THE WINNING PLAY
Passing the test

The Stuff Heaven Is Made of
A dad’s influence

How to Have a Happier Home
Mealtimes will never be the same
In my junior year at college, I was elected coach of my fraternity’s football team. My first and most important decision was to appoint our quarterback (QB), the player (in American football) who calls the plays and organizes the offensive. I wanted a QB who would listen to my advice and who was respected by the other players, and of course, he also needed to be able to pass the ball, run, and be a good all-round athlete.

There was quite a bit of pressure on me from my fraternity. Most thought Levy should be QB. He was a talented athlete, very agile, fast, and had the strongest arm. Besides that, he was a senior, which some felt should give him precedence over the other candidates. O’Neil was another possibility, a junior but a great athlete, very agile, fast, and strong. However, both Levy and O’Neil had big mouths and tended to offend others, whereas we needed our quarterback to be someone who would bring unity to the team.

I ended up choosing Terry, a quieter young man who was also a good athlete, but not as obviously showy, loud-mouthed personalities are more common in my world. Terry is just what a team needs to win. He was a talented athlete, very agile, fast, and strong. Besides that, he was a senior, which some felt should give him precedence over the other candidates. O’Neil was another possibility, a junior but a great athlete, very agile, fast, and strong. However, both Levy and O’Neil had big mouths and tended to offend others, whereas we needed our quarterback to be someone who would bring unity to the team.

In the end, though, we had a fantastic run. During our two undefeated years, I used Levy as halfback who often ran with the ball and O’Neil as fullback. Both of them got their offensive skills to use, and many of our players were elected Inter-fraternity League All-Stars.

What I learned from my experience as football coach was that the showy, loud-mouthed personalities are not necessarily the best for leading a team. Even a quieter player like Terry, working in cooperation with his coach, could do an excellent job and promote unity and teamwork, which is just what a team needs to win. I ended up choosing Terry, a quieter young man who was also a good athlete, but not as obviously showy, loud-mouthed personalities are more common in my world. Terry is just what a team needs to win. He was a talented athlete, very agile, fast, and strong. Besides that, he was a senior, which some felt should give him precedence over the other candidates. O’Neil was another possibility, a junior but a great athlete, very agile, fast, and strong. However, both Levy and O’Neil had big mouths and tended to offend others, whereas we needed our quarterback to be someone who would bring unity to the team.

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I don’t want to put my father on a pedestal. He wouldn’t have wanted that. He was always self-effacing, and I can’t remember him ever seeking honor for himself. When someone would praise him, he’d point heavenward, to his Creator, and give God the glory.

When he was still around, I didn’t treasure him as I should have. I assumed that all dads were as kind and sacrificial as mine. I didn’t appreciate his longsuffering nature, nor did I respect his convictions. Instead, I put him down many times, insensitive to the pain I caused him. Now, many years after his death, I realize what a jewel of a dad I had.

Papa was born in Germany in 1893 and was old enough to have been my grandfather by the time I came along. He was drafted into service during WW1, and despite frequent opposition, he continued to talk about Jesus at every opportunity.

“On one occasion,” Papa recounted, “one of the officers grabbed my Bible to look for a certain verse that he and his companions wanted to tease me with. They weren’t able to find the verse, but they did find my prayer list tucked between the pages, and read it eagerly. To their astonishment, they found their names written there.”

Papa’s voice would fill with emotion as he talked about a 19-year-old soldier who panicked before a major battle. Papa told the boy about Jesus—the One who faced His fears and gave His life for us—and they prayed together. The young soldier then marched bravely into the battle, knowing it would probably cost him his life. When they found his body later, his face bore the most peaceful expression. Clutched to his chest was the tract Papa had given him. The text concluded with this verse from the Bible: “The eternal God is your refuge, and His everlasting arms are under you.”

So Papa opted to remain silent, while Mom and I argued a lot. “Why do you talk so much with our daughter?” Papa would ask her. “It might be better to talk with God about her!”

Sometimes my heart cringed at the way he would look at me, his eyes full of sorrow. Our sweet father-daughter relationship had faded, and he found the hurt hard to bear. I felt miserable too, but didn’t want to admit it, so I put on a tough front.

Papa talked to God about me, and God listened. At the age of 21, I experienced a miraculous transformation. Like a prodigal daughter, I returned to Jesus and asked Him to come into my life.

Papa was so glad. What a joyful reunion we had! Mom told me how over the years he had not ceased to pray desperately and with determination. Thank you, Papa, for holding on for me.

When Papa passed away, a short article about him appeared in a local newspaper. It concluded, “It’s a rare thing to encounter such heartfelt kindness and patience as Mr. Gruenhage showed to others. Those who met him could feel that ‘he had been with Jesus’ (Acts 4:13).”

In his own humble way, Papa was a saint—the sort that heaven is made of.
By Maria Fontaine, adapted

**Appreciation in the Workplace**

**Appreciation is a human need.** It’s not just something that’s nice to have when possible, but something that each person needs in order to be happy and to thrive. That’s true in every setting, but it’s perhaps nowhere more evident than in the workplace. When people feel genuinely appreciated by those they work for and with, they’re much more likely to be excellent contributors and “team players.”

When there’s lots of appreciation flowing between team members, this significantly boosts the chances of that team becoming a winning team. Appreciation has the power to make team members appreciate one another, and shows faith in one another, this multiplies the overall productivity and happiness of the team.

It’s definitely to your advantage to take the time to appreciate those you work with. It will make you happier, because appreciation is a form of love, and love has a way of returning to those who bestow it. It will make the recipients of the appreciation happier, because it will brighten their lives. And if everyone’s appreciating everyone, then the workplace will be a happier place, everyone will work better, and more will be accomplished.

Thinking positive thoughts about one another is good; it’s a start, but if we don’t express those thoughts, if we don’t verbalize them, they won’t do anyone else any good. We can’t expect people to read our minds. We have to put those thoughts into words or actions.

No matter what may have held you back from giving sincere and regular appreciation in the past, you can begin today to bring out the best in others by pointing it out. There’s so much that we can appreciate others for, and it means so much to people when someone takes an interest in them and notices unique and special things about them. Let’s not only appreciate things that are the most obvious, and that we benefit from the most, but let’s try to expand our “appreciation horizons” by looking for the other less apparent things that we are sure to find if we make the effort.

**Maria Fontaine** and her husband, Peter Amsterdam, are directors of the Family International, a Christian community of faith.

**Often when people think of leadership,** the image of the strong, self-assured, authoritative leader comes to mind—the man who uses his charismatic style to drive his team or company to success.

In today’s world, though, good managers realize that they can’t bring success to their business entirely through their own ideas, drive, and talents. Adopting and maintaining a sense of community is an essential factor in the progress of organizations, and a wise leader multiplies his efforts by relying on the capabilities and talents of his entire team.

Three thousand years ago, when Moses’ father-in-law, Jethro, saw that Moses was personally holding court to settle disputes within the camp, he gave him the following advice:

> You are not doing this right. You will wear yourself out and these people will dislike you as well. This is too much for you to do alone.

Now let me give you some good advice. It is right for you to represent the people before God and bring their disputes to him. You should teach them God’s commands and explain to them how they should live and what they should do.

But in addition, you should choose some capable men and appoint them as leaders of the people. Let them serve as judges. They can bring all the difficult cases to you, but they can decide all the smaller disputes. That will make it easier for you, as they share your burden.

If you do this, you will not wear yourself out, and all these people can go home with their disputes settled.\(^1\)

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1. Exodus 18:18–23 GNT, condensed
2. Matthew 18:19–20 ESV

The role of teamwork in the success of any initiative is clear. Even our prayers have more power when we join together to pray with others.

“If two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”\(^2\)

It takes many hands to build anything that is to last. Accomplished teams share a common goal and have a mission that reaches over and above the objectives of the individuals within the team. It is this collective vision, the cooperation and melding of talents that empowers the team so that the results are greater than the sum of the individual efforts or capabilities. In unity there is strength.

**Gabriel García V. (also credited as Gabriel Sarmiento) is the editor of Conéctate, the Spanish edition of Activated.**
Let's take a look at how Jesus' character is manifested through some of the key events in His life.

Born in a barn
[Mary] wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.—Luke 2:7 ESV

Rejected by many
He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him.—John 1:10–11 NLT

His triumphant entry into Jerusalem
Behold, your King is coming to you, Jerusalem! His triumphant entry into the city is marked, even in the most simple way, as Jesus rode on a donkey.—Matthew 21:5

The foot washing
[Jesus] poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel he had around him. After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, “Do you understand what I was doing? You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and you are right, because that's what I am. And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other’s feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.”—John 13:5,12–15 NLT

Crucified with common criminals
Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left.—Matthew 27:38

Stood to our level
In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant.—Philippians 2:5–7 NIV

Mocked by evil men
He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.—Isaiah 53:7

Silent in the face of His accusers
He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.—Isaiah 53:7

Our Humble Savior

The best high-and-low experience I had was when I was living in Uganda and joined a mission to the former child soldiers in Gulu, the same kids you see in the movie, Machine Gun Preacher.1 We brought tons of donated food and showed the movie Jesus2 with a running Acholi translation. We had to use a generator to show the movie on a projector, as there was no electricity.

We stayed in one of the “nicer” huts, which was literally a big mud circle with a concrete wall and an aluminum roof. The toilet was a separate little outhouse, complete with insects of all shapes and sizes. (On one occasion, I counted 18 spiders!) In the evening they brought mixing food, such as a spread made of termite paste to enjoying a multi-course dinner at the Sheraton five-star hotel.

...abused, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.”3 That’s what made him truly humble, and I loved the fact that while getting the royal treatment was wonderful, having come from a place where people had so little and we had to “rough it” made us that much more thankful.

Tina Kapp is a dancer, presenter and freelance writer in South Africa. She runs an entertainment company that helps raise funds for charity and missionary projects.
God instructs us to be meek and humble in our dealings with others...

Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love.—Ephesians 4:2 NLT

Try your best to please God and to be like him. Be faithful, loving, dependable, and gentle.—1 Timothy 6:11 CEV

Be humble when you correct people who oppose you.—2 Timothy 2:25 CEV

God loves you and has chosen you as his own special people. So be gentle, kind, humble, meek, and patient.—Colossians 3:12 CEV

... and He promises to bless us when we are.

The meek shall eat and be satisfied; they shall praise the Lord.—Psalm 22:26 KJV

The meek man will attain a place of soul rest. As he walks on in meekness he will be happy to let God defeat him. The old struggle to defend himself is over. He has found the peace which meekness brings.—A. W. Tozer (1897–1963)

Most of us wouldn’t mind being a little more humble, but oh, how we hate to be humbled! That hurts our pride, but that kind of pain is good for us if we can welcome it and let it accomplish its purpose. Remember the mantra of Olympians: No pain, no gain!

Look for the best in people.

Everyone has had some experience you haven’t had and is therefore your superior in that respect. As the American scholar and author George Herbert Palmer (1842–1933) said, “I am defeated, and know it, if I meet any human being from whom I find myself unable to learn anything.”

Admit your limitations and needs.

It’s human nature to want to appear strong and self-sufficient, but that usually only makes things harder. Ask for and accept the help of others, and you’ll come out miles ahead.

Learn something new—a new skill, language, sport, or hobby.

Starting from scratch is nearly always humbling, but the rewards are manifold. Apart from benefitting from a new skill, your example will encourage others and, contrary to what your pride tells you, win their admiration and respect.

Give God the credit for anything good about you and anything good that He helps you do.

The Bible instructs: “The wise should not boast of their wisdom, nor the strong of their strength, nor the rich of their wealth. If any want to boast, they should boast that they know and understand me, because my love is constant, and I do what is just and right.”

Power to the Meek

Compiled by Samuel Keating

1. Jeremiah 9:23–24 GNT
GENTLENESS — THE WINSOME FRUIT

By Rafael Holding

A gentle spirit is one of the keys to success with people. It can make all the difference in how open others are to our opinions and ideas.

Jesus is pictured in the Bible as a lamb, a mother hen, and a gentle, concerned shepherd. He said of Himself, “I am gentle and lowly in heart.” He didn’t force anyone to believe in or follow Him; He showed compassion, and gently wooed people into His heavenly kingdom by His loving example.

If you want to win friends and win others to the Lord, follow His example. “Be gentle and kind to everyone.” Are any of you wise or sensible? Then show it by living right and by being humble and wise in everything you do.

If this sounds easier said than done, don’t worry. God can help each of us to be more like Jesus in this.

By Rafael Holding is a writer in Australia.

“Gentleness—The Winsome Fruit” is adapted from the Get Activated book God’s Gifts, available from Aurora’s online store (http://shop.auroraproduction.com/).

UNDER CONTROL

By Peter Amsterdam, adapted

I like the definition of meekness that’s in my Bible dictionary. It says meekness is “an attitude of humility toward God and gentleness toward men, springing from a recognition that God is in control.” It is strength and courage under control, coupled with kindness.

This kind of meekness is having faith and peace, because you know God’s in control. You can be mild and quiet of nature, because you’re full of faith. You have the assurance that God’s going to work things out no matter how incredibly overwhelming or desperate the situation might be.

You have faith, and therefore you have trust. You’re mild because you’re not frantically trying to work up a solution in your own strength. You’re not depending on your own talent, your own wisdom, your own charisma, but on the Lord, and that calmness translates to others as the Lord’s presence right there with you. They know everything’s okay, because you have that meekness, that quietness of spirit about you.

Peter Amsterdam and his wife, Maria Fontaine, are directors of the Family International, a Christian community of faith. “Under Control” was adapted from a blog post titled “Godly Confidence.”

Answers to Your Questions

Q: I realize that love and humility are Christian virtues, but what about anger? I sometimes get so upset when I read about some of the terrible things going on in the world. Is it always wrong to be angry?

A: “Don’t be quick to fly off the handle” is one interpretation of the scriptural advice about anger, but it doesn’t mean that we should never be stirred up about anything.

Think about when Jesus arrived at the temple in Jerusalem. A busy crowd of people thronged the open courtyard. There was such noise and commotion as the stallholders sold their wares: doves and pigeons, sheep and oxen—whatever was needed for the temple sacrifices. Money changed hands while people bargained, argued, pleaded. It was a seller’s market.

Jesus was outraged. This was meant to be a house of prayer, yet it had been turned into a busy and not entirely honest marketplace. He could have taken the sympathetic position that while the merchants were making a profit, at least they were providing a useful service by supplying what the worshippers needed in order to obey God’s law. Besides, the more people had to pay for their sacrifices, the more highly they’d value them. He could potentially have seen the good in the situation and gone on His way.

But that’s not what He did. The Gospels tell us that Jesus overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those that sold doves, and rebuked them for turning His Father’s house of prayer into a den of thieves. This incident is recorded in all four Gospels, which underlines its significance.

There are times when we do need to face up to things that are wrong. This does not mean being angry in our own spirit or that we should literally “overturn the tables.” God’s Word warns, “Don’t get so angry that you sin. Don’t go to bed angry.” Still, there are occasions when we should stand up for what is right. Holding to our convictions about truth and justice is part of following Christ.

A man that does not know how to be angry does not know how to be good. Now and then a man must be shaken to the core with indignation over things evil—

Henry Ward Beecher (1813–1887)

2. See Luke 1:34.
4. Matthew 11:29
5. See 1 Peter 2:21.
6. Titus 3:2 CEV
7. James 3:13 CEV
8. Ecclesiastes 7:9 MSG
10. Ephesians 4:26 CEV

See John 1:29; Isaiah 53:7.
Ecclesiastes 7:9 MSG
Ephesians 4:26 CEV

See a blog post titled “Godly Confidence.”

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7. James 3:13 CEV

1. Ecclesiastes 7:9 MSG
3. Ephesians 4:26 CEV

See a blog post titled “Godly Confidence.”
How to have a happier home

According to Dr. James H. Bossard, a former professor of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, one of the greatest weaknesses in family life is the way parents talk in front of their children. After studying extensive recordings of table talk, he wrote, “I have found that family after family had definite, consistent conversational habits, and that the critical pattern was the most prevalent. These families rarely had weak children. The children absorbed that pattern, and it caused the children trouble.”

“How can you be so filled with the spirit of Christ that He guides the words you say? It can only happen through you taking time with Him, getting filled with His Spirit and His love. Take time to read His recorded Word in the Bible, and let Him speak to you personally in prayer and reflection. As you spend time with Jesus, the fountain of all goodness and kindness and gentleness, your relationship with Him will deepen and you’ll soon find your words to be conduits of His Spirit, making you a fountain of all goodness and kindness in the life of those nearest and dearest to you.”

Virginia Brandt Berg (1886–1968) was an American evangelist and pastor.

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By Virginia Brandt Berg, adapted

Quiet Moments

Regaining the plot

Ever feel like you’ve “lost the plot”? You’re reading a novel and can’t quite figure out who is who, or you tuned out during a film and now it doesn’t seem to make sense anymore. Your life is busy, busy, yet sometimes you’re no longer sure who you are or where you’re headed.

Jonah lost the plot when he ran away from God. God had told him to go to Nineveh and deliver a warning; but Jonah didn’t fancy that, and instead he caught a boat headed in the opposite direction.

You’re blessed when you stay on course, walking steadily on the road revealed by God.

Sarah lost the plot when her advanced age was declared. She was told that she would have a child. Her husband Abraham predicted the angelic visitors to her:

You’re leading.

Peter lost the plot when he denied Jesus and was confused and afraid for his own life. But all was not lost. A conversation over a breakfast meal prepared by the risen Savior changed Peter’s outlook on himself and his life.

You’re blessed when you stay on track no matter how difficult.

Sarah regained the plot when she rose up to this challenge and went on to do what God had asked.

Lord, help me stay on track no matter how difficult.

Sarah lost the plot when she was past the child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.

She regained the plot through faith.

You’re blessed when you stay on track no matter how difficult.

Peter regained the plot and the remainder of his life was meaningful and purposeful.

Lord, help me to sit quietly and listen to Your voice, so that I can find and follow the path You have for me.

Sarah regained the plot through faith.

You’re blessed when you stay on track no matter how difficult.

Peter regained the plot through faith.

Lord, help me to follow You by faith, even when I don’t understand exactly where You’re leading.

By Abi May

Abi May is a freelance writer and educator in Great Britain.

1. See Matthew 15:11.
2. Matthew 12:34
3. Matthew 12:35
7. See Matthew 1:1–2.
8. Psalm 119:1 MSG
10. See Alma 11:1, Alma 31:1–2.
11. Psalm 17:5
14. Psalm 143:8

Plateau by Abi May

Upbraid my steps in Your paths, that my footsteps may not slip.

Peter lost the plot when he denied Jesus and was confused and afraid for his own life. But all was not lost. A conversation over a breakfast meal prepared by the risen Savior changed Peter’s outlook on himself and his life.

“Take care of My followers,” Jesus told him.—And that’s exactly what Peter did. He regained his plot, and the remainder of his life was meaningful and purposeful.

Lord, help me to sit quietly and listen to Your voice, so that I can find and follow the path You have for me.

Abi May is a freelance writer and educator in Great Britain.
Come to Me when you are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest and teach you how to be meek, like I am.⁠¹ The meekness I’m referring to is really strength, but it is manifested with gentleness and kindness. It doesn’t need to assert itself or boast, because it knows its strength.

A lot of times people feel they have to put on an act so as to appear stronger and more confident than they are; but that’s pretty easy to see through. It’s far better in the long run to be honest with yourself and others; honest about your strengths, but also about your weaknesses; honest when you’re confident, and honest when you’re not. When you know who you are, and most of all when you know who I am, when you’re true to yourself and authentic in your dealings with others, you can walk in confidence.

When you rest in Me, I refresh and renew you and reconnect you with My strength. Then you are able to meet all the demands that you face—whether pressure or overload at work, relationship challenges, or negative emotions—and deal with them in My strength. When things get busy and hectic and topsy-turvy, it’s easy to let yourself get a little gruff or sharp with people, which of course is not being meek and gentle, and which often doesn’t get good results or make you feel any better.

Stabilize and strengthen yourself by resting in Me and by learning My meekness of spirit. Then My strength will give you what you need to face and handle and overcome your daily challenges.

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¹ See Matthew 11:28–29.