

The Fruit of the Spirit
The Fruit of the Spirit Is Meekness

Lesson #9 for February 27, 2010

Scriptures: Genesis 50:20; Matthew 5:5; 11:29; Romans 12:3; Galatians 6:1; Philippians 2:2,3; 1 Peter 3:4.

1. This lesson is about meekness—a part of the fruit of the Spirit. Do you have a desire to be meek? Does anyone want to be meek? Is meekness somehow related to weakness? 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. . .

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. (*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Saturday, February 20, 2010)

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. (*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Sunday, February 21)

Meekness is not cowardice. It is the expression of confidence in the lifestyle preparing for heaven. It has the power to diffuse hostility and create peace and harmony. It is an antidote to egotism. (*Adult Teacher's Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, p. 103)

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. (*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, for Wednesday, February 24)

E. G. Halls said, "Humility is a strange thing. The minute you think you've got it, you've lost it."

One biblical word for "meekness" is *tapeinos* which can mean "lowly," "of low esteem," or "humble." Another word for meekness is *praus* which means "mildness of disposition, gentleness of spirit, meekness. *Additional Information*: Meekness toward God is that disposition of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting." (*Strong's Concordance*, 1996)

All of these descriptions of meekness spelled out in our study guide for this week suggest that we have trouble understanding and appreciating this fruit.

2. What did Jesus mean when He said, "I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." (Matthew 11:29, *KJV*) Did Jesus have to die to self? If He is supposed to be our Example in everything, that is one of the toughest things we have to do! Does it take courage, faith, and determination to do that? Did Jesus ever exhibit low self-esteem? At what age did He understand who He was? Was it at the temple at age 12? Jesus had the entire satanic host after Him every day? Didn't His mother tell Him about His birth and His Father very early? How soon did He begin to comprehend what all that meant? Did Jesus ever have trouble with sibling rivalry? He had brothers and sisters. (Matthew 13:56,57; Mark 6:3; see "Days of Conflict" in *Desire of Ages*) Jesus certainly recognized when He was in the temple what He was called to do and what all those sacrifices meant. There are many apocryphal stories about the childhood

of Jesus. There is one famous story about Jesus making small birds out of mud on the Sabbath day. That was considered to be a terrible thing! But when the people came to challenge Him, He clapped His hands and the birds flew away suggesting that He had not done anything wrong after all!

3. Read Romans 12:3. How often do we elevate ourselves in our own thinking by putting down other people? Is that a natural human characteristic? Is that arrogance or selfishness? Considering our true condition and what God has done for us, do we have a basis for being arrogant and selfish? If we truly know our relationship to God, do we need to compare ourselves to others?
4. Why do you think Jesus said that the meek will inherit the earth? (Matthew 5:5)
5. Will everyone who lives in heaven be meek? Are all the angels meek? Social scientists who study human behavior have concluded that aggression and self-assertiveness are the characteristics that clearly differentiate males from females and which are apparently related to testosterone levels. Therefore, is this lesson primarily for males? Do we need to learn to be meek here so that we can be meek in heaven? Is meekness needed more here than it is in heaven? Why would meekness be needed in heaven? Satan was the most “unmeek” being in heaven.
6. Think of Abraham’s relationship to his nephew Lot. (Genesis 13) Was Abraham being meek when he offered Lot the choice of where he wanted to live?
7. Review the story of Joseph and his testing of his brothers in Egypt. Is that a good example of meekness? Did God promote meekness by giving Joseph those dreams? (Genesis 37:5-10) Was Joseph being meek when he dealt with his brothers in Egypt?
8. Why do you think God asked Samuel to anoint David while he was still so young? Wouldn’t it have been better if Samuel had waited until it was almost time for David to become king? Didn’t David need to learn meekness during that time of waiting? What other characteristics do you think David developed during that time?
9. Moses is the only human being—apart from Jesus—described in the Bible as being meek. (Numbers 12:3) Why would Moses described himself as being meek? Is there any possibility that his meekness came from his military education in Egypt? Did it come from all his time with the sheep in the Midianite desert? Was Moses weak in any sense? Review the dealings of Moses with Pharaoh (Exodus 7-12) and later his handling of the incident with the golden calf. (Exodus 32:19,20) Are those examples of meekness?
10. Ellen White suggests where the meekness of Moses was developed.

Their accusations were borne by Moses in uncomplaining silence. It was the experience gained during the years of toil and waiting in Midian—the spirit of humility and long-suffering there developed—that prepared Moses to meet with patience the unbelief and murmuring of the people and the pride and envy of those who should have been his unswerving helpers. Moses “was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth,” [Numbers 12:3] and this is why he was granted divine wisdom and guidance above all others.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 384)

Do we wish we had divine wisdom and more guidance directly from God? Is a lack of meekness and humility the reason we do not have it? When Moses apparently lost his temper at the rock, did that negate his meekness?

11. Review Numbers 12:1-8. When Aaron and Miriam challenged Moses, what was really involved? Were they challenging God’s authority? Were they challenging God’s wisdom in choosing Moses as a leader? Were they challenging Moses’ wisdom in choosing Zipporah as a wife?

12. Look at the example of Jesus. When that young man hit Jesus on the face during His trial, (John 18:19-23) was it meekness that led Jesus to reply the way He did? In the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:39) praying to His Father to have that cup pass from Him, did Jesus give us an example of meekness? Was that a total lack of selfishness? One can only truly be meek from a position of power. Jesus knew that He did not have to take it. He knew that the Sanhedrin was doing all sorts of illegal things by trying Him at night, etc.
13. What about Jesus' conversation with the Pharisees? (John 8:23,24,28,44,48,57-59) What about Jesus' twice cleansing the Temple? (John 2:13-21; Matthew 21:12-17) What power did Jesus exercise there?
14. Let us consider some more of the examples of meekness given in the Bible. What is required in the character of a Christian to respond to an attack not with revenge but by turning the other cheek? (Matthew 5:39) Does it require meekness to forgive your brother "seventy times seven" times? (Matthew 18:21,22) Does it require meekness to reprove wrongdoers gently? (Galatians 6:1) Have we learned how to not speak evil of anyone? (Titus 3:2) Was Paul practicing his own advice when he called Cretans "liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons"? (Titus 1:12) What would our lives be like if we could truly not have selfish ambition; if we could stop boasting and be humble, always considering others better than ourselves? (Philippians 2:2,3) Does it take a lot of courage and self-control (our subject for next week) to do these things? Does it take strength, even moral and spiritual courage? **Is there any way that a naturally selfish human being could develop meekness on his own?**
15. Humility is often equated with meekness. Do you see any distinct difference between the two? Our Bible study guide says that meekness arises from an awareness of strength, of conviction, and of complete dependence upon a higher source of power. Does that sound like the story of Jesus? Jesus knew that He did not have to prove anything! Why did God choose to place His Son in the wicked city of Nazareth and in a poor family when He could have put Him anywhere? What role does the Holy Spirit play in giving us meekness?
16. Modern psychologists talk a lot about self-esteem. What is the relationship between self-esteem and humility or meekness? Can we truly become like Jesus if we are not willing to be humble?
17. Why is meekness so important to Christians?
18. 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 love [Is that *agape*?] 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.
19. 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 [524] 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.
20. Does placing an emphasis on fashion and external appearance pose a conflict with humility and meekness? Should people who are meek always wear very somber, plain clothing?
21. Review the progress you have made since you became a Christian? Are you becoming more meek and humble? True meekness can only be reached from a position of strength. There is a story told about a young man who showed up to visit a church in an old T-Shirt and jeans.

The church had some trouble with his attire, but they accepted him and gradually got used to having him dress like that. Finally, he joined that church. He showed up the next week in a three-piece suit! He was a business executive, but he wanted to make sure that the church was ready to accept people of all kinds before he joined them!

22. Does it help us to be humble if we identify with the poor, the weak, and the desperate?
23. Read Ezekiel 9 and compare Revelation 7:1-3. Are we truly sorry for our own sins and those of others around us? Are we doing our best to reduce the sin burden? Do we hope someday to be sealed with the seal of the living God so that we can stand through the final events of this earth's history? Will meekness help us to stand in those days?
24. Often the meek are trampled upon. In our world of aggression and striving for supremacy, few people appreciate meekness. So, God turned all of that around and said that the meek are the ones who will inherit the earth. (Matthew 5:5; Psalm 37:11) God promises to raise the humble up but to crush the wicked. (Psalms 147:6) More than that, Isaiah 29:19 tells us that the poor and the humble will find happiness.
25. So how does God describe those people who will live through the final events of this earth's history?

Their contrition and self-abasement are infinitely more acceptable in the sight of God than is the self-sufficient, haughty spirit of those who see no cause to lament, who scorn the humility of Christ, and who claim perfection while transgressing God's holy law. Meekness and lowliness of heart are the conditions for strength and victory. The crown of glory awaits those who bow at the foot of the cross. Blessed are these mourners, for they shall be comforted.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 475.4.

26. 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]
27. 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.
28. Nietzsche argued that Christianity is a religion born from those who are weak and who do not have power; and thus, the traits such as humility and meekness make them appear like something good, something to strive for. How should we respond to such an accusation?
29. Do those who espouse the “larger-view, great-controversy, trust-healing” model of the plan of salvation believe that they are better than others? Does our understanding of God and His character help us to be more meek? If it does not, do we understand God correctly?

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