“Controlling My Reactions”, Don't Worry - Be Happy! Part 3 of 8 – September 22, 2013 at SBC Matthew 5:5

We're doing this series, . . . about Jesus' Eight Secrets, . . . of Happy Living. Today, we're going to look at, . . . the most misunderstood attitude -- the attitude of meekness. Matthew 5:5 – *"Happy are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."* That sounds, . . . ridiculous. In today’s world, . . . we're talking about, . . . pushing to get ahead, . . . climb over others, . . . scramble over the top.

When the meek, inherit the earth, . . . some bully's going to take it back, anyway. The word "meek", has lost it's meaning. It doesn't mean, . . . what it used to mean. Today, it's a slur. If you call a man, meek, . . . he'd be insulted. You don't put it, . . . on your resume.

What do you think of, . . . when you think, of meek? Casper, . . . Milktoast. Some spineless jellyfish, with no conviction. We say, "Meek as a mouse." A lady said, to her husband, "Are you a man, . . . or, a mouse? Squeak up!"

What is, meekness? Meekness is not, . . . **weakness**. There are only two men in the Bible, called meek: Jesus and Moses. Neither of them, . . . were pushovers. Meekness means, . . . **strength, under control**. The Greek word, referred to a wild horse, tamed, . . . or medicine, that could tame a fever. Strength, under control.

A true story, about the Hell's Angel motorcycle gang, . . . that, went out to a place called, Cook's Corner. They walked in. There was a truck driver, setting over in the corner, eating his dinner. One of the Hell's Angels, walked over to him, . . . picked up the plate of spaghetti, and smashed it on the driver's head. He took the guy's drink, and poured it in his lap.

The truck driver, didn't do anything. Got up, paid his bill, and walked out. The Hell's Angel, looked over at the bartender, and said, "Not much of a man, is he?" The bartender said, "Not much of a truck driver, either. He just ran over, about twelve choppers, . . . going out of here!"

Meekness is **strength, . . . under control**. Jesus said, "Happy are those, . . who don't, over-react, . . to people."

**\*\*\*\*\* Five ways, . . . to work on, . . . your reactions:**

**1. When someone serves you, . . . be understanding, . . . not demanding.**

Philippians 2:4-5 – *"Don't just think about your own affairs, but be interested in others too, and in what they are doing. Your attitude, should be the same, . . . as Jesus Christ's."*

How do you treat people, . . . who serve you? Waitresses, secretaries, clerks, tellers at the bank, . . . fast food operators. Are you understanding, . . . or, demanding?

One Sunday, after church, we went over to a new restaurant. The place was packed out, and we happened to get a trainee. The poor guy was messing all up, and I said, "It's OK. Don't worry about it. You get a lot of people here on Sundays." He said, "Always, when church let's out. This place is packed, from all the churches, around here!"

So, I got to thinking, “What is the reputation of church people, in all the nearby restaurants? Are those, that call themselves, Christians, . . . are they people of understanding, . . . or, are they demanding?

Americans have a reputation, . . . overseas, of being very, very pushy, . . . very rude, very demanding, . . . and, not understanding. The secret of great service, . . . is to treat people, . . . with respect.

**2. When somebody disappoints you, . . . be gentle, . . . and, not judgmental.**

Romans 14:1 – *"Accept him, who is weak in the faith, . . . without passing judgment, on disputable matters."*  Happiness comes, when you can accept people, . . . who have not attained, . . . your level of perfection.

 They don't have, to reach up, . . . to your standards, . . . to be loved.

Galatians 6:1-2 *– "If a person is trapped in some sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But, watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens."* How do you react, . . . when somebody, . . . messes up his life? Do you get, excited about it: "I told you so! I could see it coming!

 Only a fool, would have done that. I wouldn't have been, that dumb."

Do you have a secret, . . . sense of satisfaction, . . . when other people, blow it? Meekness, . . . is when people disappoint you, . . . you are gentle, . . . not judgmental. The one thing, that angered Jesus most, . . . more than anything else in life, . . . was self righteous religious people, . . . who were always, judging others.

We should love them, . . . not, condemn them.

**3. When someone disagrees with you, . . . be tender, . . . without surrender.**

The fact is, you can't please everybody, in life. Just about the time, you get Crowd A satisfied, . . . Crowd B, gets upset. One minute, you're the hero, . . . the next minute, you're the zero. You need to learn, to be tender, . . without surrender. The test of maturity is, . . . how do you handle disagreeable people, people who irritate you, people who like to contradict you, . . . people who like to get in arguments, . . . like to quarrel with you.

\*\* You have three alternatives: You can retreat in fear, you can attack in anger, or you can respond in love.

Meekness is not, . . . compromising, your convictions. You can be tender, . . . without surrender. It's not being passive, being a doormat, giving in, . . . always letting the other person, have their own way. That's not meekness, . . . it's weakness.

It's also not, . . . reacting in anger, . . . if someone disagrees with you, you blow them away. Some people, use verbal overkill, . . . they explode people. Everything is, . . . a win/lose situation.

There is a book, by Gen. George S. Patton, “Patton's Principles for Managers, Who Mean It.” Got a lot, of one- liners in it. One is: You never fight a battle, where winning, . . . doesn't make, any difference. Don't get into an argument, over something, that doesn't matter anyway." Proverbs 15:1 – *"A gentle answer quiets anger; but a harsh word stirs it up."*

James 3:16-17 – *"Wherever there is jealousy, or selfish ambition, there will be disorder, . . . But, wisdom from above is pure, peaceful, gentle, and friendly."* Circle "gentle". That's the same word, . . . as "meek".

Meekness, and gentleness, . . means strength, under control -- a gentle giant. An argumentative spirit, indicates an ego problem. If you like to quarrel, if you like to get into arguments, . . . you've got, an ego problem.

Jesus says, that a person who is meek, . . . is happy, . . . because, he is tender, . . without surrender. Meekness is learning, to disagree, . . . agreeably. Meekness, is being able to walk hand in hand, without seeing eye to eye. In a marriage, when two people agree on everything, . . . one of them, . . . isn't necessary. You eat with a knife and a fork, . . . not, two knives. We need, . . . variety.

When people disagree with you, . . . **you have three options**: you can be passive, a doormat -- "Go ahead, have your way." – or, you can fight them, tooth and nail, blow up, get angry, fight back, be sarcastic. Or, you can respond, in love -- a gentle answer.

2 Timothy 2:24-25 says, meekness is a qualification, . . . for spiritual leadership, *"The Lord's servant, must not quarrel, . . . those who oppose him, he must gently instruct, in hope that God will give them, a change of heart."*

The Bible says, that we are not, to argue, with people. We are not, to get in a quarrel. We are to gently instruct, and hope, that God will give them, . . . a change of heart. We say, "In the essentials, we have unity; . . . in the nonessentials, we have liberty; . . . in all things, we have charity." We allow, for diversity, . . . in the body, of Christ. Different, gifts. Different strokes, . . . for different folks.

We need to learn, to be understanding, . . . not demanding with people, who serve us. And, we need to be learn, to be gentle, . . . not judgmental with people, who let us down. We let people down. Happy are those, who treat others, . . . the way God treats them. And, we need to be tender, without surrender, . . . when somebody, disagrees with us.

**4. When someone corrects you, . . . be teachable, . . . not unreachable.**

Meekness is, . . . a teachable spirit. Meek people, are eager, to learn. Meek people, don't pretend, they know it all. They know, they don't know it all, . . . and, they don't try to pretend, . . . they know it all.

James 1:19 – *"Let everyone be quick to listen, but slow to use his tongue, and slow to lose his temper."* This is a great verse. It tells how, . . . to control, your temper. If you do the first two, . . . the third is automatic. If you're quick to listen, and slow to speak, you will be slow to anger. But, if you're slow to listen, . . . and, quick to speak, you'll be quick to anger. You need, to listen. Use your ears. Be teachable, . . . not unreachable.

When your spouse, makes a constructive suggestion to you, . . how do you relate to it? Do you get uptight, and defensive? Don't consider the source, . . . consider the suggestion. Meek people, don't have all the answers. Be wary, of people, who have all the answers. Those are people, . . . you need to be afraid of. They're dangerous.

Are you open, or closed, . . . to new ideas? Are you open, to change, . . . or, closed to change? "We've always, done it this way!" A meek person -- when someone corrects you, . . . you're teachable, not unreachable.

The wisest people, that I know, are the people, . . . who are the most eager, . . . the most willing, to learn. They have, . . . a teachable attitude. They don't think, . . . they know it all.

Will Rogers used to say, "I never met a man, I didn't like." Well, I honestly believe, we never meet a man, we couldn't learn from. Everyone of you, . . . could teach me, something. We could teach, . . . each other. We've all had, different experiences. Everyone is ignorant, . . just, on different subjects. We need, each other. We can learn from anybody, . . . if you just know, the right questions.

Proverbs says, *"Counsel in the heart of man, is like a deep well. But, the man of understanding, . . . will draw it out."* Ask, questions. That's the secret, . . . of intelligence. Learning to, . . . draw it out.

Here’s a list of questions that, . . whenever you’re with someone, that you admire, . . . ask these basic questions: Questions like, “What are the most important decisions, you've ever had to make? What are the five books, that have made the biggest difference, in your life? How do you manage, your time?”

Questions, that get to the issue, . . . and, help you see what they are really like, . . . so, you can learn. Always learning, . . . always growing.

Have you learned, to learn, from your kids? You can learn, from your kids. Do you realize, you can learn, from your in-laws? Do you realize, you can learn, . . . from your enemies?

Your biggest critics, often help you out, the most. Unintentionally. They may mean, to hurt you, . . . but, God can use that criticism, . . . to teach you, and make you more sensitive, in a certain area, . . . even though, . . . they have a wrong motive for it. Meekness, . . . we're teachable, . . . not unreachable.

Proverbs 13:18 – *"Whoever listens, to correction, is honored."* Sign: "I'd rather change my mind, and succeed, than, have my own way, and fail." A meek person, is not a weak person, wimp, a Casper, Milktoast. A meek person, . . . is understanding, not demanding; gentle, not judgmental; teachable, not unreachable.

**5. When somebody hurts you, . . . be an actor, . . . not a reactor.**

Take the initiative. Romans 12:17, 21 – *"Do not repay evil for evil, . . but overcome evil, with good."* A fact of life is, . . . you will, . . . be hurt. You will have hurts, . . . in life. Life hurts. You will be hurt, . . . by other people -- intentionally, many times.

The meekness issue, . . . is how do you, respond to it? What is your normal reaction, . . . when people hurt you, intentionally? Retaliate! Get even! We're usually, at our most creative best, . . . thinking up methods,

 . . . to get even. We are so good, at thinking up, . . . creative strategies, . . . for revenge.

To retaliate, . . . is to react. They both start with "re", . . . which is a response. All a reaction. Reaction. But, to respond with forgiveness, . . . even when, they haven't asked for it, . . . is to **act**, to take the initiative.

John Powell, in his book, “Why Am I Afraid, To Tell You Who I Am?”, said he was walking down the street, with a friend, and they stopped to get a paper. The man selling the paper, was grumpy and discourteous, very rude. The friend, as he was walking away, said to the man, . . . "You have a nice day, now!"

John Powell asked his friend, "Is that man, always, that rude to you?" "Yes". "Are you, always, that nice to him?" Friend said, "Yes, . . . I'm not going to let one man, . . . ruin my day."

Booker T. Washington, the great black scientist, . . . faced prejudice, all his life said, "I will never allow another man, to control, or ruin my life, . . . by making me hate him."

When you say, . . . "You make me mad!", . . . you are admitting, that they are controlling, . . . your emotions. The other person, has the power, . . . to control, . . . your emotions.

The moment, that you start retaliating, that you start seeking revenge, that you start trying to get even, . . . you give up, . . . control of your life. You are no longer, in control. You are reacting, . . . not acting. That's a position, . . . of weakness. Jesus said, the meek person, . . . knows how, . . . to let it go.

\*\* One of the clear examples, in the Bible, is Moses. In Numbers 12, he was being criticized, and insulted, and put down. The issue was, . . . that, he married a black lady, . . . Zipporah was from Ethiopia. It was an interracial marriage, . . . and, Moses' brother and sister, didn't like it. They were griping.

Moses refused, . . . to defend himself. He said, "God, I'm going to let You, take care of this." God always has better ways, of getting even, than we do. God said to Miriam, "You like white skin? How about, a lot of it?", and He gave her leprosy. Moses did not, say a word. He would not, retaliate. God says, be an actor, . . . not a reactor, . . . in how we respond, to life.

Meekness is the ability, to handle a hurt, . . . without retaliating. The best definition of meekness, in the Bible, is Proverbs 16:32 – *"He who is slow to anger, is better than the mighty, and he who rules his own spirit, than he who captures a city."*

What determines, . . . your emotions? Can you control, your own emotions, . . . or, does somebody else? Your emotions, are either controlled, . . . **by circumstances, or by character**. It's, your choice. "That makes me so mad . . . so sad . . . feel so bad . . ."

Circumstances are controlling, how you feel. I choose, to feel happy. I choose, to not be depressed. Happiness is a choice. You're emotions, are either controlled, by circumstances, . . . or, by choices. Meek people, are self controlled, . . . controlling their reactions, toward life.

Jesus promised, "Happy are the people, who can control, . . . their reactions, . . . for they will inherit the earth." What does, "inherit the earth", mean? You'll be in control, . . . of your situation. The world, is yours.

The person, who has self control, of his emotions, . . . the world, is his. He controls the situation, . . . because, he's not, . . . controlled by it. If you are a meek person, you are no longer a victim. You control, your choices.

Victor Frank, the famous psychiatrist, went through Auchwitz. He said, "They took my clothes, my wife, my kids, my wedding ring. I stood naked, before the SS, and I realized they can take everything in my life, but, they cannot take my freedom, . . . to choose, how I will respond, to them." That is a freedom, you will always have. How do I react? How do I choose to react, . . . to those people, who hurt me?

Jesus is saying, that happiness, belongs to people, with self control. You say, . . . "That leaves me out! I can't control, my reactions! I can't get them, under control!" Right. But, I know somebody, . . . who can help you, . . . get them, under control.

2 Timothy 1:7 – “God's Spirit, does not make us timid, instead His Spirit, fills us with power, love, and self control.” God says, . . . “When I put My spirit in you, . . . I don't turn you, into a wimp.”

The results, are three fold: power, love, self control. The secret of controlling your reaction, . . . is letting God's Spirit, . . . fill your life, . . . moment by moment.

He'll break, all those bad habits, all those patterns of reacting, . . all those old ways of being negative, defensive, reacting in fear, in anger, in sarcasm. He can break, all those old patterns in your life, . . . and, fill your life, . . . with power, . . . love, . . . self control.

That, is meekness. Power controlled, by love. Even though, you could blow them away, you don't. Jesus is the prime example, of this. We're talking about, . . . the lifestyle, of Jesus Christ.

He's hanging on the cross, and He could have called, ten thousand angels. He could have, blown up the world. Power controlled, . . by love. This is the happy, relaxed, stress reduced, . . . type of life style. You roll, with the punches. Things don't fluster you, because you're in control, of your reactions, . . . even though, you can't control, . . . the situation.

Some of you, are stressed out. You're stressed out, by relationships. What do you need, . . . more than anything else? You need to develop, . . . the quality of meekness, the quality of controlling my reactions, by the Spirit of God. When He comes into my life, . . . He gives me power, . . . controlled by love.

“Controlling My Reactions”, Don't Worry - Be Happy! Part 3 of 8

Matthew 5:5 – “Happy are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.”

Clearing up the confusion:

\* What meekness is NOT \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\* What meekness IS \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

When do I need to control my reactions? Five ways, . . . to work on, your reactions:

1. When someone serves you . . . Be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, not \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Philippians 2:4-5 – “Don't just think about your own affairs, but be interested in others too, and in what they are doing. Your attitude should be the same as Jesus Christ's.”

2. When someone disappoints you . . . Be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, not \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Romans 14:1 – “Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters.”

Galatians 6:1-2 – “If a person is trapped in some sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens.”

3. When someone disagrees with you . . . Be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, without \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Proverbs 15:1 – “A gentle answer quiets anger but a harsh word stirs it up.”

James 3:16-17 – “Wherever there is jealousy or selfish ambition, there will be disorder . . . But wisdom from above is pure, powerful, gentle, and friendly.”

2 Timothy 2:24-25 – “The Lord's servant must not quarrel . . . those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in hope that God will give them a change of heart . . .”

4. When someone corrects you . . . Be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, not \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

James 1:19 – “Let everyone be quick to listen, but slow to use his tongue, and slow to lose his temper.”

5. When someone hurts you . . . Be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, not \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 12:17, 21 – “Do not repay evil for evil . . . overcome evil with good.”

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2 Tim. 1:7 – “God's Spirit does not make us timid, instead his Spirit fills us with power, love, and self-control.”

Next Week’s Sermon: “The Secret of Satisfaction”, Matthew 5:6