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COMMUNITY **DISCUSSION**  
**gr:ups** **GUIDE**

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**SERMON PASSAGE:** Matthew 11:28-30

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**REVIEW THE SERMON**

1. Read the prep verses (Isaiah 40:1-2, 11; Philippians 4:5) and the sermon's Bible passage to recall the content.
2. Briefly review the sermon outline
  - a. Introduction
    - i. Galatians 5:16, 22-23
    - ii. George Bethune:
      1. "Perhaps no grace is less prayed for, or less cultivated than gentleness. Indeed, it is considered rather as belonging to natural disposition or external manners, than as a Christian virtue; and seldom do we reflect that not to be gentle is sin."
  - b. The expectation of gentleness
    - i. Gentleness is how we carry ourselves
      1. The quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of one's self-importance.
      2. Meekness
      3. Humility and thankfulness toward God, and polite, restrained behavior toward others.
    - ii. Gentleness is how we conduct ourselves with others
    - iii. Jerry Bridges in *The Fruitful Life*<sup>1</sup>:
      1. "Both gentleness and meekness are born of power, not weakness. There is a pseudo-gentleness that is timidity, and there is a pseudo-meekness that is cowardly." We might call timidity and

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.amazon.com/Fruitful-Life-Jerry-Bridges/dp/1600060277/ref=tmm\\_pap\\_swatch\\_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=](https://www.amazon.com/Fruitful-Life-Jerry-Bridges/dp/1600060277/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=)

cowardly counterfeit fruit. The opposite fruit of gentleness is abrasiveness and arrogance.

2. "Billy Graham defines gentleness as, 'mildness in dealing with others. . .It displays a sensitive regard for others and is careful never to be unfeeling for the rights of others.' Gentleness is an active trait, describing the manner in which we should treat others. Meekness is a passive trait, describing the proper Christian response when others mistreat us..."
3. Matthew 12:34, Proverbs 15:4

c. The gentleness of Christ

- i. Matthew 11:28-30
- ii. Proverbs 4:23

d. Application

- i. Ask yourself how you speak to others in general conversations (do you spend more time talking about yourself)?
- ii. Ask yourself how you speak in conflict with others whether it be your spouse, your children, or anyone else you are in a disagreement with (do you get loud, perhaps yell or scream, belittle?);
- iii. How about in your correction of others (again whether it be with your children or an erring Christian)?
- iv. How are your online habits on social media?
- v. Gentleness with those who do/do not wear masks?



## DIGGING DEEPER

### 1. The Tale of Two People: Abrasive and Gentle

We truly live in an abrasive world. The world applauds insults as a form of entertainment, cheers when people get into heated arguments or physical altercations, and espouses verbal vomit on social media. Can you list three ways you have observed this world's abrasiveness during this week?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

This should not surprise us as the world is without Christ and we are in a spiritual war. Nonetheless it is all too easy to get pulled into participating in barbed comments

verbally and on social media. Yet, as the sermon reminded us, we are called to walk in the Spirit and exhibit the fruit of gentleness. Our gentleness is to be evident to all (Philippians 4:5).

Read and reflect on these verses:

- a. Proverbs 15:1, 25:15
- b. 2 Corinthians 10:1
- c. Ephesians 4:2
- d. Colossians 3:12
- e. 1 Thessalonians 2:7
- f. 1 Peter 3:15

With these verses as a backdrop, answer the following questions:

- a. When do you find it most difficult to restrain from rash harshness or hastiness of comments?

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- b. Would people describe you as gentle or as critical and brash?

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- c. Do you gently encourage others to sin no more, or do you self-righteously cast the first stone?

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- d. Do you quickly apologize after emotional outbursts or impassioned shouting?

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Consider the following to help you not quench the Spirit in exhibiting the fruit of gentleness in you:

- Recall that gentleness puts others first. Is what you are thinking, saying, texting, or posting putting the other person first?
- Gentleness remembers that we are all sinners (Romans 3:23). We are to extend grace to others.
- Do you need to take a fast from social media? Consider taking a week or month long fast from social media and read God’s Word instead. I assure you, you will survive, will not miss anything important, and will be refreshed by God.
- WWJD is actually a good filter to use before posting or texting. Are you lifting up Christ to the unbelieving world or edifying the body by what you post or text?

## 2. Cultivating Gentleness

Gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit, not a personality trait. You cannot become gentle on your own. There is no self-help book available to you on this matter or a seminar you can go to that teaches gentleness in seven easy steps. Gentleness is empowered by the Holy Spirit. The ONLY way to cultivate gentleness is to abide in Christ.

Read and reflect on John 15:1-11.

- Who is the vinedresser? \_\_\_\_\_
- Who is the vine? \_\_\_\_\_
- Who are the branches? \_\_\_\_\_
- What are the branches to bear? \_\_\_\_\_
- What two things does fruit provide? (A) g\_\_\_\_\_ God and (B) proves we are His d\_\_\_\_\_.

Consider this quote from Harriet Beecher Stowe:

How does the branch bear fruit? Not by incessant effort for sunshine and air, not by vain struggles. . . . It simply abides in the vine, in silent and undisturbed union, and blossoms, and fruit appear as of spontaneous growth. How then shall a Christian bear fruit? By efforts and struggles to obtain that which is freely given? . . . No: there must be a full concentration of the thoughts and affections on Christ, a complete surrender of the whole being to Him, a constant looking to Him for grace.

Without the vital union with Christ there cannot be any productivity or fruit of the Spirit. That is, there cannot be gentleness without an intimate relationship with Christ.

Abiding in Christ IS THE MOST IMPORTANT activity for us each day. How do we abide in Christ?

- Read and study His Word. God's Word is living and active, able to graft you into the vine.
  - Spend time with Him daily in prayer and obedience.
  - Listen to the Holy Spirit. This requires moving self, others, and other things out of the way.
  - Have the mind of Christ by meditating on His Word and example.
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## **PRAYER**

1. Praise God that He is gentle, that Christ has a heart of gentleness.
  2. Pray that you will abide in Christ so that gentleness is produced in you.
  3. Pray that you will exhibit gentleness and look different than the abrasive world.
  4. Submit your thoughts, speech, texts, and social media posts to God. Be in the world, but not of the world.
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