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Is the Character of Gentleness working in you? Here is how you can find out. Take a careful look at this character and fruit of Gentleness from God's most precious Word by examining the passages below. Now ask yourself:

1. How do I exhibit Gentleness in my daily life?
2. What can I do to develop a better attitude of Gentleness?
3. What blocks Gentleness from working and being exhibited in me?
4. How can I make Gentleness function better, stronger and faster, even in times of uncertainty and stress?

Gentleness, sometimes referred to as *Meekness*, is the fruit that will show calmness, personal care, and tenderness in meeting the needs of others. It is to be more than just a personality; it is to be who we are by the work of the Spirit within us. This is not a weakness or a lack of strength; rather, it is being humble and gentle toward God and others. This also means being nonresistant to God and His work in us. Gentleness produces a desire and effort to please God and to submit our will and aspirations to His will and what is best. By keeping our focus on Christ with humility, we can endure being personally attacked.

(Psalm 37:11; Isaiah. 40:11; 42:2-3; Galatians 5:22-23; Philippians 4: 5; Matthew 5:5; 11:29; 12:15; Ephesians 4:1-2; 2 Timothy 2:24; 1 Thessalonians 2:7)

Roughness and violence are the opposite! When we have the mindset to just see what we can get out of life and make a name for ourselves we miss out on what is best for our benefit. Then it causes us to run over others and we end up being like the men who built the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9). Their downfall was not the building project, but the pride and arrogance. To seek significance outside of glorifying God by their achievements alone, ignoring God's love, care, plan, and providence for a cheap and temporary substitute.

Gentleness is not being weak, as with meekness, gentleness is strength under control. It allows us to be tender, just think how big and vast and powerful God is, who is bigger than the universe, who transcends space and time way beyond our comprehension. Yet, He treats us with the utmost of tenderness and care. Knowing gentleness is trusting that God will take care of justice, thus we need to think correctly about who God is and who we are in Him. This understanding of His sovereignty, doctrine and control will move us from the hurriedness of life and the cruelty that goes with it to take the time with relationships, growth because we are at peace with God.

Shepherd, as it is used in the Bible is a term that had great depth and meaning for an agrarian society. *Sheep* and *shepherd* are often-used words that denote a concerned guide who describes God, the church, and His people (Eza. 34: 1-10; Luke 15:3-7; John 10:1-18; 21:15-17; 1 Pet. 2:25). A shepherd does not lead by being harsh or the sheep will refuse to go with him, and perhaps will even die. Rather, he leads and guides them in the right direction with gentleness; then the sheep will follow him. The sheep do this out of a need to be protected, to be led to food and water that they cannot find on their own. In likeness, we humans are to lead others to the precepts of His Word and character. We are to lead by being a shepherd, being gentle.

Gentleness is applying wisdom with humbleness and tenderness so we are under control. It is an active attitude of deliberate acceptance, as humility and wisdom go together as does foolishness and arrogance. Wisdom equals humility and does not boast and brag. Thus, as a wild, untamed horse that

is brought under control, so do we. The spirit and strength of the horse are still there, however, its focus and purpose has changed. The horse is now usable and available; the same is with us when we break from our ways to His Way. We are called to be broken into the Lord! In so doing, our allegiance, loyalty, and commitment to Christ flourishes, so we see the bigger picture of modeling Christ over how others attitude and treatment are toward us.

Romans 11:16-24 gives us some stern words about pride, about *not* being kind, and how we are before God. This passage gives us a warning light that the oven is on and it is hot, so do not touch it. Do not touch arrogance, and do not put goodness, kindness or gentleness in the cupboard where it cannot be used. This passage is also an echo of Hell, a place where God's kindness is absent. When we refuse to practice any of the Fruits—as in Gentleness—we are, in fact, bringing an aspect of Hell to others. This is a further testament to the fact that we have no right ever to be arrogant or prideful. God took the Jew's blessing away, and gave it to the Gentiles, not because they were better, rather, because of belief and faith. We are in danger of rejecting God by elevating ourselves in pride and just focusing on ourselves, just as the Jews did.

With all the severity and wrath of God, is also His Gentleness. He gives us a way, a plan, a wonderful life to be had. He does not have to; yet, He does. So, when you read, "Behold the severity (sternness) of God," we all should do just that. The severity of God includes the truth about Hell as endless suffering, and the truth of His kindness poured out to us. God's compassion is not just His Character or a personality trait; it is also a call for us, and a result of our faith. God does not force us to exercise our faith, but, when we do not put faith in our relationships; we not only cause dysfunction and even destruction, but also take the chance of cutting relationships off. Having faith and putting our faith into action will be the essential component to fueling coldness and apathy into our relationships. Your growing faith will be the visible results of that faith, impacting others, and where character is produced.

We cannot stand alone, thinking we are the determinants of ourselves and the world. That school of thinking has not worked; it is what fuels the misery, violence, and corruption in the world and it leads to the destiny of poor relationships, marriage dysfunction, abuse, and the loss of community. The unbelief and arrogance creates fear and brokenness, and that leads to loneliness and despair. Can we really say God will bless us when we continually disobey Him being selfish and do as we please? These verses say no, yet, still point to His hope and kindness.

Know this, God knows His sheep; we are to know the Shepherd. Thus, a person with a right relationship with God has no need to fear the world or the future, for we are already secured in Him. So we can practice Gentleness even when we are in unfulfilled expectations or frustrated or anxious or in the midst of hurt, we are sheep that need the Shepherd!

Once we get ourselves properly lined up with God and His will, a whole new world opens up. We will build the right character, maturity, and mindset as we emulate the Fruit of His Spirit. Then, His plan starts to become clear as we become more comfortable with and able to make the right choices in our relationships.

Reflection

Keep in mind, Christ's love is always there, waiting on our faith to embrace Him; so, we can feel and know His embrace is already upon us! We may not be able to always explain or understand God, but we can have faith and trust to be tender, and praise Him because of His kind love for us. We have been grafted into His grace, made His child, saved by His grace. Yet, somehow we allow arrogance to set in, push others away, and even say we do not need God. Therefore, we cut off our roots, and in so doing, choke off our true nourishment and ability to function with character and distinction. God is the One who supports us, and we need to see that fact as the reality of our life, nourish ourselves from His presence, and draw from His streams of living water (John 3).

- Here are positive examples from Scripture (Isa. 40:11; 42:1-3; Matt. 11:28-29; Luke 7:36-50; 10:38-42; Johan 8: 1-11; I Thess. 2:7-8)
- Here is are negative examples from Scripture (Nub. 20:2-13; II Sam. 18:10-15; 19:1-8; I Kings 21: 5-14; Luke 9:51-56)

Further Questions

1. How would you define Gentleness?
2. What are the things that cause you to be rough and course with others?
3. How does being rough counteract Gentleness?
4. Are you aware of the intricacy and delicacy of life, so you are tender too?
5. When have you been filled with Gentleness the most?
6. In what situation did you fail to have Gentleness in which you should have?
7. What issue is in your life that would improve with more Gentleness?
8. Think through the steps you need to take to put Gentleness into action in a specific instance. Such as how does God's tenderness toward you affect the way you go about your life to get things done? Does His care affect the way you care with humility and gentleness being tender in spite of people treating you like a doormat?

Remember; what come into your mind when you think about God tells a lot about you, perhaps the most important thing!