

## *A Meek and Quiet Spirit*

Thinking back on September of 1985 still evokes memories of the start of our homeschooling adventure. What an excited mommy I was that first day of homeschooling! With my third and first grader, plus a preschooler, I was delightfully expectant of this new role in my life. My attitude demonstrated quite a change of heart. Just a few years earlier, I had been the kind of mother who could hardly wait until her three children were all old enough to be in school. However, when Jesus Christ calls one to a task, He can also give the enthusiasm to go with it. I had that enthusiasm and more!

I remember sitting down with my third grader for his first homeschool “read out loud” session. One reason we had decided to homeschool was that this son was having trouble with reading. The pace at school moved too fast, and he was being left behind with a very negative, reluctant attitude toward reading.

I was looking forward to the opportunity to help my son develop a love for reading. We were simply going to slow down to a pace he could reasonably manage. We would read out loud together, snuggled up on the couch side by side,

and I would be right there to help him over the rough spots—no pressure!

That day, as he began to read, it didn't take long until he was stuck on a simple word. "Sound it out," I said. Nothing came from him. "Come on, Nathan. What did your teacher tell you about how these letters sound?" He attempted the word, but the vowel sound wasn't right. "Try again, Son." He did—the same way he had before! Finally, in exasperation, I said the word for him, and we continued.

By the end of those first fifteen minutes of my dream homeschooling life, I had become a very frustrated mother. I was close to tears. Rather than being patient and loving, I had been short and irritable. I expected my seven-year-old son to sound out the very words he had struggled with at school! I felt I had failed. I wondered whether I was wise to take on this job of homeschooling. Maybe I just wasn't cut out for it.

The next day I awoke with renewed enthusiasm. I knew it would be better, because I would be mentally prepared for the struggles our reading session would present. Sadly, even with that knowledge, I continued to lose patience with my son when we read together.

### *Help, Lord!*

It wasn't long before I was on my knees crying out to the Lord over the sin in my life during these daily fifteen minutes of reading. If homeschooling was to provide sweet,

precious moments with my son, and if he was to make progress in learning to read, I needed a change of spirit! Not only that, but I deeply desired a meek and quiet spirit to replace the irritable, impatient, sometimes even angry one I was displaying.

The Lord showed me that my reactions during the reading sessions were sin. 1 Corinthians 13:4 tells me, “Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind.” My love (charity) was not long suffering or kind. I needed to confess my sin to my Lord Jesus Christ (1 John 1:9). I also had to ask my son’s forgiveness. As I prayed about our reading time, the Lord prodded me to develop a plan for those sessions. It went like this. When Nathan came to a word he didn’t know, I encouraged him to sound it out. If he didn’t have any idea where to start, I would very slowly begin sounding it out for him. Then, he was to sound out the word after me.

The Lord also showed me that I needed to praise Nathan abundantly for every little word he read correctly. I am not a “gushy” kind of person, so this felt very artificial to me. However, that little boy beamed as he worked through his readers, while his mom lavished on him, “Good boy, Nathan. That’s it. Wonderful. Keep it up!”

What a difference a simple change in my spirit generated. No longer was I pushing for my agenda, feeling frustrated when progress wasn’t realized according to my expectations. Rather, I had found I needed to see my wrong behavior as sin, deal with it biblically, and seek the Lord for

solutions to the difficulties. I felt new joy, sitting by Nathan as he did his reading, once the Lord brought me from having a frustrated spirit to having a meek and quiet spirit.

Can you guess what happened once my spirit changed? Within a few short weeks, Nathan's reading had improved immensely. Soon he became a fluent reader and came to thoroughly enjoy reading, even doing it during his free time.

### *Our Goal*

What about you? Did you begin your homeschooling adventure with a particular picture in your mind? It might have involved sweet, cooperative children who were eager to learn. They were going to be taught, cuddled, and loved by a smiling, patient, long-suffering mother. Sometime, perhaps as early as the first day of homeschooling, this idyllic vision was shattered by an irritated tone in Mom's voice. It could have been caused by trying to teach over the noise of a rowdy toddler or simply by a student dawdling over his schoolwork. No matter what it was that caused you to react, there was disappointment in your spirit that the reality of homeschooling didn't match the ideal.

I am convinced that a heart-felt goal homeschooling moms have for themselves is that they would teach their children with a meek and quiet spirit. 1 Peter 3:4 says, "But *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." This verse, in

context, is speaking of a meek and quiet spirit in a husband and wife relationship. However, it would certainly transfer well to describing the godly spirit of a homeschooling mother.

How is a meek and quiet spirit characterized? What comes to your mind when you hear these words? Let's spend some time with them so that we are thinking along the same line.

### *Meek*

Webster's 1858 Dictionary definition of "meek" is "mild of temper, soft, gentle, not easily provoked or irritated." This is truly what we homeschooling moms desire so much! We know our children will be difficult at times (some days continually), but we want to be "not easily provoked or irritated." We long to be soft and gentle even while training, correcting, or disciplining our children.

Let me share a story from my life several years ago. On this day, meekness did not characterize me. I had three school-aged children plus a preschooler, a toddler, and a baby. I walked into the bathroom, in the middle of a busy school morning, to discover the toilet paper had been unrolled all over the floor. Do you know what I did? I sat down on the floor and cried! In frustration, I raised my heart to the Lord, "Lord, there are just too many of them and too few of me!" Of course, unrolled toilet paper was not the only thing that had happened in our home that morning, but it was the straw that broke the camel's back. Sometimes, as I