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# CLEAR VISION

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CHRISTIAN LIFE ENRICHMENT



## Meekness: Strength Under Control

By Rich Blue

**W**hile playing rugby in college, I convinced myself that one of my duties was to be the avenger of injustice. If someone on my team was hurt by the unfair play of one of our opponents, I felt I had a mandate to punish the offender and thereby restore justice. As I matured, I became increasingly uncomfortable with my duplicity; by day I was a Christ follower concerned about love and peace and by night I used power and intimidation to exact vengeance.

Many of us live with a similar sense of confusion regarding our power. We were taught to avoid conflict and not retaliate and at other times encouraged to be strong and not let others take advantage of us. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus identified the confusion when he said, "*You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go*

*with him two miles*" (Matthew 5:38-41).

It would seem things were more black and white in the Old Testament—lots of violence and brutality. God appeared more interested in eradication than reconciliation and retribution than restoration. Christ introduced a new paradigm, upsetting the beliefs of the Jews about law, order and justice much like he tossed the tables of the moneychangers in the temple. He taught love instead of violence and forgiveness instead of vengeance. He did not dismiss the Law—instead he built upon it and transcended it with the principles of grace and truth.

Understanding God's plan would require Christ followers to move beyond their old ways of adhering to laws and rules to learning how to live and love by faith. Supporters of religion appear comfortable mindlessly believing and doing what their leaders tell them to. Jesus, however, was not interested in religion and instead invited everyone to have a relationship with him and his Father. Relationships are messy and require lots of time and attention. Jesus preferred to

give them principles to live by, like loving your neighbor, instead of just rules to follow.

Consider how many of his sayings were upsetting, confusing and seemingly contradictory, "Blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are those who mourn; blessed are the meek; you must lose your life to gain it; the first shall be last; he who is least among you is the greatest."

What was Jesus trying to do? The Apostle John wrote, "*For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*" (John 1:17). As it is often the case today, righteousness in the Old Testament was confused with someone's knowledge, wealth, position, and power. The authority of Christ, however, was grounded in love instead of law; principles instead of formulas and faith instead of certainty.

Jesus epitomized power—like when he stood up to the political and religious leaders of his day, cast out demons and trashed the market in the temple. Other times he manifested power in ways we are still in awe of, like when he made time for and

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## Meekness: Strength Under Control (continued)

By Rich Blue

mute; treated women and children with dignity and respect; and let the mob arrest, torture, mock and crucify him while asking God to forgive them for their ignorance.

Peter, an Apostle of Christ and witness to Jesus' abuse wrote, *"To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.*

*When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly"* (1 Peter 2: 21-23).

Jesus' way of being was counterintuitive and demanded his followers to trust God in ways they

had never considered before. The Jews of the day were praying for a Messiah, ala Moses, who would deliver them from the evil of Roman occupation. God, however, was more interested in using Roman influence to liberate their hearts from bondage to self sufficiency, pride and power.

I once heard meekness defined as strength under control. The word "meek" in classical Greek literature was used to describe a Stallion, the mightiest of horses, under the reins of its master. To be meek like Christ, we must have full access to our power along with the self control to harness it in submission to the will of God.

How are we ever going to learn how to manage our power if we do not have permission to explore expand and express our power?

How would it ever glorify God to turn the other cheek out of fear or cowardice? Each of us must have access to our power and the will to use it before we can meaningfully offer it up as a sacrifice to God. Use personal growth work to face your hurt, access your anger, embrace your power and practice the skills needed to express your feelings responsibly.

Key TEXT: Philippians 2

## CLE Fall Retreat 2008

Celebrating a Relationship Reformation  
November 7-9, 2008



We've all heard of spring cleaning—how about fall reformation!

November 7-9, CLE will be hosting its annual Fall Retreat and our focus will be inventorying our relationships and taking stock of the unhealthy baggage we have allowed to accumulate. We will begin with cleaning, sorting, and tossing everything that does not promote authentic and satisfying relationships. We will be on the lookout for offenders like bad boundaries, dirty deals and special relationships. We will then take on filling our relationships with everything that promotes life, love and the pursuit of personal and spiritual maturity.

Save the date and sign up. Come join us for an awesome weekend living life to the fullest with others who are on the same journey!

## Biblical Mentors Series

By Rich Blue

Brief looks into the lives of influential spiritual leaders found in the Bible.

### David

Maybe one of the most gifted leaders in the Bible. The youngest of 8 boys, shepherd, musician, poet, chosen by God and anointed by Samuel to be King of Israel, victor over the giant Goliath, armor bearer to King Saul, valiant warrior and mighty King.

### Basic Training

David did his basic training in becoming a man shepherding sheep. David learned to do whatever he was responsible for to the best of his abilities—to give himself fully to the task at hand. No task was beneath him. This principle was one of the central building blocks of his character development.

#### *Read 1 Samuel 17*

When volunteering to fight the giant, Goliath, David had to persuade King Saul to put his trust in him: *David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him." Saul replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a fighting man from his youth." But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its*

*hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God" (1 Samuel 18:32-36).*

#### *Reflect*

*"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men." Colossians 3:23*

### Anointing

God rejected Saul as King of Israel and sent the prophet Samuel to locate and anoint the individual who would eventually take his place. God often does things in the most unlikely ways.

#### *Read 1 Samuel 15, 16*

*When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed stands here before the LORD." But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:6,7).*

#### *Reflect*

*"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD." Isaiah 55:8*

### Principled Life

David was appointed by Saul to be his armor bearer, a position of great trust and honor, and he remained faithful to Saul, even though he repeatedly tried to kill him.

#### *Read 1 Samuel 24-26:*

*So David and Abishai went to the army by night, and there was Saul, lying asleep inside the camp with his spear stuck in the ground near his head. Abner and the soldiers were lying around him. Abishai said to David, "Today God has delivered your enemy into your hands. Now let me pin him to the ground with one thrust of my spear; I won't strike him twice." But David said to Abishai, "Don't destroy him! Who can lay a hand on the LORD's anointed and be guiltless? As surely as the LORD lives," he said, "the LORD himself will strike him; either his time will come and he will die, or he will go into battle and perish. But the LORD forbid that I should lay a hand on the LORD's anointed. Now get the spear and water jug that are near his head, and let's go" (1 Samuel 26:7-11).*

#### *Reflect*

*"But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly" (1 Peter 2:20-23).*

## Welcome to Andrew Mercer, CLE's new Intern



Andrew grew up in Barrington, IL, and after completing his undergraduate work at Hope College in Holland, MI, he took a year to explore and discover the French countryside.

Now in the second year of his Master of Arts in Pastoral Counseling at Loyola University, Andrew comes to the CLE community with a hunger to experience life and growth with clients as they come into a deeper understanding of themselves. Andrew believes that counseling is an inherently spiritual process that is guided, enhanced, and strengthened through theory as well as the relationship between client and counselor. Andrew regards truth, honesty, and compassion as essential ingredients in forming safe and satisfying relationships.

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This newsletter is intended to offer general information only and recognizes that individual issues may differ from these broad guidelines. Personal issues should be addressed within a therapeutic context with a professional familiar with the details of the problems.



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