

1. Intro

- a. Randy Frazee, who wrote the BELIEVE series, worked closely with the Gallup Organization to survey over 1,500 adults on their attitudes towards the 30 Big Ideas we've been studying. The results were presented in a document called "The Spiritual State of the Union." And the single concept that scored the lowest, meaning that Americans were the most challenged to see this exist in their life, is Gentleness. The results were the same whether the respondents were Christians or non-Christ-followers. The specific question that reflected this virtue: "Are you known as someone who raises their voice?" Just about everyone answered in the affirmative. We are a people who are uptight, tense, angry, annoyed, irritated, frustrated, worried, stressed, bothered, riled up...need I go on?
- b. There are not very many good examples around of gentleness around. Is there even a church that is pursuing gentleness?
- c. "Perhaps no grace is less prayed for, or less cultivated than gentleness. Indeed it is considered rather as belonging to one's natural disposition or as a manner of being polite or considerate than as a Christian virtue, and seldom do we reflect that not to be gentle is sin." – George Bethune (1845)
- d. If we are to become more like Jesus, as individuals and as a church, then we need to covet, value, recognize, pray for, and pursue gentleness.

2. Main Passage

- a. **John 8:1-11**
 - i. Jesus *actually* had no sin
 - ii. Jesus had *all* the authority
 - iii. But he chose to be gentle with this woman
 - iv. This woman was guilty, caught in the act, then dragged out *to the temple*
- b. We want to become more like Jesus
 - i. In this interaction, Jesus demonstrated gentleness—both kinds
 - ii. The word used in Galatians 5 as a fruit of the Spirit, *prautes*, is restraint of one's strength
 1. Jesus did not even respond to the antagonizing of the Pharisees
 2. He could have put them in their place—and perhaps he even did—but he did not respond in anger
 - iii. The "gentleness" of Philippians 4:5 (our memory verse for this week—"Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.") that is commanded of us, "*epieikes*"
 1. "justice beyond normal justice": fulfilling the spirit of the Law, but not necessarily the letter of the law
 2. Synonyms may include equity, fairness, even leniency
 3. It is doing better than was is right according to the black & white code: doing right by the person or people involved.
 4. Jesus cares for us. He cared for this woman. He gave her a chance to repent: he passed judgment on her sin (in private), but did not condemn the woman.
 - a. Q: Which approach is better for the woman? To stone her according to the law, or to let the embarrassment be enough and guide her to repentance?
 - b. Which method do you practice?
 - c. Which method has the Lord practiced with you?

3. Looking closer

a. **James 3:13-18**

- i. The story from John 8 illustrates the difference between the earthly wisdom of people like the Pharisees and the heavenly wisdom of Jesus.
- ii. Our *epieikes* is here translated “considerate”
- iii. The truly wise and “learned,” are learned in the ways of God and seek the Spirit of God for wisdom—actually loving God and loving people.

b. **Luke 6:37-42**

- i. Gentleness is the fruit of true belief that you are a sinner. That only Jesus lived a perfect life. That he took our punishment upon himself. That Jesus’ blood opened a way to eternal life.
- ii. Jesus teaches us to be gentle instead of judgmental with people.
 1. Proverbs 15:1 – “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”

4. Application

- a. *Fred Rogers was a Presbyterian minister. And even though he might not be our poster boy for strength, he had it. At the 1997 Daytime Emmys he was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award. He walked onstage in front of all the daytime stars, GQ men and glamorous women. He stood at the microphone and said, “All of us have special ones who have loved us into being. Would you just take, along with me, ten seconds to think of the people who have helped you become who you are. Ten seconds of silence.”*
- b. *And then he lifted his wrist, looked at the audience, looked at his watch, and said, “I’ll watch the time.” As people realized that he wasn’t kidding they did what he asked. One second, two seconds, three seconds. Men’s jaws grew tight. Women’s mascara ran. Tears fell from both. Mister Rogers was an authority figure who actually expected them to do what he asked. And they did.*
- c. *After ten seconds Mister Rogers finally looked up from his watch, made a couple short remarks, and said with gentleness “May God be with you.”*
- d. **Matthew 11:28-30**
 - i. “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.”
 - ii. *In the Ancient Days, a yoke was not just something that tied two oxen together. It was also a way of doing things. Each rabbi had his own style, his own interpretation of living out the Law of Moses. Jesus was completely flipping the way to “do religion” on its side. His yoke was one motivated by grace and love, not just following rules for the sake of following rules, not the burdensome weight of trying to keep all of the Laws of Moses. The ways of Jesus will not wear you down.*
- e. Are we not so very lucky to have a Lord like Jesus—gentle and humble despite his supreme authority and power?
 - i. Let’s strive to be the same for those with whom we relate—spouses, children, employees, etc.