

## **Be happy: Be humble, gentle, and disciplined**

Message for Sunday, October 20, 2019  
by Bruce Fraser

### **Children's Message:**

John 14:21, New Living Translation:

“Those who obey my commandments are the ones who love me.”

Hi, my name is Rebel. I'm a horse, and a rather proud one. You can tell by my name that I don't like anyone bossing me around. I'm my own boss; I don't listen to anyone else.

You should have seen my owners the last time they tried to put a saddle on me. I think the man was in hospital for a week; I kicked him right in the chest. I'm a rebel alright.

And then one day, I see a truck pull into the yard. A truck with a trailer. A horse trailer. Out come a man and a woman and a girl, about ten years old. The adults went inside the house to talk, but the girl came straight over to me.

“Hi, my name is Benjy. You must be Rebel.” I reared up on my hind legs just to show her I wasn't interested in making friends with anyone.

“Would you like a carrot? I brought one with me.” She put her hand through the fence, holding out a beautiful big carrot. I may be proud, but I'm not too proud to enjoy good food. I put my head down and gently took the carrot from her hand. I'm grumpy, but I'm not mean. I only hurt people who are asking for it.

“I've got some sugar cubes as well. Would you like that?” She held out her other hand. I nuzzled her hand, licking up the sugar cubes, and finally licking the last traces of sugar from her hand. But she surprised me: while I was licking, she reached up with other hand and rubbed my cheek. I was about to yell at her, but suddenly realized, that felt nice. So I let her continue.

The adults came out of the house, and one of the strangers backed the trailer up to the gate. Looks like I was headed for a new home. Well, if it's with this girl, it may not be too bad.

A couple of hours later, we arrived at their place, my new home. Still not sure about getting close to me, they just opened the gate so I could let myself out. The door to the barn was open, and inside there was a stall with fresh straw on the floor, and hay and oats to eat.

The girl—what was her name again?—oh yeah, Benjy—came up to the fence of my stall, and she had another carrot. While I nibbled on it, she rubbed my cheek again. Then there was another surprise: she took a brush and started brushing me. Mmm, that felt good! I whinnied to tell her how much I was enjoying it. She reached over further so she could brush more of me. I moved towards her so she could reach even more.

Benjy's parents came in the barn right then, and they were surprised to see us close together. My last owner must have told them what a wild animal I was. But my last owner had never given me carrots or rubbed my cheek.

The next day, I was out in the corral. Benjy climbed onto the fence, and I went over to see if she had any treats. Sure enough, she had a carrot. This time she got in the corral with me, and started brushing me all over. It felt so wonderful.

This became a daily routine: carrots and brushing. I found myself actually liking Benjy! Then one day came another surprise: while I was standing next to the fence, she climbed from the fence onto my back. No one had ever done that before, and I didn't like the feeling. But before I could do anything, she started brushing my back and my neck, and I let her do it.

Well, you can guess what happened next. Within a week, I was walking around the corral with her sitting on my back. I actually got used to the feeling, and it wasn't so bad.

Can you guess what came next? One morning there was a saddle perched on the fence where she always met me with carrots. I didn't like the looks of that, but she had a handful of carrots. While I was nibbling them, she was stroking my head and talking softly in my ear, and her father put the saddle on my back. If it hadn't been for Benjy sweet talking me, he would have got a kick just like my

last owner. All I did was give a grumpy whinny to let him know I wasn't pleased.

Benjy got up on the saddle, brushing me all the time she was up there. Again, I got used to this, and even liked her being close to me. Within a week, we were walking all around the corral, with her in the saddle.

Next they put a bridle on me: that's where I have a harness on my head. Benjy pulls on the rein, turning my head the direction she wants to go. I didn't like this one bit, and I whinnied to let them know. No one bosses me around!

But Benjy didn't try to be bossy. She usually let me go wherever I wanted in the corral, only occasionally nudging me one way or the other. That was OK, I guess.

Finally, one more surprise: one day Benjy opened the gate of the corral, and climbed into the saddle. She coaxed me to go through the gate, and we were free to go out in the fields. We could go anywhere!

I walked over to a patch of green grass and munched a mouthful of delicious grass. Then I went over to the stream, and drank the clear cold water – it was nothing like drinking from that old pail!

Then I started towards the woods at the far end of the field. I wanted to go exploring, see what the world was like! But just as we got to the woods, Benjy said, "It's time for supper, Rebel. Time to go back home now." She pulled gently on the reins to turn me around.

"No," I whinnied and kept going ahead. She pulled harder. Without even thinking, my old habit took over. NOBODY bosses me around! I reared up on my hind legs and shook my back. Benjy couldn't hang on and was thrown down to the ground with a sickening thud. She lay there without moving.

Had I just killed the only friend I ever had? I had never called her that before—a friend—but it suddenly struck me that's what she was. My best friend; my only friend. And I had hurt her, maybe even killed her.

Then she moaned, and moved a little. It wasn't long before her parents came looking for her and found us at the end of the field.

Right then, I realized that I didn't want to be a rebel any more. I wanted to be a friend. I wanted to be with her, and go exploring with her. I needed to listen to her, to obey her when she pulled the reins. She wasn't being bossy; she was leading me so that we could have fun together, so we could enjoy life.

I'm glad they gave me another chance, a chance to prove that I was no longer the Rebel. *[The End]*

Did you like the story?

Sometimes we're like Rebel the horse: "I don't want to do that! I want my way!"

Jesus is like Benjy: he's not being bossy. He wants to be our friend, to enjoy life together, to show us the right way to go. I'm glad Jesus gives us another chance when our old habits take over.

**Message:** "Be happy: Be humble, gentle, and disciplined"

**Matthew 5:5, New International Version:**  
"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."

We are reading the "Beatitudes," the blessings Jesus promises in Matthew 5. I explained at the beginning of this series that, in the Bible, the word "blessed" means much the same as "happy." So today's verse could be translated:

"Happy are the meek, for they will inherit the earth."

I looked up the word "meek" in a dictionary, and this is what it says: "Humble in spirit or manner; very docile; having little spirit or courage; overly submissive." *That's* what Jesus wants us to be like?!? Humble, yes, I get that. But "very docile; having little spirit or courage; overly submissive"? Am I missing something here?

As a matter of fact, I *am* missing something here. About two thousand years. In the ancient Middle East and Greece, meekness was considered a virtue. It wasn't considered weakness at all. To be meek was to be strong, but that strength was disciplined. Alexander the Great conquered that part of the

world, but he never conquered himself. One day he and his friends were drunk and rowdy, and he didn't like what someone said. He picked up a spear and put it right through his best friend, killing him. That's strength out of control, the opposite of meekness.

Remember that story I told earlier in the service about Rebel the horse? In the end, Rebel became meek; he was still just as strong as before, but he learned self-discipline.

There are only two people in the Bible who are said to be meek. One is Moses (Numbers 12:3 in the King James Version), yet Moses stood his ground against Pharaoh. The other is Jesus, who describes himself as meek (Matthew 11:29 in the King James Version). Yet Jesus used a whip to drive the corrupt merchants out of the Temple.

Words change in their meaning over time, and that's why most modern Bible translations, whenever the word "meek" comes up, use "humble" or "gentle."

So "meek" means humble, disciplined, and gentle. It is strength which doesn't push others around and demand it's own way; it's assertive without being rude or arrogant; it responds to anger with gentleness.

Let's use disagreement as case study in meekness.

### 1) Ask yourself, "Is this really that important?"

General George S. Patton wrote a book *Patton's Principles for Managers Who Mean It*. One of his principles is:

**You never fight a battle where winning doesn't make any difference. Don't get into an argument over something that doesn't matter anyway.**

Another way to look at this is to ask, "What is motive here? Is it about winning and my pride? If so, that's just going to cause trouble.

**James 3:16-17, Good News Bible:**  
Where there is jealousy and selfishness, there is also disorder and every kind of evil. But the wisdom from above is pure first of all; it is also peaceful, gentle,

and friendly; it is full of compassion and produces a harvest of good deeds; it is free from prejudice and hypocrisy.

### 2) Be humble

Even though it happens only once every ten years, there is a slight chance you might be wrong!

**Proverbs 11:2, New Living Translation:**  
Pride leads to disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.

### 3) Listen with respect

Respect and listening go hand in hand. You can't have one without the other.

**Proverbs 18:13, Good News Bible:**  
Listen before you answer. If you don't, you are being stupid and insulting.

### 4) Answer with respect

Being meek does not mean you compromise your convictions. Meekness doesn't mean always giving in, being a doormat. That's being weak, not meek. Another approach is to fight back with insults, get angry, be sarcastic. That's the other extreme, which is not being meek either.

Present your case, vigorously and truthfully. But do it without being ignorant.

**1 Peter 3:15, New International Version:**  
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 gentleness and respect.

That verse is about telling why you put your faith in Jesus. But the principle applies to any kind of discussion: do it with gentleness and respect. People who show respect, earn respect. You can disagree without being disagreeable.

**2 Timothy 2:23-24, New Living Translation:**  
Don't get involved in foolish, ignorant arguments that only start fights. The Lord's servants must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone. They must be able to teach effectively and be patient with difficult people.

I like what Rick Warren said about this verse:

**An argumentative spirit indicates an ego problem. If you like to quarrel, if you like to get into arguments, you've got an ego problem.**

You can take those principles of meekness—humility, gentleness, respect—and apply them in all kinds of situations, not just disagreements. You can do this when you're at a store—whether you're the customer or the clerk; when you're on the phone with customer service; when you are having a family discussion.