

# Christian Character - Gentleness

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good evening, everyone. So we're going to talk about gentleness today. I want to start us off by asking the question, where does gentleness rank on your fruits of the spirit list?

! You know, if you're thinking about fruits of the spirit, you go, ah, well, love. I mean, gotta have that one. God is love, right? Joy. I mean, who doesn't want joy in their life?

Okay, so that's number two. Joy. I mean, peace. A lot of people pray for peace, think peace would be pretty good. And if you were even here two weeks ago, David Brown was talking about self-control.

And he mentioned self-control as kind of a foundation for almost all of the other fruits of the spirit. So you start to make a list and you go, ah, well, not top three. Does gentleness crack the top five? And you start to think, oh, well, it's kind of way down there. The good news is when Paul is listing the fruits of the spirit in Galatians 5, he doesn't list them in order of priority.

[ 1 : 04 ] He is saying, hey, all of these are important for the Christian life, whether it's love or gentleness. All of these are important. And so we all know that and we acknowledge that. But when it really comes down to it, we go, ah, but that's really hard, Seth.

And I understand completely. I am not a gentle person. See, when we think of gentleness, a lot of times we like to think of this picture right here. I call this picture Renaissance Mary, or if you have a better accent than me, Renaissance Mary.

See, this Mary, who we kind of think of, right, when we think of gentleness, she's very poised. She's very calm. This Mary, you look like you could come up to her very gently and say, Mary, I am so sorry. I just ran over your dog.

And she would go, God bless you. That's okay. See, this is what we think of when we think of gentleness. But we just never can attain to this. Instead, I like to think of myself, at least, as more Byzantine Mary.

So this is a picture of Mary from Byzantine, and it's a little far away. But if you can peer into Byzantine Mary's eyes, she looks like she is so done. She looks like if the little baby Jesus there reaches up his hand and touches her, one more face, she is going to be not only on the edge, but she's going to be pushed over that edge and screaming bloody murder.

[ 2 : 29 ] She looks completely done. And this is not how we respond a lot of the times, right? At least for me, in general, I, when responding to people not with Renaissance Mary, but rather Byzantine Mary style, of being very upset and very just mute and honestly right on the edge with people.

Well, so how? How can we go from responding like Renaissance Mary to Byzantine Mary? Well, it's the entire reason why I labeled this talk and titled it Back to the Future, is that we need to go back and understand where we have come from to then understand how we can be gentle as we understand our future as well.

So as we dive into this, let's start with the question, why be gentle? So I know I kind of asked the question earlier about how can we be gentle, and I kind of switched it around on you right here, and I'm saying why, but I think the why question is important.

If we don't understand why, what would happen here is that we would go, you know, 20 minutes here, I'd tell you how to be gentle, you'd go out of the doors, and you would try really hard, two days.

I mean, if you're really good, three days. But then something would happen. You'd mess up. We're all human, right? And then, once you've messed up, you'd say, ah, maybe this just isn't me.

[ 3 : 56 ] I'm not a gentle person. You'd forget about it. But if we know why we're supposed to be gentle, well, that can transform the how. So why? Why should we be gentle?

Well, it's a very churchy answer, but the answer is Jesus. We should be gentle because Jesus was gentle. See, Matthew 11, 29, Jesus describes himself as gentle.

He says, take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. See, Jesus here has an opportunity to describe himself.

And what does he say? He could have said he's powerful. He could have said that, you know, he's God. And he says, I am gentle and humble. I am gentle and lowly, if you choose a different translation.

And see, his gentleness comes out in many ways. In the Old Testament, you look at Isaiah 41 through 2, it says, Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for.

[ 5 : 08 ] Basically, the people have rebelled against God. And while they're in exile, God says, listen, I know you deserve this, but I am going to act gently towards you and give you, I'm going to free you from this captivity here in a little while.

See, it's in the New Testament. If you go to the New Testament, well, you just have to look at the person of Jesus, right? We already talked about he describes himself as gentle and lowly in Matthew 11. In John 8, there is a woman who's caught in adultery.

The Pharisees catch her in the act of adultery, bring her before Jesus, and say, Master, the law says that you have to stone her, and that we should stone her.

What do you say? And Jesus, he kneels down, writes something in the sand, and then says, You who are without sin, you go ahead and cast that first stone.

Well, one by one, the people, the Pharisees, they start to trickle off. Jesus looks up, it's just the woman there. And he says, oh, in almost a sarcastic tone, oh, no one can stone you.

[ 6 : 20 ] Well, I don't condemn you either. Go and sin no more. See, Jesus, this woman deserved death, and yet Jesus' gentleness overflows into her being spared.

Just before Matthew 11 is Matthew 9, Jesus is going through the countryside, and he sees the people, and he looks at them and has compassion on them.

See, he sees the crowd and loves them so much that he starts to heal them. That's what his gentleness leads to, is him healing people. And actually, I would say that Jesus' healing is actually his greatest showing of gentleness.

But not physical healing, like he does in Matthew 9, but in healing our relationship to the Father.

See, at one point in time, we have all decided that we wanted to be God, right?

It's what the Bible calls idolatry. We decide that we know better than God, so we sin. This sin separates us from God. I mean, Romans 3.23 says, For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

[ 7 : 35 ] And so since we have sinned, we need somebody to set us right. That act of setting right is called justification. Christians for centuries have called it justification.

And we need justification. And how do we get it? Jesus. Jesus is our justification.

He lived the perfect life. He took our place on the cross. And because he took our place, Romans 5.1 says, Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

See, but there's something interesting here. I don't know if you caught it, if you're listening. Romans 5.1 there, the tense of the verb.

Paul says that we have been justified. This is a past act. It's accomplished. So what does that mean right now? What does that mean for Jesus?

[ 8 : 41 ] That's the question that we have to ask ourselves. What is Jesus doing now? Is he hit retirement age? Is he 66, collecting his pension, sitting by the pool, drinking mocktails, and about to go play 18 with Elijah and Moses?

While I would love to see Jesus play golf, so I can maybe take a few strokes off of my own game, that's not what's happening here. See, Hebrews 7.25 says that Jesus right now isn't just hanging out in heaven chilling, but instead is interceding for us.

It says, Consequently, he's able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. See, Jesus' job is not done.

He doesn't just give us this path to new life, this justification, and say, Hey, here it is. Figure it out. No, he is walking alongside us as we go along.

He lives to constantly make intercession for us. Now, I want to say something to make something clear.

[ 9 : 53 ] This does not mean that justification is not fully complete. But instead, through intercession, Jesus is applying constantly what justification accomplished.

Again, this does not mean that justification is not complete. Once we are saved, we are saved. Jesus has a one-time act. Jesus has done it. But intercession, what Jesus is doing now, once you are a Christian, once you are saved, is that he is constantly applying that justification to your life. And that's great news, right? Dane Ortland, who wrote the book *Gentle and Lowly*, which a lot of this stuff is based off of, highly recommend on the book.

And if you want a copy, we have plenty, so please come ask. He says, the intercession of Christ is his heart, connecting our heart to the Father's heart.

See, right here, I think that this is something that you can kind of grasp in your head, but I honestly think a word picture and even just a picture up here would be even better. So I've asked a few friends to come help me. Lucy, will you come up here?

[ 11 : 08 ] And Anderson, will you come up here? Lucy, go ahead and stand on this side. And Anderson, stand on this side. So we're going to, Lucy right here, Anderson there, we're going to call Lucy God in this instance.

Don't let it go to your head. We're going to call Anderson here. Anderson is man. And so at one point, this relationship was perfect, right? It's the very beginning of our Bibles.

But as I said earlier, men, all of us, we have decided to sin at one point in time and it ruined this relationship. So Jesus, as our justifier, he comes in and justifies this relationship, right?

He says, no, no, no, the wrath that he rightly deserves because he's chosen to be his own God, it doesn't go to him anymore. It comes to me and the grace that I earned because I lived a perfect life, me being Jesus in this moment, goes to Anderson, to man, right?

That's what justification is. Intercession is almost as if Jesus is making this relationship right, but just almost think of him as turning and looking at God now and he is saying, hey, hang on.

[ 12 : 23 ] Not only did I make this relationship right, but almost as a lawyer, they would have their client here say on behalf of this guy here, I'm actually making intercession saying that no, no, no, he is right.

I'm interceding for anything on this guy's behalf. So that's fantastic, right? Jesus has got to be the best lawyer around. But there's one more thing here that when I was researching and reading Day Northland's book, this part kind of blew me away.

See, in this moment right here, Jesus says that he's not only our justifier, he's not only our interceder, but he is also our advocate.

So not only does he sit here as the lawyer that says, hey, this guy is innocent, he comes and joins this team and says, we're on the same team, you can't punish him.

And in fact, it would actually be unlawful for you to punish him because the wrath that you had was actually taken out of time. Thank you, guys. Thanks for your help. We've lost our slides, but that's okay.

[ 13 : 42 ] So Jesus is our advocate. He's not only our justifier, he's not only our intercessor, but he is indeed our advocate. 1 John 2, 1 says, my dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin.

But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous one.

See, this whole goal, once you become a Christian, you live this life and you're supposed to become more and more like Christ.

This is called sanctification. This is our goal, is to become more and more like Christ, but we will never hit it. In fact, if you are a new Christian in the room and you think or somebody has ever told you that once you become a Christian that your sins will, you will no longer be tempted to sin, that is a lie.

In fact, there's a lot of older saints around here today that I bet you could go and ask and ask them, and they would tell you that when they became a Christian, it actually got a lot worse, the temptation did.

See, we need to become more and more like Christ, but because we are sinful, we fail. But 1 John 2, 1, it says, don't worry, yes, you will sin, but do not worry because you have an advocate.

[14:58] This guy that stands right here beside you. And see, he's not just an advocate that says, like a lackadaisical advocate, right? So he doesn't go before God and he's like, all right, listen, God, Anderson, yeah, he talked back to his parents, which I never know never happens right now.

And, but listen, that's 35 minutes since his last sin, and if we do like a year over year, that's a 27% decrease over last year in sin per minute.

And so, honestly, pretty good investment. I think you should still keep going. That's not what God is like at all. See, instead, he advocates for us with a fervor.

I want you to grasp this, that the angels who constantly spend time with God, he advocates for us, with us so much that the angels long to look into this relationship.

They cannot grasp the kind of grace that God has for us. The kind of gentleness that Jesus shows towards us. Again, Dane Ortlund, he would say, we are called to mature into deeper levels of personal holiness as we walk with the Lord.

[16:16] Truer consecration, new vistas of obedience, what we would call sanctification. But when we don't, when we choose to sin through, though, sorry, though we forsake our true identity, our Savior does not forsake us.

So why? Why should we be gentle? Because we are mimicking the Savior who gave up everything to save us.

See, the Savior's heart just overflows with gentleness for his creation. So that's the why question. We've answered it, and I promise that the next few parts of this how section will go faster.

I promise we won't spend that much time on all of these. So now we get to the point. How? How can we be gentle? Well, we have to have patience and humility.

See, there's a reason why patience is listed as one of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5. Paul is saying that without gentleness, or there is no gentleness without patience. There's also a reason why patience and humility are also listed together with gentleness in Ephesians 4.

[17:34] Paul says in Ephesians 4, 1 and 2, as a prisoner for the Lord then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle.

Be patient, bearing with one another in love. So then, okay, Seth, great. You've told me things. You're supposed to tell me how I'm supposed to be gentle, and you've told me to be patient, and you've told me to be humble.

It's not really a great how-to guide yet. I'd agree. So how? How do we be patient? How do we be humble? How do we be gentle?

You have to remember where you came from. In about 2016, Powerade, which is a sports drink company owned by the Coca-Cola company, they started running these advertisements called Just a Kid from Blank.

So it was a call for these famous athletes to remember where they came from. This one here is a basketball player. His name's Derek Rose, and he's just a kid from Chicago.

[18:39] And part of the whole emotion behind this campaign was it doesn't matter or what's really kept these guys going, despite Derek Rose being an all-star, despite him making millions and millions of pounds, is the fact that he remembers where he came from.

See, he grew up in the slums of Chicago on the south side. He at one point had nothing, and now he has everything, but he doesn't just get complacent with having everything.

The thing that keeps pushing him, the thing that keeps driving him forward is that he remembers back when he used to be a kid with nothing, and he wants to make a better life for himself in the future.

Now, obviously, Powerade is trying to evoke some emotions inside of us to monetize and make money, but the sentiment, the premise, remains. How do we, as Christians, be gentle, patient, humble to those around us, to an undeserving boss, to impatient parents?

We remember who we were before Christ saved us. Remember, Paul describes us as enemies of God. We weren't neutral to God.

[19:55] We were actively fighting against him, and when we remember that, remember how much God loves us, how much Jesus' gentleness overflows to us, we remember that that changes how we respond to other people, right?

It's point one. Point two, how can we be gentle? We need to remember our inheritance. See, we can be gentle and should be encouraged to be gentle because it's actually strength.

Again, we can be gentle because it's actually strength. In one of his most famous discourses, Jesus goes on top of the Sermon on, what we call the Sermon on the Mountain, he goes on top of the mountain, and he basically reframes all of Jewish thinking at this time.

He says, you have heard it said, but I say to you. And in this famous discourse, at the very beginning, he says, blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Meek here is just another translation for the word gentleness. Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. See, this may have been opposite, and was opposite, to what the people around him were seeing, right?

[ 21 : 24 ] But Jesus is redefining success for the people around him. So you may have heard it said that this Roman rule that we are under will never end. You may have heard it said that this empire will keep expanding and expanding through war, through terror, through slavery.

But Jesus says, not yet. Let me actually redefine what is going to happen here. And for his Jewish audience, Matthew 5 here would have actually taken them to a passage in the Old Testament, which was a Psalm of David, Psalm 37, which says, in just a little while, the wicked will be no more, but the meek shall inherit the land.

The wicked plots against the righteous and gnashes his teeth at him, but the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he sees that his day is coming. Have you ever shared something you're passionate about with someone and they have laughed in your face?

Whether it's Star Wars or knitting or football or whatever, have you ever shared something you're passionate about and the person that you're sharing with looks back at you and laughs? Makes you feel small, doesn't it?

Makes you feel insignificant when it has happened to me, I just want to crawl up into a little ball and just dissolve into the carpet. Just pray that the Lord would take me in that moment, actually. But see, here in this moment right here, wickedness is gathering its greatest army.

[ 22 : 56 ] He's gathering his best men all together and saying, hey, if we play our cards right, we might just have a chance. And then in that moment when they've all gathered for war, and in the moment when you would say it would be the climax of a movie, swords drawn, armies are about to meet, everybody's looking, everybody's excited, Jesus stops the battle.

How ridiculous, right? Jesus laughs at wickedness, laughs in its face, and says, is this all you have? Really? This is all you can muster. See, I created you.

I own you. And you, who think you have amassed a great army and own this world, you will inherit nothing.

But instead, I will give your inheritance to the gentle that you trampled over for all of your life. So the reward for gentleness is an inheritance greater than anything we can ever imagine.

[ 24 : 17 ] And that is how we fight brutality, hatred, impatience, force in our own lives and people against us, is that we remember the inheritance that we will have.

We don't live for this life, but the life to come. All right, last one here, and then we'll wrap up. You should, oh, sorry, that was Psalm 37. You should look for gentleness in every believer.

So this is not necessarily answering the question of how, but this is just helping us understand a little bit more of what gentleness looks like. Colossians 3.12 says, therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

Again, literally, this should remind us of putting on clothes, right? Just how you put your shirt and trousers on in the morning, you need to put on these attributes. You need to put on gentleness. You need to put on patience.

You need to put on humility. And if you look at the text right there before, at the very beginning, Paul says, as God's chosen people. So this means, if you're a Christian, these attributes should describe you.

[ 25 : 33 ] And these aren't just attributes that you show towards other Christians either, by the way. Titus 3.1-2, Paul makes sure to let us know that these are attributes that you show to the world out there.

Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle towards everyone.

Everyone means your mom. Everyone means your boss. Everyone means the doctor that keeps overlooking you and won't give you your results back. Everyone means everyone. And before we go, I just want to make a second and specific point that kind of comes off of this one. See, gentleness is an attribute of every Christian, absolutely.

But as the congregation, you need to look out and be aware that gentleness should be apparent in leaders as well. See, we're going through 2 Timothy in the morning at church, right?

[ 26 : 40 ] Timothy is a pastor, and 2 Timothy is a little bit older, and 1 Timothy is a pretty young protege of Paul. He's pastoring a church in Ephesus. And in both of these letters, Paul warns Timothy that he has to be gentle.

To Timothy, he says, opponents must be gently instructed in the hope that God will grant them. In his first letter, Paul says, but you, man of God, flee from all of this and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness.

I don't think it's a coincidence that in the two letters that we have of Paul writing to a young leader in the church, both of them mention gentleness.

So it doesn't matter if you're just the leader of the hospitality team, or you're just a leader in your home, or an elder of the church.

Gentleness must mark our lives. holiness. So in conclusion, how do we be gentle?

[ 27 : 57 ] How do we go from Byzantine Mary, if you go all the way back to the beginning of our sermon here, how do we go from Byzantine Mary on the right to Renaissance Mary there on the left?

Well, see, if you're not a believer in the room, it won't be possible. See, you will try and try, but you will fail. No matter how hard you try, you will never get this relationship right.

So stop trying. Instead, let Jesus be your justifier. Let him be your intercessor. Let him be your advocate. He wants to have relationship with you.

All you have to do is ask. But for the Christian, how do we do this? Well, we just have to model what Jesus taught us. We have to go back to the future.

We have to remember Christ's love for us. We have to remember how sinful we have been, and then we look to the promise of our inheritance in the future.

[ 29 : 09 ] Let's pray. Father, thank you, Lord, for your word that is living and active. God, we thank you that you loved us.

Lord, that you are indeed our justifier, intercessor, and advocate. God, we thank you that you've done these things and that gentleness just overflows from you.

Lord, help us as we try and be gentle throughout our next week, month, year. Lord, help us to remember these things. Lord, more than anything, help us to remember your sacrifice and how it should radically change our lives.

Pray all this in your name. Amen. Thank you.