

Gentle Is Best

“Let everyone see your gentleness. The Lord is near!” ~Paul the Apostle

One of my favorite television shows, still after all these decades, was a drama called Gentle Ben. After years of reflection, I have concluded that the reason it was so profound is because of its premise. Gentle Ben was a wild bear who became a pet. Bears are not known as gentle. Bears are some of the most dangerous animals on earth. But Ben was gentle. And so should we be. No matter how difficult others are.

When we see people being selfish and angry with one another, let those moments be examples of how not to be. This turns darkness into light, difficulty into healing, in real time.

Some think it is a sign of strength to do violence or to trample on the thoughts and rights of others. Far from it! It takes a lot of strength to be gentle. It is higher, better, and leaves the world much the better as we have passed by. “Only the weak are cruel,” whispers Leo Buscaglia. “Gentleness can only be expected from the strong.”

What our world needs is a return of the quiet, gentle nature of people who want to love their neighbor and God. People on their own will be selfish, inconsiderate, and sinful. We must give a gentle answer when anger might be seen as the obvious one. We must lift others up rather than put them down. This is the way of Christ. This is the way of God.

Some might see gentleness as not caring. This couldn't be farther from the truth. We do not hurt because we care. We speak softly rather than anger because we don't want to hurt. We smile instead of hiss because we love, and God's love is in us.

“Gentleness,” says Gayle Erwin, “is not apathy but is an aggressive expression of how we view people. We see people as so valuable that we deal with them in gentleness, fearing the slightest damage to one for whom Christ died. To be apathetic is to turn people over to mean and destructive elements, to truly love people is cause for us to be aggressively gentle.”

Aggressively gentle. Now that's a mouthful! To be aggressive about being gentle and kind. To build a legacy of kindness and love day by day. This is who we are. This is what Jesus did and wants to do in us.

Gentleness is a choice. Anybody can be a bully. Anyone can be selfish. If we choose love rather than hate, we find the true power that transforms. So resisting the first impulse, thinking higher, acting better, this is how we can find the gentleness God offers us.

“I choose gentleness.” shouts Max Lucado, a pastor and writer of note. “Nothing is won by force. I choose to be gentle. If I raise my voice may it be only in praise. If I clench my fist, may it be only in prayer. If I make a demand, may it be only of myself.”

From the politicians and leaders to the protestors on the street, and everywhere in between, we could use a lot more gentleness. Rather than trying to force others to agree with us, we must seek to be open to their views as we seek to lead them to higher thoughts and actions.

Gentleness is a place we must return to again and again. It is a place of solace and healing. It is a place from which we go forth strengthened and renewed to make the world a better place.

Julie Andrews, who played a mostly gentle but sometimes rambunctious nun and nanny in the movie *The Sound of Music*, a character who was gently trying to make things better in the midst of a horrific war.

The actor spoke lovingly of the place she grew up. One of its qualities was gentleness.

“Whenever I think of my birthplace, Walton-on-Thames, my reference first and foremost is the river. I love the smell of the river; love its history, its gentleness. I was aware of its presence from my earliest years. Its majesty centered me, calmed me, was a solace to a certain extent.”

Think of a river of gentleness, slow moving, but always flowing. There sailboats can frolic. Canoes can paddle. Kids can swim. Fish can sleep. Dragonflies can flutter. Landscapes and worlds are changes by the centuries of that river flowing through the land.

God can do this with us. God inspires gentle people who are the strength of today and the hope of tomorrow to flow through the land like a mighty river. There are many ways to be, but gentle is best.

“Do everything with gentleness, with kindness, with reverence. That is how grace moves. That is how love dances.”~ Heather K. O Hare