Meekness and Humility

1. What image comes to mind when someone is described as meek or humble?

These are extremely difficult words to translate into English, because we may think they imply weakness, passivity or even cowardliness. However, we will see that the Bible teaches that these are inappropriate characterizations.

Definitions of Meekness and Humility

Praos [prah'-os] meek, mild, gentle

We will see meekness is an attitude or quality of heart [1 Peter 3:4] where a person willingly accepts and submits to the will and desires of someone else ... for Christians, particularly toward God. The meek person is not self-centered. They are willing to put themselves in second place and submit to achieve what is good for others. Meekness is the opposite of self-centeredness, self-will, and self-interest. In other words, the meek person is not occupied with self at all.

Tapeinos [tap-i-nos'] base, cast down, humble, courteous

Humility is an attitude [Acts 20:19] where a person is not proud or arrogant; although, they may be successful or powerful. A humble person shows respect for other persons. Humility is the opposite of pride, haughtiness, and self-exaltation.

2. Why do you think we find the characteristics hard to accept ... we may even hate them?

Even the greatest person in the Bible did not rely on himself ... he modeled these qualities.

Matthew 11:29 Jesus said, “... I am meek and humble in heart ...”

Benefits of Meekness and Humility

In other verses Christ emphasizes the promises available to those that practice these qualities.

Matthew 5:5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth (or land).

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (23) meekness and self-control.

James 4:6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says¹: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

James 4:10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

¹ Proverbs 3:34 He mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble. See also I Peter 5:5
3. If we possess meekness and humility, according to these verses, what do we gain?

So, it is clear that as Christians, we can experience God’s blessing and favor when we practice humility and meekness. However, there is another basic reason for Christians to adopt these attitudes.

Why Christians Should Practice Meekness and Humility

In addition to the blessings we can enjoy by remaining meek and humble, there are other important reasons.

Ephesians 4:2 Be completely humble and meek; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Colossians 3:12 Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience.

1 Timothy 6:11 But you, man of God, flee from [the love of materialism], and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and meekness.

Titus 3:1-2 Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, (2) to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true meekness toward all men.

4. According to the above verses, at the most basic level, why should we practice the attitudes of meekness and humility?

From these verses it is clear that Paul routinely used his apostolic authority to command us to show meekness and humility. However, there is one more reason why Christians should demonstrate these attitudes.

Philippians 2:5-11 (5) Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: (6) Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, (7) but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant [showing meekness], being made in human likeness. (8) And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death [again showing the quality of meekness]-- even death on a cross!

5. In these verses to the church at Philippi, Paul emphasizes another strong reason why we should practice the attitudes of meekness and humility. What is it?

Jesus Christ’s life provides the best example of what it means to have humility and meekness (Matthew 11:29; Philippians 2:1-11). Jesus preached and taught often about the need for humility (Matthew 23:12; Mark 9:35; Luke 14:11; Luke 18:14). He urged those who desired to live by Kingdom standards to practice meekness and humility (Matthew 18:1-4; Matthew 23:12).
As Christians, Meekness and Humility Should Define Our Relationships

*Paul believed that quality relationships with other people, especially those who had erred spiritually or were seeking, hinged on the presence of meekness or humility.*

Galatians 6:1  Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him *meekly.* But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.

Philippians 2:3  Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in *humility* consider others better than yourselves.

2 Timothy 2:24-26  And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. (25) Those who oppose him he must *meekly* instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, (26) and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

1 Peter 3:15  But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with *meekness* and respect.

James 3:13  Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the *meekness* that comes from wisdom.

6.  In what type of relational situations do you find it difficult to maintain an attitude of meekness and humility ... what stops you?

Applying the Word

*A word study is not just an academic exercise. Our study of God’s word should allow us to apply what we have learned to our lives. Effective application will require help ... but how do we get this needed support? Christ shows us a valuable way.*

Matthew 26:36-44  Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." (37) He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. (38) Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." (39) Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." (40) Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. (41) "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." (42) He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done." (43) When he came back, he again found them sleeping,
because their eyes were heavy. (44) So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

7. Christ was overwhelmed with sorrow and troubled about what he was being asked to do on the cross. How did he remain meek and resist the temptation to go against God’s desire?

Some people may say or just think that meekness and humility are only something that Christ can accomplish. But we can also pray and ask the Holy Spirit to guide us in these areas.

Matthew 18:4 Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

1 Peter 3:3-4 Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. (4) Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a meek and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.

This week, ask the Holy Spirit to show you who you might be tempted to impress during the next few days. Then determine what act of humble service or meekness that you can do for that person instead.

Ask God to let you see that His dealings with you are good, and; therefore, you don’t need to argue, debate or resist where He is taking you in your life.
Biblical Word Studies

Why Do Word Studies

2 Timothy 2:15  Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

The Bible is the Word of God so, naturally, word studies are an important way of learning more about the message God originally communicated to us in His Word. This method of Bible study helps us discover the rich meaning of the original texts, which were written in the ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages. The correct interpretation of biblical truth always depends on how well we understand what the writer meant. It’s been said that approximately 8,674 different Hebrew words were used in the Old Testament, while some 5,624 different Greek words were used to write the New Testament. However, an English translation consists of only about 6,000 different English words in the Old and New Testaments combined. So how did they squeeze the original 14,298 different words into the 6,000 different words we have in our Bibles? They did it by using the same English word to translate several different words in the original language. Therefore, our English translations lack some of the more subtle shades of meaning that are understood in the original language. Word studies are profitable because they help us to understand the full spectrum of meaning that the original language conveys.  

Note: This method of word study does NOT require much, if any, understanding of Hebrew or Greek.

Steps To Take When Doing a Word Study

As you begin this method of Bible study, you need to keep several things in mind.

- Word studies must be based on the original language words, not on the English words. For instance: we won’t be studying the definition of English words such as “truth.” Instead we will be looking for the original definition of the Hebrew or Greek word that was translated into the English word “truth.”
- We must always allow the context to dictate the ultimate meaning of the word being studied no matter what the English equivalent might be.
- Several different Greek or Hebrew words are translated into one English word. Be sure to check your concordance carefully to see if this is true of the word you are studying.
- One Greek or Hebrew word can be translated several ways in English, particularly between different translations. To overcome this difficulty you will have to do a careful study on all the different English renderings of the original word.
- An original word can be translated by a whole English phrase. A concordance does not list word translations by phrases.

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Step 1 Choose the word you want to study. It should be an important biblical word. Write the word and the specific verse that you found it in. Read the verse a few times in context.

Step 2 Find its English definition. If you have access to one, look up the definition in a Bible dictionary such as Vine’s, but you can also use a normal dictionary. Write out a short definition and make note of any synonyms or antonyms.

Step 3 Compare translations. Read the verse in different recent translations and write down how it is rendered in each of them. For example, one translation may use “meek,” while another may use “gentle.”

Step 4 Discover the word’s usage in the Bible. Check the word’s occurrences in the Bible by using an exhaustive concordance such as Strong’s. If you don’t have access to an exhaustive concordance, then you could use the one found in your Bible, but this is not ideal. Make note of the Strong’s number for future reference, and then write down the other verses where the word is used. Spend some time reading these verses.

Step 5 Based on the use of the word in the verses you have read, write down an expanded definition of the word.

Step 6 Bring the word’s meaning back to the verse. Now that you’ve discovered the original meaning for this word, read the original verse once again, substituting the expanded definition into the context. Does the new meaning add light to the verse? Record how the new meaning helps you to better understand this particular verse.

Step 7 Write an application. When doing a word study, be careful to remember that the goal of your study is application, not interpretation only. Remember that you are doing personal Bible study, not just conducting an academic exercise. Constantly ask, “How can understanding this word strengthen my spiritual life?” It is encouraging to know that the words which God inspired in the original languages have not been watered down over the centuries in the translation process.

References:


The New Strong’s Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible by James Strong

Word Study Greek-English New Testament by Paul R. McReynolds