

BIBLE VERSES: John 8:1-11, Galatians 6:1, Philippians 4:5.

The aim of this session is to see that gentleness is better than force when dealing with other people, and to look at examples of gentleness from the Bible.

LEADER'S NOTES

Some people are naturally quiet and gentle; they dislike rough games and prefer to sit inside with a book; other people are rumbustious and enjoy running, shouting, playing noisy games. So adults will refer to the quiet child as "gentle" and the noisy one as "rough". But that is not what the Bible is talking about when God refers to gentleness.

Gentleness is an attitude that we choose to adopt in our dealings with others – whatever we are actually feeling inside. Being gentle means coming alongside someone, listening to them and speaking quietly, understanding them, pointing out their fault in a loving way and helping them to be restored: the opposite is to tell someone off in a condemnatory manner. In Galatians 6:1, Paul commands us to "gently restore a brother" who has been "overtaken with a fault". We need to be kind and full of grace. Gentleness is not, then, weakness, but strength. Because to be gentle when you are feeling angry or upset requires superhuman amounts of self-control!

We can see gentleness at work when dealing with animals – they will respond to a quiet, gentle approach, but will snap and growl at rough treatment. It is the same with people – we clam up when shouted at because we feel threatened, we are much more willing to respond positively when someone is gentle with us. (You see it on the bad cop/good cop routines on police dramas!)

What the children need to learn in today's session is that being gentle is a better response than being angry. If you give people space and opportunity, they are more willing to change. If you are angry, they are more likely to remain stubborn.

For our children, they will often come up against people who annoy them, especially with siblings or in playground situations: the challenge for them is to be gentle in these situations, to be kind, to speak quietly. And we. As leaders, need to be gentle to the children in our groups.

DRIBBLE IT

COMPETITION |  **WARMING UP**

Divide the children into teams of equal numbers (if you are short, in some of the teams one person can go twice). Each team will need a ball.

Have a dribbling relay race – each player must dribble their ball to a specified point (have chairs mid room to be dribbled around) and back to the start, when the next child in the team takes over.

See which team can have all their children back to the start first.

If the children are kicking instead, and the ball goes off course, that child must start over. Hopefully, this will mean that the winning team will be one where everyone dribbled faithfully, while teams in which children tried to take shortcuts and just kick it will come lower down.

The Point: Just for fun. But also to see that being gentle gets good results.

EQUIPMENT

Foam football-sized balls.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

JENGA!

GAME |  **WATCHER** |  **WARMING UP**

Divide the children into groups and let each group play Jenga. The idea is that you build the blocks into a stack – three blocks facing one way and three on top facing the other way, so that it is possible to take bricks out of the stack and place them on top without toppling the tower.

During play, each player takes a turn at pulling out one block and putting it on top of the tower. The game finishes when the tower falls.

Play for a while.

If you are short on Jenga sets (or similar alternatives) you could have a group of children whose task it is to build a tower of miscellaneous bricks.

The Point: Just for fun.

EQUIPMENT

Some sets of Jenga

DURATION: 10 MINS.

PASS THE PLAY DOUGH

GAME | 🎵↑ **WARMING UP**

Create a figure from play dough. When the music starts, pass the figure round the circle. When the music stops, the child holding the figure is out.

Every time the music stops, check on the figure and see if it is still in shape. If it is badly damaged, reform it before starting up the music again...encourage the children to be gentle with the figure: as time goes on they will find it hard to be gentle AND concentrate on not getting out.

The Point: Just for fun, but also links in with being gentle.

EQUIPMENT

Music and the means to play it, a play dough figure.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

STRONG SUN

DRAMA | 🗣️ **TEACHING TIME**

Act the story for the children. You will need 3 leaders, one to be the sun, one to be the wind and one to be the man. Your actors need to narrate their own character, changing their voice for when their character speaks, and acting out as they do so. The man will wear the hat and coat.

Sun: One day, the sun and the wind were arguing over who was the strongest.

Wind: I am, said the wind. You can see the damage that I cause when I blow. When I blow a gale, trees fall down and even houses can be blown away. I can destroy whole forests!

Sun: Ah, said the sun, that may be true, but I still think I am stronger... Look – here comes a man on a horse. Let's have a competition. We will both try to get him to take off his hat and coat. Would you like to try first?

Wind: Of course said the wind. Prepare to be astonished....Watch me blow the hat right away! And so the wind started to blow.

Man: The rider felt the wind blow and he shivered. He buttoned up his coat and pulled his hat down firmly on his head.

Wind: so the wind blew stronger.

Man: And the man wrapped his arms around him to keep warm.

Wind: The wind blew stronger still – he blew until the leaves fell off the trees and the man's hat began to wobble on his head.

Man: so the man held onto his hat, really tightly, so that it wouldn't blow away.

Wind: The stronger the wind blew

Man: The tighter the man held on to his hat.

Wind: And then the wind was tired out.

Sun: so the sun had a go. That was impressive, said the sun, but it's my turn now. Watch. And so the sun began to shine.

Man: The man relaxed when the wind stopped blowing. He lifted his head. He took his hat off.

Sun: The sun shone more brightly.

Man: And the man unbuttoned his coat.

Sun: The sun shone brighter still

Man: And the man took his coat right off!

Sun: The sun had won.

Wind: And the wind had learned that sometimes it is better to be gentle than to be forceful with people.

Ask the children why the sun won the competition? Because the sun was gentle! The wind tugged and pulled, and that made the man hold his coat even tighter.

Say that in real life, people like gentle people better than bullies. The Bible says that we should be gentle with other people – we shouldn't bully people so we get our own way, but we should be kind to them.

The Point: To see that gentleness gets better results than force.

EQUIPMENT

A hat, a coat and a scarf.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

THAT WOMAN SINNED!

DRAMA |  **WATCHER** |  **TEACHING TIME**

Choose a child to play Jesus and a confident child to play the sinful woman. Everyone else needs to be a self-righteous Pharisee.

Say that we are going to see how Jesus treated a lady who had sinned; we will act out the story. Ask the children to think, as they act, how Jesus treats this lady.

Have everyone apart from Jesus off stage, and as you tell the story, have one of the leaders help the children act out what happened.

One morning, Jesus was spending some time alone when he heard a loud noise. There was shouting, there was screaming, and there was a lady crying.

A group of Pharisees – some of the leaders – dragged a woman across the path and threw her on the ground in front of Jesus. The woman was crying, and she wasn't even dressed – she was wearing her dressing gown and her hair was untidy.

“This woman!” said the Pharisees, pointing dramatically at her, “Has sinned! She has done a bad thing. The law says she should be punished. What do you say?” Jesus knew that the woman was feeling embarrassed, sitting in the square with her dressing gown on. He looked away from her and took no notice whatsoever.

“Jesus,” insisted the leaders, “The law says we should throw stones at her. Do you think we ought to?” Some of them began to pick up stones, waiting for what Jesus would say.

Jesus looked up. “Have any of you done things that are wrong? If one of you has never sinned, let that man throw the first stone.” Jesus looked down again, he was writing something in the sand. The leaders looked at each other. Then one of them, one of the oldest, put down his stone and walked away.

Then the second put down a stone and walked away. Then a third did the same. Soon, only the youngest men were left. Then they put down their stones, and only Jesus was there, and he woman, still sitting in her dressing gown. Jesus looked up and smiled.

“Where have they gone? Didn’t they punish you?” he asked.

“N-n-no,” replied the woman, a little confused.

“I won’t punish you, either,” Jesus said. “But listen, you know what you did was wrong, don’t you? Don’t do it anymore.” The woman nodded, and then she ran home.

Say that we don’t know what happened to the woman. Ask the children if they think she went back and carried on sinning, or if she never did that thing again?

Ask the children if they can think of words that describe how the leaders (Pharisees) treated the woman? (Roughly, unkindly, nastily)

What word describes how Jesus treated her? (Gentle is the answer we want, but they will probably come up with kind, nice, forgiving)

Say that Jesus was gentle. Say that we all do bad things. What do we prefer – someone shouting at us, “You did that all wrong! I’m so mad at you!” or someone saying, softly, “Do you need some help? You’ve made a mistake. Let’s put it right.”

Say that we all prefer it when people are gentle with us – and God wants his people to be gentle when they talk to other people, too.

The Point: To see an example of Jesus’ gentleness toward sinners. I have skated over the exact nature of the woman’s sin.

EQUIPMENT

Some newspaper stones, a dressing gown.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

WHEN I’VE DONE WRONG

Ask the children to think of a time at school where they have done something wrong and been told off. Ask them to remember what the teacher did, and how they felt as a result?

If your group are confident enough, they may want to act out the situations and the response in groups. But this is hard for this age group. If they don't want to act it out, ask them questions – what happened and what did the teacher do? Were you upset at the end? Then have 2 of the leaders act out the situation for the children, asking at the end if that was a fair representation. Ideally act out 2 situations – one that was harshly dealt with and one that was gently handled.

Ask the children how they feel when they are told off? How do they want adults to treat them when they have done something wrong?

Look at Galatians 6:1. Read it to the children then ask these questions:

- Who is the verse talking about? (people who have sinned)
- Who should help them? (people who haven't sinned)
- How should they help them? (gently)

Say that we've seen that we feel happier if we are treated gently when we have done something wrong. If people shout at us, we feel worse; but if people are gentle to us, then we feel better about ourselves and we try not to do it again.

Say that God wants us to be gentle with each other.

Ask the children to think of a time when they are usually rough or bossy – not them in particular, but children in general. They might choose the playground or PE lessons when someone slow has the ball or home with an annoying sibling.

Ask them to think about how they could react gently in those situations and, if appropriate, role-play one of the situations all together.

The Point: To think about our own lives, and to see that we want people to treat us gently, and that God wants us to be gentle, not hard.

EQUIPMENT

None.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

HAVE I BEEN GENTLE?

Sit in a circle all together. Ask the children if they think they have been gentle, or if they feel they might be too bossy or rough with people sometimes? Let children share if they want (remember it is easier for the children to speak out if the adults in the room confess to times that they have not been gentle).

Ask if they want to say sorry to God for the times when they haven't been gentle with people. Pray together, saying sorry to God for times we've been rough, and asking God to help us to be gentle with people.

Give the children space to pray themselves if they want to, but finish the prayer time yourself.

The Point: To allow the children to respond to today's teaching.

EQUIPMENT

None

DURATION: 5 MINS.

GENTLE TOO

MUSIC |  **WATCHER** |  **RESPONSE**

Sing this song together to the tune of "I can sing a rainbow":

Jesus always was gentle and kind
to all the people he knew.

We should all be gentle,
all be gentle,
all be gentle too.

Jesus never shouted at, or
bullied the people he knew

We should all be gentle,
all be gentle,
all be gentle too.

As you sing, children could play the percussion gently.

If you are not old enough to remember the Rainbow song, there are many versions [on YouTube](#) – the lyrics are, "Red and yellow and pink and green, purple and orange and blue: I can sing a rainbow, sing a rainbow, sing a rainbow too." That is the only bit I've used.

The Point: To sing about being gentle. This is something that should come back to the children during the week.

EQUIPMENT

Optional: soft percussion instruments – shakers and triangles.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

TO ALL

MEMORY VERSE |  **WATCHER** |  **RESPONSE**

“Always be gentle to all.”

Philippians 4:5

Divide the children into groups and give each group a copy of the verse and some newspaper.

Let them work together to form the verse out of the newspaper – the easiest way is to roll the pages into sausages, and to form them into the letters.

See which team finishes first – but praise the team that was gentlest!

The Point: To encourage the children to learn Scripture.

EQUIPMENT

Newspaper rolled into sausage shapes, a copy of the verse for each group.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

SHINING SUN

CRAFT IDEAS |  **TAKE AWAY**

This activity will work well with the following Teaching Time activities: Strong Sun

The children need to paint their paper plates yellow. Then they can stick the yellow crepe/tissue paper around the edge of their plate so it looks like the sun's rays.

When the paint is dry they can write on the plate, “Be Gentle”

The Point: A reminder craft.

EQUIPMENT

Paper plates, paint, yellow crepe or tissue paper cut into strips about 2 cm wide and 5-10 cm long, glue, marker pens.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

STONE SLOGAN

CRAFT IDEAS |  **WATCHER** |  **TAKE AWAY**

This activity will work well with the following Teaching Time activities: That Woman Sinned!

Ask the children what we learned from the way Jesus treated the lady in the story? (Or the way the sun behaved, if you did the first Bible activity.) We learned to be gentle – to be kind.

Say that to remember the story, we are going to make cards which say, “Be gentle”. We will scrunch up small bits of newspaper so they look like the stones the men in the story wanted to throw at the woman, and we are going to stick them next to each other so they make words.

It will probably be easier if you write the slogan on the card already – “Be gentle” is enough, or “Gentle like Jesus”, or “God wants us to be gentle” if you have children you know can work quickly. Then the children can crunch up their paper and stick it over the outline. Slower children might want just to fill in the first letter of each word.

The Point: To remember to be gentle, and to recall the rough actions of the men in the story.

EQUIPMENT

Small balls of newspaper, glue, card.

DURATION: 10 MINS.

ON EGGSHELLS

ACTIVITY |  **TAKE AWAY**

This activity will work well with the following Teaching Time activities: All

Before the session, blow the eggs – on Wiki How there is a very good article which takes you through the process step by step.

Let the children paint the blown eggs – you can use any type of paint. Encourage the children to be really gentle as the egg shells are delicate and must be treated gently.

The Point: This is a craft that requires the children to be gentle!

EQUIPMENT

Eggs, preferably blown, paint, brushes.

DURATION: 10 MINS.
