

Gentleness

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[0 : 00] There was a newly ordained curate. She'd been given her list by her vicar of people to go and visit. And this young curate, being full of zeal and enthusiasm, thought that this was the day that she would go out and make a huge impact on the first person that she was called to visit.

The first person that she was going to was a guy who rarely came to church. He was described by a vicar as a sort of bohemian type sort of character.

Lived in a large house, beautiful sort of enclosed garden. And it was a hot day, a bit sort of like yesterday. And she was desperate that she thought, this is great.

He's going to offer me a drink. It's about lunchtime. I may even get offered to stay for lunch. And there'll be an opportunity to pray as well. So she goes with all this enthusiasm and she knocks at the door.

And she sensed that she just may have heard something or somebody in the back garden. She, being a person of gentle spirit, she thought, I won't give up.

[1 : 13] I'm quite persistent. So she went and knocked on the door. And with that, she's sure she maybe heard somebody in the house. But she wasn't quite sure. But she thought she'd just make her presence known.

And she said, hello, hello, it's the curate. But she didn't really want to give up again. So she tried the doorbell this time.

But there was no response. So being perfectly trained, she thought, I'll leave a note. And being really full of zeal and full of the Lord and full of her Bible knowledge, she thought, I'll just leave a note for this person.

So she left Revelation 3.20. Here I am. I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and I will eat with that person and they with me.

It was the day after that she found a note left on her email. She was very surprised. It was from the chap that she just visited. And he said, dear curate, thank you for your persistence in trying to see me on a wonderful, hot, sunny day.

[2 : 29] I heard you knocking and calling out to me. Thank you for your Bible verse. And I would have loved for you to come in and have a drink with me. But perhaps the following may explain why I couldn't have come to the door.

Please read Genesis 3.10. Not readily recognizing the passage, she went straight to her Bible. And as she blushed, all was revealed.

Or perhaps luckily not. I heard you in the garden and I was afraid. Because I was naked, so I hid.

As you see, Paul says to the Colossians, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

You see, Paul is saying to the early church and says to us now, it's something that we should clothe ourselves with. Naked aggression, naked anger, naked rudeness isn't very pretty for God's chosen people.

It doesn't suit us. So we are called to cover ourselves amongst other things with gentleness.

Gentleness is a part of the fruit of the Spirit.

[4 : 03] It's an important part, but so often we don't readily understand or recognize what it is. And maybe we need to do that more.

Bear with each other. Forgive one another. If any of you has a grievance against someone, forgive. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. Don't bite back.

Take a gentle response. Bear with one another and forgive. It's a benchmark, I guess, for each and every one of us as a disciple people, is to how we should react to others when maybe we are provoked or anxiety raises.

Yet I appreciate that we are like aliens often in a foreign land. In this world, our culture of rough and rugged individualism, we see it in politics, we see it in business, self before others, mention gentleness as a strength of leadership, and people look at you as literally you are from another planet.

You know, are you serious? Do you know what happens to gentle people? You know, they get stepped on, they get walked over, they get laughed at. No thanks, pal.

[5 : 23] No thanks. I'll take all the others, but I won't buy into gentleness. How is it that the world has missed that essential element of gentleness that we saw in Jesus?

But don't be deceived. Gentleness is strength under control. I think that is my strongest definition for me, is strength under control.

In fact, immense strength sounds like the character of Jesus to me. I hope it sounds like the character of Jesus to you. In fact, the Greek word translated in Galatians 5.23 that we heard, gentleness comes from a term that was described to tame a wild horse, to actually, with a bitten bridle, to bring that gentleness back into that animal.

Great power, but brought under control. I don't know whether you've had much to do with autism in your life, or whether you've been affected by autism around you.

About two years ago, Mandy and I were watching the TV. We were really moved. And a real sign of gentleness when there was a program, and I'll introduce you shortly, to Joel and to his dog, Caddy.

[6 : 52] They'd come to their wits end, because if you know of autism at all, there's a lot of anxiety, there's a lot of fear that is generated, a lot of social unrest that it brings around a household.

And into that needed to come some gentleness. But how did you introduce that? A little clip about gentleness. Hello. Well, he knows I'm a little bit nervous or something.

So he's just like, hey, don't worry. I'm here. Well, I'm Joel. I'm 14. And I've been diagnosed with autism, ADHD, and a few others, I'm pretty sure.

But I found it hard to basically live. It felt like there was a big cloud over us. We couldn't go to the park. We couldn't go to the shops.

We couldn't go on holiday, because he was scared. Scared of everything. I wouldn't go outside. I wouldn't focus on anything. It's just...

[8 : 00] The pediatrician had told me about Dogs for Good and said, they can help you. They brought Caddy in, and Joel stood back for a while.

But within 20 minutes, Joel was outside throwing a ball. That was Caddy. And I can remember just crying. Because I thought, finally... Finally, there was going to be something there to make us a normal family, with smiles.

He changed my life. Caddy changed not only Joel's life, but that of the whole family. Smiles have come back into our house.

It's not, how's Joel going to cope? What are we going to do? It says, has Caddy got his ball? Have we got some water? So the whole focus on Joel's disabilities have gone. What a moving clip.

Gentleness comes in all sorts of shapes and sizes, and can come through introducing something into our lives. Gentleness means finding a loving, kind way to do a tough job.

[9 : 12] Gentleness means bringing control, again, over one's own life and situations that allows kindness and compassion to flow through in us and through us and out into the people and into the communities, whether that's at home or at work or wherever that is.

Gentleness is not afraid to do what is needed. As I was thinking about gentleness, I thought, what is one of the strongest parts of our body, yet often the least gentle?

And that's the tongue. And my northern neighbour used to tell me of a lady down the road, and she said, she's a sharp tongue, that one.

It'll slice you in half when your back's turned. And the tongue can be so powerful. We can use the tongue to speak of strength and the power of God, yet so often we allow it to become the least gentle part of our body.

It reveals something about our nature, or perhaps lack of it. And Paul wasn't afraid to do some tough talking.

[10 : 33] But when speaking to the people of Corinth, it started off here, it said, he said, by the humility and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you.

By the humility and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you. We can do it. Paul did it. Jesus did it.

Strength can come in gentleness, softness, and tenderness. While I was researching for this, I read in World War I, the early aeroplane pilots, the most precarious job to do, surrounded by bits of paper and string and cardboard and wood.

And they found that if they wrapped silk around their heads several, several times, that actually several layers of silk deflected the shrapnel that came.

That actually silk was stronger than steel. Jesus showed us that gentleness, that softness, that soft heart towards others, that tenderness.

[11 : 51] It's compliant and allows us to show compassion. It opens the door. Why put on gentleness?

Why should I do that? Why should I do that as a Christian? Well, in Matthew 11, 29, Jesus says, tells us to take his yoke upon him and learn from him.

Because he is gentle and humble in heart. And if we do, we will find rest in our souls. I don't know about you, I often don't find rest in my soul when I know that I don't have a gentle nature or a gentle thought or a gentle disposition towards a situation.

Learn from me and find rest in my soul. I don't know what my soul, my soul isn't at rest. Gentleness is immensely powerful. I was sharing earlier, we were having a nice afternoon in the garden a few days back and some neighbours over the back, they'd had a party and two of the lads had actually come and trespassed into our neighbour's garden.

We had a word with them. They clearly had a very lot to drink and all the rest. And they'd got a little bit leery and a little bit gobby when we'd asked them to leave and they didn't leave.

[13 : 15] The police arrived. Now, this is where, this is confession time, isn't it? People are smiling back at me. My old life kicked in.

I couldn't wait to see strength in action. But as an observer, as an observer of these police officers that arrived, I saw strength way beyond the physical.

The officers were calm. They were extremely calm. They were gentle. They were gentle in their tone. They were gentle. They were firm. But they were very precise.

They were amazingly patient. Yet I knew at a moment's notice these two young officers would have thrown themselves into action, would have handcuffed these people up, put them in the back of the car.

But they didn't need to. There was strength. It was gentleness. It was patience. It was self-control that dealt with the issue.

[14 : 27] In Isaiah, in the Old Testament, he gives us this wonderful, beautiful picture of God. He tends his flock like a shepherd. He gathers the lambs in his arms. He carries them close to his heart.

He gently leads those that have young. What a beautiful picture that Isaiah gave us in the character of God that we saw in Jesus.

that we see in Jesus today. Maybe the Spirit's already speaking to you already about that thing within our own character that catches me out time and time and time again.

Yet, put on gentleness. Perhaps the Spirit maybe is talking to you about our dealings with others, dealings in the workplace, dealings with our relationships, dealings with our communications, dealing with things that we do in the everyday where gentleness could make such a difference and add to what people see in us and for people to meet with Jesus.

never be afraid of gentleness. It's not weakness. It takes great strength. And we ask the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit to come and bring that gentleness of spirit to us to give us, to give us strength.

[15 : 56] to give us strength. To avenge us to give us strength.