

Discipleship Skills

MEEKNESS: HOLDING YOUR STRENGTH UNDER CHRIST'S CONTROL

The work of making disciples for Jesus Christ is the great mission Jesus has given all His disciples (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). It should be considered a great privilege for any disciple to take part in fulfilling this mission. In this work, it is critical to remember that you are dealing with people. So, as you work to influence people to follow the Lord, you must be tactful in your approach to various situations. Doing so will require the characteristic of meekness so that you do and say the things you ought to do and say. Consider, therefore, some Scriptures to help you learn to show meekness in your gospel work.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:1

As Paul encountered difficulty in working with the Corinthian church, he indicates that he was imitating the meekness and gentleness of Christ (Matthew 11:28-30). These characteristics must be at the core of those seeking to make disciples for Christ. The word translated meekness should not be misunderstood as timidity or weakness, but as holding your strength under Christ's control (like a horse controlled by its rider). Although it can be tempting to assert your strength through dominance in teaching, rebuking, and correcting, self-restraint is often required to connect with and lead people closer to the Lord. In fact, boldness can still flow from one who is meek. But, it should flow from the heart of one who is humble and meek (rather than a bully), who seeks to use the truth in ways that are helpful for others to grow toward God.

JAMES 1:19-25

The first place meekness should be seen in your gospel work is how you respond to hearing God's word (note the word for meekness is sometimes translated as humility or gentleness). It can be tempting for people not to listen to what God says, think they already know what God says, or get angry about what God says. Instead, you must hold your strength under control to give God's word a fair and full hearing, and then practice whatever He says. This must be modeled in your life. Then, you can help others develop this same attitude toward God's word. This attitude will

change how you approach teaching others. For you will not come across as someone who knows everything and can never be wrong. Instead, you will be a meek seeker of the truth who is willing to be corrected and is constantly searching to grow spiritually!

2 TIMOTHY 2:24-26

You must not approach working with other people as debates you must win at all costs. Instead, the Lord's servant must hold strength under the control of the Lord's character and will. This will result in more calm, controlled, patient, and non-combative interactions. Although meekness does not mean avoiding the truth, it does mean avoiding a hostile spirit that fails to reflect Jesus's character. You must remember that the goal is to win souls, not arguments! Therefore, you must consider the spirit with which you try to lead others (and how others will perceive your spirit). Consider your tone of voice, mannerisms, judgments, how you respond to difficulties and criticisms, how you are delivering God's message, etc. You should never want to put such a great and hope-filled message in a vehicle people want to avoid or run away from (2 Corinthians 4:7; 5:20)! For example, James warned about the need to control your tongue because of its potential to accomplish great good and great harm (James 3:1-12)!

1 PETER 3:14-16

You must recognize that you are accountable before God for how you share His message with others (Romans 14:13-15; Hebrews 13:17; James 3:1; Matthew 12:36-37). Therefore, you must conduct yourself in a way that keeps a clear conscience before God in how you teach and work with others. Meekness is central to this work – even in the face of opposition, accusations, misrepresentations, hostility, etc. (following the example of Christ, 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:8-12). Rather than weakening your influence, meekness will strengthen your credibility and help the gospel of Christ shine, rather than getting lost and clouded by your pride, stubbornness, hostility, etc. Through your meekness, you can actually disarm hostility, open conversations, and invite honest questions!

GALATIANS 6:1

Beyond just teaching the gospel, meekness is critical when someone falls into sin and must be corrected. Unfortunately, many have been sharply rebuked, judged, criticized, or even mocked for sinning and/or struggling with sin. While there is an appropriate time for sharply rebuking sin (Matthew 23:1-36; 1

Corinthians 5:1-13; Galatians 2:11-14; Jude 1:22-23; Revelation 3:15-19), not every situation calls for this reaction. When someone stumbles and is overtaken in sin (not necessarily through defiant rebellion or stubbornness), meekness should seek to compassionately help restore that one back to the Lord (like setting a broken bone or repairing something damaged). Furthermore, you must be meek and humble enough to recognize that you could also be overtaken by sin.

ROMANS 14:13-23

This passage introduces the concept of how to work with others in matters of liberty (Romans 14:1-15:6; 1 Corinthians 8-10). These are areas in which God has authorized but not required (e.g., eating meat). Certainly, there are many differences of opinion people have about things in life that fall into this category (authorized but not required). Unfortunately, some people (though with good intentions) will try to force their opinions and judgments on others in these matters. In doing so, they will actually ruin the faith of others. So, it will require meekness to hold your opinions and judgments about such things (no matter how important they are to you and how much you believe in them) to yourself and not make those things issues with others, even when that means denying yourself of certain liberties (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)! Instead, you should restrain your focus to those things that help other people be built up in the faith! This will require that you keep the focus in your work on those things God actually teaches, authorizes, and requires. For, the goal is to make disciples in the image of Jesus Christ according to His teachings and practices, not in your image according to your ideas and traditions!

CONCLUSION

The strength God has given you to say and do things is a wonderful thing. However, strength that is not properly controlled can cause great damage. This is true regarding gospel work. Your strength to interact with and influence others is important in accomplishing God's work. But, if that strength is not brought under the control of Christ, it can tear down the faith of others, push them away from Christ, make it more difficult to win them to the Lord, etc. Therefore, it is critical that you be aware of and intentional about how you are representing Christ and His gospel message in the work you do!

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

What is meekness?

How should meekness and boldness correlate in gospel work?

How does your meekness in hearing God's word impact your gospel work?

What are some ways strength can be used to hurt people in gospel work?

What are some things you need to be aware of concerning how you speak and conduct yourself in teaching the gospel?

How can your meekness help create more openness and opportunities for the gospel?

How will meekness impact the way you correct sin?

How will meekness impact the way you handle matters of liberty?

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