

Week 1: Exploring Radical Gentleness

Day 2: A Gentle Approach... and a Gentle Response



What do you do first when you wake in the morning? I often groan and roll over, trying to go back to sleep. Or, depending on the day, I clench my teeth, squeeze my eyes shut, and groan as I imagine the tasks ahead of me. Rarely – if ever – do I spring up ready for action.

And, you know what? That’s OK! We don’t have to start the day bright-eyed and ready to go. And, yet...

What if we approached the new day in a gentle way? “Tomorrow is a new day, you shall begin it well and serenely”, says Ralph Waldo Emerson. “This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it”, says the psalmist.

Before you even get out of bed, try a gentle stretch in appreciation for your amazing physical self and all it can do. Say a short prayer or meditate for just a couple of minutes. I’m trying to start my day with a new conversation with God that starts like this: “Good morning, God! How do you want to use me today?”

If we can practice approaching each new day – and any potential challenges included in it – with gentleness, I believe it can lead us to approaching one another with that same gentleness. Every person we encounter has an entire world going on in their head and their heart that we know nothing about. How that is expressed outwardly also varies widely – and wildly!

Can we put assumptions aside and greet and acknowledge others with gentleness? What if inwardly you approached each person with this thought: “Beloved Child of God, may you have a blessed day.” Or better yet: “How am I here to love this person, God? What can I learn?”

If we can practice approaching others with gentleness, it leads to the ability to respond in gentleness – even when someone, or some situation – has been less than kind, or demanding, or harsh, or...

Can we pause for one breath, and instead of responding from hurt, or anger, or irritation, respond from that same gentle space? “What am I here to learn Lord? Please help me love.”

I’m not advocating being a doormat here. Boundaries are important. (More on that later...) But I do believe that a gentle attitude in our interactions can go a long way in establishing rapport, closing a divide (even just a little bit), or halting the creation of a possible rift. This is how community begins to build. This is how people begin to belong to and for and with each other. Just by being a bit gentle with one another. And that’s pretty radical in my book.

What does gentleness feel like to you when you reflect upon it? How does it feel inside? Do you/can you recognize it when you see, hear, sense it? Practice is a good way to develop that gentleness muscle.

God of all peace, may we learn from you how to be gentle with one another. May we remember that you are the shepherd who will look for every last sheep. May your tender grace infuse us and all that we do. Amen.