



GENTLE AND LOWLY

BY DANE ORTLUND

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If you and I have had a conversation in the past year or so, it's likely that at some point I found a way to bring Dane Ortlund's book, *Gentle and Lowly*, into the conversation. Do you feel weary? Let's read *Gentle and Lowly*. Do you want to raise your affections for Christ? Let's read *Gentle and Lowly*. Are you struggling with anger? Let's read *Gentle and Lowly*. Did the Eagles have a humiliating football season? Let's read *Gentle and Lowly*. You get the picture.

This book appeared on the top of many best-book lists for 2020, and you might have noticed the entire Christian world seems to be commending it. This is appropriate, and I happily add my voice to the choir. Dane Ortlund has given the church a remarkable gift.

Gentle and Lowly is a treasure because it helps Christians grow in treasuring Jesus Christ. Drawing from the puritan Thomas Goodwin, as well as Richard Sibbes and John Bunyan, Ortlund highlights a particular facet of the glory of Christ that is too often neglected: the affectionate heart of Christ. His theme verse is Matthew 11:29, where Jesus declares, "I am gentle and lowly in heart."

The 23 chapters are relatively short, making this an ideal book to work through in your devotions. The Table of Contents itself is edifying, with chapter titles including "I Will Never Cast Out," "An Advocate," "A Tender Friend," and "Buried in His Heart Forevermore." Each chapter highlights a different section of Scripture. Our pastoral team read through this book together and spent several small group meetings discussing the heart of Christ for us.

In order to worship Christ appropriately, we need a theological understanding of his love. *Gentle and Lowly* provides this by displaying the gracious disposition of Christ toward sinners and sufferers.

Warning: This book is corrective in that it challenges our fleshly instincts to believe that Christ relates to us on the basis of our moral performance, our limited love, and our sin-stained relations. Christ's heart is not like ours; my heart is law-ish, his heart is lavish. He is a tender and happy friend who deals gently and is able to sympathize with us. He is our advocate who defends our cause on the merits of his substitutionary death. He loves us now and will love us to the end.

Is this what comes to mind when you think of Christ? If that answer is a sorrowful no, or a knee-jerk yes, then I invite you to spend unhurried time in this book. There is certainly more to Jesus' heart than "gentle and lowly," but this book stresses something important and life-giving. Ortlund guides us to meditate on the gentle and lowly Savior, and helps us rest our souls in the deep and unchanging love of Jesus.

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In the conclusion of his book, Ortlund raises the question of application and response:

To ask, "Now how do I apply this to my life?" would be a trivialization of the point of this study. If an Eskimo wins a vacation to a sunny place, he doesn't arrive in his hotel room, step out onto the balcony, and wonder how to apply that to his life. He just enjoys it. He just basks.

But there is one thing for us to do. Jesus says it in Matthew 11:28. "Come to me" (215).

Enjoy Christ. Find rest for your soul. Bask in the Savior's love. Let *Gentle and Lowly* lead you there.

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