

WORD STUDY

- the word for gentleness (*prautes*) comes from the adjective *praus* "mild, soft, gentle"
 - the word group is used of:
 - (1) gently urging a high-spirited horse to go instead of spurring him on roughly (Xenophon, *Art of Horsemanship* 9:3)
 - (2) animals who are gentle toward men—tame as opposed to wild and fierce (Xenophon, *Estate Management* 15.4); wild animals that bite or kick (Xenophon *Memorabilia* 2.2.7). Are you gentle or like a bear...mauling others?
 - (3) a gentle sounding voice—as opposed to a voice that terrifies people (Xenophon, *Banquet* 1.10)
 - (4) mild words (*praesi logos*) in admonishing someone (Plato, *Laws* 888a)
 - (5) a gentle versus violent disposition (Plato, *Laws* 930a):
a marriage between two violent people ends in divorce because they have "passions...too high for harmony"
 - (6) a general treating prisoners of war gently (Thucydides 4.108.3): Brasidas did not beat, kill, or enslave the people he conquered—his gentleness persuaded the allies of Athens to revolt and join him
 - (7) king Jesus riding into Jerusalem "gentle and mounted on a donkey" (Zech 9:9 LXX = Matt 21:5; cf. Rev 19:11–13)
 - (8) the opposite of gentleness is a rod: a spanking is harsh, frightening, violent behavior to a child (1 Cor 4:21)

DEFINITION

- gentleness is a supernatural ability to be mild in your speech and behavior toward others, especially when they annoy you or make big mistakes—to not treat people roughly, harshly, or brutally, to not make them afraid of you

PRINCIPLES

- gentleness exists in the heart (Matt 11:29; Col 3:12) and in the spirit (1 Peter 3:4)
- gentleness is first an attitude, then a way of treating others: it must be present in our hearts before we will treat others gently
 - Jesus was gentle (Matt 11:29; 2 Cor 10:1); gentleness is a part of being Christlike
 - gentleness is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:23): the Holy Spirit came to make us gentle like Christ
 - gentleness is a part of the worthy walk—to be gentle with others wherever you go (Eph 4:2)
 - be gentle after you forgive someone (Gal 6:1). If a person sins against you, you have a right to rebuke him (Luke 17:3), and if he repents, forgive him (Luke 17:3–4)—then treat him gently again just as you did before.
 - wives should be gentle with their unbelieving husbands (1 Peter 3:4): gentleness can win your spouse to the Lord
 - be gentle when you correct those who are doctrinally wrong (2 Tim 2:24–25): Don't say, "You imbecile!" Be gentle but firm.
 - be gentle in defending your faith (1 Peter 3:15)
 - a gentle spirit is precious in God's sight (1 Peter 3:4): it can win unbelieving husbands to the Lord (1 Peter 3:4), produce unity in the local church (Gal 6:1; Eph 4:2–3), and make us like Christ (Matt 11:29; 2 Cor 10:1)
 - pastors should remind their sheep to be gentle (Titus 3:1–2)
 - the gentleness in your heart is applied to others by your will (Col 3:12):
gentleness is put on and off at will, like clothing—you must decide if you're going to treat a person gently or harshly
- gentleness doesn't mean you never get angry or violent: (1) Jesus drove the money-changers from the temple (John 2:14–16) and harshly rebuked the Pharisees (Matt 23), (2) Paul chewed Peter out in public for his hypocrisy (Gal 2:11–14), pastors are instructed to rebuke in the presence of all sheep who continue in sin (1 Tim 5:20)
- be ruthless with sinners if necessary, but gentle with annoyances, accidents, mistakes, failures, or hapless circumstances