

# Ideal Conditions

*Article that first appeared in ICF newsletter January 2006, written by ICF member Moira Biggins*

Browsing through my back copies of ICF Newsletters, I was struck by a remark:

*Many of our members face the daily challenge of expressing their faith in an environment which often presents less than ideal conditions for those who are seeking to live as followers of Christ. (Summer 2005)*

I was led to think What *would* be “ideal conditions”? Perhaps they could be found in organisations that had integrity of purpose, were adequately staffed and financially secure, treated their workforce well and were not destabilised by constant change. In such serene circumstances, it might be easy to exhibit the gentleness of spirit that Jesus commends in the Beatitudes. “Gentle Jesus, meek and mild” would be our role-model.

But few workplaces in 21<sup>st</sup>-century Britain meet all these desirable criteria. Contemporary working life requires from most of us a certain toughness. This includes being willing to take actions that are not gentle or kindly but – in the circumstances – have to be done.

Of course the Beatitudes commend more than gentleness of spirit. They speak of those who are in difficult environments and seek to make them better. There is blessing for those who hunger and thirst to see right prevail; for the peace-makers – not those who avoid conflict or try to cover it up, but rather face up to it and strive for reconciliation.

Jesus could indeed be gentle with the sick, the suffering and the repentant sinner. But he could also be tough! He told Pharisees they were hypocrites, challenged a rich young man to give up his wealth, and used a whip to drive money-changers out of the Temple.

I believe that “ideal conditions” are not the ones in which we can be most meek and mild. Instead, they are the ones that give us maximum opportunity to influence people and situations for good.

The great missionary C T Studd famously wrote

*Some want to live within the sound of church or chapel bell,  
I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell.*

That choice requires – following his metaphor – the willingness to put up with heat and smoke, to risk choking on flying ash or suffering burns. Only by acknowledging our dependence on God can we endure such an environment and do constructive things within it.

The good news is that we are blessed in that situation.

*How blest are those who know their need of God.  
The Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.*

*Rev Dr Moira Biggins is a Methodist minister in secular employment and also an airport chaplain*