

The Obvious Christian: Characteristics That Make A Christian Stand Out.
Message 8 – The Meekness of an Obvious Christian, April 6, 2008
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I want to start this morning with a question, if someone described you as being meek, would you take that as a complement or an insult?

A lot of people would prefer not to be considered meek. It is a characteristic that is often associated in our society with weakness. However, it is certainly not a sign of weakness, if anything it is a sign of great strength. Someone has said, *“If you think meekness is weakness try being meek for a week.”* With such an experiment I suspect most of us would discover just how difficult it is to be meek.

Apparently, defining this word is a bit difficult. I looked in several books and could not find a clear and simple definition. Some do associate it with weakness, some associate it with humility, and others associate it with gentleness. Many of the newer translations of the Bible translate the Greek word as gentleness, but that does not seem to be the best solution to a difficult word.

I believe Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary does a good job defining what it means (page 693), so here’s what they say, *“Meekness is an attitude of humility toward God and gentleness toward men, springing from a recognition that God is in control. 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. But meekness is due to a person’s conscious choice. It is strength and courage under control, coupled with kindness.”*

I know what some of you are thinking, ***“What in the world does that mean?!”*** Let me give you my shortened estimate: meekness is an attitude of humility based on the conviction God is in control.

Weakness probably is more natural to us than most would like to admit, but **meekness** seems to be contrary to our nature, for that reason it is listed as a fruit of the Spirit. Open your Bibles again this morning to Galatians 5:22-23...

This tells us that meekness should characterize those who wish to Stand Out in the World as Obvious Christians..

Because meekness is such a difficult word to define, and especially difficult for people in our society to properly understand, it is probably best to first look at some good examples of it in the Bible.

The first person described in the Bible as meek is Moses. Look with me at **Numbers 12: 1-15**...

How is Moses described in verse 3? **He was very meek above all men.**

What was Moses' attitude of meekness in contrast to? **It was in contrast to the criticism and accusation of his brother and sister; Aaron and Miriam.**

How did Moses display meekness? **He did not respond to it.**

Was this just a show of weakness on Moses' part? **That is what is often thought but in fact it was just the opposite.**

What examples can you think of which clearly show that Moses was not weak? **How about when he struck the Egyptian, led over 1 million people out of the bondage of Egypt, or shouting, "Who is on the Lord's side?", as the people of Israel danced before their golden calf idol?**

Besides his immediate response, how did Moses further display meekness? **He prayed for Miriam.**

In light of this description of Moses, I like what Stuart Briscoe says in his book on the fruit of the Spirit (page 126), he says, "*Some people need to toot their own horns, bang their drums, wave their credentials, recount their exploits, polish their egos, and guard their territory- that's weakness. Others have done exploits, achieved successes, been granted honors, and scaled the heights, but find no necessity to inform those who are ignorant or remind those who are conversant- that's meekness.*"

David also provides us with a good example of meekness. Look at **2 Samuel 16: 5-13**...

David was actually on the run from his son Absalom at this point, so it seems to show weakness on David's part, but as you think about what happens, what David could have done and how he responds, it clearly indicates an attitude of meekness.

What three things did the man called Shimei do to David? **He cursed him openly, threw stones at him, and followed after him yelling.**

Using Abishai as an example in verse 9, how could David have responded? **Let me take off his head!**

How did David respond? **No! Verses 11-12, Maybe the Lord has allowed this and will look on my affliction for good. God is in control, I will yield to Him. David made a conscious choice!**

Of the next example there is no earthly equal. The Bible puts forth the Lord Jesus Christ as an obvious example of meekness. Look at the invitation of Jesus in Matthew 11:28-29...

In 2Corinthians 10: 1, the Apostle Paul says, *"I beseech you by the meekness of Christ."*

In Matthew 21 we have that fabulous occasion when Jesus officially presented Himself to the nation of Israel, and how did He do it? Jesus came into Jerusalem as one who was meek, sitting on a donkey, rather than as a conqueror riding a great horse.

From the 3 examples we have considered, do you think it is easy being meek? **It is not easy, it takes strength to remain humble and treat people with gentleness!**

Whether difficult or not, meekness is not an option for Christians. If we are going to be distinguished from the world and identified with Christ then it must be done with meekness. We are exhorted repeatedly to respond to others with meekness.

Look with me at **Ephesians 4: 1-2...**

Colossians 3: 12 tells us, as God's people, we are to **put on** meekness.

1 Timothy 6: 9-12 says our calling and profession as the people of God is to pursue meekness.

Look at 2 Timothy 2: 24-26...

Why is meekness important to our ministry to others? **It is important because it gives us the opportunity to be used by God in bringing them out from the snare of the devil.**

Titus 2: 15-3: 7 teaches that our display of meekness is a testimony to the world of what Christ has done in our life.

1 Peter 3: 15-17...

When being wrongfully treated by others why is meekness the right response? **It allows us to be a witness and enables us to receive God's blessing.**

There is especially one word of blessing provided in both the Old and New Testaments. Jesus mentions it during His Sermon on the Mount. In Psalm 37:11 and Matthew 5: 5 it says, ***"The meek shall inherit the earth."***

With everything that we have studied, why is this blessing true? **Rather than being controlled by our emotions and lusts, we are in control of our circumstances with humility and gentleness based on God's control.**

To be meek is expected of Christians, it characterizes those who Stand Out from the World as Obvious Christians, and it comes with great blessing from the Lord Himself, **but** it is also difficult to maintain, so how are we able to consistently display meekness?

1. Receive God's Word. James 1: 21 (Receive with meekness the Word which is able to save you.)
2. Receive Jesus Christ as Savior. Titus 3:4-7 (It is by His mercy, not our works that we are saved.)
3. Walk in the power of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23
4. Maintain the attitude of Christ Jesus. Philippians 2:5 (Let this attitude be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.)

Examine yourself today and make sure that each of these is true in your life.