

**THE  
CHARACTER  
OF  
INFLUENCE**

## The Summary Qualification: “above reproach” (1 Timothy 3:2a)

<i>Domestic Sphere</i>	<i>Internal Sphere</i>	<i>Relational Sphere</i>	<i>Secular Sphere</i>
husband of one wife (3:2)	temperate (3:2)	respectable (3:2)	has a good reputation with those outside (3:7)
manages his household well (3:4-5)	prudent (3:2)	hospitable (3:2)	
	not addicted to wine (3:3)	able to teach (3:2)	
	free from the love of money (3:3)	not pugnacious (3:3)	
	not a new convert (3:6)	gentle (3:3)	
		peaceable (3:3)	

**GENTLE**  
**IN DISPOSITION**

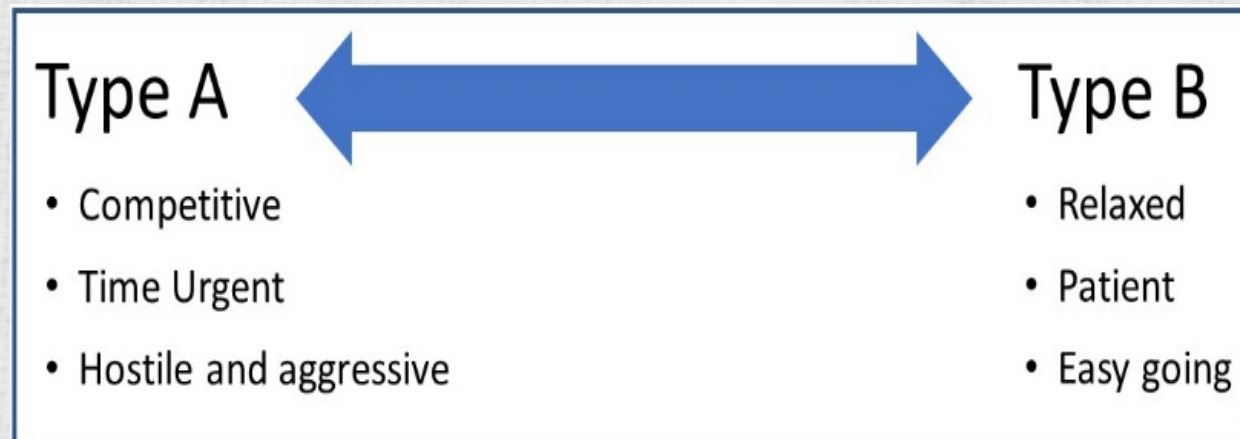
## **Common Stereotype of a Leader – “Type A” Individual**

“Type A individuals tend to be very competitive and self-critical. They strive toward goals without feeling a sense of joy in their efforts or accomplishments. Interrelated with this is the presence of a significant life imbalance. This is characterized by a high work involvement. Type A individuals are easily ‘wound up’ and tend to overreact. . . .

“Type A personalities experience a constant sense of urgency: Type A people seem to be in a constant struggle against the clock. Often, they quickly become impatient with delays and unproductive time, schedule commitments too tightly, and try to do more than one thing at a time, such as reading while eating or watching television. . . .

“Type A individuals tend to be easily aroused to anger or hostility, which they may or may not express overtly. Such individuals tend to see the worse in others, displaying anger, envy and a lack of compassion. When this behavior is expressed overtly (i.e., physical behavior) it generally involves aggression and possible bullying.”

—[www.simplepsychology.org](http://www.simplepsychology.org)



## For many, ideal masculinity = the “Type A” man

- ✓ Man of steel
- ✓ Rough around the edges
- ✓ Always in the driver’s seat
- ✓ Highly competitive
- ✓ Never takes ‘no’ for an answer
- ✓ Gets what he wants
- ✓ Only capable of *tough* love.

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**“An overseer, then, must be . . . gentle.”**

**—1 Timothy 3:2-3**

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# 1. The *Definition* of Gentleness

The Greek word translated “gentle,” ἐπιεικής (*epieikēs*), describes the attitude of “**not insisting on every right or letter of law or custom.**”

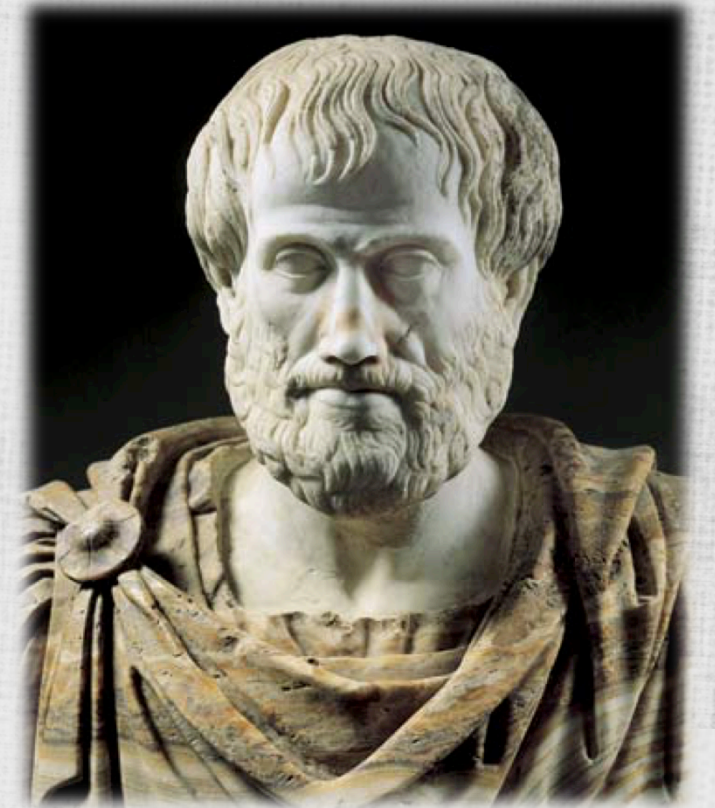
- It can be translated as “**yielding, gentle, kind, courteous, tolerant.**”
- It describes a **relational quality**—a particular *manner* by which a person relates to others.
- “One of the truly great Greek words that is almost untranslatable.”
- Difficult to define, but easy to recognize.

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“Aristotle contrasted it [gentleness] with ‘strict justice.’ For him it meant a generous treatment of others that, while demanding equity, does not insist on the letter of the law. Willing to admit limitations, it is prepared to make allowances so that justice does not injure. It is a quality, therefore, that keeps one from insisting on one’s full rights.”

—Gerald F. Hawthorne





The term *gentleness* (ἐπιεικῆς) “was used for a considerate, thoughtful attitude in legal relationships which was prepared to mitigate the rigors of justice, with its laws and claims, in contrast to the attitude which demands that rights, including one’s own, should be upheld at all costs.”

—NIDNTT

The term “applied to him who knows how to bear injuries with a gentle and moderate disposition, who forgives much, who passes by insults, who neither makes himself be dreaded through harsh severity, nor exacts with full rigor.”

—John Calvin



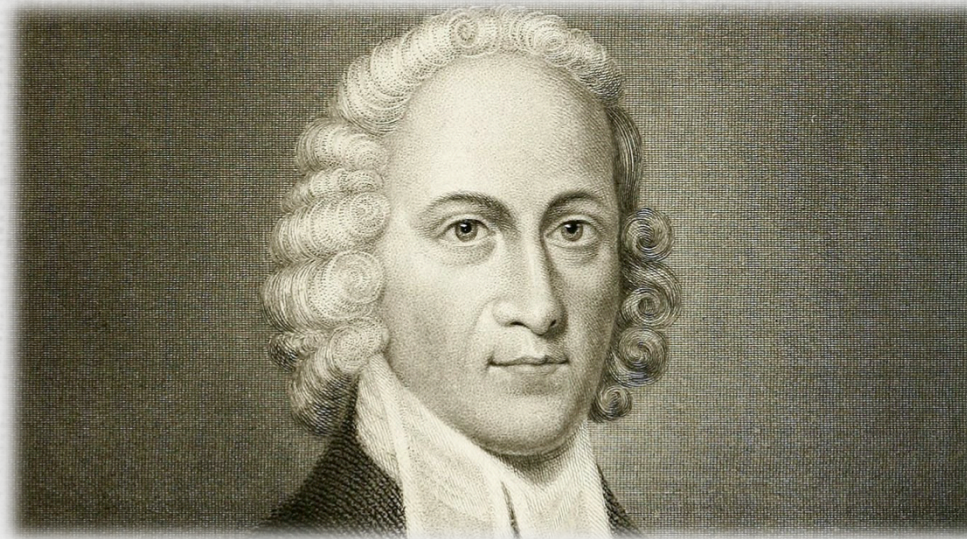
## The antithesis to gentleness:

- *Gentleness* is antithetical to *pugnaciousness*: “not pugnacious but gentle” (1 Tim 3:3)
- To be *gentle* is to be exactly opposite of being *angry, abusive with one’s authority, critical, combative, and self-preserving*.

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“In him who exercises the Christian spirit as he ought there will be no passionate, rash and hasty expression; there will not be a bitter exasperated countenance, or air of behavior, no violence in talk or carriage, but on the contrary, those words and that behavior which savor of peaceableness and calmness.”

—Jonathan Edwards, *Charity and Its Fruit*, 97-98



## 2. The *Basis* for Gentleness

### a. It finds its origin in the character of God.

- **Psalm 103:8-14** – “The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. He will not always strive *with us*, nor will He keep *His anger* forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. Just as a father has compassion on *his* children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are *but* dust.”

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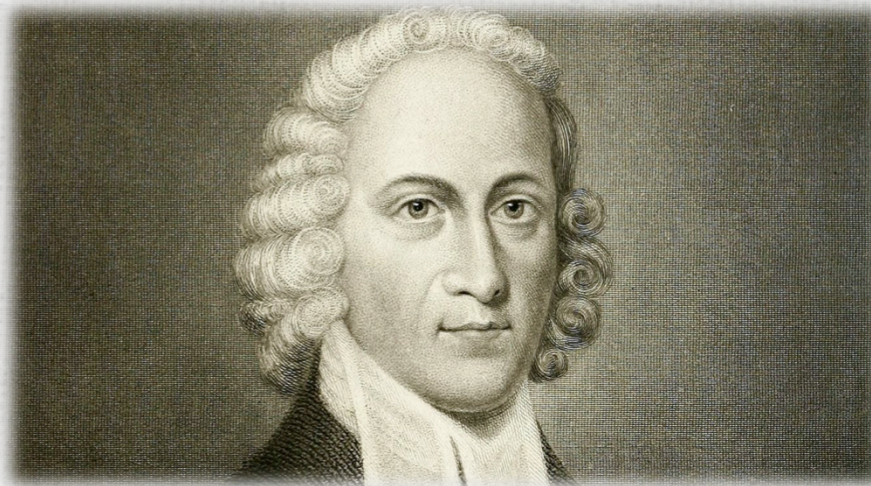
## b. It characterized how Jesus Christ related to sinners.

- **2 Corinthians 10:1** – “Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent!”
- **Matthew 11:28-29** – “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 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. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”
- The incarnation itself demonstrates *gentleness*.

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“This glorious Person came down from heaven to be ‘the Light of the Word,’ that by him the beauty of the Deity might shine forth. . . . Christ having, by his incarnation, come down from his infinite exaltation above us, has become one of our kinsmen and brothers. And his glory shining upon us through his human nature, the manifestation is wonderfully adapted to the strength of the human vision; so that, though it appear in all its effulgence, it is yet tempered to our sight. He is indeed possessed of infinite majesty, to inspire us with reverence and adoration, yet that majesty need not terrify us, for we behold it blended with humility, meekness and sweet condescension.”

—*Jonathan Edwards*





**c. It is the direct evidence of the Spirit's sanctifying influence in a believer's life.**

- **Galatians 5:22-23** – “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness [πραΰτης], self-control; against such things there is no law.”
- The opposite of “enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions” which are the “deeds of the flesh” (Gal 5:19-21).



# 3. The *Expectation* of Gentleness

## a. The Church's Elders

- **1 Timothy 3:2-3** – “An overseer, then, must be above reproach, . . . not pugnacious but gentle.”
- “An overseer who is gracious does not insist on his full rights but rather is willing to rise above injury and injustice” —*William Mounce*
- *Gentleness* is what makes it nature to call an elder a *shepherd*.

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“The gentle man stands in vivid contrast to the pugnacious man. A gentle man exhibits a willingness to yield and patiently makes allowances for the weakness and ignorance of the fallen human condition. One who is gentle refuses to retaliate in kind for wrongs done by others and does not insist upon the letter of the law or his personal rights. God fully expects His undershepherds to shepherd His people in the same way He does. He will not let His people be driven, beaten, condemned, or divided. Thus the shepherd must be patient, gracious, and understanding with the erring—and sometimes exasperating—sheep.”



—*Alexander Strauch*

- **Galatians 6:1** – “Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.”
- **2 Timothy 2:24-25** – “The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition.”
- **2 Timothy 4:2** – “Preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.”

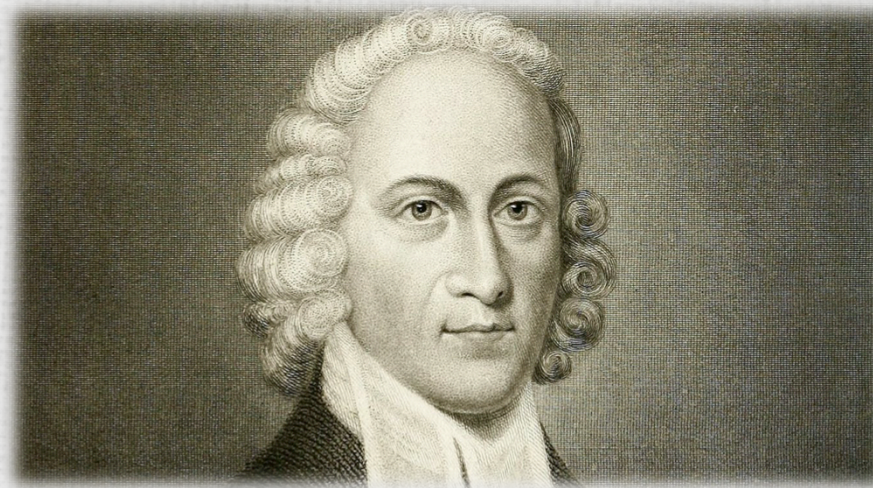
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## b. All Christians

- **Philippians 4:5a** – “Let your gentle spirit [ἐπιεικής] be known to all men.”
- **Titus 3:1-2** – “Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle [ἐπιεικής], showing every consideration for all men.”
- *Gentleness* is one of the most winsome qualities of a Christian man.

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“Truly gracious affections . . . are attended with the lamblike, dovelike spirit and temper of Jesus Christ; or in other words, they naturally beget and promote such a spirit of love, meekness, quietness, forgiveness and mercy, as appears in Christ. The evidence of this in the Scripture is very abundant. If we judge of the nature of Christianity, and the proper spirit of the gospel, by the word of God, this spirit is what may, by way of eminency, be called the Christian spirit; and may be looked upon as the true, and distinguishing disposition of the hearts of Christians, as Christians. . . . All that are truly godly, and real disciples of Christ, have this spirit in them; and not only so, but they are of this spirit; it is the spirit by which they are so possessed and governed, that it is their true and proper character.”



—*Jonathan Edwards*

“Gentleness is essential to Christian living. It is not an add-on. It is . . . one of the few indisputable evidences of the Holy Spirit alive and well within someone. Gentleness is not just for some Christians, those wired in a certain way. It cannot merely be an inherent character trait, a result of personality or genetic predisposition, because it is listed as part of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. Looked at another way, nowhere in the New Testament’s lists of spiritual gifts is gentleness identified as one such gift. It is not a *gift* of the spirit for a few. It is the *fruit* of the Spirit for all. To be gentle is to become who we were meant to be; that is, to return to who we once were, in Eden.

—Dane Ortlund, *Edwards on the Christian Life*

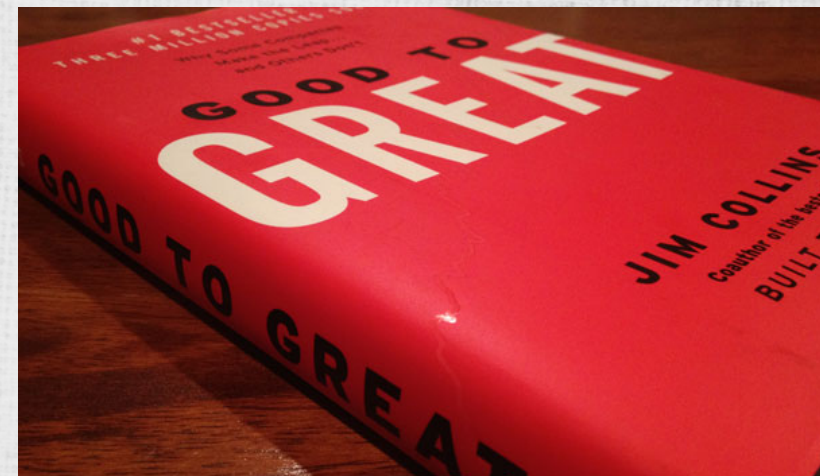
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## c. Leaders in General

A five-year study on what transforms a company:

“We were surprised, shocked really, to discover the type of leadership required for turning a good company into a great one. Compared to high-profile leaders with big personalities who make headlines and become celebrities, the good-to-great leaders seem to have come from Mars. Self-effacing, quiet, reserved, even shy—these leaders are a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will. They are more like Lincoln and Socrates than Patton or Caesar.”

—Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap . . . and Others Don't*.





## Case Study #1: Moses, Israel's First Leader

- **Numbers 12:3** – “Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth.”
- The Hebrew adjective translated as “humble” literally means “bowed” or “bent over.”
- There is good reason to understand the word as “long suffering” or “tolerant,” especially when understood in light of the context of the constant opposition Moses faced during the wilderness wanderings.

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## Case Study #2: Rehoboam, Divider of the Nation

- **1 Kings 12:3-5** – “Then they sent and called him, and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying, ‘Your father made our yoke hard; now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you.’ Then he said to them, ‘Depart for three days, then return to me.’ So the people departed.”
- **1 Kings 12:6-11** – “King Rehoboam consulted with the elders who had served his father Solomon while he was still alive, saying, ‘How do you counsel *me* to answer this people?’ Then they spoke to him, saying, ‘If you will be a servant to this people today, and will serve them and grant them their petition, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever.’ But he forsook the counsel of the elders which they had given him, and consulted with the young men who grew up with him and served him.”

- **1 Kings 12:10-11** – “The young men who grew up with him spoke to him, saying, ‘Thus you shall say to this people who spoke to you, saying, “Your father made our yoke heavy, now you make it lighter for us!” But you shall speak to them, “My little finger is thicker than my father’s loins! Whereas my father loaded you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.”’”
- The kingdom of Israel was divided into the northern and southern kingdoms over the absence of the king’s *gentleness*.



## 4. The *Resistance* to Gentleness

- Emphasizing the concept of *gentleness* elicits warnings about the dangers of compromise.
- Old liberal theologians preached about a God who was so gentle that he would never punish anyone for their sin, and who was so loving that he had no place for anger.
- Christians must be bold to preach the truth. They must be courageous, alert, outspoken, and fearless—about such doctrines as divine sovereignty and wrath, the heinousness of sin, and the reality of hell.
- But the solution to liberal cowardice is *not* evangelical pugnaciousness.

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- **2 Timothy 2:24-26** – “The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses *and escape* from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

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“Of all people who engage in controversy, we, who are called Calvinists, are most expressly bound by our own principles to the exercise of gentleness and moderation. If, indeed, they who differ from us have a power of changing themselves, if they can open their own eyes, and soften their own hearts, then we might with less inconsistency be offended at their obstinacy: but if we believe the very contrary to this, our part is, not to strive, but in meekness to instruct those who oppose. ‘If peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth.’ If you write with a desire of being an instrument of correcting mistakes, you will of course be cautious of laying stumbling blocks in the way of the blind or of using any expressions that may exasperate their passions, confirm them in their principles, and thereby make their conviction, humanly speaking, more impracticable.”

—John Newton



**How then are we to proclaim the truth in a context of hostility?**



**“gentle in presentation, powerful in substance”**

## 5. The *Examination* of Gentleness

CONTEXT	QUESTIONS
<b>In the home</b>	If your wife was asked about your primary strengths, would she list gentleness as one of them? Do your children know you as much for your tenderness as for your discipline? Are you a <i>shepherd</i> of your family?
<b>At work</b>	Would your coworkers say that you are the last person in the office to insist upon his own rights? Do they know you as one who is quick to forgive, and who is willing to take responsibility for the deficiencies of the team?
<b>In the neighborhood</b>	Would your neighbors know they could turn to you for help in a time of personal emergency?
<b>Towards believers</b>	Have you withheld forgiveness from someone at the church even though they have asked, because you are expecting something bigger than a mere request? Have you not forgiven someone who injured you because they have not yet admitted their sin and asked for forgiveness?
<b>Towards strangers</b>	Do you respond with kindness to drivers who cut you off on the freeway or take your parking spot? Do you speak gently to customer service representatives, even when they treat you with disrespect?



**“A mature man, then, must be . . . gentle.”**

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