

4. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth

(Matthew 5:5)

Biblical and Cultural Background

In the ancient world, meekness was often misunderstood as weakness. However, in biblical terms, the Greek word for "meek" (*praus*) refers to strength under control. It was used to describe a well-trained warhorse: powerful, but responsive and docile to the guidance of its rider.

In the Old Testament, Moses is described as the meekest man on earth (Numbers 12:3). He was not weak. He stood up to Pharaoh and led Israel out of Egypt. His meekness came from his deep reliance on God and his willingness to yield to God's will rather than assert his own.

Jesus himself describes his heart as "meek and humble" (Matthew 11:29), and he perfectly embodies this beatitude. He did not retaliate when he was insulted. He stood firm in truth, but did so with gentleness and inner authority. His meekness was not passivity; it was strength guided by love and rooted in his relationship with the Father.

What It Means for Us Today

To be meek today means to be teachable, open, and grounded in the knowledge that we don't need to dominate others or control every outcome. It means having the inner strength to:

- Yield to God rather than grasp for power.
- Stay calm and centered when provoked.
- Speak the truth firmly but gently.
- Be **docile** in spirit—willing to be led, taught, or corrected.

In a world that prizes assertiveness and control, meekness is often viewed as a flaw. But Jesus says it is exactly this quality that leads us to inherit the earth—to live in true freedom, peace, and fullness.

Reflection Questions (to reflect on during prayer time)

- Where in your life do you feel tempted to force outcomes or control others?
- When was the last time you listened instead of reacted?
- Are you teachable? Do you welcome correction?

A Way to Discern Responses: Respect for God and for Self

One helpful way to reflect on our reactions is to ask: *Does this response show respect for God? Does it show respect for myself?* Some reactions may defend our pride or ego but lack charity or reverence. Others may appear pious but compromise our dignity or boundaries. Meekness is not about passivity or self-erasure—it's about responding with strength under control. A truly meek response respects both God and self, and seeks the good of others. As you read the examples below, notice how this framework can help clarify what a wise and spiritually grounded response might look like.

Practice: 3 Real-Life Examples

Read each situation and reflect: Which response shows meekness? What would you choose to do?

Example 1: The Overburdened Coworker

Scenario:

Marty notices that his coworker, Bea, often neglects her portion of a shared task. It keeps falling on him to complete her work, and it's becoming a pattern.

What does Marty do?

- **A.** Marty confronts Bea sharply and tells her she's taking advantage of him. He lists all the times she's dropped the ball and makes it clear he's not going to tolerate it anymore.
→ (High respect for self, little/no respect for God—reactive, lacking charity)
- **B.** Marty says nothing. He keeps picking up the extra work because he thinks that's what Jesus would do—suffer silently and avoid confrontation.
→ (High respect for God—on the surface—but little respect for self or stewardship of his time/energy)
- **C.** Marty prays first to respond, not react. Then, when calm, he talks to Bea directly but kindly, saying he's noticed a pattern and would like to revisit how they're dividing the work. He stays grounded and respectful, aiming for truth and resolution.
→ (Balanced respect for both God and self—meekness in action)

Example 2: The Overbearing Relative

Scenario:

Carrie's sister-in-law, Jenny, repeatedly criticizes her parenting style, offering unsolicited advice and undermining her decisions—sometimes in front of others.

What does Carrie do?

- **A.** Carrie snaps and puts Jenny in her place. She brings up Jenny's own parenting flaws and tells her to back off.
→ (High respect for self, little/no respect for God—justified perhaps, but driven by ego and pride)
- **B.** Carrie lets Jenny talk and smiles politely. She doesn't speak up, even though it makes her feel small and resentful.
→ (Respect for God—or perhaps conflict avoidance—but little respect for herself and her own dignity)
- **C.** Carrie takes a moment to pray or breathe. Then, in a calm voice, she says, "I know we see things differently. I'm trying to raise my children intentionally and with love. I'd appreciate your support rather than critique."
→ (Balanced response: upholding truth with kindness—respecting both God and self)

Example 3: Changes to the "Our Father" at Mass

Scenario:

Alan's diocese recently implemented a new translation of the "Our Father" to align with the rest of the global Church. Some phrases are now worded differently, and he's struggling to get used to it. It feels disruptive and unnecessary.

What does Alan do?

- **A.** Alan complains openly and frequently—during Mass, to friends, and on social media. He says it's ridiculous to change sacred words he's known his whole life and decides to keep saying it the "right" way, no matter what.
→ (High respect for self—his feelings, comfort, and habits—but little to no respect for God's broader work through the Church and unity with others)
- **B.** Alan feels confused but says nothing. He tries to memorize the changes but feels resentful every time he prays. He assumes this is just part of "offering it up," so he never brings it to prayer.
→ (Attempt at respect for God, but no real integration of his interior life or voice—low respect for self)
- **C.** Alan brings his discomfort to prayer and asks God to help him understand the change and his reaction to it. He researches the reasons for the translation and tries to embrace it as a way of staying united with the universal Church. He lets himself be stretched.
→ (Balanced response: honoring God's movement through the Church while honoring his own spiritual growth and response)