

Lesson Plan Overview

CHAPTER 7: Virtues, Part 2

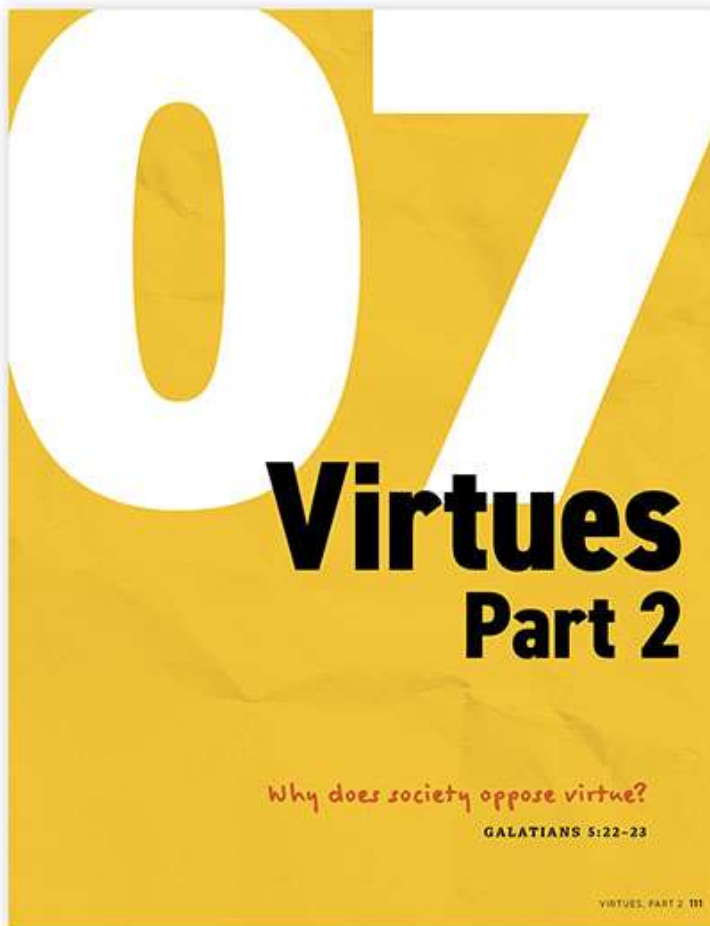
EV ExamView

PPT pres. PowerPoint presentation

PAGES	OBJECTIVES	RESOURCES	ASSESSMENTS
7.1 Humility, Meekness, and Gentleness (3 DAYS)			
112-16	<p>7.1.1 Define <i>humility</i>, <i>meekness</i>, and <i>gentleness</i>.</p> <p>7.1.2 Compare and contrast Christian and non-Christian conceptions of <i>humility</i>, <i>meekness</i>, and <i>gentleness</i>.</p> <p>7.1.3 Contrast the virtues of <i>humility</i>, <i>meekness</i>, and <i>gentleness</i> with the vices of <i>pride</i>, <i>anger</i>, and <i>harshness</i>.</p> <p>7.1.4 Give examples of how <i>humility</i>, <i>meekness</i>, and <i>gentleness</i> relate to ethical decision-making and ethical living.</p> <p>7.1.5 Develop a plan for growing in <i>humility</i>, <i>meekness</i>, and <i>gentleness</i>.</p>	<p>ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7.1 Virtues over Vices <p>BJU PRESS TROVE*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PPT pres.: Chapter 7 	<p>STUDENT EDITION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thinking It Through 7.1
7.2 Kindness and Compassion (3 DAYS)			
116-21	<p>7.2.1 Define <i>kindness</i> and <i>compassion</i>.</p> <p>7.2.2 Compare and contrast Christian and non-Christian motives for <i>kindness</i> and <i>compassion</i>.</p> <p>7.2.3 Contrast the virtues of <i>kindness</i> and <i>compassion</i> with the vices of <i>cruelty</i> and <i>indifference</i>.</p> <p>7.2.4 Give examples of how <i>kindness</i> and <i>compassion</i> relate to ethical decision-making and ethical living.</p> <p>7.2.5 Develop a plan for growing in <i>kindness</i> and <i>compassion</i>.</p>	<p>ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7.2 Modern-Day Good Samaritans <p>BJU PRESS TROVE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PPT pres.: Chapter 7 	<p>STUDENT EDITION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thinking It Through 7.2
7.3 Gratitude, Joy, and Peace (3 DAYS)			
122-26	<p>7.3.1 Define <i>gratitude</i>, <i>joy</i>, and <i>peace</i>.</p> <p>7.3.2 Compare and contrast Christian and non-Christian sources of <i>joy</i> and <i>peace</i> and objects of <i>gratitude</i>.</p> <p>7.3.3 Contrast the virtues of <i>gratitude</i>, <i>joy</i>, and <i>peace</i> with the vices of <i>ingratitude</i>, <i>despair</i>, and <i>worry</i>.</p> <p>7.3.4 Give examples of how <i>gratitude</i>, <i>joy</i>, and <i>peace</i> relate to ethical decision-making and ethical living.</p> <p>7.3.5 Develop a plan for growing in <i>gratitude</i>, <i>joy</i>, and <i>peace</i>.</p>	<p>ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7.3 The Vice of Worry <p>BJU PRESS TROVE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PPT pres.: Chapter 7 	<p>STUDENT EDITION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thinking It Through 7.3

*Digital resources for homeschool users are available on Homeschool Hub.

PAGES	OBJECTIVES	RESOURCES	ASSESSMENTS
7.4 Honesty (3 DAYS)			
126-32	<p>7.4.1 Define <i>honesty</i>.</p> <p>7.4.2 Relate the character of God to truth and the character of Satan to falsehood.</p> <p>7.4.3 Explain direct biblical teaching about truth and falsehood.</p> <p>7.4.4 Analyze Scripture narratives that seem to approve of deception.</p> <p>7.4.5 Apply the biblical teaching about truth and falsehood to difficult ethical choices.</p>	<p>ACTIVITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7.4 Don't Tell Yourself Lies <p>BJU PRESS TROVE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link: When Is It OK to Tell a Well-Meaning Lie? PPT pres.: Chapter 7 	<p>STUDENT EDITION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thinking It Through 7.4
Review			
133	Recall concepts, terms, and Scripture memory from Chapter 7.		<p>STUDENT EDITION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 7 Review
Test			
	Demonstrate knowledge of the material from Chapter 7 by taking the test.		<p>ASSESSMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 7 Test <p>BJU PRESS TROVE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EV: Chapter 7 test bank



CHAPTER 7

Overview

Why does society oppose virtue?

Objectives

- 7.1** Analyze Christian and non-Christian conceptions of each virtue.
- 7.2** Evaluate Christian and non-Christian applications of each virtue.
- 7.3** Formulate plans for growth in each virtue.

Terms to Remember

- humility
- meekness
- gentleness
- pride
- anger
- harshness
- kindness
- compassion
- cruelty
- indifference
- gratitude
- joy
- peace
- ingratitude
- despair
- worry
- lying
- honesty
- falsehood

Scripture Memory

- Galatians 5:22-23

7.1 Humility, Meekness, and Gentleness

How do I become great in the eyes of God?

Objectives

- 7.1.1 Define *humility, meekness, and gentleness*.
- 7.1.2 Compare and contrast Christian and non-Christian conceptions of *humility, meekness, and gentleness*.
- 7.1.3 Contrast the virtues of *humility, meekness, and gentleness* with the vices of *pride, anger, and harshness*.
- 7.1.4 Give examples of how *humility, meekness, and gentleness* relate to ethical decision-making and ethical living.
- 7.1.5 Develop a plan for growing in *humility, meekness, and gentleness*.

Printed Resource

- Activity 7.1: Virtues over Vices

Suggested Reading

- Bridges, Jerry. *The Practice of Godliness*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1996. Pages 72–84, 180–88.
- MacArthur, John. *The Quest for Character*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006. Pages 16–19, 23–25, 101–3.

Engage

NOT WHAT YOU EXPECT

Guide a discussion of common misconceptions surrounding strength, size, and intimidation.

What is a “gentle giant”? *a large, strong individual whose size and intimidating features betray the heart of gold or gentle ways he actually has*

What are some popular “gentle giant” characters from stories or movies? Do you think strong, large, and mean-looking people struggle to be humble, meek, or gentle?

The virtues of *humility, meekness, and gentleness* have nothing to do with the size or strength of a person. God calls believers of every size and personality to practice all the virtues. It isn't only giants who can surprise others by their gentle nature, but believers who are gifted, powerful, influential, or intimidating can also surprise others by their humble, meek, and gentle spirits.



“Humility opens the way to all other godly character traits. It is the soil in which the other traits of the fruit of the Spirit grow.” —C. S. Lewis

Humility, Meekness, and Gentleness

Have you ever been to one of those Japanese restaurants where the chef prepares the food in front of you on a teppanyaki grill? The chef shows off and entertains you with various antics while preparing your meal. Compare that experience to a meal prepared in a slow cooker. A slow cooker takes hours and hours to prepare a meal. It simply works in the background. But when the slow cooker has been going all day, the delicious smell of dinner permeates the house.

In a way, the virtues of *humility, meekness, and gentleness* are like that meal prepared in the slow cooker. Some virtues, such as faith and love, get a lot of attention. *Humility, meekness, and gentleness*, however, support these and other virtues by being “on,” though in the background. These three virtues are godly and should be pursued by all Christians. And they are critical for avoiding one of the oldest and most pervasive of all the vices—pride.

PROPER DEFINITIONS

Meekness and gentleness flow from *humility*. **Humility** is a lowly view of one's own importance, resulting from “a high view of God's person” and a profound sense of one's own weakness and sinfulness. **Meekness** is a humble and calm disposition in situations that can lead to pride or anger. **Gentleness** is tender care for others even when they are hard to deal with. Jerry Bridges offers a helpful distinction between *meekness and gentleness*: “Gentleness is an active trait, describing the manner in which we should treat others. Meekness is a passive trait, describing the proper Christian response when others mistreat us.”

The Bible gives us examples of these three virtues in action. The best example of *humility* is seen in Christ's incarnation and crucifixion (Phil. 2:3–8). *Meekness* takes one's sober estimation of oneself and applies it with the proper restraints and responses to difficult circumstances. Moses exemplifies this virtue in how he endured with the children of Israel from Egypt to the brink of the Promised Land (Num. 12:3). The *gentleness* of Christ is closely related to His *humility and meekness* (Matt. 11:29; 2 Cor. 10:1) and is seen in His tender care for His people. A proper view of ourselves that leads to a patient and merciful response to sinful, imperfect people allows us to show others the *gentleness* of Christ.

Instruct

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT HUMILITY, MEEKNESS, AND GENTLENESS

Guide a discussion regarding the misconceptions of the virtues and their corresponding vices.

What are some misconceptions that many associate with *humility, meekness, and gentleness*? *naivete, weakness, and cowardice, respectively*

What are the vices for these three virtues? *pride, anger, and harshness, respectively*
Why are the misconceptions and vices poor substitutes for their corresponding virtues? *Christians aren't to choose the easy or the sinfully natural choice when *humility, meekness, or gentleness* are called for. The*

*misconceptions are bad excuses, and the vices are sins that could dangerously become habits. In light of the misconceptions and the vices mentioned, what makes *humility, meekness, and gentleness* truly virtuous according to the Scriptures?* *To remain naive or to seek the attention that pride provides twists the virtue of *humility* (see Prov. 29:23; Matt. 23:12; 1 Pet. 5:5–6). *Humility* pursues adequate knowledge and understanding. It also seeks to love others and seek their well-being over one's own (see Phil. 2:3–8).*

*To confess weakness or lash out in anger does nothing to solve a problem or meet a need (see Matt. 11:29). *Meekness, on the other hand, provides the necessary strength with patience that avoids heated situations and makes a difference (consider Moses and his dealings with the disgruntled and rebellious Israelites, Num. 12:3).**

“Rather than thinking less of yourself, humility leads to thinking less about yourself.” —HANS REISER

PROPER CONCEPTIONS

One sure way to verify that society at large is standing on its head morally is to notice what it thinks of Christian virtues. According to many non-Christians, if you are humble, you are naïve; if you are meek, you are weak; if you are gentle, you are cowardly. These three virtues are unpopular among some unbelievers because they appear to them to hinder advancement in the face of opposition. Even Christians can be tempted to minimize or avoid these virtues because of society's influence and because they misunderstand what these virtues really are. Humility, meekness, and gentleness don't get in the way of a successful life. But these virtues definitely don't play into the selfish mindset that many people have.

How do I become great in the eyes of God?

Can Christians also see humility as naïveté, meekness as weakness, and gentleness as cowardice? Unfortunately, yes. Does every achievement and every fashionable outfit or hairstyle need a picture posted to social media? Is there room for humility when you do that? Do you vocally oppose every individual or organization that supports abortion and the LGBTQ agenda? How about your tirades against all those perceived injustices that are your hobbyhorses or soap boxes? Where does meekness fit in? Do you view a gracious, tender heart as contrary to a tough, steely mindset needed for this fallen world? What place does gentleness have in the life of a believer, then?

Consider humility and pride. Whom do you seek recognition from to satisfy your ego? Who must know what you have done and what you possess to give you fulfillment? Receiving due recognition and healthy encouragement is not what we are addressing here. True humility counters any notion of bragging or boasting. A Christian conception of humility considers the fact that believers are sinners saved by grace and anything good about them comes from God's hand (1 Pt. 2:8-9; James 1:5). Believers should, therefore, constantly point others to God and His goodness rather than themselves.

Does meekness have anything to do with weakness? Not really. The Christian conception of meekness involves a combination of patience and faith. Being hot-headed and getting even with someone flies in the face of true meekness. Meekness sees the believer entering the situation and outcome to God while humbly enduring the adverse circumstances (Isa. 54; Matt. 23; Eph. 4:2). Early church father Chromatius described meekness this way: “The meek are those who are gentle, humble and unassuming, simple in faith and patient in the face of every affront. Inward with the precepts of the gospel, they imitate the meekness of the Lord, who says, ‘Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart.’” Remaining meek in the face of adversity is real strength—a far cry from weakness.

Do you enjoy following the rules and making sure everyone else does too? Do you seek justice at any cost? It is challenging to maintain righteous responses and just reactions to evil done to us or to those we care about. Gentleness shouldn't get in the way of justice and courage. But neither can gentleness be forgotten altogether. The Christian conception of gentleness seeks to be both heart and understanding to the implementation of justice. Gentleness is not cowardly; it does the right thing while tenderly caring for the individuals involved in the situation (Gal. 6:1; 2 Tim. 2:24-25).



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To excuse one's lack of gentleness because one is fearful or to blame harshness on a knee-jerk reaction is utterly lacking in virtue. Gentleness offers loving and kind assistance even when the recipient is hard to deal with or there are multiple easy ways out.

MOVING FROM ANGER TO MEEKNESS

Guide a discussion about Moses as an exemplary meek man who imperfectly displayed this virtue.

Who in the Bible is described as “very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Num. 12:3)? Moses. What indications from Scripture are there that Moses practiced the virtue of meekness? Moses patiently and gently, for the most part, put up with a complaining and often rebellious people for forty years as they

wandered in the wilderness (Num. 11, 12, 14, 16, 20, 21, 25).

At what points did Moses cease being meek while succumbing to the vice of anger? when Moses killed the Egyptian abusing his fellow Israelite (Exod. 2:11-12); when he failed to control his temper and in anger broke the stone tablets of the law (Exod. 32:19); when he complained rather strongly to the Lord about the difficulty of putting up with the Israelites (Num. 11:10-15); when he struck the rock in anger, disobeying God's command (Num. 20:2-12)

Instruct students to compare and contrast these examples of Moses' anger with Christ's positive examples of righteous anger in Matthew 21:12-13 and John 2:13-17.

How is righteous anger different from anger as a vice? Righteous anger is motivated

by the truth and God's standards of justice and righteousness. Righteous anger toward falsehood and injustice must be carried out righteously. Anger as a vice is marked by recklessness, selfish motives, and the breaking of God's laws.

Can you tell whether someone is virtuous based on his or her practicing certain virtues or vices? No, only God knows the person's heart, motives, and how he or she is progressing in the virtues and seeking to avoid the vices.

What hope does the example of Moses' practice of both meekness and anger give you? We will practice the virtues imperfectly, but God desires a consistent and faithful pursuit of virtues. God patiently gives grace as we struggle with vices along the way. Though merciful, God does deal with us justly, as He did with Moses by not letting him into the Promised Land.

HONORING AUTHORITIES IS AN ACT OF HUMILITY

Use a one-minute essay for the students to record answers to the following question.

Who does God command us to honor in Scripture (include Bible references as able)? Parents (Exod. 20:12; Eph. 6:2-3), the elderly (Lev. 19:32; Job 32:4; 1 Tim. 5:1), faithful pastors (1 Tim. 5:17), employers (1 Tim. 6:1), and civic or governmental leaders (Matt. 22:17-21; Rom. 13:7; 1 Pet. 2:17) are some of the main categories.

Consider allowing students to use their Bibles or do online searches to find more passages or categories.

Follow up with a discussion so students do not confuse gifting, talents, and honorable deeds with the vice of pride.

Should receiving appropriate honor from others cause one to feel guilty of pride?

Why or why not? No; receiving honor is simply a way for others to show their appreciation for the good deeds or helpful contributions of the one being honored (see 1 Sam. 18:6-8).

Do Christians display the virtue of humility by refraining from doing something well because one is fearful of others noticing? Explain your answer. No; humility is not maintaining a low view of one's God-given abilities or position but instead using those gifts with a focus on God and others. God calls all to do excellent work, so performing to the highest degree of one's abilities and gifts is right and good. Thanking God while doing one's best is a mark of true humility (see Phil. 3:3-11).

CONFUSING GRATITUDE, LOVE, AND JOY FOR PRIDE

Use a **Turn and Talk** to begin a discussion about feelings that are commonly called *pride* but which are appropriate for Christians. Note that there are two kinds of pride: a selfish, self-focused pride and a God-and-others-focused pride. The latter can be used for a mixture of gratitude, love, and joy.

What are some examples of things commonly called pride that are acceptable for the Christian? Examples could include having gratitude for, loving, and finding enjoyment in one's close family members, one's country, and one's favorite sports teams. Why are these categories not a form of a selfish kind of pride? We should be thankful for the things that we love and enjoy. Our loyalty to those things God has given us is partly expressed by our gratitude, love, and joy in them. God is the giver of all good gifts, and He expects His children to thank Him for them and to enjoy them (Matt. 7:7–11; James 1:17).

Apply

SEEKING GREATNESS

Use a **Think-Pair-Share** to discuss this section's essential question and related questions.

How do I become great in the eyes of God? Through humility, meekness, and gentleness; it is the desire for and practice of these virtues that sets a believer up for greatness in the eyes of God. But both the path to and the greatness itself are the opposite of what the world expects. Christ taught that it is those who serve (humble, meek, and gentle ones) who are truly great in God's kingdom (Matt. 20:25–27; 23:8–12). Peter taught the same principle: God makes great those who humble themselves before Him and others (1 Pet. 5:5–6). Why does the world see the path to greatness differently than believers? In general, the world sees those with the most money, power, influence, achievements, and followers as the greatest. This is a type of greatness, yes. But biblically, believers pursue greatness by humbly submitting to God by serving Him and others out of love. According to Proverbs 27:2, should we let others know how great we are even though we have done certain great things? Why or why not? No; humility requires performing faithfully and letting others praise us, whether we get praise or not.



PERVERTING THE VIRTUES

Pride

If there is one prevalent sin that Christians often fail to identify in their own hearts, it is the vice of pride. **Pride** is an inflated estimation of oneself, which attempts to rob God of His rightful place as sovereign Lord of all. Pride is the nemesis of humility. This can be seen in Scripture's descriptions of the proud being brought low and the humble being raised up (Prov. 29:23; Matt. 23:12; 1 Pet. 5:5–6). God despises the proud (Prov. 6:16–17; Ezek. 28:6–8, 17). It is ironic that pursuing what pride seeks, personal glory and self-exaltation, actually results in the destruction of the proud person (e.g., Nebuchadnezzar [Dan. 4:30–35] and Herod [Acts 12:21–23]). That doesn't always happen in this life. But the vice of pride in unbelievers will surely lead to their eternal demise (Prov. 16:18; 1 John 2:16–17).

Pride fills the void where humility should reside. If autonomy and selfishness rule a person's mind, there is no room left for a humble recognition of frailty and fallibility (Prov. 3:7). The vice of pride causes any acknowledgment of and submission to God's wisdom, power, and sovereignty.

Anger

The vice of anger stands opposite the virtue of meekness. **Anger** is intense displeasure arising from strong disagreement with a situation. Moses was meek, but not perfectly so. Look at these passages to see examples of Moses' anger, stirred for the right reasons but poorly expressed: Exodus 2:11–12; 32:19; Numbers 11:10–15; 20:2–12. Just as meekness is closely related to humility, anger can be closely connected to pride, as seen in the history of Haman in the book of Esther (for example, see Esther 2:5). It is too easy to let unimportant things get under our skin, and then we unleash anger. Even short outbursts of anger, if they happen often enough, can point to the vice of anger. Proverbs attributes "great understanding" (Prov. 14:29) to those who know how to control their tempers but calls quickness to anger foolish (Prov. 14:17). James memorably conveys the folly of anger by saying, "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (James 1:20). James also relates wisdom to meekness (James 3:13). Meekness measures up to God's righteous standards and is the wiser choice over anger.

Harshness

Where gentleness should thrive in the heart of a believer, harshness seeks to assert itself. The vice of **harshness** is to be unpleasant, rough, or mean toward someone. Harshness can come across through spoken or written words and nonverbally through looks and body language—and even through silence when gentleness demands verbal communication. In Scripture, the vice of harshness is described by various terms that stand against gentleness—violence, quarrels, strife, brooding (1 Tim. 3:3; 2 Tim. 2:23–24; Titus 3:2). Whereas gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), harshness is involved in several of the works of the flesh—"hatred, . . . wrath, strife" (Gal. 5:20). Where our next response takes place, the vice of harshness is present. Gentleness encourages, de-escalates, and soothes. Harshness discourages and aggravates, making problems worse.

PERSONALIZING HUMILITY, MECKNESS, AND GENTLENESS

All the virtues, but especially these three, are like a cellular network that operates in the background, enabling a device to communicate properly, just as the network your cell phone uses to communicate with other devices is always active, so must humility, meekness, and gentleness be constantly active in governing your personal interactions. In any conversation, either the virtue of humility is helping the relationship, or the vice of pride is spoiling the relationship. Meekness must counter anger, and gentleness must thrive instead of harshness. Season your success stories with humility. Blend meekness into discussions of frustrating topics. Sprinkle your defense of the truth with gentleness.

VIRTUES OVER VICES

Use **Activity 7.1** on pages 37–38 to bolster students' ethical decision-making.

CUTTING THROUGH THE VENEER

Ask a question about the following virtues.

Humility: How would you respond to a friend who fishes for compliments? Don't feed your friend's appetite for this type of attention. Rather, with loving but appropriate boldness, appeal to the person to mend his or her ways.

Meekness: How would you respond to a friend who always wants to be the center of attention? Outgoing or extroverted people can and must still exercise the virtue of meekness. Meekness is also required when this

boisterous individual needs to be confronted on some level.

Gentleness: How would you respond to a friend who takes a stance on every issue on social media in unwise or borderline sinful ways? You might have a friend who spends time on social media "correcting" all the wrong posts and comments he or she encounters. You must decide whether to intervene privately or publicly to help this person see his or her folly. When you intervene, you need gentleness to do so. To correct someone with the virtue of gentleness is to show tender care for that person.

God didn't intend humility to be the virtue that squashes all expressions of personal success and accomplishment, but humility will keep such things from being our focus. We all know the individual who wants to give off an appearance of modesty and humility but finds ways to name-drop¹ or boast in an indirect, nonchalant way. The fact that you have had a 4.0 all through high school or that your new car is way cooler than all your friends' cars doesn't entitle you to bring those things up at any moment in every context. Humility helps us keep everything in perspective—God is the giver of all good things, and we aren't better than anyone else, especially based on our performances or possessions (Luke 18:10–14; 1 Cor. 4:7). Pride infects all of us with great ease. Be motivated by humility in all your conversations.

Do you have a short fuse? Do you get angry easily about every single thing that goes against what you believe in and support? Many things should make believers angry, in a righteous way: the far-left agenda shaping educational materials, abortion, the normalization of pornography use, rampant feminism among young people, any sort of abuse against the innocent and vulnerable, and many other expressions of evil in the world. Practicing meekness will help you keep your righteous anger from turning into sinful irritability and brashness. Meekness is also paramount during times when pride attempts to seduce you to accept flattery. When you feel like someone is flattering you with ulterior motives, meekness will help you duck out of the way of that temptation. All believers are commanded to “put on . . . meekness” (Col. 3:12)—in other words, to practice it.

It's not only muscular or passionate individuals who need to practice the virtue of gentleness. Yes, the six-foot-four pediatrician can and should be extremely gentle with the infant patient he is treating. Gentleness presupposes the power to do damage, to be harmful or harsh. But we are all capable of that, at least with our words.

“Meekness . . . is where humility and self-control meet. It is one of the most attractive and indispensable aspects of truly Christlike character.”

—JIM WALLACE

Think of your intellectual, athletic, or spiritual opponents. You might think they have it coming to them! You can be tempted to win at any cost because you have the right knowledge, the better team, or the right interpretation of the Word. Practicing gentleness isn't passivity or compromise. Not harming or embarrassing an opponent unnecessarily, even though it would be easy to do, is practicing gentleness. The apostle Paul makes the point that, when dealing with people who present challenging situations in the church, gentleness must reign (Eph. 4:2; 2 Tim. 2:24–25; Titus 3:2). The truth is, God deals with us with perfect gentleness (Ps. 18:35; 2 Cor. 10:1). The Almighty chooses to deal with His people with gentle tenderness (Isa. 40:10–11). These truths must permeate believers' ethical decision-making processes.

PRACTICING HUMILITY, MEEKNESS, AND GENTLENESS

Like many of the virtues, it might seem a daunting task to actually develop these three in your life. Do you find it embarrassing if people know that you are weak in certain areas of the Christian life? Don't be afraid that people might find that out. All believers are in the same boat—all need to grow in their relationship with Christ!

The fruit of the Spirit is just that, *fruit* in the singular. The different aspects of that fruit are distinguishable—meekness and gentleness included (Gal. 5:22–23)—but each fruit comes with the rest as believers respond to the work of the Spirit in their lives. Be encouraged that God's work in the hearts of believers is comprehensive and not limited. The fruit of the Spirit is a single unit, and the virtues are interconnected (2 Pet. 1:5–7).

¹name-drop—to introduce names of important or famous people into a conversation, implying a personal connection to them.

Assess

Guide a summative assessment by directing students to answer the questions in Thinking It Through 7.1.

Thinking It Through 7.1

1. a lowly view of one's own importance, resulting from "a high view of God's person" and a profound sense of one's own weakness and sinfulness (Bridges, *The Practice of Godliness*, 91)
2. a humble and calm disposition in situations that can lead to pride or anger
3. tender care for others even when they are hard to deal with
4. Non-Christians believe that if you are humble, you are naive; if you are meek, you are weak; if you are gentle, you are cowardly. Christians pursue humility because they receive grace and mercy and all things from God. Christians know that meekness should be practiced because God expects patience and faith in Him in challenging situations. And Christ's example of being gentle, despite having infinite power and always being in the right, guides Christians to be gentle with one another.
5. Pride, the opposite of humility, is an inflated estimation of one's own self that robs God of His rightful place as sovereign Lord of all. The vice of anger stands opposite the virtue of meekness. Anger is intense displeasure arising from strong disagreement with a situation. The vice of harshness is unpleasant, rough, or mean toward someone. Gentleness encourages and soothes. Harshness discourages and aggravates the problems.
6. The only way to live ethically is to make it a habit to make ethically sound decisions. The virtues of humility, meekness, and gentleness help believers do that. Even when tempted with a smidgen of pride, a bit of "righteous" anger, or some well-deserved harshness, Christians must be careful to make sure they submit to God and faithfully apply humility, meekness, and gentleness. How you treat others whom you disagree with is a common testing ground for these three virtues. This happens often in person and in online engagement. You can point out error and demonstrate what the truth is without disparaging and disrespecting whomever you are ad-

Do you have a plan to grow in these virtues? When was the last time you specifically prayed to God asking for His help to be less proud and more humble, less angry and more meek, or less harsh and more gentle? Praying to grow in humility, meekness, and gentleness is the right place to start. Praying taps into the Lord's power and cultivates an awareness of your need for these virtues. If you aren't aware of these virtues and their vices, then you won't be thinking of ways to practice the virtues like you should.

Another aspect of a plan to grow in these three virtues is to ask a friend, perhaps an elder mentor who knows you well, to assess your humility, meekness, and gentleness. Be honest and then submissive to the report the friend gives about you. You can practice humility by graciously accepting what he or she says and repenting, if necessary, from any traces of pride, anger, and harshness in your life. Thank your friend and ask him or her to keep you accountable in these areas.

We all need God's grace to be humble, practice meekness, and treat others graciously. Look to Christ, who is the supreme model of humility, meekness, and gentleness (Matt. 12:20).



Thinking It Through 7.1

1. Define humility.
2. Define meekness.
3. Define gentleness.
4. How do Christian and non-Christian conceptions of humility, meekness, and gentleness differ?
5. How do the vices of pride, anger, and harshness contrast with humility, meekness, and gentleness, respectively?
6. Give examples of how humility, meekness, and gentleness relate to ethical decision-making and ethical living.
7. What are some actions you can take that can help you grow in humility, meekness, and gentleness?

7.2 Kindness and Compassion

You have been told to smile for the camera since you were a child wrinkling your nose in a cheery grin. Your parents constantly reminded you to say, "Thank you" and "Please." They also taught you not to laugh at someone if they tripped or got hurt. Were all those smiles, words, and acts genuine? If you only look and sound nice at the appointed times, are you truly kind? And can compassion be faked?

True kindness is much more than being nice or polite, and compassion is much more than feeling sorry for someone.

DEFINING KINDNESS AND COMPASSION

Kindness is an internal sentiment, cultivated by the Holy Spirit, that motivates believers to indiscriminately do good to others. Compassion is an external manifestation of loving kindness that sympathetically and indiscriminately meets a need. Whereas kindness is primarily a disposition of one's character, compassion activates that kindness by sympathizing with someone and meeting their need.

THE VIRTUES

And when faced with immoral government mandates, it takes humility and meekness to navigate obedience to God rather than men in the situation, without coming across as proud or cavalier.

7. committed, specific prayer and getting an older, wiser accountability partner

7.2 Kindness and Compassion

How should I respond to those who are hurting?

Objectives

- 7.2.1 Define kindness and compassion.

7.2.2 Compare and contrast Christian and non-Christian motives for kindness and compassion.

7.2.3 Contrast the virtues of kindness and compassion with the vices of cruelty and indifference.

7.2.4 Give examples of how kindness and compassion relate to ethical decision-making and ethical living.

7.2.5 Develop a plan for growing in kindness and compassion.

Printed Resource

- Activity 7.2: Modern-Day Good Samaritans

Suggested Reading

- Berg, Jim. *Essential Virtues: Marks of the Christ-Centered Life*. Greenville, SC: JourneyForth, 2008. Pages 115–29, 174–88.