

Ephesians 4:2—with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love,

Certain character traits epitomize the lifestyle of a New Testament believer who walks worthily in his calling. “*Humility...gentleness...patience,*” along with “*showing forbearance to*” fellow believers “*in love,*” should be obvious.

“*Humility*” can also be rendered “lowliness of mind.” Don’t misunderstand. The humble are not to perceive themselves as worthless and without hope. Neither are they weak with no backbone to stand in battle. Rather, they are individuals who regard others “*as more important than*” themselves (Philippians 2:3). Anyone who lives by the principle of the cross demonstrates humility as a way of life.

Moses was the most humble man on the earth (Numbers 12:3) but could never be accused of wimping out (going passive) in a bind. David (2Samuel 7:18), Josiah (2Kings 22:19), Isaiah (Isaiah 6:5), John the Baptist (John 3:30), Paul (2Corinthians 12:7-10), and, of course, Jesus (Matthew 11:29), all exemplified humility as they carried out the Father’s will. But to a man, they possessed the boldness of a lion. So “*humility*” (Ephesians 4:2) is not synonymous with “weakness.”

God makes the following promises to the humble: He will teach them His way (Psalm 25:9); they will prosper (Psalm 37:11) and be rewarded with riches, honor, and life (Proverbs 22:4); they will possess wisdom (Proverbs 11:2) and honor (Proverbs 29:23) and receive abundant grace (1Peter 5:5). Humility most definitely is the way to travel, especially when you consider the alternative.

The opposite of humility is pride. Pride caused Lucifer’s fall (Isaiah 14:12-14), was the basis of Adam and Eve’s sin (Genesis 3:5-6), and is the root of sin in mankind in general (1John 2:16). A life of pride results in forgetting God (Deuteronomy 8:14; Hosea 13:6), engaging in corrupt action (2 Chronicles 26:16), being unthankful to the Lord (2 Chronicles 32:25), opposing God and man (Psalm 10:2-4), being rebuked by the Lord (Psalm 119:21), receiving dishonor (Proverbs 11:2), bringing destruction upon one’s self (Proverbs 25:15; 16:18), stirring up strife (Proverbs 28:25), stumbling and falling (Proverbs 16:18; Jeremiah 50:32), never being satisfied (Habakkuk 2:5), seeking evil gain (Habakkuk 2:9), experiencing self-deception (Galatians 6:3), opposing the Father (1John 2:16), being unfaithful to the Lord (2 Chronicles 26:16), and being humbled (Proverbs 29:23; Isaiah 2:11, 17; Daniel 4:37; 5:20; Matthew 23:12). Why Paul encouraged the believers at Ephesus to walk in “*humility*” (Ephesians 4:2) is apparent.

“*Gentleness*” (Ephesians 4:2) is a natural byproduct of humility. “*Gentleness,*” a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23), can also be interpreted “meekness”; but in no way means “weakness.” Jesus was gentle and meek (2Corinthians 10:1), but cleansed the temple after observing its abuse (Matthew 21:12-13; John 2:13-17). Consequently, the gentle (meek) can display righteous anger without committing sin (Ephesians 4:26). In fact, controlled anger (directed toward what opposes God and is harmful to others) is permissible when coupled with wisdom and discretion. However, unrighteous anger (uncontrolled anger based on selfish motives) toward those in opposition is sin. We are to love and pray for our enemies (Matthew 5:10-12, 44; Luke 6:28)—never attempt to “whip them into line” by using weapons of the flesh.

Once humility and gentleness take root, patience follows. How so? Humility and gentleness are gained through a proper view of God’s awesome character, power, and sovereignty. Once a believer perceives God as sovereignly working all things for his good (Romans 8:28), he is more apt to wait patiently on God’s timing rather than attempt to resolve difficulties in the power of the flesh. Those who marginally know God possess little patience. Those who know Him intimately (know His heart) learn that everything must be done in His timing, for the right thing done at the wrong time is sin. God teaches us patience by allowing our faith to be tried (James 1:3). Once tried, we learn that God always knows best and answers prayers with: “Yes!” “No!” or “Wait!” Abraham learned this truth while waiting on God’s promise regarding Isaac

(Romans 4:18-21; Hebrews 6:13-15).

When a believer possesses humility, gentleness, and patience, he is equipped to “*show forbearance*” to others “*in love*” (Ephesians 4:2). “*Forbearance*” means “to hold up or to bear with.” “*Love*” is *agape* love, unconditional love. Unsurprisingly, our agape love validates to the world that we are Jesus’ disciples (John 13:35). Paul desired that the Ephesians display all of these qualities.