

Gentleness

I'm sitting in a Best Western in Charlotte, North Carolina as I am writing this most recent article for the *NEWSLETTER*. Toni and I and our youngest daughter Melanie are taking a few days to see the sights of North Carolina from the mountains in the north and northwest to the Atlantic Ocean to the east. So far, the trip has been great.

I have to admit that in public places, I like to “people watch.” While we were sitting at Dalas Love Field on Monday, I witnessed something I thought would be a great lead-in for this week's subject. I saw, and pointed out to Toni, an obviously new set of parents trying to deal with a very hungry baby. I judged the baby to be around one month old—the age where he was even having trouble holding up his head. His father was not a small man—he seemed to be tall and strongly built. But you couldn't have known it by the way he handled his son. He was so careful, so gentle with his child. He cradled that small baby in his large hands as if afraid of harming him in some way. It was a terrific, memory-jolting experience.

God treats us the same way. We can depend on Him to hold on to us , to nurture us, and to protect us. God doesn't want anything to happen to us and went to great lengths to make sure we are protected. He holds on to us so that we don't get lost, just as in the airport and other public places, children held tightly to their parent's hand just so they would remain close. And God deals gently with us, even when we don't do as we've been told. He is said to be gentle in **Matthew 11:29** and **2 Corinthians 10:1**. Jesus describes Himself as gentle in **Matthew 11:21** in a very familiar passage:

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (NKJV)

He could have come to the Earth to exact God's revenge on us for not doing as God has instructed us to do. He did not come for that purpose. He came, not to punish, but to save. Jesus told that to Nicodemus in **John 3:17**. He came to gently deal with us, to care for us, teach us, correct us, and take us home. And that is what He expects from us in our dealings with the lost.

We are to:

Restore a lost sould in a “spirit of gentleness” (Galatians 6:1)

“Walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness...” (Ephesians 4:1-2)

Avoid quarrels and remain gentle in our dealings with everyone (2 Timothy 2:24, Titus 3:2)

“Let (our) gentleness be known to all men.” (Philippians 4:5)

“Pursue....gentleness.” (1 Timothy 6:11)

Show our heavenly wisdom by being gentle. (James 3:17)

And ladies, you are to possess a “quiet and gentle spirit.” (1 Peter 3:4)

Perhaps what describes our gentleness is a passage that doesn't mention the word gentleness, but certainly describes it perfectly:

“A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, But the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness.” (Proverbs 15:1-2)

You really CAN catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. In order to save the lost, we should “speak the truth in love” in a gentle way. Gentleness is one of the fruits of the spirit we must incorporate into our lives.
--- Johnny Stephens