

# THE MEASURE OF A MAN

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## GENTLE

We are measuring a godly man by looking at the spiritual characteristics required of leaders in the church. Even if you do not aspire to a position, your practice should be the same if you want to be a maturing, godly man.

Our eleventh characteristic is “gentle.”

1 Timothy 3:1 This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.

1 Timothy 3:2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach;

1 Timothy 3:3 not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but **gentle**...

The Greek word is *epiikees*. The KJV translates the word for “gentle,” *patient*. The word is used in the following verses:

Philippians 4:5 Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.

1 Peter 2:18 Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh.

A good alternate translation is the word “appropriate.” **You are to act with a gentle patience that is appropriate to each situation.**

In law enforcement the cops have what is called the level of force. The level of force in your response is dictated by the situation. Police officers use the force continuum, a scale of force alternatives, to mediate the level of response used in a given situation.

The force continuum is broken down into six broad levels. Each level is designed to be flexible as the need for force changes as the situation develops. It is common for the level of force to go from level two, to level three, and back again in a matter of seconds.

The level of force goes from officer presence to verbal commands to empty hand control to pepper spray or baton or taser to less lethal and (finally) to deadly force.

Level of force is something we can all identify with even if we're not cops. We've all seen videos of police officers using force on a subject. Sometimes it can appear to be excessive force. (Usually it isn't - we just don't have the whole context).

Normally we are talking about a spiritual or emotional response more than a physical one. But in any case, physical or otherwise, we are to act with a gentle patience that is appropriate to each situation.

Jesus was and is gentle in that sense. On one end of the spectrum, children loved Him. *That's saying a lot!* Kids don't always take to adults.

The dregs of human society felt comfortable around Jesus. That's also saying a lot since they were despised and treated with disdain by all the other supposed religious leaders.

Think of the man born blind. The religious leaders did nothing to help him. After Jesus healed him the religious leaders tried to trap him into accusing Jesus of something. They brought in his parents and harassed them. When the formerly blind man didn't give them the answer they wanted they officially excommunicated him.

In the Gospel of Matthew you read,

Matthew 12:18 "BEHOLD! MY SERVANT WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN, MY BELOVED IN WHOM MY SOUL IS WELL PLEASED! I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT UPON HIM, AND HE WILL DECLARE JUSTICE TO THE GENTILES.

Matthew 12:19 HE WILL NOT QUARREL NOR CRY OUT, NOR WILL ANYONE HEAR HIS VOICE IN THE STREETS.

Matthew 12:20 A BRUISED REED HE WILL NOT BREAK, AND SMOKING FLAX HE WILL NOT QUENCH, TILL HE SENDS FORTH JUSTICE TO VICTORY;

Matthew 12:21 AND IN HIS NAME GENTILES WILL TRUST."

Reeds and flax are very fragile. They are easily damaged. The very use of such delicate things suggests a gentleness in how they are handled.

Reeds grow in marshes. They were good for only one thing: musical instruments. If a reed became bruised or bent, it was good for nothing. Flax, too, was good for only one thing: to be used for wicks in lamps. Through the analogy of reeds and flax, this quote from Isaiah described the ministry of Jesus. Maybe you feel like nothing more than a squeaky reed or a smoking wick. The Lord will not break you, throw water upon you, or give up on you. He'll strengthen you, rebuild you, and use you for His glory.

At the same time Jesus could verbally spar with the Scribes and Pharisees. When they accused Him of being illegitimate He could answer that they were of their father, the devil. But it was a measured, appropriate response.

Same with the time Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers in the Temple. It wasn't out of anger. Jesus didn't need anger management. He didn't need to learn to stop and count to ten. He didn't have S.A.D. - sudden anger disorder. It was the appropriate response to the situation.

There are lots of inappropriate responses in the Bible. My favorite is David's dealings with Nabal. David was a fugitive. It would be a while yet before he became king. He and his fighting men protected wealthy farmers like Nabal from being raided by their enemies. Come the harvest it was understood that the farmers would reward David and his men with some of their crops. It was protection but not a racket! It was real protection.

David's men came to Nabal during harvest. Nabal refused to share any of his harvest with David. Worse, he insulted David. So David strapped on his sword and took his men with the intent of killing Nabal.

Nabal's wife, Abigail, would have been better off (in some ways) with Nabal dead. Even his name meant *fool*. Instead of letting things play out she did the appropriate thing. She took food stuffs and stopped David on his way. She reasoned with him by pointing out it was inappropriate for the future king of Israel to act out of anger and revenge. He relented.

(Nabal, by the way, died of a heart attack when he heard all this. Abigail went on to marry David. Sadly she became one of many wives so the story doesn't necessarily have a happy-ever-after ending).

Earlier we saw the characteristic “not violent.” It can describe things other than physical abuse, like verbal or emotional abuse. Our word “gentle” takes it even further. You purposely measure your response to be appropriate to the situation. And you do it with **all** your words and gestures and body language and behavior so as to treat the other person or persons with respect.

There are times when you **must** escalate as the situation warrants it. But even then you must carefully measure your response.

I might also mention things like appropriate clothing and demeanor; or appropriate behavior in general. We can be creative and spontaneous and have fun. But we should do so in an appropriate manner.

Appropriate to what? **To our witness for Jesus Christ!**

You may, like Jesus, be accused of behaving inappropriately. Just be sure it isn't true.

Inappropriate can be somewhat subjective. If you're not sure, then err on the side of caution. The man of God, the godly man, is “gentle.”