

Women in Focus  
September 2008 Devotional

Focusing In . . . . Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. (Phil. 4:5)

I was looking up a totally different verse this morning when these words just jumped off the page and stuck so deeply in my heart that I simply had to change direction and write a different letter than initially intended. I'm not very fond of using the words, "God told me . . ." but I was pretty tempted to start this missive with that phrase.

As I consider this fall and all that is required of our family with school and jobs and commitments, the word "gentle" isn't the first thought that comes to mind. Life more often appears demanding, competitive, pushy, critical, fast-paced . . . just plain tiring! And there is this sadness and cruelty and hatred and anger and senseless violence so often in the news and sometimes even in our own neighborhoods. The world is just not a very gentle place to live.

In reading this phrase which I've known and even memorized in years gone by – what struck me was the connection between "Let your gentleness be evident to all" to the next sentence, "The Lord is near". The dawning realization was that when we display gentleness to those around us, we are bringing to them the very presence of Christ. When our gentleness is evident, the Lord is very near. People can feel him and almost touch him through our gentle spirit.

As far as I can recall, there is only one time that Jesus describes himself in the Scripture and that is Matthew 11: 29, ". . . for I am gentle and humble in heart . . ." And so a gentle and humble spirit is truly the spirit of Christ made alive and tangible and very present in the present.

What does gentle mean to you? What image comes to mind? I see a new dad holding his first born child, so afraid that he might harm this little one with his rough hands while gazing down with teary eyes filled with a wonder that God could create such perfection. Isn't that a beautiful image of how we ought to hold each other's hearts? Not careless or rough with judgmental or critical eyes, but with such a tender delight.

Yes, if there is anything this world needs, it is a large dose of gentleness to counter the rough edges of life and God is calling his people to be that gentle touch. Sadly, I don't think that "gentle" is often the first word that comes to mind when people think of Christians either. I Peter 3 reminds us as women that our beauty is not found in outward adornment of jewels or clothing or hair styles but is ". . . the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight".

So let's put away those critical spirits and here is to a kinder, gentler fall as we endeavor to bring the Lord ever near.

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