

The Fruit of the Spirit Is Meekness



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Gen. 50:20; Matt. 5:5; 11:29; Rom. 12:3; Gal. 6:1; Phil. 2:2, 3; 1 Pet. 3:4.*

Memory Text: “ ‘Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth’ ” (*Matthew 5:5, NKJV*).

Meekness is a fruit of the Spirit that seems very much lost in our aggressive, self-centered culture. Because people associate it with weakness, most do not admire others for being meek. Yet, it is what we are called to be.

What is meekness? It's an attitude of humility toward God and gentleness toward people—when we recognize that God is in control and that we can trust Him, even when things don't go the way we would like, which is so often the case (Is it not?). To be meek, one needs confidence, not in oneself but in the Lord.

Although weakness and meekness may look similar, they are not the same. Weakness is due to negative circumstances, such as lack of strength or lack of courage, hardly the words to describe Jesus, who said, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart” (*Matt. 11:29*). Meekness, rather, is the result of a person's conscious choice to trust in God and lean on Him, as opposed to pushing for one's own ways. Thus, meekness arises out of strength, not weakness.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 27.*

Meek and Lowly in Heart

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (*Matt. 11:29*). **What is Jesus telling us here? How can being meek and lowly in heart bring rest to our souls?**

Meekness is the absolute ceasing to fight for our agenda and believing that God will fight on our behalf for His. Meekness is the opposite of self-assertiveness and self-interest. It stems from trust in God’s goodness and control over the situation. The meek person is not occupied with self (*see Luke 22:42*)—an attitude that’s key to the promise of finding rest for our souls. After all, aren’t our turmoil and agitation so often due to seeking only for ourselves and what we want? In the truest sense, then, a meek person is one who has learned to die to self, and that takes faith, courage, and perseverance, not necessarily traits the world would associate with meekness.

Read Romans 12:3. How is the idea of meekness represented here? In what ways is this the key to being meek?

Ephesians 4:2 is another text that helps us understand what meekness is. Notice how it’s related to Romans 12:3, in that both texts emphasize in their own way why arrogance and selfishness are contrary to the Christian’s walk. After all, why should any Christian be arrogant about anything? Are we not all sinners? Would we all not be doomed to eternal destruction were it not for Jesus? Are we not all utterly dependent upon God for every breath, every heartbeat? Does not every gift and talent we have come from God? What then do we have to be proud about? Nothing! Indeed, considering all that it cost to save us, Christians should be the meekest and humblest folk on earth.

Think about how utterly dependent you are upon God for everything. Where, then, does that pride and arrogance in your heart come from, and how can you get rid of it?

Models of Meekness

Remember the crisis that Abraham faced in deciding with his nephew Lot how to divide up the land? (*See Gen. 13:8, 9.*) In view of the fact that God had promised to make of his descendants a great nation, what might have been Abraham's justification in taking the best for himself? Instead, Abraham allowed Lot to choose first, saying that he would take what was left over. How was this action a characteristic of meekness?

Most everyone knows the story of Joseph being sold as a slave into Egypt by his brothers. Read again the story of their coming to him, now second in command in all Egypt, and begging to be able to purchase food (*Genesis 45*). How did Joseph's meekness determine how he treated his brothers? Had he not been meek, what would he probably have done? How is Genesis 50:20 an example of the worldview of those who are meek?

As a young man David had been anointed to be the next king of Israel. King Saul became insanely jealous and for years pursued David and his men with the intent to kill him. On two occasions David had an opportunity to kill Saul (*1 Sam. 24:3–7, 26:7–12*). If David had not been meek, what might have been his rationalization for killing Saul? Why is it so easy for us to use a spiritual excuse for doing something that is in our own interest?

In Numbers 12:3, Moses is described as the meekest man of his time. Yet, his decisive actions do not seem to fit the popular concept of meekness. His demand to Pharaoh to let Israel go was forceful and followed up with action. When Israel worshiped the golden calf, his "anger burned," and before it was over he had taken the calf that they had made, burned it with fire, ground it to powder, and made the children of Israel drink it (*Exod. 32:19, 20*). How are we to understand the meekness of Moses?

Jesus, of course, is the greatest of all models of meekness (*Matt. 11:29*). What are some of the examples of His meekness? How, for instance, was His meekness revealed in John 18:21–23? Or how about Matthew 26:39? At the same time, we find examples of Jesus doing things that don't appear to be meek, such as when He drove the money changers out of the temple or all the times He confronted the Pharisees and others regarding their hypocrisy. How do these examples help us understand that meekness can be manifested in some very bold ways?

What can you find in common among these examples of meekness? What can you learn from them that could help you understand what meekness is and isn't?

The Importance of Meekness

“Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the Lord’s anger” (*Zeph. 2:3, NKJV*). Meekness is the opposite of pride. There is much emphasis today on the importance of having self-esteem. When does self-esteem go over the edge and become pride?

Meekness is necessary for receiving God’s Word. “Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (*James 1:21, NKJV*). A person who does not have a humble spirit cannot receive God’s Word because there is a conflict of interest. Why is this so?

Meekness is necessary for effective witnessing. “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (*1 Pet. 3:15, NKJV*).

“Our influence upon others depends not so much upon what we say as upon what we are. Men may combat and defy our logic, they may resist our appeals; but a life of disinterested [unselfish] love is an argument they cannot gainsay. A consistent life, characterized by the meekness of Christ, is a power in the world.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 142.

Meekness gives glory to God. First Peter 3:4 says, “even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”

“It is right to love beauty and to desire it; but God desires us to love and seek first the highest beauty, that which is imperishable. No outward adorning can compare in value or loveliness with that ‘meek and quiet spirit,’ the ‘fine linen, white and clean’ (Revelation 19:14), which all the holy ones of earth will wear. This apparel will make them beautiful and beloved here, and will hereafter be their badge of admission to the palace of the King. His promise is, ‘They shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy.’ Revelation 3:4.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 523, 524.

How does putting emphasis on external beauty potentially conflict with the development of the fruit of the Spirit, particularly with the fruit of meekness? As the fruit of meekness grows in you, how should your life be different from what it was before? In the area of meekness, what changes have you seen in your life since you’ve accepted Christ? What attitudes might you be harboring that make it difficult for you to be meek?

Practicing the Fruit of Meekness

Meekness will be manifested in how we relate to others. That is, it's something that is active, something that will reveal itself in our words, attitudes, and actions. You might think that you are meek, but that doesn't necessarily mean that you are. To be meek is to manifest meekness.

How do the following texts show us how meekness is to be revealed in our lives? Why is meekness so important in these situations?

Matt. 5:39 _____

Matt. 18:21, 22 _____

Gal. 6:1 _____

2 Tim. 2:24, 25 _____

Titus 3:2 _____

Phil. 2:2, 3 _____

As we've been saying all along, meekness is wrongly associated with weakness. It is anything but. In fact, go back over the verses we've looked at today. Can you not see how it takes strength, moral and spiritual strength, to reveal meekness in most of these situations?

Of course, if meekness is a fruit of the Spirit, it's something that comes to us from God and not from ourselves. Nevertheless, we need the daily surrender to the Lord, the daily willingness to obey in faith, in order for meekness to be made manifest in our lives.

The Reward of the Meek

E. D. Hulse said, “Humility is a strange thing. The minute you think you’ve got it, you’ve lost it.”

A small town wanted to recognize and reward its meekest citizen. A survey was taken of their small community, which eventually identified the person. In a ceremony attended by all the important people, the meekest citizen was presented with a ribbon on which were inscribed the words, “The Meekest Man in Town.” However, the next day they had to take the ribbon away from him, because he was wearing it!

How do you understand the promises and rewards mentioned in the following texts?

Ps. 22:26 _____

Ps. 25:9 _____

Ps. 37:11 _____

Ps. 147:6 _____

Isa. 29:19 _____

Matt. 5:5 _____

These verses are comforting because there are times when the meek are taken advantage of. But we have learned in this study that a meek person isn’t concerned with lifting himself up before men but rather lifting God up. As a result, God promises to exalt the one who is meek. The rewards can be experienced now and, most surely, in the new heaven and new earth of eternity.

Further Study: “Christ is not to be hid away in the heart and locked in as a coveted treasure, sacred and sweet, to be enjoyed solely by the possessor. We are to have Christ in our hearts as a well of water, springing up into everlasting life, refreshing all who come in contact with us. We must confess Christ openly and bravely, *exhibiting in our characters his meekness, humility, and love*, till men shall be charmed by the beauty of holiness. It is not the best way to preserve our religion as we bottle perfumes, lest the fragrance should escape.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health*, p. 400, emphasis supplied.

“The peace of Christ, the peace of Christ—money cannot buy it, brilliant talent cannot command it, intellect cannot secure it; it is the gift of God. The religion of Christ—how shall I make all understand their great loss if they fail to carry its holy principles into the daily life? *The meekness and lowliness of Christ is the Christian’s power*. It is indeed more precious than all things which genius can create or wealth can buy. Of all things that are sought, cherished, and cultivated, there is nothing so valuable in the sight of God as a pure heart, a disposition imbued with thankfulness and peace.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Health*, p. 403, emphasis supplied.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 God promises to increase joy in the lives of those who are meek. Why do you think meek people can be joyful? Give several reasons. How will cultivating the fruit of the Spirit that is meekness improve your everyday life?
- 2 What are ways in which meekness can be misconstrued as weakness?
- 3 All this talk about meekness raises an important question: are Christians never to stand up for their own rights? Do we allow ourselves to be doormats, constantly stepped on without doing anything in our own defense? Is there a balance here, and, if so, how do we find it?
- 4 Nietzsche argued that Christianity was a religion born from those who were weak, who didn’t have power, and thus who took traits such as humility and meekness and made them appear like something good, something to strive for. How would you respond to such an argument?

God's Thousand Ways

by JUNKO ASANUMA

I live in Japan where fewer than 2 percent of the people profess any form of Christianity. While studying at the university, I lived with my parents and large family. We weren't Christians, but we were happy.

I met a young man at the university, and we began dating. One day he invited me to attend a Christmas program at a church. He said he had been studying the Bible with someone there, but I knew nothing about church or about Christians.

After we graduated from the university, he went on for further education while I took a job in a private high school in another city. I got my own apartment closer to the school, and I liked my work. But I missed my family terribly. I spent my evenings surfing the Internet and e-mailing my boyfriend.

But we were too far apart to maintain a relationship. I was devastated when we broke up. My life was so empty and lonely that sometimes I thought of committing suicide. I often cried while talking to my friends, so I stopped calling them.

In the midst of my despair I remembered the church that my boyfriend had invited me to attend. If God was real, as my former boyfriend said, could God really save me? Could He help me solve my problems? I found the little Seventh-day Adventist church my boyfriend had taken me to, and with a heart heavy with burdens, I opened the church door.

The pastor greeted me warmly and saw to it that I sat with a friendly person. After church he invited me back and offered to study the Bible with me and help me find the answers I was searching for. In the Adventist church I discovered a world of hope and love. The pastor e-mailed me often, answering my questions, sending me copies of sermons I had missed and inspirational articles. My bruised heart began to heal. I felt a new purpose, a new hope in life. I committed my life to God and accepted His invitation to become His child through baptism.

I praise God for finding ways to shed His love on my wounded heart. He used so many different ways to show me His love: through the Internet, friendly church members, Bible studies, and many others. I thank God for the generosity of church members around the world who give mission offerings liberally to lead me to Christ.

JUNKO ASANUMA lives in Japan with her husband and two children.