

Lesson #5 – Gentleness and Self Control

A Disciplined Ministry

*²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me,
for I am gentle and humble in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls. Matthew 11:29*

Part I: Gentleness

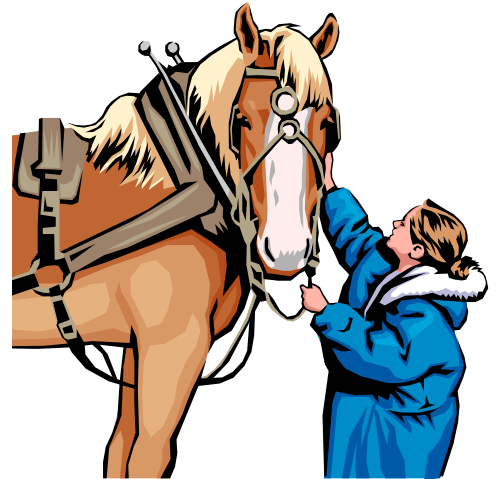
In this lesson we consider...

- *What it means to be “gentle” (and what it does not mean)*
- *That rebellion v. human authority = rebellion v. God*
- *How to test your heart for rebellion*
- *The breaking process of God’s servants*

What does it mean to be “gentle?”

Being soft? Lacking backbone?

Being anemic or lacking determination?



¡NO! Meekness is not weakness!

Gentleness = Strength of will, submitted to the Lordship of Christ

Definition: *Strength of will which has been submitted to the Lordship of Christ. A docile and responsive spirit to God’s voice and the leadership of spiritual authority. Respectful and courteous to all.*

Gentle people have submitted their strength to the Captain of their lives!

The gentle minister...

- Submits to his or her leaders
- Is broken before the Lord, as were Moses and Jesus
- Is teachable and open to guidance, suggestions and criticism
- Defers to others without concern for his own status or authority
- Does not worry about defending his or her “rights”
- Is obedient to the word of the Lord, even when it hurts
- Learns from God’s discipline
- Is respectful and considerate of others
- Has learned to say to the Lord; “... *not my will, but your will be done.*”





Comparison #1 – The horse

The rebellious minister is like...

A wild un-broken, un-bridled animal

Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.

¹⁰ Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD's unfailing love surrounds the one who trusts in him. Psalm 32:9-10



Why is it so important for a horse to be broken and tamed?

In what way are potentially great ministers comparable to untamed stallions?

Comparison #2 – The Soldier

The rebellious minister is like a soldier who “does his own thing”

What is the goal a soldier's training? Why? And how is this done?



Comparison #3 – A Stiff neck!

⁹ “I have seen these people,” the LORD said to Moses, “and they are a stiff-necked people. Exodus 32:9

Why does scripture compare the rebellious heart to a stiff neck, in your opinion?

Rebellion against Spiritual Authority is Rebellion against God

God himself instituted human authority. When we rebel against the legitimate authorities, *we rebel against the God who instituted them!*

Example of David

“I will not touch the Lord’s anointed” – (No matter how rotten he is!)

David, before becoming the King of Israel, refused to harm the corrupt King Saul, who persecuted him without cause. No matter how evil Saul had become, his “anointing” represented God’s authority upon him. David knew that to touch the person who carried this anointing was to attack the presence of God Himself.



Read Numbers 12:1-10: *Miriam and Aaron rebel against Moses*

Why do you think Aaron and Miriam rebel against Moses?

In general, why do people rebel against spiritual authorities?

Submission to Spiritual Authority in the church results in our own “benefit”

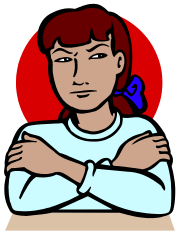
¹⁷ Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you. Hebrews 13:17

Mention two spiritual authorities who supervise your work. (Besides the pastor)

Authority #1 _____

Authority #2 _____

Think for a moment: *How do you respond to spiritual authority?* What has provoked you to complain, at times, against your spiritual authorities, whether pastor or ministry leader?



Heart Check: *Does your ministry reflect gentleness?*

The lack of gentleness is common in ministry!

Rebellion, and even rudeness, can be disguised as zeal and intensity!

Examples

- The cell leader who refuses to follow the established schedule, insisting she is led by the spirit, and not the guidelines of the cell ministry directory
- The cell leader who corrects the “lies” the pastor preached the previous week
- The musician who refuses to turn down the volume when instructed to by the worship director
- The children’s Sunday School teacher who insists on setting the curriculum aside and teaching her own lesson

We ask ourselves...

- Do you assume that rules do not apply to you much of the time?
- Do you have a hard time working under the leadership of others?
- Do you find yourself complaining, even subtly, about your pastor or minister leader?
- Do you have a hard time admitting a mistake?
- Do you readily assume the role of “helper” or “assistant” in a project?
- How do you respond to the parking attendant when asked to move your vehicle?
- How do you respond to the suggestions of your ministry leader?
- How do you respond to the usher who asks you to change seats?
- Do you feel restless when attending a cell group or a prayer meeting led by another brother or sister?
- When you serve in leadership, do you feel the need to be “tough” or talk about your previous successes to establish your authority?
- When someone raises an opinion different from your own in a meeting or Bible study, do you feel compelled to argue, or are you able to listen patiently and recognize that they may have a point?

Gentleness requires personal security. *Truly strong and secure people need not impose themselves or prove themselves to others. They are free to be gentle.*

Gentleness Tests

1. How do you handle conflict?

Do you tend to blame others?

- When dismissed from a job – *The boss was a “control freak.” It’s her fault.*
- You lose a friend – *He is selfish and peevish*
- You receive a parking ticket - *The cops are out to get me!*
- You hop from church to church - *The pastor never pays enough attention to me!*

2. How do you respond to correction and discipline?

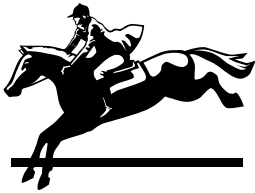
²¹ *Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.* James 1:21

Think of an occasion when someone offered you a word of correction or advice.

What happened? Describe the situation.

How did you feel?

What resulted from this experience? _____



God breaks the one He would use!

There is simply no way around it. In order to exercise spiritual authority with integrity, we must be prepared by God's discipline. We must be "trained" and "tamed." We must be broken.

⁵*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Matthew 5:5*

God's discipline breaks our pride

*"My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline,
and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,
⁶ because the Lord disciplines the one he loves,
and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son."*



⁷ *Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father?* ⁸ *If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all.* ⁹ *Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live!* ¹⁰ *They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness.* ¹¹ *No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Hebrews 12:4-11*

God breaks his chosen servants --- Moses' example

³ *(Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.) Numbers 12:3*



Moses started out as a "cocky" young man! While he eventually became a man of legendary meekness and unique spiritual authority, he began his life with tremendous pride. Raised and educated in the palace of Pharaoh himself, Moses early acquired a profound consciousness of his own importance and destiny in the plans of God. He assumed the self-appointed role of leader and judge, killing an Egyptian whom he found mistreating a fellow Hebrew. The next day he assumed the authority to separate two fighting Israelites. Perhaps because of his royal upbringing or his naturally strong temperament, Moses simply took for granted that he had the right to command others.

Therefore, before God called him and invested him with a staff of authority, He dealt with this pride and willfulness. Forty years of obscurity in the desert cured him of any messiah complex, and produced in him a humility and gentleness that would allow him to wield the most awesome spiritual authority ever endowed upon a human being up to that time. When Yahweh called to him from a burning bush, Moses made no presumptions of his own importance, but sincerely admitted his own inadequacy to such a holy role. After forty years of breaking and training in the desert, he had shed his self-sufficiency and haughty self awareness. He did not abuse his authority or seek to be a "prince" over the people of Israel. Instead of asserting his own authority, he interceded for those who rebelled against him. He had become the type of humble, gentle leader that could be trusted with true power. *And you...? Is your ego still intact?*

Review of Level III (Lesson #8) - The Variety of God's Discipline

God breaks us through...

1. *Moments of Crisis* – He “wrestles us” as with Jacob.
2. *Our failures* – He shows us our frailty – Peter's denials.
3. *Long Waiting Periods* -He makes us wander in the desert for what seems like an eternity
4. *Moments of “Cruel” Obedience* – The Garden of Gethsemane - Jesus
5. *Human authorities* – He breaks us through leaders he has invested with authority, teaching us submission and respect.

In your own life, what has been a significant way that God has broken your pride and willfulness, making you a more gentle, submitted person?

What happened?_____

What did you learn? How did you grow and change through this experience? _____



Prayer of Submission

We suggest a kneeling posture, physically symbolizing an attitude of submission

Lord God, I confess that I am often rebellious.

I insist on doing things my own way and refuse to submit to your way.

I complain against authority figures at work, at home and at church.

Forgive me.

I want to be humble and gentle, as you are.

I want to be a completely obedient soldier of my captain, Jesus Christ.

I ask you to break my pride and rebelliousness.

As Jesus prayed, “Not my will, but your will be done.” Amen.

Part II: Self Control – Self Mastery

²⁸ *He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.* Proverbs 25:28 (KJV)

¹ *Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.* ² *We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.* James 3:1-2

⁷ *For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.* 2 Timothy 1:7



In this lesson, we consider...

- *The definition of self control in daily life*
- *The “internal brake” of a sober ministry*
- *Qualities of self control in God’s service*

Definition: *Self control is the ability to harness one’s appetites, impulses, and feelings in order to serve God with sobriety and discipline. Self mastery.*

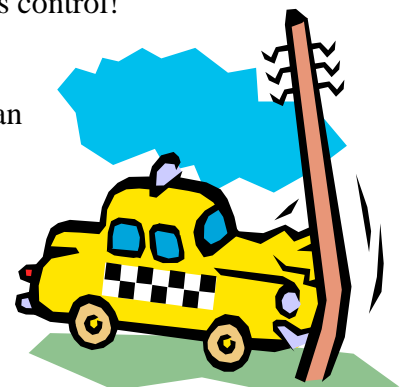
Self Control requires us to set limits in our behavior and speech

²⁸ *Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control.* Prov. 25:28 (NIV)

Why this comparison? How is a person without self control akin to a city without strong walls?

Self Control requires that we use an “inner brake”

What happens when the brakes of a vehicle malfunction? The car loses control! Regardless of the quality of the motor or the fine paint job, it ends up smashed against a tree! Likewise in ministry, regardless of our giftedness, talents, or passion for Christ, without self-control; without an “inner harness,” we end up in ruins.



Self Control is spiritual power to...

... harness (or brake) the desires of the flesh

¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. Galatians 5:16-17

... harness (or brake) the tongue

¹ I said, "I will watch my ways
and keep my tongue from sin;
I will put a muzzle on my mouth
while in the presence of the wicked." Psalm 39:1

... harness (or brake) our anger

¹¹ Fools give full vent to their rage,
but the wise bring calm in the end. Proverbs 29:11

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty,
And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city. Proverbs 16:32

... harness (or brake) our physical impulses

¹² "I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"—but I will not be mastered by anything. ¹³ You say, "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both." The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. I Corinthians 6:12-13

.... harness (or brake) our emotions

¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength. Philippians 4:12-1

For you, which of the impulses above are most difficult to control?

1. _____
2. _____

Mention a situation in which you struggle to "harness" yourself in some way.

_____.



Example of (the lack of...) Self Control in Ministry

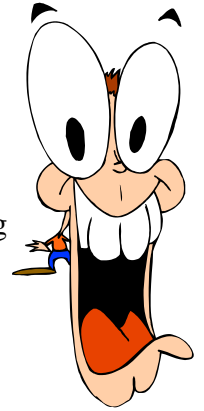
Fiery Franky the Evangelist -- "Franky el Fogoso"

Franky preaches with fire and anointing. He has no fear of standing on a street corner to preach the gospel, moving in a unique grace to impact his hearers.

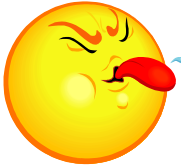
Sometimes he receives a miraculous word of knowledge, enabling him to speak directly to the problem a person may have, cutting through their opposition and leading them into an encounter with Christ. He weeps and shouts and groans in prayer for hours at a time. In worship he has no inhibition and leaps for joy in God's presence. In his enthusiasm he sometimes "shoots from the hip" and speaks indiscreetly. Especially when angry, he pulls no punches.



Franky loves to flow with the Spirit, and resists making plans in advance. He improvises, and as a result, the events he leads often lack organization. The anointing is never lacking, but neither is the chaos. Whenever a new opportunity presents itself, he is quick to say "yes" without hesitation, and sometimes he agrees to two or three events on the same day, forgetting previous engagements and promises he had made. When he tries to organize an evangelistic event, he usually waits until the last minute to make plans, often resulting in widespread confusion. No one seems to know where to put the speakers, who will set up the tent, where to be, and when?



After intense ministry, when the adrenaline has passed, Franky sometimes suffers severe depression. In his discouragement he will often stop attending services for weeks at a time, and falls into certain temptations over and over again, especially in the area of sexual purity. One can observe this lack of sobriety in other areas of his life as well. His finances are a disaster, and he often overeats. He allows himself to be carried away by his feelings, whether good or bad.



He is an anointed evangelist, but lacks self control.



List the ways we can observe the lack of sobriety and self control in Franky's life and ministry.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____



Heart Check: *Does your ministry reflect sobriety and self-discipline?*

We ask ourselves...

- Do you act on impulse, making quick decisions without considering consequences?
- Do you have a hard time biting your tongue when angry?
- Do you fall into the same temptations over and over again?
- Do you have difficulty controlling your sexual appetites?
- Do you often forget commitments you made?
- Do you plan ahead, using a calendar?
- Do you keep a budget or does money “burn a hole in your pocket?”
- Do you tend to improvise rather than plan ahead?
- Do you let yourself be led by emotions more often than not?
- Do you have a hard time managing your time, money and eating habits?

Qualities of self-control in ministry

1. *Knows how to restrain itself*
2. *Is sober*
3. *Is disciplined*



1. The ministry with self-control knows how to “apply the brakes”

If we do not apply the brakes, we “crash and burn”...

- *If we fail to harness our tongue* – we end up in constant arguments
- *If we fail to harness our sexual desires* – we fall into sin
- *If we fail to harness our spending* – we end up in debt
- *If we fail to harness our hunger* – we end up overweight
- *If we fail to harness our commitments and time management* – we become exhausted and run chronically late
- *If we fail to harness our emotions* – we suffer extreme ups and downs
- *If we fail to harness our anger* – we explode and destroy relationships

Mention two of these situations, mentioned above, which present a particular challenge for you?

1. _____
2. _____

2. The Self-controlled minister is sober-minded

Sobriety - your “game face”

Professional athletes and soldiers habitually wear an expression of seriousness and concentration when engaged in competition or official service. This “game face” communicates discipline and attentiveness. A self-controlled minister cultivates this sober attitude, enabling him or her to stay focused and alert to the things of the Spirit and the task at hand.



⁴ But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. ⁵ You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. ⁶ So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. ⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. 1 Thessalonians 5:4-8

Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming. ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. ¹⁵ But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 1 Peter 1:13-15

In view of the focus on holiness in the verses above, mention specific ways we can remain sober and alert in ministry.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

3. The self-controlled minister embraces rigorous training and preparation

²⁴ Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. ²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. ²⁶ Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. ²⁷ No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. 1 Cor. 9:24-27

One must sacrifice and abstain from certain indulgences in order to “stay sharp”

Mention some ways that a marathon runner or boxer must exercise abstinence and self sacrifice in order to stay in shape.

1. _____
2. _____

Discipline v. Legalism: The self-controlled minister is self-disciplined to stay sharp!

Like the marathon runner, the self controlled minister observes a distinctive regimen of training and life-style that “normal” people need not. Certain activities may not be sinful in and of themselves, but perhaps they “dull” our spiritual wits. If we truly desire to stay “sharp” in ministry, we must abstain from certain “permitted” behaviors that cloud our spiritual sensibilities.

These expressions of self discipline do not earn God’s favor in any way, since our very existence depends of God’s grace. The Apostle Paul clearly affirms that “it is by grace that we have this ministry.” (2 Corinthians) Rather, self control frees us to walk in this grace with a clear mind and a focused heart.

¹² *“I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but I will not be mastered by anything. 1 Corinthians 6:12*

Disciplines of the self-controlled minister

1. Abstain from certain movies and TV programs which contaminate our thoughts
2. Fast regularly
3. Refuse to indulge inappropriate flirtation
4. Distance themselves from people who draw them into negative attitudes or behaviors...etc.

In your case, mention a way that you would like to begin “training” and disciplining yourself to maintain a more alert and sober spirituality.

_____.

Review:

Define self-control. _____

_____.

Mention some specific ways that we must “apply our internal brakes” to control our lives.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____.
5. _____.