

Week 12 Day 6 | *Fruit of the Spirit: Gentleness*

Gentleness is a misunderstood quality. We tend to think of someone who is gentle as merely being “kind” and “sweet.” Certainly, gentleness requires a sense of kindness, but kindness and sweetness do not necessarily conclude in gentleness. In fact, gentleness as a fruit of the Spirit isn’t even likely what you think.

A better translation for gentleness in this context would probably be “meekness.” So, from now on, when you think about the fruit of gentleness, think of meekness.

To make matters even more confusing, meekness isn’t likely what you think, either. If we are to truly understand the fruit of gentleness, we must also understand meekness.

Meekness gets a bad rap. If I said someone was meek, you would probably think they were “timid” or “weak,” or both. With that understanding, we misinterpret the beatitude, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5). Admit it: reading that beatitude makes you think that a strong, assertive person will not inherit the earth. The reward is reserved for the opposite type of personality, the timid or weak.

The Greeks, however, defined meekness as “strength or power under control.” Sound like anyone you know? Jesus, maybe? He had legions of angels at His disposal (Matthew 26:53). He could turn water into wine (John 2:7–9) or walk on water (Matthew 14:25) at will. He had the ability to heal the sick, fix the broken, and conquer death (Matthew 11:5). Jesus was the epitome of power under control. There was nothing feeble about Jesus. He was meek.

So, what other attributes comprise meekness? Certainly, humility is one. Romans 12:3 tells us not to think too highly of ourselves. When we do, we are unteachable. The unteachable are the unreachable. A humble heart, however, can be molded and used for His glory.

Meekness also requires submissiveness. We’re to remain open to the Lord’s leading in our lives and the imparting of His Word into our hearts. Then, we can live in the transformative power of Christ working through us.

Graciousness is an underlying characteristic of meekness. Look at how Philippians 4:5 uses the word “let” rather than “make” when talking about the cousin of meekness, gentleness:

*“Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.”
—Philippians 4:5 (NIV)*

If I were to say kindly, “Will you let the dog out, please,” there’s a sense of natural cordiality in the process. Now if I said, “Make the dog go out,” that graciousness is gone. In the same way, we don’t “make” our gentleness known. We “let” it be known. That requires a graciousness that arises out of the Holy Spirit in us.

Okay, so meekness is a combined result of the Spirit exhibiting power, humility, submissiveness, and graciousness in our lives. That’s great, but what’s that have to do with fitness?

Nearly 12 weeks of this fitness journey are completed. If you’ve been diligent, you’ve likely experienced one or both of the following situations.

The first situation we talked about briefly when we covered Job and his unsupportive friend base. There’s a chance that your efforts to be healthier have unintentionally convicted some people around you about their own health. However, rather than talking to you about it in a productive manner, something else happens. Out of their insecurities or lack of understanding, they have discouraged, doubted, teased, or tempted you with their careless remarks. During

times like these, you’ll quickly learn whether the fruit of gentleness is evident in your life. Responding in kind or wilt-ing under their words displays a lack of controlled strength. We have Paul and Timothy to encourage us:

*“Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”
—Colossians 3:13 (NIV)*

This is a whole lot easier if we first clothe ourselves in gentleness, as we’re instructed in verse 12.

The other situation you may find yourself in is wanting to “help” others with all your newfound knowledge and expertise. You’ve been so successful, you now have the urge to generously share your discoveries with the world, letting everyone bask in and learn from the greatness of your achievement. Now, wanting to help others with their fitness can come from an authentic and loving place in your heart. It can also come from the desire for attention, accolades, and feedback. Are we “letting” our gentleness be known? Or, with a lack of humility that we might not see, are we “making” our abilities known, as we attempt to impress others?

Paul is there for us again, and again, with the same remedy:

“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”—Ephesians 4:2 (NIV)

Whether it is insensitivities to your fitness ambitions or a friend’s lack of fitness ambitions, gentleness and meekness are required. As my parents are fond of saying, “Whatever God requires, He provides.” In this case, like so many others, He provided the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit can produce gentleness and meekness in you.

Remember, gentleness and meekness are produced out of strength. That strength needs to come from the Holy Spirit or it won’t be sustainable. Be strong in the Lord by recognizing that your reliance on Him is no weakness at all.

Prayer

Father, thank You for giving us Jesus as the ultimate example of power, humility, submissiveness, and graciousness. Will You forgive me when I let my arrogance or defensiveness win out? Please help me live a life characterized by gentleness and meekness. Amen.

Meditation

Let Your gentleness with me manifest in gentleness through me.

Daily Spiritual Exercise

Today you will focus on the fruit of gentleness. Remember, these are not “fruits of ourselves.” These are the outcomes of the Holy Spirit working in and through our lives.

As you are focusing on the fruit of gentleness, pray for wisdom. You may need help in discerning whether you’re working out of your efforts or allowing the Holy Spirit to work.

Also, be sure to be teachable. Sometimes we are being taught a lesson we don’t want to learn. If we are truly open to the Lord working in our lives, however, we need to humbly receive all He wants to teach us.