

WITH KINDNESS
Live Fully
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We look again at the fruit of the Spirit, Galatians 5:22. The fifth fruit of the Spirit is kindness.” Galatians 5:22 and a story of kindness in action found in Luke 10:30-35. “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road and when he saw the man he passed by on the other side. So too a Levite when he came to the place and saw him passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan as he traveled came to where the man was and when he saw him he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said ‘and when I return I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’”

As the fifth of the nine fruit of the Spirit, kindness occupies the center position. All of the fruit of the Spirit of course describe qualities of life in the person in whom God is dwelling. Several truths I want to relate first that govern all the fruit of the Spirit. We’ll look at these before we examine the meaning of the word “kindness.”

One of the things that we must recognize in regard to the fruit of the Spirit is that although these are tremendous positive personality traits they are far more than that. We must avoid an idea of if I can just do certain things I’ll become a loving person, a joyful person, a peaceful person, a patient person, a kind person, etc. In each of the messages I have tried to give helpful steps. But the fruit of the Spirit are exactly that. They are the fruit *of the Spirit*. These are the manifestations of the Spirit’s personality. You’ll never completely express the fruit of the Spirit unless the spirit of Christ is dwelling in you.

Many people have a very odd idea of the Holy Spirit. They see the Holy Spirit as someone that is scary, as an *it*, as someone mystical, spooky, ethereal, distant, undefined. But these views of the Holy Spirit shatter when we realize that the Spirit’s personality bears witness to the fact that he is a person of love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and gentleness and goodness and self control and faithfulness. God’s purpose in having the Spirit live in us is that our personalities might be full of the Lord’s presence.

So there’s a difference between what we might call normal, healthy personality characteristics, which these nine fruit of the Spirit describe. The difference between them and the action of the Spirit’s indwelling in us.

The second thing we ought to note about fruit is that fruit is delicious. If you see some real nice peaches or grapes or apples. I love raw kind of fruit. When I see one I want to eat it because it looks good, it’s delicious, and I know it’s nutritious besides.

The fruit of the Spirit is exactly like that. You show me loving people, peaceful people, joyful people, patient people, kind people and they feed your life. They’re delicious to be around and they are sure good spiritual vitamins a well.

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The third thing that ought to be looked at in an introductory way in regard to all the fruit of the Spirit is that we'll waste a lot of time if we wait for these qualities to develop in somebody else's life before we seek them in our own. It would be so wonderful if everybody we lived with had all of these qualities, wouldn't it? But if you're waiting for somebody else to change to make life better for you, it's never going to happen. You've placed responsibility for your life in someone else's hands and God never asked you to do that.

Jesus never calls us to be fruit critics – how spoiled is the fruit in somebody else's life or how good is it. He's never called us to be fruit critics. He called us to be fruit bearers.

It's easy to seek change in someone else, isn't it? Very difficult for ourselves.

When we look at the subject of kindness it would be well to take just a moment to see its meaning and its use in the New Testament. It comes out of a Greek word *chrestos*. It's very similar to the Greek word for Messiah. We're named Christians because of that term for Christ as Messiah. Early in the church in the first centuries often Christians were called not only Christ-ians but *crestos*. *Crestos* kind of persons. Because a Christian will be showing kindness.

Out of the seventeen times this word *crestos* occurs in the New Testament in noun or adjective form in nine of those seventeen times it is used in reference to the personality of God. God himself is kind. Romans 2:4 tells us that it is his kindness that leads us to repentance. 1Peter 2:3 says, "We have tasted that the Lord is kind." And Ephesians 2:7 "The incomparable riches of his grace are not only expressed now but they are shown in the age to come the kindness that God is giving to us in Christ."

The English word "kind" comes from the root "kin." Therefore to be kind to somebody is to treat them as a blood member of family. Kind is an attitude toward kin. The old word for family. All too often though we think of kindness is a courtesy we show to strangers and maybe very rude and unkind around family. But kindness in its true biblical meaning as well as the English etymology of the word is something that begins first at home. It begins in our primary relationships. It's treating other people as kin and then it works outward ultimately to people we've just come across. That's where we see it in the story I read from Luke 10. In this story which Jesus tells of the Good Samaritan we see some traits of people in whom kindness is present.

There are three traits I want to look at that the Holy Spirit seeks to develop in us as people that are represented as kindness qualities in the Good Samaritan.

The first trait is a kindness person cares.

The Samaritan came to where the man was when he saw him he took pity on him. He had compassion upon him. That's what moved him. He cared about what was going on. Kindness people care.

In thinking about that I realized that there are other groups of people that don't care. Therefore they never or rarely express kindness in their life. Using this story as a vehicle I'd like to show you at least four different kinds of people personality types that are not kind. Maybe we can

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look at that together and see whether we belong to one of the four or whether we have the character of the Good Samaritan.

The first kind of person that is unable to show kindness because they do not care are the hostile and angry people. The punishing or punitive people. These are represented in Jesus' story by the robbers who fall upon the man and wound him as he is traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho.

The hostile person ravages another person. They may do this by force or manipulation or guile. What they do is they inflict wounds upon other people but they take no responsibility for helping to heal those wounds. It may relate to taking sex from a person or money from another person or using a person to acquire power or status. But when they're done using another person for their own purposes they just discard them. They're kind of hit and run people. They play hit and run with a spouse, hit and run with a child, hit and run with a business partner, hit and run with a friend. They hit you for what they want and they're gone. They're one concern is for what they can get out of you. Persons who have that kind of mentality in life – what's yours is mine if I can get it and I'll do anything to get it if I need to – do not show kindness.

A second kind of quality of a non-kind person, the second type of non-kind person, is an indifferent person. This person does not inflict violence upon anyone but neither will they move a muscle to help you when you're down either. Of course the priest and the Levite who are on their way are examples of indifferent people. So what that a man is down by the side of the road. It isn't impacting their life any. Maybe it's his time to die! Indifferent.

It's possible with an indifferent person as only being concerned with what's going on with me and with my own. To live life surrounded by rooms of mirrors rather than rooms of windows to look upon the needs of others.

Diotrephes in 3 John 9-10 was that kind of a person who lived in a room with mirrors rather than windows. He had a leadership position in the church. He had a powerful place. But his eyes were on his own prestige and the perks of his ecclesiastical office. So his service to the body, his service to Christ, had nothing to do with real love for people. There was a way of simply enhancing his own self-image. He was an indifferent person.

A third kind of person who does not show kindness is the one who reduces life to a set of rules and regulations and laws. Violate the rules and you deserve what you get. The Pharisees were these kinds of people. They believed that God always worked in lock step with their theology. Therefore if anything were wrong in your life you broke some rule. God takes care of the righteous and prospers them. But sickness and suffering comes because in one way or the other you've broken the rules.

The legalistic person like the Pharisee may have a lot of good theological answers but they're little help to people who are really wrestling with real problems.

This leads us to a fourth kind of non-kind person who is not in the Good Samaritan story here but you find him in the scriptures. This is a person who is faithful to the truth of God's word. They know God's word and they will use it and use it and use it and you can depend upon that person to proclaim the word of God with great power and authority like Jonah. But did Jonah know God's heart? No. When God spared the people that Jonah preached to Jonah was really upset

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with God. Why? Because he didn't know God's kindness. He didn't know Psalm 103 how God delights in forgiving us. He couldn't be kind. He was more concerned with being right than with being kind.

The Good Samaritan is the person we're to model after in terms of kindness because he shows us how God feels toward the wounded. He is moved with compassion.

Kindness people care for others. They feel. They have, if you will, spiritual x-ray vision to see into the needs of other people's life. They want to be here to attend to those needs.

As we look at the fact that a kindness person cares, really cares. We might ask some questions to see whether or not the Holy Spirit is laying somebody on our heart to care for. Is there anyone that is lying wounded along your path in life? Any one here have somebody lying wounded in your life? Maybe that hurting person is not a stranger. Maybe it's kin. Maybe it's a spouse or a child or a parent or a friend. The Holy Spirit has compassion. If you're sensitive to the Holy Spirit, he is going to cause you to care about that person because the mark of the kindness person is the kindness person cares.

The first step in really seeing the fruit of the Spirit, we ask the Holy Spirit to open us to caring.

A second quality of a kindness person represented in the Good Samaritan story is that the kindness person takes action. The Good Samaritan not only felt for the wounded man he did something about his condition. In fact you can diagram out the four kinds of things he did which are suggestive of the kinds of actions we need to take toward the wounded that we see whether they are kin or strangers such as the wounded man in the gospel story.

The actions that he took...

First of all he arrested a deteriorating condition. He went to him. That's critical. If he doesn't go to the man the man just lies there. Lies in the heat of that Judean sun. Dies of dehydration. If there's any open wounds in his body he dies because nobody's put on a tourniquet. So it's critical that the first thing you do is stop the deteriorating condition. Some relationships are like that. Maybe we're not going to swing things around overnight. The best thing we can do at the beginning is arrest the deteriorating condition and hold things even for a moment.

Second thing that the Good Samaritan did in terms of action was he began a healing process. How did he do this? He bandaged him and he poured on oil and wine. That was their first aid kit then. Wine would serve as an antiseptic and oil as a balm to provide some salve and relief. He wanted to do what he could to initiate the healing process.

The third thing he did that was significant as he provided a transition for the wounded from where he was hurt to a healing environment. Sometimes we need to help people in our kindness toward one another get out of the way we've always treated them. The way we've always responded to them. And help them be placed in a healing environment. He loaded him on his donkey.

The fourth thing he did was he insured sufficient long-term care to allow the man to return to wholeness. Kindness is not just a one time, one second sort of a thing. It's not an impulsive – I

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feel it, I do it sort of thing and then it's over. But kindness is the disposition that is so committed to another person that it is willing to see that situation through and even if it's long term care facility until that other person has come to a place of wholeness.

So the Good Samaritan provided the means where by the man could stay at the inn until he was well.

Regarding this taking kindness action and looking at the word as it relates to kin, I think that all of us would agree that more wounding occurs within family perhaps than any other place. Here is where we maybe need best to implement the policy of the Good Samaritan.

There are all kinds of things I could single out as the need within family for caring for wounds and being kind to one another. But I think the question that immediately that comes to my mind is the question of authority. Too many families are hung up on the question of authority. Who's the boss? Who's going to call the shots? I've found as a husband whenever my focus is upon authority it generally is not upon serving. And the times when I am most anxious to be a servant in the household are the times we have the least problem with authority. Which is exactly what Jesus said. "He that is greatest among you must be servant of all."

Sometimes when a spouse is wounded there is no strength in them. We need to be attentive to that. Maybe your spouse has said, "Help me. Talk to me. Could we talk with a counselor about what we're going through?" Again I found it's very threatening for me to talk to somebody else about things I'm going through. We men are that way. Ninety percent of those seeking counseling from somebody else it is initiated by the wife. Maybe fifty percent of those the man would not appear as part of the process at all. But it seems to me that part of caring is listening to the hurt of another person. Not just continuing to ignore it. If we can meet that hurt without violating biblical principles in any way but allowing biblical principles to work.

If you're a wife, how can your husband gain the strength to love you when he himself has been wounded by a barrage of hurtful words or you deny him affection or put him down or freeze him out. All these things are injurious. It really gets tough when the atom bomb is dropped by both spouses. Nobody has the strength to help anybody. That's when it really gets tragic. I suppose in that case the husband needs to be the leader of the home to take the initiative.

God help us to not just talk about kindness but see how it can operate within our family structure. Being sensitive to where a person's hurting and what can we do. Maybe they've been asking us to do something and in order to prove that we're independent and we don't need to listen to that, have been denying a legitimate request.

We need to employ more hug therapy in our relationships. This holds true for husbands and wives, single people, single parents. Families without children. It holds true for all people. It's been said that you need five hugs a day for survival, eight hugs a day for maintenance. And you need twelve hugs a day for growth. Wouldn't that revolutionize lives?

Kindness in action. Kindness people take healing actions. They practice the words of Paul, Ephesians 4:32 "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you."

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The kindness person is first a person who cares, second a person who takes action...

A third quality in a kindness person is that they have strength and resources to give. Many times when the word "kindness" is used we think of it as a weak quality – someone timid, mild. Someone who has a backbone the consistency of a sponge. But a kindness person is a strong person. The Good Samaritan was strong. Physically he was a strong man. He had to host dead weight up on a donkey. And he had to have some resources to help the person. He had to have some shekels to lay out at the end so the man could be taken care of. Effective kind people are strong people. Not necessarily physically strong but their personality is strong. They're strong enough to show interest in others and they have resources to give.

In thinking of kindness we do not mean a jellyfish kind of person. Romans 11:22 for example tells us that God himself is kind and severe. There's a continuum of kindness running through severity. Sometimes God must become severe or harsh. He only will do that when his kindness has been repudiated.

Paul sometimes in his letters like 2 Corinthians 13:10 and Titus 1:12-13 severely rebukes and reprimands not because he's being unkind but because sometimes discipline is a way we give kindness. Don't think that to be kind you have to give up being forceful or strong or you have to give up being disciplined and simply be passive. Somebody does something and you passively say, I'll love you – it didn't matter.

I think as persons of strength, as persons of kindness we need to be intentional in our kindness. Not let our kindness simply be moved by our emotions. Too much kindness we allow it to be emotionally motivated. We see a picture of an orphan or we see earthquake and famine victims somewhere so we're moved. We ought to be moved when we see those things.

I personally feel that the man the Good Samaritan helped that day it wasn't the first time he'd helped somebody. I suspect he'd been a rather regular trait of his disposition and life. So that when he met a person that was down it was an instinctive quality to go over and attempt to help them. The Holy Spirit seeks to develop strength and resources in us so that kindness becomes an habitual response. Since the Holy Spirit habitually lives in us it is therefore not surprising to realizing that a continual mark of life, a continual habit of life would be the showing of kindness.

A person of kindness has been defined this way: a kind person is one who acknowledges his kinship with other people and acts upon it, confesses that he owes to them as one blood with himself the debt of love. Kindness people realize owe to others love. They realize it and they are blood bonded with every other person beginning with members of their own family.

Our Father, we come to you now in these moments of conclusion and we ask that you will take your works and intensify them in our life. We realize that we do not become kind people by listening to a sermon. We become kind people in exercising the fruit of the Spirit and the only 143 hours in the week. But I pray that this word which has come to us today will be a generative word in our life, a seed-word which will help us to more fully see formed in us the fruit of kindness. We especially pray for families who struggle and who hear this message today and know that the word has come to them on a very personal basis. Sometimes it's possible to even use a sermon to wound other people. Help us to use the counsel that comes from your spirit in a way that builds one another up. As we do that we

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ourselves are built up. Let all of our lives really be filled with this fruit of the Spirit. Forgive us for the temptation of waiting for circumstances to change in our life so that we can become better. Help us to realize that the change you seek most is the change within us. Minister to us your own kindness, Lord. You are kind to us. Full of compassion and longsuffering. We praise you for that. We ask these things in your name. Amen.