

Graciousness Is Spelled “N-E-E-D”

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
—Matthew 5:7

When Jesus said, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5:48), He was setting the stage for a higher level of perfection than many Christians have even thought to strive for. What we see in Jesus’ words, “Do not judge, or you too will be judged” (Matt. 7:1), is an example of this level of perfection—not the sinless perfection of Christ, but a level of maturity that allows us to have a true intimacy with God and a greater anointing. Being merciful is showing graciousness. Paul said, “Let your gentleness be evident to all” (Phil. 4:5).

The word gentleness in this passage comes from a Greek word that literally means “to be gracious.” When you could throw the book at somebody but instead you show mercy, you are making the choice to be gracious.

One acrostic that I have found helpful is built on the word NEED. When speaking to or about another person, ask yourself if what you are about to say will meet his need:

Necessary—Is it necessary to say this?

Encourage—Will this encourage him? Will it make him feel better?

Edify—Will it edify? Will what you say build him up and make him stronger?

Dignify—Will it dignify that person? Jesus treated other people with a sense of dignity.

Judging is the opposite of graciousness. Being gracious is the

consequence of a choice. Remember that any time you choose to judge, you are not being gracious. Judging someone else is actually uncalled-for criticism. That's what Jesus meant by judging. Criticism that is either unfair or unjust, even if it is true, should not be uttered. Remember, be gracious.

Excerpted from *Total Forgiveness* (Charisma House, 2002).