

TIP TOEING THROUGH THE TOUGH STUFF

Phil. 4:4-9

Lesson Two: Gentleness – A Prerequisite to Peace

I. Rejoice is such a way that it is evident to everyone!

A. “Let your gentleness or moderation be known...” (vs.5)

“epieikes”: It is “the willingness to yield one’s personal rights and to show consideration and gentleness to others.

1. It occurs twice in the New Testament: Acts 24:4 (Kind enough), II Cor. 10:1 (meekness and gentleness)
2. It has been translated softness, yieldingness, kindness, a forbearing spirit, a leniency, a clemency. It is justice, but something better than justice. It is “sweet reasonableness”.
3. It is the opposite of obstinacy. (Remember Euodia and Syntyche, Chap 4:2)
4. For the sake of peace, Paul is calling everyone to a higher standard, a standard where we yield our rights, our position, even our preferences.

B. “Be evident to all...”(vs. 5)

1. An attitude towards other believers so outsiders will take notice and be drawn to Christ (Matt. 5:16)
2. An attitude towards everyone as a witness to God’s power in our lives (Rom. 12:17)

C. This attitude is the first of Pauls’ prerequisites to peace. He will highlight prayer with thanksgiving later in the passage.

D. It is to be found first in the leaders of the church (I Tim.3:3), then in leaders of society (I Peter 2:18), then in the lives of our heroes (peacemakers –see James 3:17-18) and finally in all our lives (Titus 3:1-2).

II. Some Biblical examples to consider:

A. David and his interaction with Saul

1. David spares Saul's life near En Gei (I Samuel 24:1-14)
Don't miss Saul's reaction to the "epieikes" expressed by David (vs.6-21)
2. Again David spares Saul's life in the desert of Zipfh (I Sam. 26:1-20)
Don't miss Saul's reaction to the second "dose" of "epieikes" expressed by David (vs. 21-25)

B. Jesus with the woman caught in adultery See John 8:1-11

Special Note: This section is often not included in the earliest manuscripts

1. Consider what the Law required (see Lev. 18: 20; 20:10, Deut. 22:22-24). According to Jewish Law, the witnesses must begin the stoning.
2. Consider what the Jewish leaders required- A stoning
3. Consider the reaction of the witnesses (see Deut. 17:7)
4. Consider the reaction of Jesus as He exercised "epieikes"
Stop Sinning. (Rom. 6:12 and I Cor. 15:34)
Start a different life.

Micah 7:18 "Who is a God like you who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy."

III. Some principles for us to consider:

- ### A. Of course there are times when we must confront others for the sake of the truth (consider Phinehas in Numbers 25:1-13). When dealing with others, **remember to keep balance in our reactions.**

Speak the truth, in love (Eph. 4:15)

Prov. 3:3 "Let not mercy and truth forsake you, bind them about your neck, write them on the tables of your heart."

Mercy is God's ministry to the miserable.

- ### B. Rules and regulations are not the last word. **Remember (especially with our children), rules without relationship equal rebellion.** (Matt. 23:13, Luke 13:11-18)

C. Whenever possible, **remember to meet people half way.**

Romans 12:18: "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."

D. Although it runs against the grain of Western society, **remember to yield your rights to another.**

Rom. 12:10 "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. *Honor one another above yourself.*"

Phil. 2:3 "do nothing out of selfish conceit, but in humility *consider others better than yourself.*"

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss the term "moderation." What do you think it means in a modern society? In what ways are you "moderate"? Is that a good thing or a bad thing?
2. Are you a "rule follower"? Is it difficult for you to "excuse the behavior of others"? If you have to choose between pursuing truth or mercy, which is easier for you? Any ideas why?
3. Why is relationship so important when guiding others? How do you strike that balance in your own home (with your own children) or at work with employees?
4. This whole section of scripture is outlining the prerequisites to peace, and we all crave peace in our lives. Why then is yielding our rights, in pursuit of peace so difficult?