INTRODUCTION

Your words carry great power! Your choice of words and the tone you use can bring healing or pain. For example, when you admit you are wrong and ask for forgiveness, you have taken an important step in rebuilding a relationship. A warm welcome or a grateful, “Thank you!” goes a long way in showing you care. Carefully chosen words spoken in a soft tone can avert anger. Pleasant words can promote healing. Choose to speak with thought and sensitivity because people can be hurt when they hear ridicule, teasing, or criticism. “Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof” (Proverbs 18:21). The next time you are tempted to raise your voice, demand your way, or say harsh or critical words, remember that God’s desire is for your tongue to speak blessing and life to others.
Gentleness Overview

What is Gentleness?

Read aloud, study, and discuss what gentleness means and how it applies to life.

The operational definition of gentleness is “showing personal care and concern in meeting the needs of others.” Gentleness builds on several different character qualities. A person must first experience the love of God for himself and realize God’s love for others. After love, alertness recognizes the needs around him. Alertness requires wisdom to discern what level of involvement is appropriate. Wisdom paves the way for compassion to step in to empathize with a person’s need and take suitable action. Gentleness is the final touch, carrying out the act of compassion in a tender and thoughtful way. Lacking gentleness, a person’s loving intentions may actually cause more harm than good. However, as you experience the tenderness of God in your life, the more God will enable you to gently minister to others for Him. “Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God” (II Corinthians 1:4).

Jesus is our example of being gentle. Truly, Jesus was a “gentle man.” The term “gentleman” does not indicate weakness, but a strength that is disciplined. A gentleman behaves properly at all times. A gentleman is kind, yet firm. He can comfort the downhearted and defend the weak. His speech is gracious, never demeaning, and his intention is to treat all with respect. A gentleman handles all things carefully, whether people, situations, or possessions. He is courteous and calm and discerns the needs of others. God enables us to be “gentle”—not “gentle as a kitten,” but gentle like Jesus!

The opposite of gentleness is harshness. In the absence of love, we will lack gentleness. Selfish motives, wrong priorities, and a limited perspective can cause a person to make demands sharply and “run over” others to accomplish his goals. Beware! If this attitude creeps into your thoughts or actions, remember that “a brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle” (Proverbs 18:19). Do not rudely demand your way at the expense of others. Ask God to help you look beyond yourself to the needs of others and to replace your harshness with His love and care. “But [Jesus] turned, and rebuked [His disciples], and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them . . .” (Luke 9:55–56).
Gentleness in Scripture
Read aloud and discuss each verse, question, and concept.

Proverbs 2:1–6 says, “My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.” What a privilege to study the rich truths of God’s Word, hide them in your heart, and apply them to daily life! These truths are priceless treasures, far above the value and beauty of rubies and diamonds. As you dig deeper into God’s Word, see Who He is, and allow Him to work in you, your life will be a radiant expression of His love. He will be glorified as His character is seen in you.

THE CHARACTER OF GOD
We see examples of gentleness in God’s character in the following ways:

- God’s gentleness in His mercy, correction, provision, and goodness is the reason for any accomplishment in our lives. (See Psalm 18:35.)
- Like a shepherd who cares for his sheep, God tenderly cares for us both in times of rest and times of distress. (See Psalm 23:1–4.)
- Jesus was known for the graciousness of His words, even among those who ultimately rejected Him. (See Luke 4:22.)
- Jesus valued little children and blessed those who were brought to Him. (See Mark 10:14, 16.)
- Jesus demonstrated gentleness when He raised a young girl to life. He kindly aided the grieving parents by keeping the crowd outside. Jesus held the girl’s hand, and He called for food to be brought to her. (See Luke 8:49–55.)
- The Holy Spirit tenderly guides our prayers when we do not know our need or how to ask. (See Romans 8:26.)
- The Holy Spirit produces gentleness in our lives as we walk in the Spirit and not according to our flesh. (See Galatians 5:22, 25.)

GENTLENESS IN MY LIFE
Now let’s examine some ways God wants us to live out gentleness daily.

- Do I lead by demanding compliance, or do I follow Christ’s example of leading gently? (See Isaiah 40:11.)
- Does the way I treat my pets reveal that I am a kind owner or a cruel one? (See Proverbs 12:10.)
- How can my thought life yield pleasant words? (See Proverbs 15:26.)
- Who do I know that might appreciate attentive, careful assistance? When I help them, Who else am I helping? (See Matthew 25:39–40.)
- Am I quick to reprimand others, or do I purpose to help them grow in the Lord? (See Galatians 6:1.)
- Am I tenderhearted and forgiving toward offenders? (See Ephesians 4:31–32.)
- Do I jump to conclusions, or do I listen patiently before speaking? (See James 1:19–20.)
- Do my words bless those who hear me? (See James 3:9–10.)

GENTLENESS KEY VERSE
“But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children.”
I Thessalonians 2:7
David and Jonathan had been close friends. Jonathan was the son of King Saul, and David, the son of Jesse, was anointed to be the next king of Israel. Recognizing David’s calling, Jonathan had asked David to covenant with him that, no matter what happened, David would always show “the kindness of the Lord” to his family and descendants. Years later, Jonathan and his father were killed in battle. King Saul’s household had panicked at the news, fearing for their lives with a new king coming to the throne. One caring servant had hurriedly snatched up Jonathan’s five-year-old son, Mephibosheth [meh-FIB-o-sheth], to escape. However, the small boy fell as she carried him off in haste, and his feet were severely injured, leaving him crippled for life. Time passed. One day as the new king, David, remembered his friendship with Jonathan and the covenant they shared, he wondered if any of Jonathan’s children were alive. The search began. The first clue came when King David’s men found Ziba, who had been a servant of King Saul. Did Ziba know of any living relatives? Read today’s story and discover if King David was able to find Jonathan’s descendants and keep their covenant by showing the kindness of God to his family.

BIBLE STORY QUESTIONS
Read II Samuel 9:1–13 together and discuss the following questions:

1. What was the covenant between David and King Saul’s son, Jonathan? (See I Samuel 20:12–17.)
   
What promises of kindness have you made? Have you followed through with them?

2. What did King David say he would do to any survivors in the house of Saul, his enemy? Why? (See II Samuel 9:1.)

   Were you ever prompted to reach out to someone when others might find it unusual?

3. What did King David hear about Jonathan’s son, Mephibosheth, that would require extra gentleness? (See II Samuel 9:3.)

   What specific needs of others are you aware of?

4. Who had been showing personal care and concern for Mephibosheth? (See II Samuel 9:4–5.)

   How is your family meeting the needs of others? How can you help?

5. What words of kindness did David speak to Mephibosheth? (See II Samuel 9:6–7.)

   What gentle, reassuring words could you share with someone who is afraid or in distress?

6. How did Mephibosheth respond to David’s kindness? (See II Samuel 9:8.)

   In what ways have others shown gentleness in their care for you?

7. What did David graciously give to Mephibosheth? (See II Samuel 9:9–10.)

   Who do you know who has a need right now? What could you give to demonstrate love to them?

8. Years later, what kind words of gratefulness did Mephibosheth speak to David? (See II Samuel 19:28.)

   Who has been gentle toward you? Have you thanked them?
Memory Verse
I THESSALONIANS 2:7

Play the game together to help the children commit I Thessalonians 2:7 to memory. In the section “Doers of the Word,” have the children record how they will apply the verse to their lives.

“But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children.”
I THESSALONIANS 2:7

MEMORY VERSE GAME

Hot or Cold
Choose a child to be “It.” Have the child close his eyes while the rest of the children agree on a spot to hide an object, such as an eraser or a water bottle. Tell him now to open his eyes and begin to search for the hidden object. The other children are to give him hints by saying the verse softly or loudly, depending on where he is in relation to the hidden object. As he looks for the hidden object, have the other children guide him to the object by saying the verse softly when he is far away from the object (cold) and loudly when he is closer to the object (hot). Give different children the opportunity to be “It until the children have quoted the verse often enough that they have it memorized.

DOERS OF THE WORD

In the blank below, write how this verse could be applied in your life, e.g., “listen politely when an older person shares a memory,” or “cheerfully play the game my sister chooses,” or “help mom by holding the baby when he cries.”

“Dear Lord, I yield to You and am willing to apply this verse. Help me to __________________________.
I ask that You would develop gentleness in my life. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.”

When the Lord gives you an opportunity to apply this verse, write it in your journal to later recall God’s working in your life.
INTRODUCTION

Enjoy meditating on and thinking about the words of the gentleness key verse and definition as you fill in the crossword puzzle below. *Italicized* words fit horizontally and *underlined* words fit vertically. One word is already done for you.

*I Thessalonians 2:7*

“But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children.”

**Gentleness**

Showing **personal care** and **concern** in **meeting** the **needs** of **others**
INTRODUCTION

During this character study we are asking the Lord to develop gentleness in our lives. What a privilege to respond to the work He is doing to change us into the image of His Son! Today we are going to make a craft to remind us to have a gentle, soft attitude instead of a harsh, rough heart.

Supplies:
- 7–10 cotton balls per child
- 5” x 4” sheet of rough sandpaper per child
- 7” of yarn or ribbon per child
- Elmer’s school glue

Instructions

Cut a heart shape out of sandpaper. (A template can be found on page 12.) Punch a hole near the top middle of the heart. Thread the yarn through the hole and tie the ends in a knot to make a hanger. Glue cotton balls to the back of the sandpaper heart.

Harsh words are discouraging and damaging to those who hear them. They are rough and unpleasant like this sandpaper. Just as you would not want to rub the sandpaper side of your heart against your cheek, neither would you want to have rough words spoken to you. How does it feel to rub the cotton ball side of your heart against your cheek? The soft side is gentle and pleasant, just as our words should be.

I am going to read different words and phrases to you. When you hear a harsh word or phrase, show me the sandpaper side of your heart. When you hear a gentle word or phrase, show me the cotton ball side of your heart.

PHRASE LIST:
- I’m sorry.
- That’s mine.
- Give it to me.
- You’re a good friend.
- Hurry up.
- Thank you.
- Be quiet.
- Please.
- I enjoy time with you.
- No!
- Good job.
- Go away.
- You are a blessing.
- You don’t ever do anything right.
- You can go first.
- I never liked you in the first place.
- I love you.
- Good morning!
"And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually" (II Samuel 9:7).
“Day by Day”

Sing “Day by Day” and read about how the gentleness of Lina Sandell Berg’s father led her to write this beautiful hymn about the gentleness of our Savior.

White waves churned from under the prow of the large boat as it sailed along the east coast of Sweden, on its way to the city of Gothenburg. Standing at the rail of the ship, Pastor Jonas Sandell and his daughter gazed at the view. They had always shared a close, loving relationship. As a child, his daughter, Mrs. Lina [LIE-nah] Sandell Berg, was sickly and often stayed in her father’s study while all the other children played outside. Not only did those hours together build a special bond between them, but through her father’s tender, loving example, she learned to know the sweet compassion and care of her Heavenly Father. As she grew older, she became her father’s secretary, and for that reason she was accompanying him on this peaceful boat trip.

In a single moment, however, her world changed. With a sudden jolt, the boat lurched. In horror, the young woman saw her beloved father abruptly lose his balance, totter, and fall overboard! The sailors did all they could, but they were too late. By the time they pulled Pastor Sandell’s body out of the water, he had drowned.

What a sudden, terrible grief—especially for someone as close to her father as Mrs. Berg had been. Heart-broken, she traveled home alone. Many people would have been crushed to lose someone so dear. Some might have become bitter or lost their faith. But because Mrs. Berg’s father had pointed her to Christ and His love, she looked to Him and found perfect comfort and consolation. Comforted in this grievous loss by Christ’s sufficiency, she began to write. That year alone, she wrote fourteen poems speaking of Christ and His loving care:

Children of the Heav’nly Father,
Safely in His bosom gather;
Neither life nor death shall ever
From the Lord His children sever.

But perhaps her most famous poem was written six years later:

Day by day, and with each passing moment,
Strength I find to meet my trials here;
Trusting in my Father’s wise bestowment,
I’ve no cause for worry or for fear.

In later years, Mrs. Berg became known as “the Fanny Crosby of Sweden” for the multitude of her hymns and the blessing they were to so many people. Gentleness is “showing personal care and concern in meeting the needs of others.” Because Mrs. Berg had experienced the loving nurture and care of both her father and her Heavenly Father, she was able to use her gift of poetry to bring great comfort and hope to many people.
Day by Day

Lina Sandell Berg (1832–1903)  
Oscar Ahnfelt (1813–1882)  
Translated from the Swedish by Andrew L. Skoog (1856–1934)

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Crossword Puzzle Answer Key

N A T
E R T
E C H E S T
D H S
S H O W I N G
L S S
D P A
N U R S E E C L
G E R O O
M E E T I N G S N N
N O C I
T E V E N E A
L A R N
E G E N T L E N E S S

Recommended Resources

- 2018 Biblical Character Illustrated Calendar
- Hymns for the Family CDs
  (“Day by Day” is sung to piano accompaniment on Volume 3.)
- The Power for True Success
- Character Cards
- Character Cards Memory Game
- Character Sketches, Volumes 1–3
- Achieving True Success

To view these resources and many more, visit us at:
store.iblp.org

Hymn History Bibliography


Heart Template

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