



Looking Inwards (15 mins)
Caring For Each Other

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an **opportunity to share**, not something you have to do, however: 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:*

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins)
Concern For Others

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours; or church, which you would like to share (please be careful not to pass on anything that is **confidential** or which you think the person/people concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?

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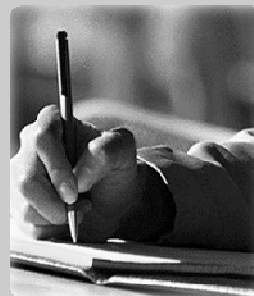


HG118: Fruit That Is Never Out Of Season
GENTLENESS: Love's Humility

Matthew 11:28-30 & 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Home Group Study Notes

14 February 2016 - Revd Paul A. Carr



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!

Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful.



Welcome (10 mins)
Ice Breaker

Sunday 14 February was Valentine's Day. What is the most romantic thing someone has ever done for you?



Looking Upwards (10 mins)
Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



Looking Upwards (40 mins) Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1: Have you ever been accused of being 'weak and spineless' when you showed gentleness to another person? How did this make you feel? Has this affected how you deal with others?

2: Paul suggested that a Biblical definition of gentleness is 'strength under control'. Share an example, or two, from the Bible where you have found this found to be true.

3: Read Matthew 11:28-30 and share an example when you've experienced the gentle hand of the Lord on your life.

Being gentle is to leave room for the workings of God's will. It is not about fighting for what is right, but for God's will to be done. It is not about defending oneself, but upholding God's will. So our responses are to be tempered with graciousness and gentleness, because we want the purposes of God to be fulfilled. God's desire is to restore and redeem, not to judge and condemn.

Isaiah 42:1-4: *"Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope."* Remember that passage in Luke 4 when Jesus read that the Messiah will come to *"bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners."* (Isa 61:1)

In the Beatitudes, He said *"Blessed are the meek [gentle], for they will inherit the earth."* (Matt 5:5) In other words, they are blessed because they will be fulfilled in life. They will inherit the earth – they will experience the abundance of life and be fully satisfied.

Conclusion. Jesus knew who He was, but He was gentle and humble - quite a contrast to those who exalt themselves by noisy demonstrations and who too often begin to think of themselves as above the requirements of holiness and justice. Jesus' awareness of His power enabled Him to be gentle to those in need. The broken reed He would not crush but would fully restore. The flickering wick of a lamp He would not put out but would cause it to burn brightly again. His gentleness works. It brings righteousness, and it will bring justice in the earth. Jesus gently takes the sinner and makes them whole.

We are called to be gentle, to restore to wholeness what which is broken. Just as the Lord did for us - he restores our soul, as David says in Psalm 23. He has been gentle with us, and we are now called to be like Him. The world needs to see the Jesus who has made a difference in our lives. And by the grace of God, we show this through our gentleness and changed lives.

May we cultivate that fruit of the Spirit which gives all the glory to God and shows a gentleness that is powerful and which demonstrates the incomparable, holy, faithful love of God!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you, for being gentle with us. We thank you for the gentleness shown to us by others. We ask for Your spirit of gentleness to shine through our lives. May we reflect Your gentleness to all that we meet. May we be considerate and loving and may our words and deeds bring healing and comfort to everyone. Help us walk with humility and gentleness through life. Let the world be touched, the way we have been touched by your gentleness with us. In Jesus' name we pray, AMEN

Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, writing on the Sermon on the Mount says: *The man who is meek is not even sensitive about himself. He is not always watching himself and his own interests. He is not always on the defensive ... when a man becomes meek he has finished with all that; he no longer worries about himself and what other people say. The man who is truly meek never pities himself, he is never sorry for himself. To be meek, in other words, means that you are finished with yourself altogether...*

You have nothing to lose in being gentle. Who knows, you may even gain a soul for the kingdom.

4. Gentle People Are Courageous People. Someone has pointed out that courage is not in Paul's list of the fruit of the Spirit. But we should recognize that it takes courage to be gentle in the midst of all the evil surrounding us in this world. It took courage for Paul to stand against the antagonism that had developed in Corinth and which had become quite vicious. Sounds like any church at any time in history.

Gentleness is never a false modesty, a self-depreciation, or a spineless refusal to stand for anything. Gentleness is never a cowardly retreat from reality, which substitutes a passive selfishness for real gentleness and avoids trouble in ways that allow even greater trouble to develop. Neither is it a false humility that refuses to recognize God has given us talents and abilities or that refuses to use them for His glory.

The Bible says Moses excelled in the meekness that is gentleness (Numbers 12:3). It is hard to be gentle toward those who attack him, especially if they attack his official rank and honour. But Moses did not try to defend himself. He was gentle toward Miriam and Aaron and let God take care of the situation. Gentleness includes the idea that we do not care about what happens to our honour so much as what happens to God's honour and what happens to others.

In our daily lives we cannot help coming into situations that bring conflicts with people. It is easy for us to react with violence or anger, especially if we feel insecure in our position. But when we accept the reality of who we are in Jesus, and trust the Holy Spirit to help us, we *can* be gentle, whatever conflicts may arise and however aggressive people may be. Jesus showed true gentleness both in the midst of conflict and in the midst of popularity. His healings and miracles often brought the crowds but He refused to let them make Him the kind of king they wanted.

5. Gentle People Fulfil The Will Of God. Remember when Jesus was arrested in Gethsemane and Peter drew a sword to defend Him, but Jesus said: *"Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"* (Matt 26:53-54)

He can call for twelve legions of angels (that's 72,000 angels) at once, but He chose not to do so. Isaiah rightly prophesied: *"He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth."* (Isa 53:7).

4: Read 2 Timothy 2:25-26 and Galatians 6:1. How would you 'gently instruct' someone who has fallen away from God and/or the teachings of the Bible?

5: Jesus is our example of being gentle whilst also being a servant. Suggest practical ways in which we might be able to find the right balance in our own Christian lives.

6: Paul suggested that 'gentle people are courageous people.' Share a situation in your life where you need courage to be gentle to someone - be sure to pray for each other as you do so.



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



HG118: Fruit That Is Never Out Of Season
GENTLENESS: Love's Humility

Matthew 11:28-30 & 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Home Group Sermon Notes

14 February 2016 - Revd Paul A. Carr

1. What Is Gentleness? In a culture of rough-and-rugged individualism, to be thought of as gentle is often thought of as being weak and spineless and easily taken advantage of. In fact, if someone tells you that 'you're being gentle' it's not usually a compliment. More often than not people probably mean that you have no backbone and are saying that you need to stand up for yourself.

A Biblical definition of gentleness is 'strength under control'. In Matthew 11 Jesus placed it in the context of 'taking up the yoke'. The yoke is a crossbar that is used to harness the strength of a pair of oxen. The yoke makes the task easy and the burden light. The strength of the oxen is brought under control and is focused (not wasted) to fulfil a purpose. Gentleness is not weakness, but strength under control.

Christianity is NOT for the weak! Being a Christian does NOT mean being soft spoken, weak, or easily intimidated. It is strength under the control of the master! Gentleness means finding a loving and kind way to do a tough job. It means a control over one's own life and situations in a way that allows kindness and compassion to show through. Gentleness is not afraid to do what is needed. So, what are the characteristics of gentle people?

2. Gentle People Are Concerned People. Jesus was gentle with the woman caught in adultery (John 8) not because He was unjust or unrighteous, but to give room for her to recover from her sinful ways and through His forgiving love restart her life anew. This was what happened – she was changed. Jesus made a detour to Samaria to meet another adulterous woman, by the well (John 4). She has had five husbands and the man she was with wasn't her husband. Jesus did not judge her, but rather led her to salvation, for He has come to seek and save the lost. Jesus noticed Zacchaeus, a chief tax-collector, whom the world hated, and invited himself into the sinner's house. His gentleness touched Zacchaeus in a way that no one else did and that changed his life.

Gentleness restores because it is motivated by a concern for the well-being of others. It is for this same reason that Paul instructs Timothy: 2 Tim 2:25-26: *Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.*

Gal 6:1 *Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently.* Gentleness is more concerned with the welfare of others than with self. The legalist seeks to exploit a brother or sister's failure. The Spiritual person seeks to restore them in love. The word "restore" means "to mend a net or set a broken bone."

Jesus said in Matthew 11:29a: *For I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yolk is easy and my burden is light.* When I read this I can't help but see a picture of Jesus walking alongside me with his arms around my shoulder gently walking with me as I journey and struggle through life.

3. Gentle People Are Humble People. Jesus demonstrated that at the Last Supper. John 13:3-5: *Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.*

All power and authority were in His hands, yet Jesus washed His disciples' feet. They needed something, physically speaking, their feet need washing, and spiritually, more importantly, they need to learn the importance of serving others. Jesus explained in John 13:14-15 "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."

Jesus could have been concerned about himself but He wasn't. For those of us who have power and authority over others (by virtue of the position you hold at work, home or church), take note of how we exercise those rights. Use your power and authority with respect and consideration for others. That's exercising gentleness. Jesus introduced a spiritual principle here – greatness is defined by servanthood. That's the example we're called to follow.

In reflecting on Jesus' character, Paul puts it this way in Philippians 2:3-4 "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." That's the example Christ set for us. Gentleness flows from an attitude of selflessness and humility. That is, don't take yourself too seriously. Don't get too caught up in defending your rights, exercising your powers or stamping your authority.

A corporal at Valley Forge during the American Civil War was directing three soldiers to lift a log into place. It was too heavy, but the corporal commanded again and again, "All right, men, one, two, three, lift!" It was obvious they were struggling. A man in an overcoat came by and said to the corporal, "Why don't you help them?" The corporal pulled himself up to full height and replied, "Sir, I am a corporal." Without a word the man stepped over and with his help the log went easily into place. The man was George Washington, a General.