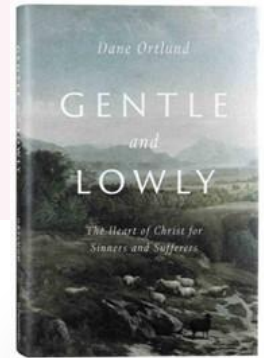




LEADER'S GUIDE

GENTLE AND LOWLY BY DANE ORTLUND



"Gentle and lowly". This, according to his own testimony, is Christ's very heart. This is who he is. Tender. Open. Welcoming. Accommodating. Understanding. Willing."

DANE ORTLUND

THEMES

Comfort and Consolation

Theology

Grace

Puritan Teachings

The Love of Christ

HEADS UP! (TRIGGERS AND DELICATE TOPICS)

Elements of Calvinism

Wrath of God

BOOK SUMMARY

Ortlund's *Gentle and Lowly* is a theological study of the Heart of Christ, designed to sweep us into Christ's very heart (p15). We are challenged to break down our pre-existing or natural inclinations and belief systems of Christ's heart and how He loves us as sinners and sufferers. We are asked to consider both the merciful nature of Christ, alongside His seemingly harsh, wrathful, and justice-seeking side, for those who choose to be outside of His unfailing love. When we consider who He is, we must remember that these two characteristics are bound together; for Jesus to be perfectly Holy, He must also seek Holy justice and right sinful wrongs. Ultimately, Ortlund desires for us to remember, amongst all our sin and suffering, that; "...on that day when we stand before him, quietly, unhurriedly, we will weep with relief, shocked at how impoverished a view of his mercy-rich heart we had." (p180)

The study explores the following aspects of the heart of Christ;

The introduction, 23 Chapters, and Epilogue can be grouped into 10 sub-sections:

- Introduction; Who is Christ?
- Christ's gentle and lowly heart towards us as sinners and sufferers (Chapters 1 - 7)
- The role Christ's heart plays as intercessor and advocate (Chapters 8 + 9)
- The loveliness of Christ's heart (Chapter 10)
- The emotional life of Christ (Chapter 11)

- Friendship with Christ (Chapter 12)
- Christ's heart in relation to the Trinity (Chapters 13 + 14)
- Christ's heart in relation to the Old Testament; Studying Lamentations, Exodus, Isaiah, and Jeremiah (Chapters 15 -18)
- Christ's heart in relation to the New Testament; Studying Ephesians, Galatians, and Romans (Chapter 19 – 21)
- Conclusion; Christ's heart forevermore and our response (Chapter 22 + 23, Epilogue)



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & TALKING POINTS

1

Q. "The heart is a matter of life. It is what makes us the human being each of us is. The heart drives all we do. It is who we are. And when Jesus... exposes the innermost recesses of his being - what we find there is gentle and lowly." (p18-19)

How did the chapter "His very heart" help you to understand the heart of Christ better?

TALKING POINTS

"Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls, For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30)

Gentle and Lowly (p19, 21);

- Meek
- Humble
- Understanding
- Accessible
- Open
- Tender
- Welcoming
- Accommodating
- Willing
(towards those who love Him, and seek Him)

2

Q. "What we see Jesus claim with his words in Matthew 11:29, we see him prove with his actions time and time again in all four Gospels. What he is, he does... His life proves his heart" (p25). Examining ourselves with this statement, what do our actions tell us about our hearts?

TALKING POINTS

The Bible asks us to examine ourselves regularly;

"Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" Psalm 139: 23-24

Answers may vary and could include;

- My actions display the generosity of Christ through the giving of finances and resources.

- My actions display the hospitality of Christ through the giving of meals and/or the opening of my home for the comfort of others.
- My actions display the love of Christ as I love the difficult-to-love through friendship and fellowship.
- When I consider my actions, I am not sure I display Christ to the world.
- People are shocked when they hear I am a Christian; my actions do not follow what I believe.

At the end of the meeting, pray together that all hearts present will reflect Christ's heart and will display His character to others, truly showing the gentleness and lowliness of Christ.

We must remember to role model our faith well because our actions do speak louder than words.

3

Q. Which attributes of Jesus, the gentle or harsh, are you most naturally drawn to? Why?

TALKING POINTS

On pages 28 - 29, Ortlund describes both the wrath and mercy of Christ and suggests a few reasons we may be drawn to one or the other;

- We may have been raised in a heavy-rules/religious or rigid environment, resulting in attraction to the grace and mercy of Christ because it was craved, OR be attracted to the familiarity of laws, rules, and/or punishment.
- We may have grown up in a chaotic or immoral home, resulting in attraction to structure, laws, and rules because those were craved, OR we may only like to relate to the gracious and merciful side of Jesus because it is more familiar.
- We may have been profoundly mistreated or lived lives with traumatic experiences, resulting in a longing for justice and retribution OR have a deep desire to experience gentleness and mercy amongst the brokenness in the world.

We must "ensure we are growing in a healthy understanding of the whole counsel of God and a comprehensive and therefore proportionate vision of who Christ is" (p28-29). We can do this by remembering a few things;

- The wrath and mercy of Christ are not at odds with one another.
- The two attributes are not like a see-saw, one diminishing to the degree that the other is held up; rather, the two rise and fall together.
- As we gain an understanding of the wrath of Christ against all that is evil, we also gain more understanding of his mercy.
- "It is impossible for the affectionate heart of Christ to be over celebrated, made too much of, exaggerated" (p29).
- We are not leaving behind the harsher side of Jesus when we speak of his tender sides.
- Our fallenness, which Jesus came to undo, is what is most attractive to him (p30).

4

Q. "should we envision the Son as gentle and lowly but the Father as something else?" (p127). How did the chapter 'Father of Mercies' help you to better understand how the heart of Christ relates to God the Father?

TALKING POINTS

"A correct understanding of the triune God is... The heart of both is one and the same; this is, after all, one God, not two. There is a heart of redeeming love, not compromising justice and wrath but beautifully satisfying justice and wrath." (p131)

The Father of mercies (p131);

- If your heart is hard, his mercies are tender.
- If your heart is dead, he has mercy to liven it.
- If you are sick, he has mercy to heal you.
- When you are sinful, he has mercies to sanctify and cleanse you.

Our Father God (p132);

- Tenderly and gently pursues us.
- Sweetly governs every last detail of our lives.
- Sovereignly ordains all which occurs.
- Is our heavenly Father, whom every good earthly father is but a shadow.

5

Q. "...the Son, 'being manifest in the flesh, expresses and utters what was in the heart of all the three'" (p121). How did the chapter 'Why the Spirit?', help you better understand how the heart of Christ relates to the Holy Spirit?

TALKING POINTS

"the Spirit makes the heart of Christ real to us: not just heard, but seen; not just seen; but felt; not just felt, but enjoyed. The Spirit takes what we read in the Bible and believe on paper about Jesus's heart and moves it from theory to reality, from doctrine to experience" (p122).

The Spirit (p121-122);

- Regenerates us.
- Convicts us.
- Empowers us with gifts.
- Testifies to our hearts that we are God's children.
- Leads us.
- Makes us fruitful.
- Grants and nurtures us in resurrection life.
- Enables us to kill sin.
- Intercedes for us when we don't know how to pray.
- Guides us into truth.
- Transforms us into the image of Christ.

6

Q. What do you think of when you hear the phrase "the glory of God?" (p147). Has this changed since reading *Gentle and Lowly*?

TALKING POINTS

In Exodus 33:18-19 Moses asks God, "Please show me your glory," and the Lord responds with "I will make my goodness pass before you" (33:19). God's glory is his goodness, not his greatness which we tend to associate with glory (p147).

Answers may vary and could include;

- God's goodness; tender loving-kindness, mercy, forgiveness, justice, graciousness.
- The majesty of his creation.
- God's power displayed through lightening, thunder, water.
- God's creativeness; making man in his own image.
- God's sacrificial love.
- Miracles and good works.

7

Q. "Jesus walked the earth rehumanizing the dehumanized and cleansing the unclean" (p32). Jesus is fully God and fully man. By healing our diseases and casting out demons, Jesus 'rehumanizes' us and gives us a glimpse of what it looks like to be fully human. Discuss.

TALKING POINTS

On page 31, Dane quotes Jurgen Moltman writing;

"When Jesus expels demons and heals the sick, he is driving out of creation the powers of destruction, and is healing and restoring created beings who are hurt and sick... Jesus' healings are not supernatural miracles in a natural world. They are the only truly natural thing in a world that is unnatural, demonized and wounded".

- Although we may experience miraculous healings (spiritual, physical, or emotional), we will not be fully restored into our 'fully human' selves until Christ has come.
- We all must die; and although God is a miracle worker, eventually our earthly lives will come to an end. We can hope and believe for healing and restoration of our physical earthly bodies, but we must also accept the consequence of sin is death.
- Death feels so wrong, so grievous because it is unnatural and was not God's good plan for humankind.
- Becoming "fully human" in the presence of the Lord, is a hope we should all hold on tight to.

8

Q. "Jesus's sinlessness means that he knows temptation better than we ourselves do." (p49). How does knowing this about Jesus give you comfort?

TALKING POINTS

Jesus never gave up, and he endured all temptation without ever having given in; therefore, he knows the strength of temptation better than any one of us (p49).

- Being sinless Himself, He does not require rescuing but is free to rescue us from our sin.
- Jesus is not trapped in sin with us but calls us to come to Him to receive mercy and find grace, to pull us out of the trap.
- Jesus' sinlessness is our salvation.
- Jesus desires to "climb in and bear our burdens" (p49).
- Jesus can sympathize.
- Jesus co-suffers with us.
- Jesus' own heart is bound to ours as believers, and He cannot bear to keep Himself at a distance or leave us in our brokenness.
- He deals with us gently; He deals gently with the wayward (those in deliberate sin) and ignorant (those in committing accidental sin) (p53).

9

Q. "If we never come to him, we will experience a judgement so fierce it will be like a double-edged sword coming out of his mouth at us" (p54). Has reading *Gentle and Lowly* been a powerful reminder to you that Jesus will judge those outside of himself as their sins warrant? How are you reaching those who are lost around you?

TALKING POINTS

Answers may vary and could include;

- It was very difficult to think of the lost and those outside of Christ being cut off from God and all goodness.
- It reminded me to continually pray for my lost family and friends.
- I am pleading with God to intervene and draw those I love to himself.
- I am boldly sharing my faith with non-believers.
- I am asking the Lord to shine his light in my life more powerfully than ever so those around me see Him.
- It makes me fearful that I will be judged, and/or I question my salvation.

Speaking about judgement can be confronting and scary for some people. Those who are new to the faith or others who struggle with unbelief in their salvation can be prayed for at the end of the session. Ask God to provide them with a 'confident hope' (Romans 5:3-5).

10

Q. "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us" (p127). How has 'Gentle and lowly' changed how you think about and relate to God?

TALKING POINTS

Answers may vary and could include;

- This book has made my heart swell with thankfulness and adoration for Jesus, who so passionately loves me.
- I now understand God's feelings towards me are tender and welcoming, I do not need to fear being turned away.
- I am more comfortable in the presence of God, knowing He invites me to come just as I am.
- I can rely on God during times of temptation, knowing Jesus is there with me.
- I now understand that Jesus's heart longs to undo my shame and suffering.
- I understand I am absolutely loved, forgiven, and accepted.
- I no longer fear dying or meeting Jesus, as I know my place is secure with Him in eternity.

Actions;

Knowing we are so deeply loved and forgiven stirs our hearts to love God even more. Our love can be displayed through our obedience to Him, surrender to His will, everyday worship and living in an honourable way among unbelievers so that they would see our good deeds and glorify God.

"The Christian life boils down to two steps;

1. Go to Jesus
2. See #1" (p216)



ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR LEADERS

Gentle and Lowly is a study of the heart of Christ and therefore encompasses theology, doctrine, vocabulary definitions of biblical phrases and words at a high-quality level. You may wish to consider if this book is suitable for your book club, depending on the spiritual maturity of the group. If your group includes new Christians, you may like to suggest the following chapters as a starting point for easier reading while still gaining knowledge and being able to participate in the group meeting;

- Introduction
- 1 His Very Heart
- 2 His Heart in Action
- 3 The Happiness of Christ
- 4 Able to Sympathize
- 5 He Can Deal Gently
- 6 I Will Never Cast Out
- 12 A Tender Friend
- 13 Why the Spirit
- 14 Father of Mercies
- 15 His "Natural" Work and His "Strange Work"
- 21 He Loved Us Then; He'll Love Us Now
- 22 To the End
- 23 Buried in His Heart Forevermore
- Epilogue

Disclaimer: Thanks for supporting this essential ministry impacting the lives of women the world over! We pray that our Heavenly Father blesses both you and the women you lead. This Leader's Guide has been prepared by Blossoming through Books and is protected by copyright law. Please seek express permission from Blossoming through Books before making copies by contacting blossomingthroughbooks@gmail.com. Please share your experience and feedback with us! Edited by Blossoming through books team member Kathleen Emerson.