

**Life on the Vine**  
**Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit in Christian Community**

Lesson Eight: **Gentleness**

**Introduction**

1. What are some “arenas” in our culture in which violence is regularly depicted and perhaps even glorified?
2. What are some “arenas” in our culture in which violence is often experienced.
3. Do you think there is a connection between our use of depictions of violence for entertainment and the actual experience of violence in our culture?

**Lesson Plan**

1. The eighth fruit of the Spirit listed by Paul is gentleness—also translated meekness or humility. This word has its roots in economic and social realms and refers more to interpersonal relationships than to an inner attitude or disposition. Gentleness is something that can be observed in our interactions with others.
2. In the Old Testament, this word refers to \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. (see Zephaniah 3.11-12)

The powerful people (characterized by \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ ) are more likely to depend on themselves and to seek to secure their own well-being. They are also the ones who are most likely to seek their own vengeance. Why are those who rely on the power of God more apt to deal gently with people—while those who rely on their own power are more likely to be aggressive and violent with others?

3. In the Kingdom of God, the meek and gentle are exalted over the haughty and powerful. Read “The Magnificat” (Mary’s song in Luke 1.46-55). Can you think of other stories in the Bible where God exalted the weak over the powerful?
4. The ministry of Jesus is an example of the gentleness of the Kingdom. What is the primary image of Jesus in scripture? Discuss the incidents below in Jesus’ earthly life that illustrate his meekness and gentleness.

Examples:

- born in a stable to a poor peasant girl
- submitted to John’s baptism
- associated with the sick and outcasts
- rebuked his disciples for wanting to call fire from heaven down on their opponents.
- entered Jerusalem astride a humble donkey

- washed the disciples' feet
  - arrested without resistance
  - remained silent in trial
  - stayed on the cross even though had the power to come down
5. As Jesus' disciples, we are called upon to imitate his gentleness and humility. Read Philippians 2. 3-11. In what specific situations of our lives should we "have this mind in us"?

Other scriptures calling us to gentleness include 1 Peter 5.5 and Colossians 3.12.

### ***Obstacles to a life of Gentleness***

1. Fostering aggression and self-promotion
2. Aspiring to positions of power

### ***Cultivating Gentleness***

1. Altering our posture through prayer
2. Learning to yield
3. Hanging out with those of "no account"

### ***Class Discussion Questions***

1. Though most of us rarely (if ever) resort to physical violence, in what situations do we favor aggression over gentleness? What types of aggression do we normally use?
2. What is passive-aggression? When do we tend to use it?
3. Do we find ourselves more often defending our physical selves or our pride? Why do we choose to use aggression in defending our pride? How is pride tied to aggression?
4. Why is the use of any aggression (even passive-aggression) a failure to rely on the power of God?
5. Do we experience the gentleness or the power of God most often in our lives? When and how?
6. How can gentleness be displayed within a church family?
7. How could our nation be known as a gentle nation? Should it?