
Words of Truth

Does Being Kind And Gentle Mean We Have To Be Soft Spoken?

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The word of God teaches us that we are to be kind and gentle (Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:12, II Timothy 2:24-26, Titus 3:1-2, and II Peter 1:5-7). We're not supposed to be rude people with a nasty disposition. The world is full of people like that. We're not supposed to be of that number. We should be the kind of people that others can stand being in the company of.

If we stopped our study right here, there are all sorts of false conclusions one could come to. In fact, I have known many people who have taken Scriptures such as II Timothy 2:24-26 and have concluded that these verses teach us to be "nice" to everyone all of the time. That conclusion is simply not true.

Along with being kind and gentle the word of God also teaches us to speak boldly, speak sharply, rebuke, be hateful, etc. Notice the Scriptures that prove these things: *"And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak... This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith... These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee... But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate"* (Ephesians 6:19-20, Titus 1:13, Titus 2:15, and Revelation 2:6). We have to be people who rebuke the erring and reject them if they do no repent (Titus 3:9-11; cf. Matthew 7:6, Romans 16:17-18, II Thessalonians 3:6, and II Thessalonians 3:14-15).

When Paul taught the brethren in Thessalonica he taught them with gentleness (I Thessalonians 2:7). Yet, he never used flattery (I Thessalonians 2:5). He charged the brethren in Thessalonica to walk worthy of God (I Thessalonians 2:11-12). When Paul preached the Gospel to non-Christians in Athens, he was nowhere near being "soft spoken". He told them they were worshipping idols and that they needed to repent of their ignorance (Acts 17:22-30). When the churches in Galatia erred from the faith, Paul told them they were fools (Galatians 3:1-3). When erring Christians are acting worldly and having friendships with the world, inspired men referred to them as adulterers and adulteresses (James 4:4). Even when a babe in Christ errs, there has to be a sharp rebuke (Acts 8:13-24). One of the clearest examples in the Bible of a gentle man who used sharp, hateful, and offensive speech is our Savior.

Let Jesus Be Our Example On This Question

The Scriptures teach us to follow the example of Jesus (I Peter 2:21-22 and I John 2:3-6). The very nature of our Lord is that of kindness and gentleness. Notice the following Scriptures: *"Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but*

being absent am bold toward you... But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared" (II Corinthians 10:1 and Titus 3:4).

Now that we've established the kindness and gentleness of our Lord and that we're to follow His example, let's see how Jesus communicated with others. When talking with false teachers Jesus talked like this: *"But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves... Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also... Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell" (Matthew 23:13-15, Matthew 23:24-26, and Matthew 23:33)?*

Some would dismiss the verses we just examined by saying Jesus talked that way with false teachers, but not with others. Read the following verses carefully: *"From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto **Peter**, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men... And I brought him to thy **disciples**, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, **O faithless and perverse generation**, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the **disciples** to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your **unbelief**: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you" (Matthew 16:21-23 and Matthew 17:16-20).*

Regardless of whom Jesus was talking to, when they were wrong He could get very sharp. When the disciples misunderstood Jesus He rebuked them sharply (Mark 8:14-21). When the disciples acted foolishly Jesus called them fools (Luke 24:13-27). When Jesus saw the temple being used as a house of merchandise, He took a whip and drove out the erring (John 2:13-17). Jesus was gentle and kind, but He was also fierce and pointed. He is our example to follow.

Conclusion

We have to measure how we act by how the Scriptures teach us to act. That means there are times for kindness (Acts 16:14-15) and times for fierceness (Acts 13:4-13). Let me conclude our study with a verse that identifies how we are to balance kindness and hatefulness: *"Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good" (Romans 12:9).*