

Day 1

Gentleness

Silence (2 minutes) Take some time to be quiet, to calm down, and to listen. What has God been teaching you? What are the next steps He wants you to take? How is your spirit doing?

Scripture *"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again. Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* Philippians 4:4-7

Discussion Paul writes to the Philippians, who believed the Gospel when Paul shared it with them. They have been experiencing persecution and Paul writes to encourage them. He tells them to rejoice in the Lord, to let their gentleness be evident to everyone, and to pray. In the midst of persecution their gentleness should be easily observable. Whether God calls them to speak or be silent, take action or not, they are to be known as gentle in the midst of persecution. What exactly would observers see? If our focus is primarily on ourselves or the injustice of others our responses might look more like revenge than gentleness. In the midst of our struggle, acknowledging our situation and our emotions, our focus needs to be on the character of God, His love, justice, faithfulness, and timing. Having thankfully and earnestly told God what we desire, He will give us His peace. Additionally, we should strive to see others as God sees them. *"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven"* (Mt. 5:44-45).

Application Gentleness is not merely the lacking of strong emotional responses; it is a demeanor of one devoted to Jesus Christ. When our focus is on Christ and His heart for us and those around us, our reactions will not be over-the-top or brutal, but proper and proportional to the situation. Consider the week ahead and the situations or people you feel the most concern about. What would Christ-like gentleness look like in these situations or with these people? Set a reminder for yourself (or write yourself a note!) at the end of each day and prayerfully consider how your demeanor demonstrated gentleness in those situations. Be honest with God and remember that it is His gentleness that we can rely on to teach us how we can best obey Him.

Prayer Father, this sort of gentleness is far beyond me, but I know it is not an ideal; it is what You want and expect of me. I can so easily speak and act out of frustration due to much more trivial matters. My gentleness is to be evident to everyone in the midst of persecution? Father, please change me. Please mature my thoughts and responses. I can only do this with Your power. I praise You Jesus for Your endurance. *"Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary or lose heart"* (Heb. 12:3). I praise You Jesus, for Your grace. You forgave those who didn't know what they were doing. You forgive me even when I do know what I'm doing, but then acknowledge and turn away from my sin to return to You. I praise You that You are *"The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness"* (Ex. 34:6). Amen.

Silence (2 minutes) Talk to God about what you are learning. What are your fears? Where are your hangups? Pray for direction.

Scripture memory for the week: *"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."* Matthew 11:28-30

