

Fruit Of The Spirit #7

Gentleness

Galatians 5:22-23

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

How often have you seen these words put on a box for shipment with the words on the side of the box that said, FRAGILE HANDLE WITH CARE only to receive your item in the mail all beat up and broken.

I wonder if God were to place a “Handle with care sticker” label on people if it would also be ignored? How often is the heart of an individual crushed or the spirit of a child broken with the wrong words? Words and actions damage and wound every day. Healing and restoration to the human heart can be a slow difficult process. Sometimes only God can make the wound new again.

So the Fruit of the Spirit is Gentleness. What is gentleness? How is gentleness developed? What is its purpose?

The Greek word for gentleness is “Prahotace.” I don’t know a lot about the Greek language but the few things I do know I will share with you. It is very precise and expressive language. When the Greeks developed a word, they not only gave it a careful definition, but they almost always illustrated it.

So there illustration of gentleness was to paint a picture of an animal that has been tamed. For example a wild horse has yielded or submitted its strength. The strength of the horse is no longer wasted wildly, but has been focused in order to fulfill a purpose. Gentleness is then power under control, submitted strength.

So gentleness is the fruit of the Spirit that brings us under Gods control. It is power under control, submitted strength.

Without gentleness love does not touch others. Without gentleness our touch is harmful instead of helpful, painful rather than pleasing, selfish instead of selfless.

Only as our strength is submitted to God can we reach out and touch one another.

So how is gentleness developed in a Believers life?

I broke horses growing up and had a front row seat in how to break a horse. There are two ways to go about it. The first is forceful and the second is gently. Guess which way I chose: That's right, the first way. We would ride wild horse all day long and eventually the horse submitted its strength to be ridden.

The second way is gentleness. Using some of the same ways that horses communicate with each other through sound and touch. As the horse handler works with a horse it will eventually grow to trust the handler and be ridden. I'm not that smart, I chose the first way.

God will develop gentleness within us in the same two ways.

1. God teaches us gentleness through His gentle touch.

- Psalms 103:10-11 "He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love to those who hear Him."
- We can see the gentle touch of God in how Jesus dealt with people. Jesus is the perfect example of what it means for us to be gentle with one another.
 1. John 4 shows Jesus gentle touch to an outsider, the Samaritan woman.
- Jesus didn't push the outsider away, but reached beyond prejudice with gentle touch to include them in God's gift of salvation.
 2. John 8 shows Jesus' gentle touch for the immoral, the lady caught in adultery.

- Jesus did not condemn this woman of her sin. We see Jesus reaching out with a gentle touch and told her “go and sin no more.”

3. Luke 19 shows Jesus’ gentle touch for the dishonest and self-centered, Zacchaeus the tax collector.

- Zacchaeus was a dishonest man that was greedy, and stole from his own people. Overcharging them on their taxes. But Jesus transformed his life when he ate with him and said, “Today salvation has come to your house.” Because of his gentle touch Zacchaeus returned all the money that he had stolen over the years.

So why didn’t Jesus condemn these people? Why didn’t He treat this people as their sins deserved? Jesus did not come into the world to condemn it but to save it.

Most of us are familiar with John 3:16 but not to many know John 3:17 “God did not come into the world to condemn it, but to save it.”

Jesus reached out to the outsiders, the immoral, the dishonest and self-centered with a gentle touch. How will we respond to these people if they come to our church? Are we a church that will welcome everyone with a gentle touch?

How will we treat a neighbor who is not like us? How will we treat a friend who has been immoral? What about those who have been dishonest and selfish? All around us are people who are broken and hurting, empty and searching for love and acceptance. God does not condemn them; He loves them

2. The second way God develops gentleness in us is through forceful or difficult circumstances.

How is the roughness of wood smoothed and prepared for a beautiful finish? With sandpaper. How are muscles developed and strength increased? Through resistance.

1. Gentleness can be developed through people who oppose you.

- 2 Timothy 2:25 Those who oppose him he must gently instruct.

2. Gentleness grows when people fail you.

- 1 Peter 3:9 “Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.”

3. Gentleness can increase through correction.

- Proverbs 4:13 “Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life.”

See God's purpose for gentleness is not to make us a doormat for people to walk on and take advantage of us. Remember meekness is not weakness; gentleness is strength submitted to God.

Let me illustrate it for you. Many of you remember when the federal building in Oklahoma City was bombed. In this picture fire Captain Chris Fields carried 1 year old Bayleee Almon, one of the many injured in the bombing. Pictured here is strength under control. Gentleness came to rescue a child to bring hope. This is the goal of gentleness, to rescue and restore those who cannot help themselves.

Anyone of us in this room could find ourselves in need of gentleness coming to the rescue. Galatians 6:1 “Brothers, if anyone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should go and restore him gently. But watch yourselves or you also may be tempted.”

My prayer for all of us today is that we reach for gentleness first instead of judgment.