

# Peeled

LOVE | JOY | PEACE | PATIENCE | KINDNESS | GOODNESS | FAITHFULNESS | GENTLENESS | SELF-CONTROL

## GETTING UNDER THE SKIN



**Gentleness**  
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**The Crossing Church**  
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### OPENING

We're in a series about the Fruit of the Spirit as defined for us in **Galatians 5:22-23a**: "But the Fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." Each of these characteristics flows out of our relationship with God when we surrender our lives to Him. This week we are looking at gentleness. In Matthew 5, we read, "Blessed are the gentle (meek) for they shall inherit the earth." When we hear the word meek, we think weak or timid or mousy or lacking strength or powerless, but true **gentleness** means strength or **power under control**.

### SCRIPTURE<sup>1</sup>

**Galatians 5:13-15** You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

**Galatians 5:25** Since we live by the Spirit in us, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

**2 Samuel 16:5-13** As King David approached Bahurim, a man from the same clan as Saul's family came out from there. His name was Shimei son of Gera, and he cursed as he came out. He pelted David and all the king's officials with stones, though all the troops and the special guard were on David's right and left. As he cursed, Shimei said, "Get out, get out, you murderer, you scoundrel! The Lord has repaid you for all the blood you shed in the household of Saul in whose place you have reigned. The Lord has given the kingdom into the hands of your son Absalom. You have come to ruin because you are a murderer!" Then Abishai son of Zeruiah said to the king, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Let me go over and cut off his head." But the king said, "What does this have to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? If he is cursing because the Lord said to him, 'Curse David,' who can ask 'Why do you do this?' " David then said to Abishai and all his officials, "My son, my own flesh and blood, is trying to kill me. How much more, then, this Benjamite! Leave him alone; let him curse, for the Lord has told him to. It may be that the lord will look upon my misery and restore to me His covenant blessing instead of His curse today." So

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<sup>1</sup> All scripture is NIV translation unless otherwise indicated.

David and his men continued along the road while Shimei was going along the hillside opposite him cursing as he went and throwing stones at him and showering him with dirt.

## **OBSERVATION**

Before we continue with gentleness, let's consider why Paul was writing about Fruit of the Spirit at all. The church in Galatia was started by some who had left behind the bondage of rules-based religion to follow a relationship-based faith in Jesus, but in doing that they were swinging too far in the opposite direction saying, "Since we've been freed from the Law and have the promise of heaven because of Jesus, we can do whatever we want." Let us look deeper at Jesus' message to us that we are to work, not for ourselves, but for God's Kingdom.

### **QUESTION: Who do you know who believes as some new Galatians believed in their day?**

For more background, originally God wanted to lead His people the Israelites, but they wanted a king like all of the cultures around them had. So, God relented and gave them Saul. The problem was that Saul was not a very good king and actually turned a bit crazy when God called a shepherd boy named David to replace him. Now David wasn't perfect – on the bell curve, he was pretty terrible, but he had a heart for God, repented and God forgave him (**See Psalm 51**). Unfortunately, his sins caused his son Absalom to rebel against him and attempted to overthrow him. David didn't escape the consequences of his sins as his entire family was a mess, but God's forgiveness resulted a life of greater character later in his life.

### **QUESTION: In what ways have other Bible characters modeled gentleness to others?**

Because of this history a man called Shimei cursed David and threw stones at him, but David didn't retaliate, saying that God was using the situation for His purposes. David responded with gentleness as he admitted that he may have deserved the awful treatment.

### **QUESTION: In what ways is God trying to say something to you through this story?**

## **APPLICATION**

When someone comes against us a common reaction is to deflect or attack. When someone is snarky or unkind we want to be snarky back, don't we? When people are angry over politics or other social issues, our primal response is to be outraged, but that isn't God's best for us. Our kids are watching, our friends are watching, the whole world is watching so we need to do better. We are called to represent Jesus to everyone we encounter. So, how do we keep in step with the Spirit? **1) We immerse ourselves in God.** We begin each day with Jesus as we read the Word, especially Gospels, and listen for His voice; **2) We wait for His presence** and choose our actions based on His love for us and those we encounter; **3) At the end of the day, we review** how we have behaved. Then we thank God for what we got right and repent of what we got wrong. Eventually these practices become habits and naturally a way of new life in Jesus.

### **QUESTION: When have you experienced rejection? How did you react?**

### **QUESTION: In what ways are you immersing yourself in Jesus and His ways of gentleness?**

Because Jesus loves us at our worst, we are expected to love others even at their worst. But this is not natural: We can't just make ourselves gentle. The fact that we struggle with this should remind us that we need Jesus to do it for us. Because He has freely forgiven us, we can forgive

others; because Jesus offers gentle answers to us instead of rejection, we can offer gentleness to others rather than rejection. After all, we are on journeys to become more like Him every day to the end of the age.

**QUESTION: How are you being obedient to God as you love someone even at his worst?**

**QUESTION: When have you experienced rejection? How did you react?**

**QUESTION: When was the last time you took a step back to evaluate your own gentleness?**

**QUESTION: What is Jesus urging you to change today as you follow Him on your journey in His Kingdom?**

#### **PRAYER**

Heavenly Father, we are called to be a light to the world, but we can only achieve that heavenly state through Your Holy Spirit. Help us to begin by showing Jesus' gentleness and mercy to others under all circumstances. In His name. Amen.

#### **QUESTIONS**

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