

Gentleness

Scripture used: [Galatians 5:22-23 \(NLT\)](#), [John 8:1-11 \(NLT\)](#)

OVERVIEW

Our amazing volunteer Director of Transforming Communities, Marvette Uto-Uko, delivered this week's sermon, the eighth of the series "Peel: What's Under Your Skin?" We are looking at the nine dimensions of the fruit of the Spirit as the Apostle Paul describes in Galatians. Marvette was challenged by this topic, as she doesn't consider herself "gentle" by any traditional definition. But she learned some surprising lessons about gentleness during her research into the Biblical foundations of the word. She came to appreciate how much we're missing if gentleness isn't a part of our lives. Marvette used the story of Jesus speaking with the crowd of Pharisees who were ready to stone a woman caught in the act of adultery. The Pharisees, threatened by Jesus' radical message of loving sinners, tried to catch Him in a situation where Mosaic law demanded the punishment of death. Instead Jesus turned this dangerous situation around using only a few gentle words!

KEY POINTS

- 1) **Biblical gentleness is expressed through humility.** Marvette offered us two definitions of gentleness that change our sense of what it means: "power with reservation" and "strength under control." The image is of someone who could dominate any situation, but chooses not to. Humility is the key that limits the gentle person's strength.
 - a. **Humility is hard when we think we're right.** Jesus was especially critical of people who were self-righteous. These were mostly religious scholars who were sure that they "had a right to be right" in all aspects of life. Jesus saved His harshest words for people like that.
 - b. **Serving others can cultivate a spirit of gentleness within me.** We develop gentleness by getting outside our comfort zone. Find opportunities to serve people who aren't like us. We'll learn that maybe we don't have all the answers!
- 2) **Biblical gentleness is expressed through both words and silence.** Jesus stood in front of the crowd of people ready to stone someone to death. Jesus knew each person there, including the sins they had committed. He could have lashed out at them and exposed their darkest secrets, but instead He chose to stoop down quietly and draw on the ground. Jesus used the power of silence to draw attention to the few words He did speak: "All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!"
 - a. **Gentleness is especially important for those who lead others.** In his many letters to early Christian communities, the Apostle Paul emphasizes gentleness for people trusted with responsibilities. This includes husbands with their wives in [Colossians 3:19-21 \(NLT\)](#), fathers with their children in [Ephesians 6:4 \(NLT\)](#), wives in [1 Peter 3:4 \(NLT\)](#) and even leaders of the church in [1 Corinthians 4:2-6 \(NLT\)](#).
- 3) **Biblical gentleness has the power to restore.** Hearing Jesus' words, the crowd realized their mistake. Through His gentleness, Jesus held up a mirror to each person. They saw their own sins and suddenly saw how much they needed gentleness in their own lives. One by one, they lost the ability to condemn the woman. Jesus set the crowd free, and He later did the same for all of us by choosing to absorb all of our sins through His crucifixion and resurrection. Jesus showed us the awesome power of Biblical gentleness!

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Like meekness, gentleness is often confused with weakness. What's your reaction to the idea that gentleness actually reveals strength under control? How does this change your perception of gentle people around you?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Jesus showed the crowd of accusers that all of them were also sinners. This changed their attitude toward the condemned woman. They dropped their stones and left. What stones are you holding right now? Who do you want to throw them at? What's stopping you from dropping those stones and instead treating that person with gentleness?
- 3) **DO** - Identify a relationship where you are often tempted to react harshly. Pray to God with the affirmation "I will practice strength under control!" and watch for opportunities to act toward that person with gentleness. And if you want help in being sensitive to daily opportunities to do good, join over 600 members of NBCC as we cultivate the fruit of the Holy Spirit by signing up for [the PEEL Challenge!](#)