

BLESSED ARE THE GENTLE

Matthew 5:5

by Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. If you search Amazon.com for books on the subject of happiness you'll find over 70,000 books. What does that tell you? Everyone wants to be happy. Every human being is on a happiness quest.
2. I asked AI the secret to happiness and I got some good answers. It gave four suggestions.
 - i. First, strong relationships; having people you can rely on.
 - ii. Second, purpose and passion; engaging in meaning activities or work.
 - iii. Third, a positive mindset; practicing gratitude and optimism.
 - iv. Fourth, physical health; managing and maintaining wellness.
3. I think that's a good answer, but it's missing the most important thing – your relationship with God. According to Jesus and the authors of Scripture, the most important ingredient to living a happy life is having a right relationship with God.
4. Jesus gives us the secret to happiness in a passage of Scripture called "The Beatitudes." It's found in Matthew 5:3-12. There He gives us eight qualities of a happy person, or eight steps to happiness. He said, "Blessed (happy) are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the gentle, those hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and the persecuted.
5. AI did say something that is right in line with Jesus' formula for happiness. It said that happiness is not pursued directly but is a by-product. In other words, happiness is not a goal to be pursued, it's the by-product of the right choices. That's what Jesus is saying in the beatitudes. Happiness isn't found by people who pursue it directly, but by people who pursue the beatitudes. The beatitudes are really about how to have right relationships with God and people. You don't have to

search for happiness. As you cultivate the beatitudes, happiness will find you.

II. REVIEW

1. So far we have looked at the first two beatitudes. Let's do a little review.
2. Remember that every beatitude follows the same pattern. There's a promise, a condition, and an explanation. (1) you will be happy, (2) if you do this, (3) for this reason.
3. The first beatitude was about being poor in spirit.
 - i. **Matthew 5:3** Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.
 - ii. To be poor in spirit is to acknowledge your spiritual poverty. The poor in spirit believe four things: 1) I am a sinner. 2) I don't deserve to go to heaven. 3) I can't earn heaven (I'm helpless to save myself). 4) Jesus can and will save me. They are happy because they have the kingdom of heaven, or eternal life. They have salvation.
4. The second beatitude is about mourning.
 - i. **Matthew 5:4** Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
 - ii. This isn't any kind of mourning. Jesus is talking about being deeply sorry for your sins. Those who mourn are happy because mourning leads to repentance, and repentance is necessary for salvation. Godly grief produces repentance.

III. THE THIRD BEATITUDE

1. The third beatitude is about gentleness.
2. **Matthew 5:5 (NASB)** Blessed are the gentle, for they will inherit the earth.ⁱ
3. What is gentleness? The Greek word (praus) means meek, mild, gentle. Gentleness is treating others with softness and tenderness. It is dealing with people softly and tenderly.
 - i. Softness: Nice, polite, kind, comforting, easy, careful. Be a pillow, not a rock. Be a cushion, not concrete. The word "softness"

reminds me of my wife. Sometimes when I'm picking on her and teasing her she'll say, "Careful." I've learned that's she's warning me that I'm being too rough and need to be more soft and gentle. Softness also reminds me of what people say when you are carrying something that is very valuable, like a new tv. They say, "Easy, easy," meaning be gentle, be soft.

- ii. Tenderness: Caring, sweet, considerate, thoughtful of the feelings of others.
4. To understand gentleness, think about how you would hold a baby, how you would handle a raw egg, or how you would handle fine china. That's how you are supposed to treat people – not just physically, but emotionally. Soft, tender, easy, careful, sensitive, kind.
5. The opposite of gentleness is hard, harsh, rough, loud, threatening, mean, pushy, forceful, violent.
6. Gentleness is applying softness and tenderness to all your actions. Your word choice, your tone, your volume. With your demands and expectations of others. With the way you treat people when they fail, when they drop the ball, or even when they hurt you.

IV. THE REASON FOR GENTLENESS

1. Why is it so important to treat people with gentleness? Gentleness is the key to being a person of influence. It's the key to making a difference in people's lives. It's the key to making a positive impact on people.
2. God wants you to influence people – to lead them to believe in Christ, to grow in Christ, to serve Christ, to honor and glorify Christ. He wants you to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Mt 5:13-16). He wants you to influence your children, your friends, your family, your job, your team, your community for Christ.
3. The key to being a person of influence is gentleness. Most of the references to gentleness in the NT are in the context of influencing others. It is used in the context of leadership, of evangelism, of teaching and preaching, of helping a believer who has fallen into sin, etc.

4. If you want to influence people for Christ, then you must cultivate the quality of gentleness in all your interactions with people.
5. Why is gentleness the key to influence? There's a truth about people that you need to know. People are fragile. People are easily upset, easily offended, easily hurt, easily damaged, easily angered, easily frustrated. People are like fine china – very valuable, but very fragile. And it's hard to influence people if you have hurt and upset them. They won't listen to you if you have offended them. Rather than follow you, they will run from you. You have to be gentle.
6. At FedEx I work with packages, and often I'll come across a box that says, "Fragile. Handle with care." Every time you are interacting with someone, you need to imagine in your mind that they are wearing a sign around their neck that says, "Fragile. Handle with care," because that's true about every person you meet. They are fragile. And if you want to influence them for Christ, if you want to make a difference in their life for Christ, then you need to handle with care. Be gentle. Be soft and tender.
7. How important is gentleness?
8. **Titus 3:2** "always showing gentleness to all people."
9. Paul wrote this to a pastor named Titus about what he needs to teach his people. He said, "Remind them to always show gentleness to all people." Be gentle all the time to everyone. That's how important gentleness is. Be gentle to all people, all the time.
10. This is why the apostle James repeatedly calls gentleness an application of wisdom. It's evidence of wisdom.
11. **James 3:13** Who among you is wise and understanding? By his good conduct he should show that his works are done in the gentleness that comes from wisdom.
12. If you want to be wise in your dealings with people, then be gentle. If you want to be influential, persuasive, magnetic, a difference maker, then be gentle. Be soft and tender.

13. To better wrap our minds around gentleness, it might be best to apply it to different life situations. The Bible mentions at least five situations that require gentleness.

V. FIVE SITUATIONS THAT REQUIRE GENTLENESS

1. When you are the target of anger.

- i. **Proverbs 15:1** A gentle answer turns away anger, but a harsh word stirs up wrath.
- ii. From time to time you will make people angry, and they will bark at you, fuss at you, maybe even raise their voice at you. How should you respond? If you respond by barking back at them, then that's only going to escalate the situation and make them more angry.
- iii. Instead, the Bible says the best way to respond when people are angry with you is with gentleness. Be soft and tender, calm and kind. When you do that, you deescalate the situation. You defuse their anger.
- iv. I've seen this happen in my own family. When my kids make me angry and I fuss at them, if they respond to me with gentleness, then my anger quickly goes away. It's like throwing dirt on a fire, causing the fire to quickly die out. But if they respond to my rebuke with a harsh word, by talking back, or raising their voice, or defending themselves, then it only escalates the situation.
- v. A harsh word, either with your word choice, or tone, or volume, is never appropriate. It doesn't matter if they are mad at you even though you are innocent. It doesn't matter if they are wrong in the way they are speaking to you. If you respond with harshness, it will only drive a bigger wedge between you; if you answer with gentleness, it will deescalate the situation and point you in the direction of reconciliation.

2. When you are correcting someone.

- i. **Galatians 6:1** Brothers and sisters, if someone is overtaken in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual, restore such a person with a

gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so that you also won't be tempted.

- ii. When a fellow believer falls into sin, don't just ignore it; don't turn a blind eye; don't pretend you didn't see; don't just mind your own business; go to them and try to restore them. Try to help them overcome their sin.
- iii. But how should you approach them? If you fuss and yell and criticize and condemn and hit them over the head with the Bible, then you probably won't be successful. They probably won't receive it well. They will likely get angry and defensive. But if you approach them in a spirit of gentleness, with softness and tenderness, then they are more likely to respond positively to your help.
- iv. Remember, the goal is not to simply rebuke them, but to restore them. The goal is to help them repent and get right with God, and gentleness is the most effective way to do that.
- v. And this applies to any situation in which you are correcting someone – your children, your employees, your students. Gentleness is always more effective.

3. When you are witnessing.

- i. **1 Peter 3:15-16** “But in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. Yet do this with gentleness and reverence, keeping a clear conscience, so that when you are accused, those who disparage your good conduct in Christ will be put to shame.”
- ii. This verse says that when someone asks why you are different, or why you act the way you do, or why you go to church, or why you believe what you believe, use that opportunity to share the gospel.
- iii. But then it says to share the gospel “with gentleness and reverence.” Don't condemn them or insult them. Be gentle. Be soft and tender.

- iv. Let's say the gospel conversation turns to the subject of apologetics. You are challenged to defend your beliefs. Perhaps the discussion turns into a debate, and they attack you and your faith. How should you respond? Gentleness. Stay soft and tender, calm and kind. When they go low, you go high.
- v. Paul put it like this in his letter to Timothy.
- vi. **2 Timothy 2:24-25** The Lord's servant must not quarrel, but must be gentle to everyone, able to teach, and patient, instructing his opponents with gentleness. Perhaps God will grant them repentance leading them to the knowledge of the truth.
- vii. Timothy was a young pastor, and Paul was explaining to Timothy how to handle people who were caught in spiritual or doctrinal error. He said, "Don't insult them, or lambaste them, or attack them, or humiliate them. That will only push them away. The goal is to win them over to your side, to God's side, to the side of truth. How do you do that? Instruct them with gentleness. Be soft and tender, calm and kind.
- viii. Do you know what is more persuasive and winsome than the perfect argument? Your behavior. Your attitude. Actions speak louder than words. Your attitude is more persuasive than your arguments. If you treat them with softness and tenderness and respect even if they mistreat you, it will be a powerful witness, and it will leave the door open for further discussion down the road. But if you raise your voice and attack them, you run the risk of winning the argument but losing the soul.
- ix. It reminds me of the old saying, "You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar." Gentleness is like honey; spread it all over your gospel conversations.

4. When you are in leadership.

- i. Gentleness is a Christlike attitude. He is characterized as gentle multiple times. The prophet Zechariah described Jesus as gentle (Zech 9:9), quoted in Matthew.

- ii. **Matthew 21:5** Tell Daughter Zion, “See, your King is coming to you, gentle, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”
- iii. Paul described Jesus as gentle.
- iv. **2 Corinthians 10:1** Now I, Paul, myself, appeal to you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.
- v. And this is how Jesus described Himself.
- vi. **Matthew 11:28-30 (ESV)** Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
- vii. Jesus is inviting people to follow Him by describing the kind of leader that He is. He describes Himself as a gentle leader. He says, “I will give you rest; I will ease your burden; I will teach you.” In other words, “If you follow me, I’m not going to make you miserable; I’m not going to demand too much, or expect too much; and when you fail, I’m not going to chew you out, or threaten you, or destroy you; I’m going to be patient with you, and help you improve. I’ll be your example; just do what I do. If you follow me, I’ll make your life better.”
- viii. Gentle leadership. That’s effective leadership.
- ix. Many of you are in some kind of leadership role. If you’re not now, then you probably will be. If you have children at home, then you are in a leadership role. If you are a teacher, a manager, a business owner, a coach, a Home Group leader, a ministry team leader, then you are in a leadership role. Your goal is to move people from where they are to where they need to go; to help them achieve their full potential. How can you pull the best out of people? By imitating Jesus. By being gentle, soft, tender. Don’t make your people miserable; don’t demand or expect too much; go easy on them when they fail or drop the ball; set a good example for them.

- x. Jesus taught servant leadership. The concept of servant leadership is that it is the leader's job to serve your people by giving them whatever they need to do their best. What do your people need? Gentleness. They don't need you to yell and scream and curse and insult and threaten. They need your encouragement, and motivation, and instruction, and patience, and example. Do that and you will pull the best out of them.

5. When you are married.

- i. **1 Peter 3:3-4** Don't let your beauty consist of outward things like elaborate hairstyles and wearing gold jewelry or fine clothes, but rather what is inside the heart—the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.
- ii. This is perhaps my favorite passage on gentleness. Peter is writing to wives, instructing them how to relate to their husbands.
- iii. He says, “don't let your beauty consist of outward things... but rather what is inside the heart.” This doesn't mean that you should ignore your physical appearance. Men are highly visual. Marriage counselor Willard Harley says that one of your husband's deepest emotional needs is your physical attractiveness. Don't ignore your appearance. The point is that you should focus more on inner beauty – your character and attitude – than outer beauty. Why? Peter gives several reasons.
- iv. First, inner beauty is imperishable. Your outer beauty will fade, but if you cultivate inner beauty, your husband will continue to be attracted to you as you age.
- v. Second, inner beauty is “of great worth in God's sight.” Not only will inner beauty attract your husband, but it will please the Lord.
- vi. Third, inner beauty is winsome. In this passage Peter is specifically talking to Christian women who have husbands who are unbelievers or backsliders. He's explaining to them the best way to win their husbands to the Lord. But this applies to anyone who wants to influence people. He says that your most powerful tool for influencing someone is not your words, it's not your outer

appearance, it's your character (See 1 Pt 3:1-2). This applies whether you are trying to win them to Christ, or win them over to your opinion about anything.

- vii. What does this inner beauty consist of? Paul calls it "a gentle and quiet spirit." Gentleness.
- viii. What might gentleness look like for a wife? Be soft and tender with your words, attitude, and behavior in your interactions with your husband.
- ix. How do you get your husband to change? Peter is telling you. He's telling us the key to getting anyone to change. It's not yelling and screaming; it's not insults and threats; it's not violence; it's not meanness; it's not insubordination if they are in authority over you; it's a gentle and quiet spirit. It's softness and tenderness. It's staying calm and kind. It's submission.
- x. I like how it's worded in Proverbs.
- xi. **Proverbs 25:15** A ruler can be persuaded through patience, and a gentle tongue can break a bone.
- xii. There's an old saying that while the husband may be the head of the family, the wife is the neck. The means that the husband is the leader, but the wife has the power to turn him. But some wives are better at this than others. Peter is explaining how to be an effective neck. Again, this goes not just for wives, but for anyone who wants to influence people. How can you maximize your influence, your ability to turn people? With gentleness. Be soft and tender, calm and kind.

VI. GENTLENESS AND HAPPINESS

1. Before we close, we need to deal with the relationship between gentleness and happiness. That's what the beatitudes are all about – the secret to happiness. In this beatitude Jesus promises that if you will cultivate gentleness, you will be happy. Why?
2. **Matthew 5:5 (NASB)** Blessed are the gentle, for they will inherit the earth.

3. The gentle are happy because they inherit the earth. What does that mean?
4. It's hard to know for sure. It could be talking about the new heavens and new earth, the final state of Christians after Christ comes back. So this could simply be another promise of eternal life. The gentle are happy because they have heaven to look forward to. It's not that gentleness is how you earn salvation, but that salvation requires repentance, and that means turning from harsh and hurtful behaviors.
5. Another interpretation is that the gentle person enjoys earth to the full; he gets the most out of life (*Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*).
6. Why do they get the most out of life? The gentle are happy because gentleness is the key to becoming a person of influence. Gentle people are the biggest difference-makers. They make the biggest positive impact on others. And making a positive impact on others, influencing them to grow closer to God, is one of the most fulfilling and satisfying and meaningful things you can do.

VII. CONCLUSION

1. When I think about gentleness I come under great conviction, because there have been many moments in my life when I have lacked gentleness, and it's humbling because there are people in this church who have seen me lack gentleness.
2. Maybe you're in the same boat. Maybe you have had a lot of moments in your life when you've been too harsh, too rough, too abrasive, too fierce, too cruel.
3. That's why I'm glad Jesus described Himself as gentle and lowly. He's describing His patience and forgiveness for sinners; for people who blow it all the time. He offers His forgiveness to people like me who blow it all the time. That's why He died on the cross –to pay for our sins.
4. He simply says, "Repent of your sins and believe in me, and all will be forgiven." Believe in Him, and hand over the steering wheel of your life to Him, and all will be forgiven.

ⁱ Normally I preach from the Christian Standard Bible (CSB), but for this verse I prefer the New American Standard Bible because the Greek word for “gentle” (praus) is the same word that’s found in the Galatians 5:22-23, the passage known as the “fruit of the Spirit,” where it is translated “gentleness” by every English translation. The Greek word praus can mean humility, but most of the time it is translated “gentleness,” or even “meekness” (KJV, NIV, ESV), and so I think that’s best translation here. Also, most of the time the word “humility” in the Bible is a different Greek word – tapeinos (Acts 20:19; Eph 4:2; Col 2:23; Col 3:12; 1 Pt 5:5).