



The Strength of Gentleness

By Mark Taylor, College/University Representative

“The Lord’s servants must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone. They must be able to teach effectively and be patient with difficult people” (2 Timothy 2:24, NLT).

In my teacher education classes, I talk about the characteristics of an effective teacher. One important characteristic is having the ability to relate to others with kindness, tactfulness, and gentleness. I am reminded of a time when, as a school administrator, I had this characteristic tested.

An Angry Parent

One day after school, I stepped out of the office and looked down the hallway to see a parent coming toward the office. She appeared quite angry, with laser-like eyes beaming in my direction. I looked around and quickly confirmed that those eyes were locked in on me. I thought, *where is the escape door?* As soon as she was at my door, she let me have it! She was angry and upset about something that occurred after school with her child. As I recall, it was quite trivial. Since her voice was elevated, I quickly suggested that we step into my office. I encouraged her to be seated, and I let her rage on. And that she did!

For the next 15 minutes, she let me know about everything she thought was wrong with the school and with me. I really wanted to let her have it and let her know she had no right to respond to me in that way. However, as I silently prayed for God’s wisdom, I calmly let her share everything that she had on her mind. When she was finished unloading on me, I kindly and briefly addressed some of her concerns.

Here She Comes Again!

The next day after school, I stepped out of my office. I looked down the hallway, and you can probably guess whom I saw coming toward me—the angry parent I had encountered the previous day. However, this time she had a different countenance. She had the look of a puppy that had just been caught doing something she should not have done. I greeted her, and she asked if she could speak to me. I invited her into my office unsure of what was going to occur.

The parent proceeded to apologize to me for her behavior of the previous day. She explained that she had experienced a horrible day at work. Everything that could go wrong had happened, and she took it out on me and the school. I accepted her apology and forgave the actions of the previous day. We prayed together, and she was on her way, never again to have a confrontation with me.

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As I reflected on this after-school experience, I thought about what might have happened if I had not responded with a spirit of kindness and gentleness. There probably would have been a strained relationship between this family and the school forever, and she might have withdrawn her son from the school. And what would have been the impact on her and her son's life in the future?

Ten years later, as I handed out high school diplomas and shook the hands of our graduates at the Christian school, I shook the hand of that parent's son. He had grown and matured into a godly young man. I thought back to the time his mother came to see me, and I thanked God that my strength was a gentleness He had given me.

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