



FLASHY VS. MEEK: What's so bad about showing off? Facilitator's Guide

KINGDOM

🎯 OVERVIEW:

The way of Jesus is not the way of the world. While the world values flashy people concerned with their own platform and celebrity, Christ wants his followers to be meek. But as Rick Warren reminds us, "Meek doesn't mean weak."¹ The story that Jesus tells of a Pharisee and a tax collector shows how outward appearances of strength or success don't matter at all compared to an inner life of humility before God. And the life of William Seymour demonstrates how God can use a meek person to do great things.

? OPENING QUESTIONS:

- What is your greatest achievement? What makes you proud of this accomplishment?
- Would you be as proud of this achievement if no one else knew about it? Why or why not?

💬 WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY ABOUT IT:

LEADER'S NOTE: Meek, a Greek derivative, was originally used in the training of horses. Imagine a wild stallion, filled with spirit and energy, bridled and brought under control. The Greek understanding of meekness is controlled power and focused strength. It's a readiness and availability to be used for a purpose, like a horse trained and ready for battle.²

For hundreds of years, the Jewish people waited for a Messiah, a Christ, a Savior. The prophets told them that a new king would rise up and lead them into an era of prosperity and freedom. So they imagined what this new king might be like. They pictured a mighty man, garbed in royal clothes. He would ride a large, white horse, waving his sword as he led the Jewish people in battle over the oppressive Romans. He would then rule from atop a beautiful throne and shower the Jewish nation with great wealth.

No wonder most people didn't recognize the Messiah when he finally came. Jesus, the king the prophets spoke of, didn't arrive as a mighty conqueror—he came to earth as a tiny baby. He didn't wear fancy, expensive clothes—he wore average robes and sandals. He didn't charge in on a warhorse—he usually walked. And he didn't conquer the Romans in a battle and take over their throne—he allowed himself to be killed by the Romans and take on a wooden cross.

Does that mean Jesus wasn't the king God promised would come in power to save his people? Of course he was! But he came with a restrained power, a focused strength, a meek disposition. And it was exactly the kind of power God needed. Jesus didn't need to conquer the Romans. He needed to conquer death, itself. He couldn't save us through a military show of strength. He could only do that as a gentle, meek man, willing to restrain his glory so that we could be with him forever. He made himself available to his Father's plans, even though they weren't as flashy as some people expected. Is it possible that, by restraining our own flashy and selfish natures, God can use us for bigger and better things, too?





LEADER'S NOTE: If your students don't know the basics of Christ's redemption or the significance of his death on the cross, check out the Rescue root of Deep Discipleship. Or consider giving your students the *I Am a Disciple* 40-day discipleship journal to go deeper into the story of Christ and the marks of a disciple. Find both at leadertreks.org/deep-discipleship.

Read: Luke 18:9–14

Discuss:

- Pharisees were highly regarded religious leaders and tax collectors were hated traitors. Who do you think would be considered more spiritual: a Pharisee or a tax collector? Why?
- Why do you think God prefers an honest, repentant sinner to a boastful, religious person?
- How does this verse from the Old Testament fit into Jesus' story? "For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart," (1 Sam. 16:7).



A SECOND LOOK:

William Seymour was the child of slaves. Even though he was born free, he still had to overcome extreme poverty. He faced a lot of racial discrimination and violence in his life. And if people weren't making his life hard enough, smallpox blinded him in one eye and left him with permanent scars. William saw this as a sign from God that he needed to start spreading the gospel to those who had not heard. His newfound purpose led him to Los Angeles. Despite preaching from a pulpit made of nailed-together shoe crates, he found enormous success, starting a church that overflowed with people from all backgrounds.

How did he do it? William Seymour wasn't flashy or proud, but he was sincere in his faith and meek in his demeanor. Here's what Arthur G. Osterberg said about him:

"He was meek and plain spoken and no orator. He spoke the common language of the uneducated class. He might preach for three-quarters of an hour with no more emotionalism than that post. He was no arm-waving thunderer, by any stretch of the imagination. The only way to explain the results is this: that his teachings were so simple that people who were opposed to organized religion fell for it. It was the simplicity that attracted them."³

Another man who knew Seymour, William Durham, said this:

"He is the meekest man I have ever met. He walks and talks with God. His power is in his weakness. He seems to maintain a helpless dependence on God and is as simple-hearted as a little child, and at the same time is so filled with God that you feel the love and power every time you get near him."⁴

William Seymour's meekness revealed the truth of 2 Corinthians 12:9: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." It doesn't take someone flashy or prideful to do great things. It takes someone who is meek and humble.

Discuss:

- Who are you more drawn to: people who are flashy and full of themselves or people who are meek and sincere?
- Why do you think God is more interested in using people who are meek?
- How difficult is it to be meek in a world that values people who have bought into celebrity culture, pride, and flashiness?



✓ **RATE IT:**
Give yourself a 1 to 5 rating. How well are you doing at being meek?

1

Others should know when I've done something amazing. You won't get far in life if no one knows how awesome you are.

3

I know that I shouldn't rub my victories in others' faces, but I still find myself bragging about my accomplishments. Others should know when I've done the right thing so they know I'm a good person.

5

I'm mostly concerned with making myself available to be used by God and letting his glory shine through me.

✓ **LIVE IT OUT: For God or Glory?**

This activity will help students look beyond their actions to their motivations. People who are and aren't meek may do exactly the same things, but a meek person will do them whether or not anyone else is watching. Flashy students may make themselves available to serve in obvious ways, but meek students will be available to serve in unnoticed or even demeaning ways.

1. As a group, have your students generate a list of the top ten things a follower of Christ should do. Write the list on a whiteboard or big sheet of paper for everyone to see. Have each student copy the list into the chart below.

***Students have the following chart in their handout, but the instructions are not included in their version.*

Top Ten Things Christians Should Do	Last 30 Days	Motivations
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		



2. In the next section of the chart, have students count how many times in the last 30 days they've done each of the things on the list the group put together. Ask students to be specific. Don't let them come up with arbitrary numbers. They should write out each instance in which they did one of the things on the list.
3. In the last section of the chart, ask students to write their motivations for each thing they wrote in the second section. Tell them to be as honest with themselves as they can. Did they do this for recognition? For a reward? To go on a college resume? To make their parents happy? Who knew about what they did? Did they tell anyone about it afterward? Or did they keep it to themselves? Once students have finished filling out this chart, ask them the following questions.

Discuss:

- Are you surprised by the number of things on the list you did or did not do in the last 30 days? Why or why not?
- Which thing did you do the most? Which did you do the least? Do you see a pattern in the things you were more willing to do?
- Think about your basic motivations behind doing the things on your list. What kind of things are driving you to act like a follower of Christ?
- Did you find that you were more or less likely to do something on the list if other people knew about it? What about if you were going to receive a reward for doing it?



RATE IT:

After thinking about your chart as a whole, give yourself a 1 to 5 rating. How available are you when God wants you to do something?

1

I was surprised to discover that I rarely make myself available to do the things a follower of Christ should do.

3

I'm available to do God's will only when I'm rewarded for it or when others see me do it.

5

I make myself available to do the things God wants, even when those things are demeaning or when no one else will ever know.

**APPLY IT:**

Write down one way you are going to apply what you now know about meekness. What difference will it make in your life this week? How will you apply it to your life?

Be specific:

What are you going to do?

When are you going to do it?

Is there someone who can keep you accountable?

LEADER'S NOTE: Whenever students make applications, challenge them to be specific. It's one thing to say, "I'm going to trust God more." The truth is, our students won't really know if they did this, or if they grew in trust over the week. It's another thing to say, "Every morning this week before I eat breakfast, I'm going to tell God that today is his and that I trust him, and I'm going to ask him to give me the strength to replace worries with trust." Challenge your students to answer the questions under the "Be Specific" section. You can even have them pair up, share their applications, and ask for accountability from their partner.

**THINK ABOUT IT:**

"He must increase, but I must decrease," (John 3:30).

"We've lost the true meaning of meekness. Meek doesn't mean weak. Jesus and Moses were described as meek, and they certainly were anything but weak. Meekness really means strength under control." - Rick Warren⁵

***Any reference within this piece to Internet addresses of websites not under the administration of LeaderTreks is not to be taken as an endorsement of these websites by LeaderTreks; neither does LeaderTreks vouch for their content.

¹ Rick Warren, "Meekness Is Not Weakness," *PastorRick.Com*, May 21, 2014, accessed July 19, 2017, <http://pastorrick.com/devotional/english/meekness-is-not-weakness>

² Mary Jane Chaignot, "Definition of Meekness," *BibleWise.Com*, accessed July 19, 2017, http://www.biblewise.com/bible_study/questions/definition-meekness.php

³ Arthur G. Osterberg, quoted in Larry E. Martin, *The Life and Ministry of William J. Seymour: And a History of the Azusa Street Revival* (Joplin, MO: Christian Life Books, 1999), 159.

⁴ William Durham, "A Chicago Evangelist's Pentecost," *The Apostolic Faith* 1, no. 6 (February-March 1907), 24.

⁵ Rick Warren, "Five New Year's Resolutions for Any Christian Leader," *ChristianPost.com*, January 8, 2010, accessed July 19, 2017, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/five-new-year-s-resolutions-for-any-christian-leader-42964/>