

Read: Philippians 4:4-7

We Can Be Gentle Because the Lord is Near

Philippians 4:5-7

Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

David shot out of his chair like a rocket and dove to the ground. A spear whizzed just inches over his head and stuck in the wall behind him. When he poked his head up, David saw King Saul making the angriest face he'd ever seen. The king hated David, and he was trying to kill him.

That night, after David blew out the candle, the king's soldiers surrounded David's house. If he tried to leave, they would capture him and kill him.

How would you feel if someone threw a spear at you? What would you think if bad guys surrounded your house? David was very afraid, at least at first. Maybe David wanted to fight his enemies, at least for a little while. But that's not what he did. He didn't panic, and he didn't hurt them. Even when he had the chance to get revenge, David was gentle. You can read all about it in 1 Samuel, chapters 19-22.

David was gentle, even when his enemies tried to kill him because he knew a secret. Here's what David thought when he was trapped inside his house: "You, God, are my fortress, my God on whom I can rely." (Psalm 59:17) As David sat inside his home surrounded by enemies, he didn't need a big fortress wall. He was sitting right next to God, and God was his fortress.

There are still bad guys in the world. Some people try to hurt others, and sometimes bullies pick on those smaller than them. Sometimes we get ourselves into trouble. All the danger around us can make us anxious like there's a big storm splashing around in our hearts. Maybe we even want to fight somebody.

But you know the secret to being gentle. The Lord is near! David didn't need to worry, and he didn't need to fight because he knew God was right next to him, and God took care of him. God is right next to you too, and he promises to take care of you.

Jesus came as a baby in the manger in order to erase all your sins by dying on the cross. You don't need to be scared of your sins. Every day Jesus is sitting right next to you, and he promises to take care of you no matter what happens. When Jesus comes again, he will bring a

whole army of angels, and they will take out every bad guy once and for all. God handles our sin. God handles our enemies. We can be gentle because the Lord is near.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- What happened that made David afraid?
- What made David feel safe from his enemies?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- There are many occasions when we don't need to fight back. Give an example of how to be "gentle" when someone tries to hurt you.
- Why is it easier to be gentle when we know God is taking care of us?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Make a list of the top three things are making you feel anxious at the moment.
- For each thing that makes you anxious, come up with a short prayer that helps you to align with how God wants you to feel.

Closing Prayer:

Dear Jesus, thank you for taking care of me all my life. Remind me that you are near me so that I can be gentle to others. Amen.