into speech.  
**Proverbs 15:4 (NLT)** Gentle words bring life and health; a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.  
**Ephesians 4:29 (TM)** Watch the way you talk. Let nothing foul or dirty come out of your mouth. Say only what helps, each word a gift.
- **Is each word that you say a gift?** One of the characteristics of gentle people is that their words are under control. They think BEFORE they speak!

## E - EXPECTATIONS

- When someone disappoints you are you gentle or are you judgmental? Did you know that your response will determine the health of that relationship? **(even in your relationship with God!)**
- When we mess up, God is not waiting for us with clenched fists, but with open arms! Just like the prodigal son – God wants us to run TO Him, not FROM Him! And that exactly what God expects us to act like with other people!  
**Ephesians 4:2 (NLT)** Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love.
- Remember in 1 Kings 19 when Elijah was sulking on the mountain after hearing that Queen Jezebel wanted to destroy him? He certainly hadn’t met God’s expectations for a bold prophet (especially after the miracle God did on Mount Carmel!). After all of his complaints, he probably expected God to kill Him in the wind, the earthquake, and the fire! But God was in the still small voice!

- How about you? Are you a wind, an earthquake, or a fire that kills everyone? Or do you respond with gentleness when someone disappoints you? Gentle people don’t let their unmet expectations mess them up (even when they think GOD has let them down!).

## R - RESPONSE

- Have you ever thought about the word “responsible”? You could say it this way: **RESPONSE – ABLE**. Gentle people are able to control their responses in life. The way they respond is due to their internal DISPOSITION, not their external CONDITIONS.
- **"You make me so angry!"** Is that statement true? No! You always choose your reaction to every circumstance! Your emotional life does not have to be built on the shaky foundation of the behavior and weaknesses of others! It can be produced by the Holy Ghost inside!  
**Proverbs 16:32 (NKJV)** He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.
- In our relationship with God, our **RESPONSE – ABILITY** is crucial!  
**James 1:21(NKJV)** Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.  
**1 Peter 3:4 (KJV)** But let it [your adorning] be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.
- Only to GENTLE, MEEK and HUMBLE people does God give Himself freely. He draws near to those who draw near to Him. God, who is selfless love, can only be in harmony with the person who also is selfless enough to give control of their life to Him!  
**Psalms 34:18 (KJV)** The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.  
**James 4:6 (KJV)** But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.
- God actually RESISTS those who are not submitted to Him! Instead of going through life HELPED by God, they are actually HINDERED by Him!
- The wonderful news is that God has promised us that we can receive the Holy Ghost, and with it the Fruit of the Spirit ... GENTLENESS!