

# THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

## STUDY EIGHT

### Extending Grace Ever So Gently

*2 Samuel 9*

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*When we need relief, we long for a touch of grace given with gentleness.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**S**OME doctors could use a dose of gentleness. Their bedside manner is more sandpaper than silk! They speak fast, avoid eye contact, and perform examinations roughly. They may be medical geniuses, but their gruffness rubs people the wrong way. Their patients dread when they come in the room and breathe a sigh of relief when they leave.

On the other hand, doctors who take time, listen with compassion, and treat the sufferer with tender care bring as much healing with their gentle touch as with their treatment plan. Gentleness is good medicine for the body and soul.

Proverbs puts it this way: “Gentle words are a tree of life,” (Proverbs 15:4). They offer cool shade to those toiling in the harsh conditions of an inconsiderate and indifferent world. Gentle words put people at ease and create a safe place for the hurting.

Like all the fruits of the Spirit, gentleness is of heavenly origin—not of this world but so needed in this world. Gentleness is an extension of grace. Think of it as God’s grace dished out in small doses. A caring gesture. A welcoming smile. A soft expression. A merciful action.

In 2 Samuel 9, we come to one of Scripture’s richest illustrations of grace extended gently. David showers a man named Mephibosheth with a refreshing blessing. In so doing, he plants a tree of life that brings shade not only to his household but the entire nation.



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### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Come sit under the shade of God's gentle care as you approach His Word. Write a prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to warm your heart with the wisdom you find.



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Mephibosheth's story can be traced to a vow that David made to Jonathan, Mephibosheth's father. Review David's vow that we examined in the previous *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study in [1 Samuel 20:12–17](#). What did David promise?

For years, David was a fugitive from murderous King Saul, who was bent on killing David before this young rival could take the throne. Finally, the chase ended when Saul died during a battle with the Philistines. Tragically, Jonathan was killed too. In the frantic aftermath, every family member related to Saul fled for their lives. What happened to Saul's grandson, five-year-old Mephibosheth ([2 Samuel 4:4](#))?

The northern tribes of Israel picked Saul's son, Ishbosheth, to be king, while David ruled Judah in the south. After two years, however, Ishbosheth was murdered by his own captains ([4:1–8](#)), and finally, at age 30, David was declared the rightful king of all Israel ([5:4](#)). He centralized his government in a new capital city, Jerusalem, the city of David ([5:6–10](#)). After a little time passed, he remembered his vow to Jonathan.

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### Observation: A Promise Kept

Read [2 Samuel 9:1–13](#). Use your skills of observation to identify the thematic progression of the narrative—David’s question, David’s search, and David’s provision.<sup>1</sup> Look for expressions of gentleness throughout the new king’s dealing with Mephibosheth.

#### David’s Question—2 Samuel 9:1–4

The first task for most kings in David’s day was to eliminate the previous king’s remaining heirs. What strikes you by contrast as you read David’s question ([2 Samuel 9:1](#))?

The Hebrew word for “kindness,” *chesed*, has rich theological meaning. In [Isaiah 54:8–9](#), the word is translated as “everlasting love” and “faithful love.” It is God’s covenantal love and connotes unconditional favor for the undeserving . . . in other words, *grace*.

David’s question led him to an old servant in Saul’s household named Ziba. What did Ziba tell David, according to [2 Samuel 9:2–4](#)? What tone do you perceive in Ziba’s words?

The town name, *Lo-debar*, means “no pasture.” It was a barren place—hot and dry with too little vegetation to sustain animals. What does the name suggest about the conditions in which Mephibosheth was living?

*David understood what it was like to be pushed aside. He didn’t ask Ziba about Mephibosheth’s disability. He said, “Where is he? Go get him!”*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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### David's Search—2 Samuel 9:5–6

What happened when David sent for Mephibosheth, according to [2 Samuel 9:5–6](#)? What might Mephibosheth have assumed about David's intentions?

*Mephibosheth was in hiding, hoping never to be found. Lo-debar was a place of unimaginable desolation. A place the new king would never go looking.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

### David's Provision—2 Samuel 9:7–13

David didn't summon Mephibosheth to kill him but to show him *chesed*. What gestures of kindness did David shower upon Mephibosheth in [2 Samuel 9:7–13](#)? Identify the gentleness in David's grace.

From his place of exile, where conditions were harsh and food was scarce, Mephibosheth was ushered into a place of plenty with servants to tend his needs. David even welcomed Mephibosheth to his family table, making him equal in status to his own children. What grace!



### **Interpretation: Grace and Gentleness from God toward Us**

David could have been like a gruff doctor, checking off his task without any concern for the patient. But David acted with *chesed* toward Mephibosheth, reflecting the grace and gentleness that God has shown us in Christ.

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As we compare Mephibosheth's grace encounter with David to our grace encounter with the Son of David, we find deeper layers of meaning. At least eight analogies emerge. Read the verses in the right column, then fill in the theological analogy. We filled in the first one as an example.

David's Grace toward Mephibosheth	God's Grace toward Us
Mephibosheth was Jonathan's son, born in his image.	<i>Genesis 1:27</i> Humans were created as God's children in His image.
Mephibosheth suffered a fall that crippled him for life.	<i>Romans 5:12</i>
David sought someone to whom he might extend grace.	<i>Luke 19:10</i>
Undeserving Mephibosheth couldn't earn the king's favor but simply received it.	<i>John 1:12</i>
David took Mephibosheth from a barren place to the royal banquet table.	<i>Revelation 19:9</i>
David gave Mephibosheth the same royal status as his own children.	<i>Ephesians 1:5</i>
Mephibosheth's disability was a constant reminder of David's grace.	<i>2 Corinthians 12:9</i>
David gave Mephibosheth the same privileges as his own sons and daughters.	<i>Galatians 4:4-7</i>

Out of his love for Jonathan, David sought anyone to whom he might extend God's kindness. He didn't launch a contest to find the worthiest. The invitation was to *anyone*. Jesus Christ also seeks anyone to whom He might extend His grace, anyone whose heart is open to Him.

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## Correlation: The Life-Changing Power of a Gentle Savior

Like David inviting outcast Mephibosheth into his home, Jesus invited all “who are weary and carry heavy burdens” to receive His rest (Matthew 11:28). What was Jesus’ “bedside manner”? What character qualities in Him were a healing balm to sufferers, according to [Matthew 11:29](#)?

Why are these qualities essential for us to reflect toward others?

How did Paul say we emulate Jesus as we “lead a life worthy of [our] calling” in [Ephesians 4:1–2](#)?

*By trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, we were made a member of God’s forever family . . . by grace. We did nothing, deserved nothing, earned nothing, and could never repay what Christ did for us. We simply say, “Thank You, my King, for welcoming me to Your table.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



## Application: Emulating the Gentleness and Grace of Jesus

We follow David’s example when we treat people with gentleness, but more importantly, we express the heart of Jesus. We can’t give what we haven’t received, however. Look again at the eight analogies above and put your name in the list. How has the Lord shown His gentle grace toward you?

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What loving response can you offer the Lord for His gentle “bedside manner” toward you? Write a prayer of gratitude in the space below.

Now, how can you pass along the gentle grace that you’ve received to a fellow sufferer? What gesture of gentleness can you give? To whom?

Every day, you can dispense small doses of grace through simple acts of gentleness. Consider how the Lord might show His humble and gentle heart to the people in your life, and then follow His lead.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, thank You for Your open arms inviting me to Your banquet table. You have drawn me to Yourself through Your gentle heart and covered my life from beginning to end with the beautiful blessings of grace. I give You my heart and lift my voice in eternal praise through Jesus Christ, my Lord, amen.*

#### ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, “*How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?*”

For the 2024 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll’s messages. Copyright © 2023, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

