

Let your gentleness be evident to all

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A photo of Daron from Kenya. Learn more at <https://cure.org/curekids/kenya/2016/12/daron/>

Certain words have easily understood and accepted opposites: black and white; smile and frown; tall and short; strength and weakness. Sometimes synonyms are available from which to choose for an opposite. Gentleness is often used in describing the opposite of strength — or even its absence. But I submit that gentleness is the evidence of strength, not a synonym for weakness.

“Let your gentleness be evident to all,” is found in the fourth chapter of Philippians in the New Testament. This phrase is tucked between two other ones of significance: “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, ‘Rejoice!’ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.” And I think in these two bookend verses lies evidence as to gentleness being understood more as strength than as weakness.

Look at the trailing verse first: “The Lord is near.” The realization of the nearness of the Lord allows us to have confidence.

If God is for us, who can be against us? Romans 8:31

The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Psalm 27:1

I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. Psalm 23:4

The meaning of “near” could also be that the time of His return is soon — if I have a limited time to live, how then shall I live?



Gentleness has a positive nature, even an optimism. Neither negativity nor pessimism is a motivator for being gentle. Continual rejoicing and its resulting state-of-mind are very complementary to a person exhibiting gentleness. Still, I find it interesting that the logical extension of rejoicing in this literary line of thought is being gentle. It is not any specific act — spiritually, like prayer or worship, or practically, like feeding the hungry or helping the poor — but it is rather the descriptor for how the next action should be conducted. It is more adjective or adverb than noun.

Only the strong have the opportunity to truly be gentle. There is a purposeful restraint for effect that can produce an innate gentleness by virtue of strength. A 6' 7", 300-pound NFL lineman must be gentle to hold his small baby. A weakling would be in jeopardy of dropping and hurting that same baby. A weak person might have to summon all his strength to exhibit the same effect of gentleness, but it can not be sustained without unevenness or spasticity that no one would mistake for gentleness.

Exhibiting gentleness is what I believe informs CURE's approach to medical work and care. To me, compassionate care is one appropriate way to describe exhibiting gentleness. Its source is confidence from strength — strength of expert knowledge, strength of sound faith, and strength of undaunted hope. And when the Lord is our strength, the most effective form of gentleness — or compassion — is realized.