

5/1/2021



"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil" Psalm 23



DEALING WITH ...

DIFFICULT PEOPLE

An application of Ephesians 4.1-3

Focusing on Eph 4.2

- 5 elements leading to “tolerating” difficult people
 - Humility
 - Gentleness
 - Patience
 - Tolerance
 - Love_x

Eph 4.2 Focus (*cont'd*)

- Home in on “tolerance”
 - From different English translations
 - NASB: tolerance
 - KJV1900: forbearing
 - ESV, NIV84, NRSV, NET: bearing with
 - NCV: accepting
 - From the original Greek
 - anechomai /an·ekh·om·ahee
 - .. to hold up
 - .. to sustain, to bear, to endure
 - Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*
 - .. to endure patiently
 - *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary* ✘

Eph 4.2 Focus (*cont'd*)

- Common definition of “tolerance”

 - ... the capacity to bear something unpleasant, painful, or difficult

 - ... Long-suffering

Merriam-Webster's collegiate thesaurus

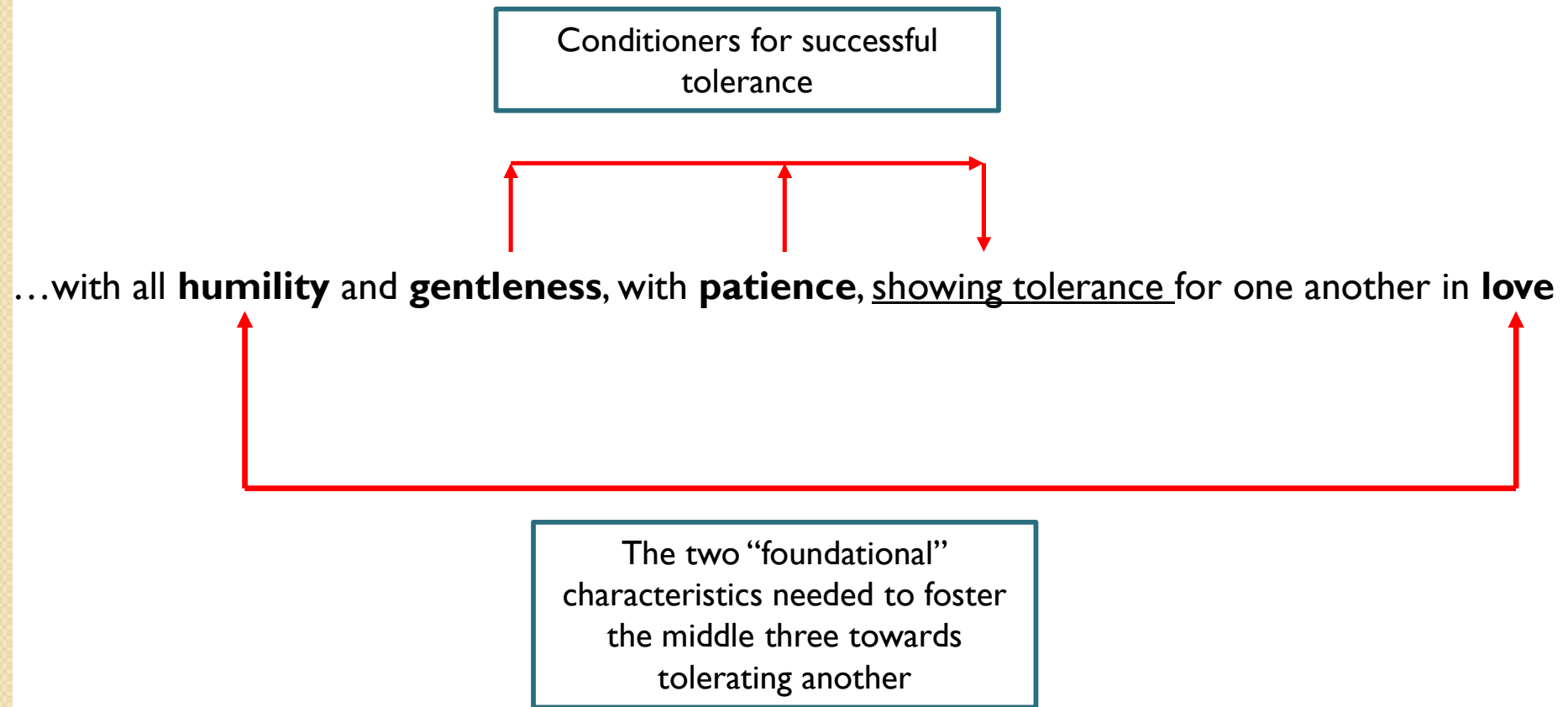
- “tolerance” is the target of humility, gentleness, patience & love

 - Minimum = deal with them as best we can

 - Better objective is the Christian view

 - The four elements are necessary for us to achieve this^x

Eph. 4.2 in a nutshell



HUMILITY

- What is humility ?
 - Absence of pride or arrogance
 - Modest self appreciation
 - OT Hebrew - “to crouch” or “to bend low to the ground” , as in submissiveness or to describe one’s impoverished condition
 - NT Greek – modesty of character

Andrew Murray’s definition

“Humility is perfect quietness of heart. It is to expect nothing, to wonder at nothing that is done to me, to feel nothing done against me. It is to be at rest when nobody praises me, and when I am blamed or despised. It is to have a blessed home in the Lord, where I can go in and shut the door, and kneel to my Father in secret, and am at peace as in a deep sea of calmness, when all around and above is trouble.” x

HUMILITY *(cont'd)*

- Illustrations

- Phil 2.3

- The “...of mind ...” kind of humility
 - Greek *tapeinophrosune* /tap i ·nof ·ros ·oo ·nay/
 - the having a humble opinion of one’s self.
 - a deep sense of one’s (moral) littleness
(in the light of being aware of sinfulness)

Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon

- Bluntly put > Matt 7.5

- If I evaluate myself in the light of my imperfections, it is difficult to look down on others x

HUMILITY

- Illustrations *(cont'd)*
 - Matt 18.4
 - What is it about the child that makes the child a key example of humility ? (assuming Jesus pointed to a very small child)
 - Doesn't have a high opinion of self due to lack of skills and accomplishments
 - Hasn't developed self-centered goals
 - Basically is happy to be with most anyone regardless of who they are or how they act
 - Not afraid of what people think of them > not vain, self-conscious
 - Teachable, correctable, can accept being wrong, can quickly apologize
 - Have simple trust in those bigger than them
 - Quickly forgive when they are wronged x

HUMILITY

- Illustrations *(cont'd)*

- Matt 11.29 > The Ultimate Example

- Phil 2.5-8 > Temporarily gave up His heavenly privileges to serve sinful humanity (ultimate “difficult” people)

- Note His attitude

- He did not hold onto His high standing while serving the Father and man
- He reduced Himself to be a servant and assumed lowly human form
- He served in humility to the point of giving up His life in spite of His true identity, capabilities, perfect moral standing
- He never once stood up and rebutted someone with "Hey do you realize Who I AM ?? !“


John E. Mitchell

“The great leaders of men in all fields have not been the arrogant and the greedy, but the servants. The real servants are the true nobility. The greatest of all, the Son of God Himself, declared that He had come not to be served but to be a servant, and to give his life a ransom for many.” x

HUMILITY (cont'd)

- Why do I need humility to “bear with” a difficult person ??
 - To maintain necessary relationships peaceably, fruitfully
 - To make progress with others in working together, even though they may be difficult
 - To win difficult people over to Christ, and to help difficult believers grow
- God’s warnings
 - Micah 6.8
 - Luke 4.11 x

HUMILITY *(cont'd)*

- Putting humility into practice
 - Expand beyond the “holy huddle” that you usually hang out with
 - Realize & use humility’s enablements that help in dealing with a difficult person. 
 - Humility
 - ... allows you to listen better, ask learning questions, be a more informed in trying to have the better relationship
 - ... automatically makes you more vulnerable, so be prepared
 - ... allows the difficult person to see you as human, too
 - ... allows you to have a better chance of reconciling differences
 - ...helps you to forgive the difficult person, admit your own mistakes
 - 2 Chron 16.9 > God will support your efforts
 - Sometimes humility comes in a backward way ^x

GENTLENESS

- What is gentleness ?

- Bible language translating gentleness

- Hebrew – a mix of words dependent on content
- Greek > prautes /prah ·oo tace
mildness of disposition, gentleness of spirit, meekness

"Praütēs, according to Aristotle, is the middle standing between two extremes, getting angry without reason and not getting angry at all. It is a condition of mind and heart which demonstrates gentleness, not in weakness, but in power. It is a balance born in strength of character. This does not come naturally. It is supernatural ."

Sermon "Gently Engage“, Mike Measley, Evangelical Free Bible Church

- Some other definitions ..

An expression of compassion, seen in God's dealings with the frail and weak, and expected of believers in their dealings with others.

Manser, M. H. *Dictionary of Bible Themes*.

Sensitivity of disposition and kindness of behavior, founded on strength and prompted by love.

- Chamblin, J. K. *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* x

GENTLENESS *(cont'd)*

- Illustrations

- God's gentleness with His people
 - Ps 18.35, Isa 40.11, 1 Ki 19.11-12
- Advice to believers re. gentleness
 - Prov 15.1, Col 3.12,
 - Jam 3.17 "reasonable" > Gk *eupeithes* /yoo pi thace
> willing to yield
- Further illustrations
 - Handling the prodigal son's older brother Lk 15.25-32
 - Christ as the Standard
 - Matt 11.29
 - 2 Cor 10.1
 - Gentleness here is *epieikeia* /ep ee i ki ah, which suggests the yielding of a judge, who, instead of demanding the exact penalty required by strict justice, gives way to circumstances which call for mercy > believer's target attitude
- Connell, J. C., *New Bible Dictionary* x

GENTLENESS (cont'd)

- Why do I need gentleness to “bear with” a difficult person ??
 - 2 Cor 5.20a – “... as though God were making an appeal through us ... “
 - 1 Cor 4.21
 - How would you like to be treated ??
 - 2 Tim 2.24-25 > Believer to be a promoter of unity
 - 1 Pet 3.15
 - Gal 5.23 > These are needed to deal with difficult people_x

GENTLENESS *(cont'd)*

- Putting gentleness into practice
 - Titus 3.1-2
 - A necessary balance to achieve...
 - Matt 7.1-2 > Observe our own difficulties as we deal with others
 - Gal 6.1 > Don't fail to help others as well
 - The guidelines
 - We are not told to avoid making value judgements of others' behavior
 - We are told to judge others with humility and gentleness
 - Be careful to not overstate the other person as difficult (it might be you also/instead ??)
 - Remember Christ's example: gentleness = a judge yielding
 - The person may actually be wrong, but Christ's example (epieikeia) says to not be ready to judge, decide punishment due versus considering circumstances and extend mercy
 - Don't demean, demote, dismiss, think less of the person because of the difficulty the person presents^x

PATIENCE

- What is patience ?
 - Biblical patience is a God-exercised, or God-given, restraint in face of opposition or oppression. It is not passivity. The initiative lies with God's love, or the Christian's, in meeting wrong in this way. In the OT, the concept is denoted by Heb. 'ārēk, meaning 'long'. God is said to be 'long' or 'slow' to anger

Hoad, J.W. L. (1996). in *New Bible Dictionary*

- New Testament Greek
 - makrothumia /mak ·roth ·oo ·mee ·ah
 - patience, forbearance, longsuffering, slowness in avenging wrongs
 - hupomone /hoop ·om ·on ·ay
 - a patient enduring, sustaining, perseverance^x

PATIENCE *(cont'd)*

- What is patience ? *(cont'd)*
 - Ability to take a great deal of punishment from evil people or circumstances without losing one's temper, without becoming irritated and angry, or without taking vengeance. It includes the capacity to bear pain or trials without complaint, the ability to forbear under severe provocation, and the self-control which keeps one from acting rashly even though suffering opposition or adversity

Walter A. Elwell, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* x

PATIENCE *(cont'd)*

- Some scripture exhortations for patience in believer
 - Prov 29.20, Col 1.9 & 11, Col 3.12-13, Jam 1.2-4
- Illustrations of patience
 - Exod 34.6 > OT: God as perfect example of patience
 - Rom 2.4 > NT: Rom 2.4 God's example again
 - Jam 5.10-11 > Patience of Job
 - Job knew that he didn't deserve the troubles God allowed him to have
 - He felt that God Himself had placed the roadblocks in his life
 - Job didn't know that, although he was righteous, God was allowing Satan to test Job's patience and faith in God
 - Job showed the ultimate case of enduring patience
 - > Job 19.25-26
 - Patience of Joseph
 - Patience of the Apostles and early Christians^x

PATIENCE (cont'd)

- Why is patience needed to deal with a difficult person ?
 - Prov 15.18, Prov 19.11, Prov 25.15
 - Practical advice
 - Home-grown caution # 1
“Hitting them between the eyes just raises defenses”
 - Home-grown caution # 2
“Never Attempt To Teach a Pig To Sing; It Wastes Your Time and Annoys the Pig”
 - With a difficult person, you're operating somewhere in between ... so be patient !x

PATIENCE *(cont'd)*

- Putting patience into practice

- 1 Thess 5.14

- “...some Christians will never in this life grow beyond certain limitations ...Paul seems to say that there will always be this kind of diversity of weakness among believers — not that there should be, but that there will be. God assigns faith and growth according to his own inscrutable wisdom. Paul says that in Romans 12:3. - John Piper

- Rom 12.3

“The point is that each member functions to serve the body, not the body to serve the members. The diversity of the many accompanies the unity of the body. Therefore it is important to think soundly about oneself and to evaluate properly God’s gifts and their uses”

Witmer, J.A. (1985).

The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures

- Heb 12.1-2 > Jesus is the answer to enduring patience ! ✕

LOVE

- What is love ?
 - Heb most common 'ahab, 'aheb /aw 'hab
 - Multiple translations best understood by context, e.g. affection, friendship, loyalty, desire, liking, attachment
 - NT Greek agape /ag ah pay
 - Love for God and love for one another
 - “Agapē means to love the undeserving, despite disappointment and rejection”

White, R. E. O. Love. In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* x

LOVE *(cont'd)*

- What is love ? *(cont'd)*
 - A feeling of deep affection. A central theme in Scripture and Christian theology and ethics. Defines our relationship with God and dictates how we should treat others
Lexham Bible Dictionary
 - That disinterested and unselfish relation between persons, in which the personality of the one is lost in the other, in which each esteems the other better than himself (Phil. 2:3) ...
....When John says, “God is love” (1 John 4:16), he does not mean to give a metaphysical definition of the essence of God, but to state God’s feelings toward us.

Jackson, S. M. In *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* x

LOVE (cont'd)

- Illustrations of love
 - In Scripture
 - Lev 19.18, Deut 10.19
 - Matt 22.37-39, 5.43-48, 1 John 4.21, Eph 5.1-2
 - Moses leading the complaining children of Israel
 - He never retaliated against them
 - Instead he continued to plead to God for forgiveness for their complaining and sinful actions against God's mercy and grace
 - Hosea and his adulterous wife > Hos 3.1
 - Parable of the Good Samaritan
 - Jesus sacrificing His life on the cross
 - For DIFFICULT people !_x

LOVE (cont'd)

- Why should I love a difficult person ?
 - Parable of the ungrateful slave > Matt 18.33
 - Love others in gratitude for Christ loving us
 - Jn 13.34-35
 - As a witness to those around you, believers and nonbelievers, and especially the difficult person > toward the betterment of the difficult person
 - Lk 6.32-35
 - Making an effort to personally grow spiritually while demonstrating Christ's influence
 - I Jn 4.7-8, 11
 - For unity in the body of Christ_x

LOVE (cont'd)

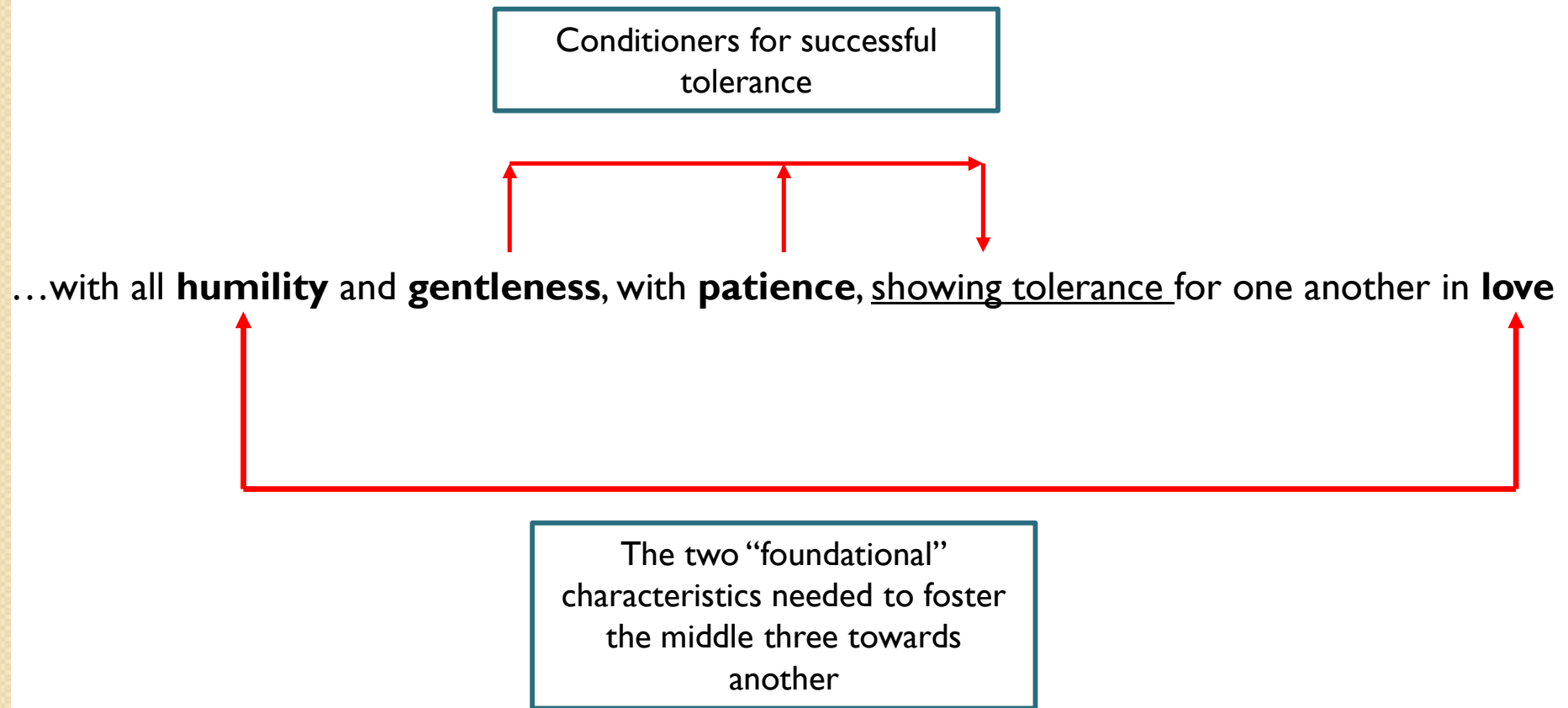
- Putting love into practice
 - Applying love in our relationships, particularly in dealing with the difficult
 - Matt 7.12, Rom 13.10, 1 Cor 13.4-8a
 - Eph 4.32 > Be ready to forgive the other person
 - Heb 12.15 > Choose love vs . Being provoked to anger
 - Paul's epistles show that love is the ultimate foundation for treating others as Christ desires
 - “Paul's description of love in action includes liberality, acts of mercy, and hospitality; avoidance of revenge; sympathy that weeps; rejoicing with others; sharing of weakness, shame, or need; restoring, supporting, and upbuilding others, giving them all honor, kindness, forgiveness, encouragement; restraining criticism, even of the divisive, over-scrupulous “weaker brother”—the list is almost endless”

White, R. E. O. , *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* x

LOVE (cont'd)

- Putting love into practice (cont'd)
 - Notes from article “Loving Difficult People” by Stacy Reaoch (John Piper’s Desiring God Web site)
 - Pray for your own heart Col 3.12-14
 - Pray for the difficult person Phil 1.9
 - Note "knowledge and discernment" and its effect on generating the full love needed to deal with all others
“...that love should be more than sentimental; it should be knowledgeable and discerning. Having genuine spiritual knowledge (epignosis) of God and depth of insight into His ways enables Christians to love God and others more.”
Lightner, R. P. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck
The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures
 - Don't run from them, move toward them !
 - Find ways to encourage them x

Eph. 4.2 in a nutshell



Realizing the high bar set by Christ ...

From commentary on Eph 4.2 by William Barclay...

- **Humility**
 - The virtue by which a man becomes conscious of his own unworthiness
 - ...comes from *setting [his] life beside the life of Christ and in the light of the demands of God*
- **Gentleness**
 - The person who is *praus* is the one who is always angry at the right time and never angry at the wrong time
 -stirred by indignation at the wrongs and the sufferings of others, but is never moved to anger by any personal wrongs and insults
 - ...who has every instinct and every passion under perfect control
 - ...such an individual is God-controlled
- **Patience**
 - The spirit which will never give in and which, because it endures to the end, will reap the reward
 - ...the spirit which bears insult and injury without bitterness and without complaint
- **Love**
 - That quality of mind and heart which compels Christians **never** to feel any bitterness, **never** to feel any desire for revenge, but **always** to seek the highest good of absolutely everyone **xx**