

GENTLENESS UNWRAPPED

Welcome to this service. We have been unwrapping the fruit of the Spirit, the qualities that grow inside us when we decide to follow Jesus and are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now, where are we up to? Let's say them together - "Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness".

What does "gentle" mean?

What is a gentleman?.....*Someone decent and kind and polite. Not just someone who is posh.*

What is a gentle animal?..... *Possibly an animal that has been tamed. Not wild or dangerous.*

What is it like if we stroke someone gently? *Loving and comforting.*

How does a gentle breeze feel?..... Or gentle rain?.....*Refreshing, caressing.*

What about a gentle medicine?.....*Cures us but doesn't cause horrible side effects.*

Or gentle heat?.....*Nice and warm but doesn't burn us.*

Or a gentle voice?..... *Soothing, not shouting or painfully loud. Makes us feel loved. (demo!)*

Gentleness does not only describe how we do something, but also how we feel inside. If we feel gentle, not aggressive or challenging, then we will be gentle.

Is God gentle?

That is a tricky one. In the Old Testament it looks as if he is not. Some of the things he commands or allows are violent. It was ok for the Israelites to be violent when entering the Promised Land. But there was a reason for that. God was growing the Jewish race and protecting them so they would become a strong, healthy, holy nation in preparation eventually for the birth of Jesus as a Jew. On the inside God is gentle. When he talks to people with a real voice that you can actually hear, which he occasionally does, it is a gentle voice.

Here is an example of this. It is about the prophet Elijah. King Ahab and Queen Jezebel were evil rulers. They worshipped Baal, not the true God, Jehovah. Jezebel wanted to kill Elijah, because he was a prophet of Jehovah. Elijah was running away from her. He arrived at Mount Horeb. This is what happened.

Read 1 Kings 19 11b -12.

And the gentle whisper was the voice of God.

God then told Elijah how to deal with the situation. He told him to anoint two new kings and a new prophet, the prophet Elisha.

Is Jesus gentle?

He wasn't always gentle on the outside. One example is turning over the money lenders' tables in the temple. Jesus was angry because people were treating the temple like a market place. He was right to be angry.

But he is very gentle inside. This is what he says.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Are we weary or burdened?.....I certainly feel weary at the moment. Why could that be, I wonder?...Does anyone else feel like that.....?

And how do we come to Jesus?.....Just walk into his arms and let him hold us tight. Let's imagine that we are doing that now.....I feel better already!

"My yolk is easy and my burden is light".

Let's get to know him as well as we can. Let him love us. Learn to love him.

We are now going to read a psalm about the gentleness of Jesus. A psalm is a song to God. Many of them, including this one, were written by King David.

Read Psalm 23

This psalm shows how gentle Jesus is, even though when King David was alive Jesus had not yet been born. How does the psalm begin?.....*The Lord is my shepherd.*

And what did Jesus call himself? "I am the good shepherd."

How many words or phrases are there in this psalm that make us think of gentleness?.....*shepherd, green pastures, quiet waters, restores my soul, guides me, you are with me, your rod and staff, they comfort me.*

Here is a story from the Bible that shows how gentle Jesus was.

Read John 8 3-11.

If we feel that someone has done something wrong, we can gently point it out and if it something they did to us we can then forgive them.

I am going to tell you about the gentlest thing I have seen recently. A friend of mine has just adopted a six week old baby. They had only had the baby for one day. We spoke to them on Zoom. Her husband did the talking. The whole time, probably twenty minutes, she had the baby lying on her lap and was very gently stroking his body, without stopping, entirely focussed on the baby.

PRAYER

Dear Lord

We know that you are a gentle shepherd and we are your sheep.

Thank you for those among us who have naturally gentle spirits. Please help the rest of us to be less impatient, less irritated, quieter, gentler, on the inside and in our dealings with each other. Amen

FREE PRAYER

OUR FATHER

GRACE