

“The To List: Love Kindness”  
Micah 6:8  
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“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality... Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

Martin Luther King Jr., Letter from the Birmingham Jail.

Tomorrow is Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Established in 1986 as a Federal Holiday. A man who took a stand for racial injustice. Are we taking a stand for injustices of any kind? Dr. King had some powerful things to say, not only about justice but about kindness and love.

(video: <http://www.sermonspice.com/product/58109/remembering-martin-luther-king-jr> )

Oh to love kindness---  
Love can transform an enemy into a friend---  
How do you treat others?  
Hating others is not consistent with a dynamic relationship with Jesus.  
Love kindness.

Although perhaps not the most politically correct, and I do want to be sensitive, and it is not my intent to offend anyone---I quote the song I sang as a child and quote this video: Red and yellow, black and white we are all precious in His sight.

Beloved when it comes to racism we need to be color-blind.....are you with me?? Xxxx ALL are precious in His sight. We may look on the outward...God looks at the inside. May we try to see the world as God sees it. May we see people as God sees them.

Do justice to all and for all. Love God! Love All!! So we are at our second in our To Do List series (**logo slide with all 3 listed**).

Now I never thought I would do this...but I am going to show you something. (**image of arm with tattoo**). No this is not my arm...as you look at the picture you must know my biceps are a whole lot bigger. This photo is an actual picture of a fellow United Methodist pastor. And you know...if I were going to have a tattoo down my arm, well I guess this would be a good one. It is a forever reminder of what we are to do. In fact, our scripture says this is what the Lord does require of you.

Today on the “To Do List” is Love Kindness. I always like to look at other translations to see how else that simple phrase might be used in other Bibles. I found these to be some of my favorites.

**“Love kindness.” (English Standard Version”**

**“Love mercy.” (King James Version)**

**“Be compassionate and loyal in your love.” (The Message)**

**“Let mercy be your first concern.” (Contemporary English Version)**

**“You must love to show mercy.” (New International Readers’ Version)**

To be honest I don’t always love to show mercy. There are times when people get me so frustrated and I want to...well I want to tell them off. I want to get even. I want to treat them like they treat me. I want to tell them what I really think. But then I remember I am a pastor and I have to be pastoral. No...then I remember I am a follower of Jesus and I need to do what He would want me to do. To say what He would want me to say.

Do we really love kindness or do we do it just because that’s what “good people” do?

Several of us on team have just finished reading “Growing Young: 6 Essential Strategies To Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church.” It is a Fuller Youth Institute Resource written in 2016.

The National Study of Youth and Religion did some research and found that Moralistic Therapeutic Deism Still Threatens to Distract Young People from Jesus. Say what? That’s a mouthful. Before I explain, let me say that I believe that Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is not something that distracts just young people, but all people.

Let me explain by sharing what the book means by each word.

**“...moralistic, meaning that religious young people equate faith with being a good, moral person (generally being nice.)”**

Beloved being good does not make you a follower of Jesus. Not just youth, but adults in our world have seemed to equate doing good with being a believer.

**“...therapeutic, so faith becomes a means of feeling better about themselves.”**

Is that why we do good----to feel better about ourselves? Is that why we show kindness and love kindness----to feel good about ourselves. And if we do good and love kindness more people are going to like me and I really like to be liked, so I’ll doing a bunch of good and kind things.

**“...deistic, meaning God exists, but this God is not involved in human affairs with any regularity.”**

And now I quote the book, “Thanks to moralistic therapeutic deism, or MTD for short, God has essentially become a heavenly butler for teenagers inspiring them at best to become cordial to others.”

Is that all being a follower of Jesus is....being cordial to others? Is there anything more?

This book goes on to say that a corollary to Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is the Golden Rule Gospel. You know the Golden Rule that says, “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” (Luke 6:31) Why that is a Golden Rule. And I am not saying there is certainly anything wrong with it....but friends there is more.

And I quote from the book *Growing Young* by Powell, Mulder, and Griffin: “Both moralistic therapeutic deism and Gold Rule Christianity are flawed because of their overemphasis on behaviors. But by suggesting these two belief systems are inadequate version of Christian faith, we are not promoting the divorce of morality or faithful obedience from spirituality. Following Jesus certainly affects our behavior. What separates *biblically* rooted obedience from *behaviorally* rooted obedience is our motivation and the work of the Spirit. We can be driven by the defective notion that it’s possible to work to please God or earn salvation, or we can act morally as a response to grace and the transformation of God.” (page 134, published by Baker Books)

So we are required on “To Do List” to love kindness. But if we do it only for our sake who are we really? Do we do it just to feel good about ourselves? Look at me I did good today. It can easily become self-centered, self-righteous. Back in the day the term “Do gooder,” or “goody goody two shoes” were negative terms of those perceived as being “holier than thou.”

So what is our motivation to love kindness. We certainly say a YES to Justice and a YES to Love Kindness...but why. Let me succinct. Jesus. It is a response to grace and the transformation of God. Our motivation is not a moralistic therapeutic one....but is based on a relationship with Jesus. We love kindness because Jesus loved kindness. We love kindness because in your relationship with Jesus He has shown you kindness. We loved kindness because Jesus was kind to others.

Let’s look at a New Testament passage that talks about why we should be kind.

#### **Ephesians 4:29-32 New Living Translation (NLT)**

**<sup>29</sup> Don’t use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.**

Ah oh....everything I say should be good and helpful. My words should be an encouragement. Well what about that getting back when people speak bad to me. I have the right to speak....nopey, nope, nope. Let EVERYTHING you say be good and helpful, an encouragement.

**<sup>30</sup> And do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.**

Oh my...to bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way we live. Is Jesus embarrassed that you go by the name Christian. Do your actions represent Christ? That means justice issues as well as loving kindness.

**<sup>31</sup> Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior.**

Well...and I wondered what I was going to work on in 2017!!!! Get rid of it. It's your choice...don't fall into the bitterness. Why waste energy on rage? Harsh words and slander does no one any good. Well it may make me feel better! Oh maybe for a split second until you realize that you are representing Jesus in all situations. And well....that evil behavior. "Shout it out!!!!" **(image)** Be gone!!!!

As we keep the image up I couldn't help but sermonize a little bit on the Shout container. "Triple Action. Clings, Penetrates, Lifts." Cling to Jesus not evil ways! Let Jesus Penetrate your heart to live a life of justice and kindness! Lift your eyes to the one who made heaven and earth, and yes made you. Woo-hoo!!!

So shout out that evil behavior:

**<sup>32</sup> Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.**

Here it is. Be kind to each other. Love kindness the prophet Micah says. Be kind. What is so difficult about being kind. Be tenderhearted. Forgive one another.

Now hold it...forgive one another...but preacher, you don't know what they did to me. You don't know how they treated me. You just don't know. No, I may not, but I do know what it says here... "forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you."

Christ has forgiven you what right do you have not to forgive someone.

The phraseology looks like more of a command or imperative. BE kind!!!! It's required.

As you may know the Bible wasn't originally written with chapter or verses. Here I think it is appropriate to go on and tie this section in with the next chapter.

**1 Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. <sup>2</sup> Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.**

Now let me pause and tell you a little bit about a family in a church called the Tators. The Tator Family. The father's name is Dick. Yes, Dick Tator....and it's his way or the highway. If he doesn't get his way in the church there is trouble. His wife's name is Agi. Agi-tator. She is always agin' everything. Dick and Agi were blessed with 5 children...you might call them Tator Tots. There one child is named Speck. Speck Tator. He just sits and watches everyone else in church do the work. They have a daughter that is like her mom. Her name is Irri. Irri-Tator. Yep she loves spreading false stories and just simply causing an irritation. And then there is the middle children Hesi. Hesi-Tator....who is afraid to do anything and get out of his comfort zone and there is Common. Common Tator always giving his "official" version of what is going on at the church. However the smallest Tator Tot is named Emma. Emma-tator. She is really sweet (yes a sweet tator). She is a True Imma-Tator....in the church. She imitates God.

Be Emma-Tators. Imitate God in everything you do because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, follow the example of Christ.

Beloved on our To Do List we can be Imitators of Christ. Do Justice and Love Kindness. There is only one place where I can recall that Jesus got angry. It is in Matthew 21. He turned over tables and made a whip of cords right there in the temple. (John 2) Why?...because of injustice. The money changers were taking advantage of the poor.

And yet Jesus loved kindness even when people were not kind to him. They hurled insults at Him. They spit on Him. They deserted Him and betrayed Him...and He loved them and showed them mercy.

Oh, I want to run into the arms of Jesus... He gives us the riches of His love. May we be imitators! Are people running to us...running to us to receive kindness, running to us because they know we are people of justice?

"Let mercy be your first concern." Love kindness. Love mercy.