

FIRED UP?! THREE WAYS TO PARENT WITH GENTLENESS

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Our firstborn daughter, Elizabeth, was only a couple of diaper sizes larger than her newborn sister when she met Stephanie in the hospital. Gentle was not part of Elizabeth's limited vocabulary or toddler nature, so she welcomed Stephanie into the family by bopping her on the head!

When babies are newborns, we gently protect them from their rambunctious older siblings, prop their heads with care, and intentionally choose baby shampoo, lotion, and laundry soap. It's enough to rock us into a sleepy understanding of gentleness.

When God's Spirit makes us gentle, it's not weak, timid, or passive. His gentleness is strong, bold, and active. His gentleness is evident in us when—compelled by love—we gently speak the truth and fight for people, leaving them stronger in Christ than we found them.

Post-diapers, is the Spirit's gentleness evident in you when your children are deceitful, disrespectful, or disobedient? Would you describe yourself as gentle in how you talk, text, or react to their poor choices? Would your children agree?

When you're fired up over a child's disobedience, a strained relationship, or injustice, how can you be gentle and strong to confront, correct, and bring change?

Here are three tips to get you started.

- **Back up.** If you're fired up, take a deep breath to calm yourself. Before you confront, back up and do an honest heart check. What's your true motive? Is it to win the argument or restore the relationship? Anchor yourself to the truth of who God is, what he says about you, and how he would respond. "You are my God. Show me what you want me to do, and let your gentle Spirit lead me in the right path." [Psalm 143:10](#) (CEV)
- **Rise up.** Gentleness doesn't take a back seat to disobedience or injustice. When confronting, listen well to your child's words and body language. Offer clarifying language like, "What I hear you saying is" or "Tell me more." Listen with a heart that is for them, not against them. Then speak life into them with gentleness and strength, love and truth. "Patience and gentle talk can convince a ruler and overcome any problem." [Proverbs 25:15](#) (CEV)
- **Build up.** When Jesus saw hurting people and brokenness, he was strong and gentle to help. Jesus didn't bring change through shouting, fighting, or silencing people. No! Jesus' heart was always for people. They were helped, healed, strengthened, and built up through the power of his gentleness. "He won't shout or yell or call out in the streets. He won't break off a bent reed or put out a dying flame, but he will make sure that justice is done." [Matthew 12:19-20](#) (CEV)

Parenting with gentleness was never meant to be limited to the baby stage. As your child grows, may you both grow in the power of his gentleness.



