



# KINDNESS

*Showing concern for others through my words and actions, without expectation of return*

“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” is the Golden Rule. This universal rule is drawn from the biblical principle found in [Matthew 7:12](#): “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you” (NIV).

Often in our society, “others” is limited to people we are comfortable being around. Yet God’s standard is much higher. Not only are we to be kind to individuals we value, but also to individuals we might find more challenging to interact with. Being kind and tenderhearted to our enemies certainly does not come naturally. Understanding this obstacle of human nature, we as parents must shepherd our children to show kindness to everyone from an early age. Through teaching and learning opportunities, our children can grow in extending kindness to everyone they encounter.

As with all godly qualities, it is valuable to have a clear definition guiding your efforts when shepherding the attribute of kindness within the heart of your child. A solid, useful definition of **kindness** is “**showing concern for others through my words and actions, without expectation of return.**” Thoroughly and consistently take the time to explain, demonstrate and practice kindness—a hallmark of God’s faithful servants.

*Prior to extending kindness to another, we must first recognize the needs of another.*

## **Kindness: thoughtfulness with action**

“Thoughtfulness with action” is a great way to think about the first aspect of kindness. Prior to extending kindness to another, we must first recognize the needs of another. To do this successfully, we need to pay careful attention and evaluate another’s situation. Then, we need to respond in a beneficial manner.

Recognizing a need is simply not enough. If we can think of considerate responses or actions to uplift another but never act on them, then those are simply fruitless thoughts. Equally as important, we cannot respond with concern to someone without first giving due consideration to the person and situation. Haphazard words and actions, without awareness of the needs of others, will most likely lead to offenses. “Showing concern for others” (from our definition) strongly indicates that we must exercise some level of thought and effort.





As your child matures, he or she will need to be guided in understanding that we are to extend kindness to others because it is what God *expects*. As noted in our definition, kindness should not be extended with an expectation of acknowledgment, praise, or recompense ([Matthew 6:1-4](#)). Genuine kindness makes no noise and draws no attention to itself and should be prompted by sincere concern for others. True loving-kindness is a reflection of God’s love, springing spontaneously from a heart of compassion.

*The book of Ruth demonstrates how kindness builds and nurtures godly relationships, often causing a positive ripple effect.*

### *Kindness begets kindness*

The biblical account of Ruth illustrates the compassion and tenderness that dwell within those who live their lives pursuing loving-kindness. After the death of her husband and two sons, Naomi decided to return from Moab to her homeland of Bethlehem. Ruth, free to return to her own people (Moabites), insisted on remaining with Naomi out of her deep love and concern for her widowed mother-in-law: “Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God” ([Ruth 1:16](#)). As an older, godly woman, Naomi’s example certainly had a profound effect on Ruth during their 10 years together in Moab.

*“Wherever you go, I will go;  
and wherever you lodge,  
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Learning and growing from that example, Ruth’s reputation of godliness impacted Naomi’s kinsman, Boaz. Gleaning in the fields in Bethlehem, Ruth received the kindness of protection and generosity from Boaz. He had heard of Ruth’s kindness toward her mother-in-law and, as a result, she made a favorable impression on him. In time, Ruth and Boaz married and raised a son, Obed, who would become the grandfather of King David ([Ruth 4:13-17](#)). Throughout the entire narrative, we are greatly encouraged by God’s overriding, supreme kindness towards His faithful servants.

The book of Ruth demonstrates how kindness builds and nurtures godly relationships, often causing a positive ripple effect. Take time to share this fantastic example of kindness and love with your children. Highlight how each individual extended kindness—and ultimately reaped blessings from those actions. Be certain to read what Boaz said to Ruth when they met (see [Ruth 2](#)). Did God fulfill the blessing He spoke to Ruth?

Another touching biblical account of kindness can be read in [2 Samuel 9](#), in which King David extends favor to Mephibosheth, Jonathan’s last remaining heir.



*As parents, we must strive to root out rudeness and harshness and shepherd thoughtfulness and concern among all within our homes.*

### *Kindness begins at home*

We are surrounded by countless examples of individuals showing kindness: examples in Scripture, examples of Jesus Christ, examples of our brethren, and the list continues. Yet for our children, it is the daily examples and practices within the home that will have the greatest impact upon their character. Do those in your household treat each other with kindness—in speech *and* deed? Upon rising and until retiring each day, all aspects within your family’s daily life should be liberally sprinkled with kind words and actions—from all members.

### *Encouraging words lead directly to loving actions.*

As indicated within our initial definition, kindness is demonstrated through our words and actions. Expecting and exchanging simple courtesies (allowing others to go first, for example) and pleasant greetings (“please,” “thank you,” “good morning,” “I’m sorry,” “excuse me”) cultivate a safe, warm, godly home where kindnesses will flourish (1 Thessalonians 5:11). Encouraging words lead directly to loving actions. Little deeds of brotherly kindness performed on the ordinary and uneventful days of life impart joy and unity. As parents, we must strive to root out rudeness and harshness and shepherd thoughtfulness and concern among all within our homes.



*Gently guide your child to understand the significance of Christ’s sacrifice for our sins and offenses against God.*

Unfortunately, at times all families experience hurts and offenses between or even among members. It is essential to use these experiences to teach your little ones that extending kindness requires conscious effort and personal sacrifice. Gently guide your child to understand the significance of Christ’s sacrifice for our sins and offenses against God. Take the time to share the account of Joseph and his brothers, explaining that forgiveness is the highest form of kindness (read the account in Genesis 37 and 42-45).

When brotherly kindness is an everyday component of your family’s thinking process, it will unmistakably manifest itself in each member’s interactions outside of the home as well. This is a fabulous way to set an example for others of living God’s way (Matthew 5:16).



## A ministry of kindness

*When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.*

*Then the King will say to those on His right hand, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.”*

*Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, “LORD, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?”*

*And the King will answer and say to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.” —Matthew 25:31-40*



In this account, Jesus Christ shares a significant truth about who will and will not be a part of the Kingdom of God. In the ebb and flow of life, it is easy to forget that a full record of our days is being kept—a record that includes the intents of the heart ([Matthew 12:36](#); [16:27](#); [Luke 6:45](#); [Romans 14:12](#)). Our words and actions will either *commend* or *condemn*.

## Help your child understand that the smallest acts of kindness offered from a caring heart bring glory to the Father.

Note the amazement of the righteous in the parable. They did not regard their humble, nameless actions worthy to be remembered and judged as honorable. Given out of purity of heart, their commonplace deeds—free of self-seeking—were unconditionally offered to uplift and strengthen their fellow man. Yet to Christ, their actions were expressions of devotion to His way of life. Help your child understand that the smallest acts of kindness offered from a caring heart bring glory to the Father. Christ discerns the heart and observes the motive behind every word and deed ([Jeremiah 17:10](#)).

*Then He will also say to those on the left hand, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.”*

*Then they also will answer Him, saying, “LORD, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?”*



*Then He will answer them, saying, “Assuredly I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.” And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. —Matthew 25:41-46*

Christ’s response to the unrighteous is clear and sharp: failing to express kindness to others is a sin. Neglect (a lack of action) is equated to improper action—both are sin (James 4:17). We are not told why the unrighteous did not respond. Was it self-centeredness? busyness? ignorance? callousness? laziness? Could we be guilty of any of the same?

## *Our daily lives should serve as a ministry of kindness to all of humanity, without distinction for station in life.*

It is essential to guide and shape your child’s attitudes—his or her internal compass—toward a willingness to meet others’ needs as he or she is able. Our daily lives should serve as a ministry of kindness to all of humanity, without distinction for station in life.

### *Practice, practice, practice*

Cultivating a habit of kindness will take effort and practice. Discuss and plan with your child small deeds of kindness to perform at Sabbath services. It may be as simple as offering a sweet smile, pleasant words, or a warm handshake. Making a craft, coloring a picture and writing a note, then giving these as gifts, are all thoughtful gestures that can bring true delight to other members within the congregation. Thank those individuals whose unique services contribute directly to everyone’s enjoyment at Sabbath services. Whether holding a door or holding a hand, guide your children in understanding that each and every Sabbath day, they have many opportunities to offer brotherly kindness within the congregation (Galatians 6:9-10).

### *Talk with your child about being a giver of kindness to everyone he or she will encounter.*

Since God expects our families to show kindness to everyone, our consideration of others must move beyond our homes and church families (Matthew 5:47). Before leaving home to complete errands, attend school or complete other activities, talk with your child about being a giver of kindness to everyone he or she will encounter. Again, common courtesies and cheerful greetings are the perfect place to begin.

Also lovingly prepare your child for the sad fact that not everyone will welcome kindness. During those unsettling times, encourage your child forward with Christ’s perspective: “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me” (Matthew 25:40).





*Whether male or female, rich or poor, high or low, we must strive to uphold and live by the royal law, “Love your neighbor as yourself.”*

### *Love your neighbor as yourself*

It is crucial to shepherd your children’s understanding that they have a responsibility to treat all with kindness. We cannot withhold kindness based on outward appearance or status in life. Whether male or female, rich or poor, high or low, we must strive to uphold and live by the royal law, “Love your neighbor as yourself” ([Matthew 22:39](#); [Galatians 5:14](#)). There are tremendous blessings—eternal blessings—for those who obey this great commandment.

Impart this concept by reading the parable in [Luke 10:30-37](#), commonly referred to as the parable of the Good Samaritan. Emphasize that we show godly compassion and kindness when we go out of our way to care for others.

Consider using the phrase “Love your neighbor as yourself” within your home to highlight our continual need to put ourselves in the other person’s shoes. Ask yourself, *How would I feel if... ? What would I need when ... ? What can I do to encourage him or her during ... ?*

Godly character springs from the heart through our thoughts, words and deeds. A delightful poem called “Kind Hearts Are the Garden,” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, conveys this concept in pleasant rhyme:

Kind hearts are the gardens,  
Kind thoughts are the roots,  
Kind words are the flowers,  
Kind deeds are the fruits.

Take care of your garden  
And keep out the weeds,  
Fill it with sunshine,  
Kind words and kind deeds.



### *Kindness: not for the faint of heart*

Shepherding the godly quality of kindness will have its ups and downs. At times it will be exciting and encouraging to perform kindnesses to others, causing us to become eager for the next opportunity. But the litmus test of kindness comes when we are challenged beyond our comfort zone. Showing kindness to those who are selfish, ungrateful and just plain difficult will require the Holy Spirit dwelling within and working with us. With abundant thanksgiving for God’s unfailing kindnesses, do not allow others’ attitudes to impede your family from reflecting the love of God ([2 Thessalonians 3:13](#); [Titus 3:4-7](#)).



## *Pray with your child for God's Holy Spirit to soften hearts and open eyes to others' circumstances.*

Honestly and openly discuss with your child the challenge it is to offer kindness to some individuals. Talk about how meeting God's standard requires great effort and humility. Emphasize that we do not know how God will use (or is using) situations to test and change individuals. Pray with your child for God's Holy Spirit to soften hearts and open eyes to others' circumstances.



### TAKING THE FIRST STEP

Here are a few suggestions to initiate your family's application of pleasant words and humble actions of kindness:

Write out a clear, workable **definition of kindness** and display it prominently.

Write out one or two **key scriptures** that will guide your family's kind words and actions toward others.

Study and discuss at least one **example of kindness** found in the Scriptures. Find a way to replicate and apply that kindness during the week.

Model and expect consistent use of **kind words** and **actions** within your home.

Actively **seek opportunities** to exercise kindness outside your home, perhaps by visiting a church member in the hospital or a shut-in.

Daily or weekly, **share the kindnesses** that others generously extend for your benefit. Discuss the effort the individual put forth for your benefit. What can you and your family learn from others' kindnesses?

## GUARD AND GUIDE SCRIPTURES

*And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. —Luke 6:31*

This verse is a simple and necessary one to add to your child's memory scripture repertoire. As discussed throughout this study, the biblical principle of considering others more highly than oneself flows into every aspect of daily life, profoundly shaping one's character. Humble, heartfelt deeds of kindness express unconditional love—the love of God. Be mindful and careful not to allow busyness to distract you and your family from offering kindness when the opportunity presents itself.



*Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. —Colossians 3:12-13*

This scripture identifies several facets of God’s perfect character. As His holy people, we are instructed to implant these same characteristics within our new nature. Throughout the months and years, steadily expand and strengthen your child’s knowledge of the holy, righteous character of our sovereign God. Emphasize that each aspect of godly character is intimately linked together—no one trait eclipses another. Review the fruit produced when God’s Holy Spirit is working with an individual ([Galatians 5:22-23](#)).

*But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.  
—Matthew 5:44*

Actively implementing this scripture will be among the most challenging aspects of shepherding your child’s heart. The standard that Christ set for us in forgiving our enemies is unmistakable ([Luke 23:34](#)). To apply kindness fully and rightly, we must be willing to place the best interests of others ahead of our own selfish interests. Put this scripture into practice within your home and take the time to model this principle in prayer with your children. Discuss how this scripture challenges our human nature, but emphasize that God’s wisdom is perfect ([James 3:17](#)).



## FURTHER RECOMMENDED READING

We also recommend these additional (but certainly not exhaustive) scriptural passages that are relevant to the topic of kindness:

- An imperative to be kind ([Ephesians 4:32](#))
- How to interact with and react to your enemies ([Luke 6:27-35](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:15](#))
- How to think of and treat others ([Romans 12:10](#); [Philippians 2:3](#))
- A new commandment of love ([John 13:34-35](#))
- Why set an example ([Matthew 5:14-16](#); [Colossians 3:17](#))
- Kind words heal ([Proverbs 16:24](#))
- Unconditional love and sacrifice ([Romans 5:8](#); [1 John 3:16-18](#); [4:7-11](#))