

5. The Fruit of Kindness

2 Peter 1:5-9 & Galatians 5:22-23

Intro

When you think of kindness, perhaps one that comes to mind is Mister Rogers. A few years before Fred Roger's death someone in Philadelphia, where he lived, stole his car. The media got a hold of the story and before long all the local TV stations were broadcasting the incident. Thousands of Philadelphians saw the story, including the thief who stole the car. This criminal had dealt with his own share of difficult times, but he knew that when he was a child, Fred Rogers had been a positive influence on him.

Within 48 hours the car was back in the spot where he left it, along with a note saying "If we'd known it was yours, we never would have taken it!" I suppose Mr. Rogers kindness paid off!

As believers or Christ followers, one of the most important virtues of your life must be kindness. Why? Because in Galatians 5:22 we are told that kindness will be evident in your life if you are a Christian, not might be or could be or may be but will be evident in your life. The Holy Spirit desires to produce this fruit in our lives.

In the Old Testament we are told by King Solomon in Proverbs 3:3 "*Never let loyalty and kindness get away from you! Wear them like a necklace; write them deep within your heart.*"

What is Kindness?

What exactly is kindness?

Philip Keller (Christian writer) says, "Kindness involves finding ways to brighten and cheer the lives of others."

Stephen Winard (also a Christian writer) writes, "Kindness includes sympathy, generosity, and benevolence."

In essence Rev. Rick Warren combines these two statements and says, "Kindness is love in action."

In Scripture "Kindness" means "tenderness." It is a characteristic of God.

It actually means "*to demonstrate tender care for others.*" It is the genuine desire of a believer to treat others gently, just as the Lord treats us.

The extent of Biblical Kindness

In Luke 6:35 Jesus tells us to, "*Love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back . . . because [God] is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.*"

Jesus doesn't tell us just to love our friends and treat them nicely. He says love your enemies! Why? Because that is what God is like; we are to follow His example. God is kind to the ungrateful—those who take God's kindness for granted and don't give it a second thought. And God is kind to the wicked—those who turn their back upon Him and despise Him.

Notice how Matthew expresses the kindness of God in the parallel passage of Jesus' teaching like the one we read in Luke 6:35.

Kindness does not discriminate

In Matthew 5:45 we read that God "*causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*"

The kindness of God does not discriminate! God does not treat His enemies differently than He does His friends. God shows His enemies kindness in order to win them, as Paul told the Romans, "*God's kindness leads to repentance*" (Romans 2:4).

God's kindness is without limit because His kindness:

- Breaks down barriers and boundaries.
- Opens the door to the fullness of God's love and fellowship.
- Takes in the objectionable and critical; His kindness welcomes those filled with bitterness and resentment.

Ephesians 2:6-7 *“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his **kindness** to us in Christ Jesus.”*

God can always show us, as examples, of the incredible wealth of His favour and kindness toward us, as shown in all He has done for us through Christ Jesus.

We who believe show others the riches of God's incredible kindness. God offers His kindness to those who do not deserve it and to us regardless of how we respond to His kindness.

The fruit of the Spirit is kindness. Jesus said that as we are connected to Him we would bear much fruit. Remember that apart from Christ we can do nothing! Separated from Jesus there is no fruit. Jesus taught the very truth in John 15:5, *“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”*

The Apostle Paul told believers in Ephesians 4:31-32 to, *“Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of malicious behaviour. Instead, be **kind** to each other, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.”* Did you catch that *“Be kind to each another.”*

In 2 Timothy 2:24 we are told to be kind to everybody. *“And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be **kind** to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.”* We must be kind to everybody.

John Wesley told Christians about 250 years ago *“Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as ever you can.”*

Jesus our Example of Kindness

When Jesus was leaving Jericho one day, two blind men cried out to Him, and *“He had compassion on them and touched their eyes”* (Matthew 20:34).

Those whom Jesus touched in compassion and kindness would never be the same again. His personal touch of kindness was a turning point in their lives. Kindness changes lives!

1 Peter 2:21 says *“To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps.”* We must follow Jesus in personal acts of kindness in our relationships with others, even those who are our enemies and those who will not be grateful for our care and compassion.

In Scripture the word kindness stems from a root word that means, *“To furnish what is needed.”* Kindness is caring for others. Sometimes we think of kindness in terms of pity or sympathy, but kindness on the part of the Christian believer is much wider in scope.

You see, it is not enough to simply express feelings of sympathy for those who hurt. A kind believer sees the hurt, the pain, the discomfort of others and takes action to alleviate the suffering. A kind Christian is not satisfied by simply offering words of encouragement; he or she takes action and

helps. Kindness is practical in that it “*furnishes what is needed.*” Look out for someone other than yourself! Treat your enemies with kindness. Be a reflection of the love that Christ has given you!

Frederick Faber, the hymn writer hit the nail on the head when he said “*Kindness has converted more sinners than zeal, eloquence, or learning.*” The way you treat others may determine whether they spend an eternity with God or without God.

Conclusion

I like what Pastor Bill Hybels wrote, “*With kindness you can lift sad people up. With kindness you can cool angry people down. With kindness you can bridge racial, ethnic, socio-economic and gender chasms. With kindness you can lower someone’s stress or reduce someone’s fear.*”

At the 1995 annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, researchers revealed the results of a study that demonstrates how important kindness is in day-to-day relations. In the experiment researchers gave forty-five doctors the symptoms of a hypothetical patient and then asked for each doctor’s diagnosis of the illness. But the real point of the study was not how well the doctors could diagnose illness. Before the experiment began, researchers gave half of the doctors a bag of candy, saying it was a token of appreciation for their involvement in the study. The other doctors received nothing.

Dr. Alice Isen, a Cornell University psychologist said: “*The doctors receiving the candy were far more likely to correctly diagnose the patient’s problem. Pleasant-feeling states give rise to altruism, helpfulness, and improved interpersonal processes.*”

Marriages & relationships thrive on kindness

What helps a marriage or relationship thrive? Dr. John Gottman, one of the world's leading researchers on marital relationships, looks for the presence of contempt or kindness within the marriage. The following is what he found:

Contempt is the number one factor that tears couples apart. People who are focused on criticizing their partners miss about 50 percent of positive things their partners are doing and they see negativity when it's not there. People who give their partner the cold shoulder—deliberately ignoring their partner — damage the relationship by making their partner feel worthless and invisible, as if they're not there, not valued. People who treat their partners with contempt and criticize them not only kill the love in the relationship, but they also kill their partner's ability to fight off sicknesses and diseases. Being mean can destroy relationships.

Kindness, on the other hand, glues couples together. Research independent from theirs has shown that kindness is one of the most important predictors of satisfaction and stability in a marriage. Kindness makes each partner feel cared for, understood, and validated—feel loved. There's a great deal of evidence showing the more someone receives or witnesses kindness, the more they will be kind themselves, which leads to upward spirals of love and generosity in a relationship. (Source: Emily E. Smith, "Masters of Love," The Atlantic, June 12, 2014)

God tells us in His word to be kind to one another and to show appreciation. “*Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, **kindness**, humility, gentleness and patience*” (Colossians 3:12). The act of kindness is God’s program for making our home, community and world work better. Even be kind to those who mistreat you. Overcome evil and bad acts with kindness. Let us follow our Lord’s example!