

INTRODUCTION

The Book of Galatians is all about the beauty of God’s grace. And one way that God’s grace is displayed in our lives is through the Fruit of the Spirit. So, I’m calling this series, “Grace-fruit: Jesus Living in Me.” Here are the nine expressions of the fruit of the Spirit. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22-23)

Chances are you’ve heard the expression, “Kill ‘em with kindness.” The source that of that phrase comes from Shakespeare’s play, “The Taming of the Shrew.” In one scene the scheming Petruchio says of his wife, Kate: “This is a way to kill a wife with kindness; And thus I’ll curb her mad and headstrong humour.”

I don’t really like the phrase “Kill ‘em with kindness,” because whether you use anger or kindness, the goal is still to kill someone. Instead I’ve changed the phrase around. As we talk about the fruit of kindness I want to challenge you to “Kiss ‘em with Kindness.”

A man stopped at a highway diner for breakfast. A grumpy waitress came out and said, “What do you want?” He said, “Well, I’d like two eggs, and a few kind words.” She didn’t say anything; she just turned and left. In a few minutes she returned and slammed down a plate with two greasy eggs. He said, “What about my kind words?” She said, “Don’t eat them eggs.”

In August 1998 when George H. W. Bush accepted the Republican nomination for President, he said, “I want a kinder, gentler nation.” Five months later he was inaugurated as our 41st President. Do you recall what his first official act was as Chief Executive? He led us in prayer. May God give us more leaders who lead us in prayer.

It’s amazing that President Bush said that one of our greatest needs is to become a kinder, gentler nation. If it’s true of our nation, it’s also true of our churches, and our homes. We need a kinder, gentler culture.

Sometimes “good, religious people” can be as mean as a snake. I’ve had more than one server in a restaurant tell me the rudest folks are the church people who eat out for Sunday lunch—and they’re the worse tippers! I agree with the little girl who had spent all day with some of these “good, religious people.” During her bedtime prayer she prayed, “Dear God, please make all the bad people good; and make all the good people kind.”

My favorite definition of kindness is that it is “love with its work clothes on.” Patience and kindness appear together on our fruit list, and there’s a reason for that. Patience is passive. Remember, patience is the ability to NOT to blow your stack with difficult people and situations. But kindness is active. Kindness is the act of doing something that demonstrates love, especially to difficult people.

In this simple message we’re going to follow this sequence: Know it; See it; Do it. In other words, we’ll examine three scriptural truths about kindness (Know it). Then I want to illustrate this aspect of kindness from the life of Jesus (See it), and finally talk about why and how we can demonstrate kindness (Do it).

I. KNOW IT: "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." (Ephesians 4:32)

The word "kindness" is *chrestos*, which literally means, "Grace in action." The Bible teaches that God is full of loving-kindness. He has shown His kindness to us by sending Jesus to die for us. Romans 5:8 says, "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

On rare occasions someone will say to me, "Oh, I don't believe in God." I've often responded by saying, "Well tell me about this God that you don't believe in." They usually talk about a vindictive, angry God who has failed to heal a family member, or who didn't prevent some tragedy." After they finish, I say, "Well, I don't believe in a God like that either." I believe in a God who is kind, loving, and merciful. He will punish sin, and His justice will be satisfied in the future, but now He is opening His arms to anyone who will accept His kindness.

This past week, one of my friends, Keith Ingram went to be with Jesus. Through the years he sent me funny emails that I've kept in a file. At his funeral I said that I could even use some of them in church! One of the funny ones he sent me is the story of a first-grade boy named Timmy who walked to school every morning with his friends. His mother was nervous about Timmy's safety, but she didn't want to embarrass him by walking with him. So she asked her neighbor, Mrs. Goodnest to walk along behind the group of students. That worked great because every morning, Mrs. Goodnest would take her dog, Marcy, for a morning walk.

After several mornings one of the boys asked Timmy about the woman who seemed to follow them every morning. He said, "Oh, that's my neighbor, Mrs. Goodnest. Her first name is Shirley and that's her dog, Marcy." The boy said, "Does it bother you that she follows us?"

Timmy said, "Not really. It's in the Bible. Every night my mom reads the 23rd Psalm to me and it says, 'Shirley Goodnest and Marcy shall follow me all the days of my life!'"

God's goodness, mercy, and kindness ARE with us all the days of our lives. And because He has demonstrated kindness to us when we didn't deserve it, we should show kindness to others.

A. SEE IT: Jesus showed kindness to a desperate woman

In Luke 8 we read the story of the time Jesus was in a hurry to get to the home of Jairus, whose daughter was on the verge of death. He was making His way through a mob when suddenly a desperate woman slipped through the crowd and grabbed the hem of His garment. Jesus stopped and said, "Who touched me?" Peter said, "Lord, we're in a mob, everybody is touching you!" Jesus said, "No, I felt power go out from me."

This woman had suffered with a blood disorder for twelve years. She was a social and religious outcast because of her problem. She was what we would call an "untouchable." And yet, Jesus stopped and gave her His time, His attention, and His healing. He knew who had touched Him, but He wanted her to confess Him before the crowd. When she confessed what had happened, Jesus said, "Woman, your faith has healed you."

Every day we encounter desperate people who reach out to interrupt us while we’re on our way somewhere else. Many of them are what our society calls “untouchables.” We tend to ignore them, but Jesus didn’t. He showed them kindness, and when Jesus lives in me, we’ll show kindness to desperate people.

B. DO IT: Treat others the way God treats you

We don’t deserve God’s kindness and we can’t really repay Him. The most valuable kindness is when we are kind to strangers, or to those who mistreat us.

You’ve probably seen the viral video released where the three middle-school boys tormented Karen Klein, a 68-year old school bus monitor. They harassed her about her weight and even said her son committed suicide because of her. One of the boys posted the video on YouTube thinking other people would laugh at them making fun of her: How dumb was that? The boys are seen as insulting idiots and Karen is now a new hero for anyone who has been bullied.

Karen showed amazing patience with those young idiots. She said later, “I wanted to punch him is what I wanted to do, so that’s why I stayed laid back and just tried to ignore it, because I really wanted to hurt them, you know, and you can’t do that; nope.”

That’s patience. But since the video was posted, there has been an outpouring of kindness toward Karen. She’s a celebrity, and Redit.com suggested readers set a goal of donating \$5,000 so she could go on a vacation and “scrub the foul memories of the last days of school from her mind.” Well, over \$500,000 has been donated to Karen.

She has shown kindness herself in saying that she has forgiven the boys and she doesn’t want to press criminal charges against them. And she has said that with her newfound wealth she will probably retire as a school bus monitor. I say, Karen, take the money and run!

II. KNOW IT: “If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.”

(Proverbs 25:21-22)

Paul quotes this verse in Romans 12:20 when he writes about repaying good for evil. What does it mean to “heap burning coals on his head?” In this case, this simply means when you show kindness to those who treat you like dirt, they end up burning with shame. Someone has said it this way, “Love your enemies. It will drive them crazy.” But don’t miss the second result of showing kindness to your enemy—God will reward you.

If you are kind to those who are kind to you, that’s not true kindness, that’s just courtesy. It’s when you show kindness to strangers, or to those who have mistreated you, or to those who have no chance of repaying your kindness—that is the true fruit of kindness.

A. SEE IT: Jesus showed kindness to an enemy

The night before Jesus was crucified, He was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. A mob arrived to arrest Jesus led by Judas who walked up to Jesus and kissed Him. With that signal, the soldiers started grabbing Jesus. Simon Peter pulls out a sword to defend Jesus. He slashes at the head of one of the members of the mob. Obviously Peter was a fisherman, not a swordsman, because he missed his head and cut off the man’s ear. All four gospel accounts relate this incident, but John identifies the man as being Malchus, a servant of the high priest.

Put yourself in Malchus’ sandals for a moment. You’ve been told this Jesus is a traitor and an imposter. And in the heat of the battle to arrest Him, one of his men cuts off your ear. Suddenly, you think your life is over because people with physical deformities couldn’t enter the Temple—and certainly a deformed man could not work for the Jewish high priest. But in that moment of pain and fear, this “imposter” does the impossible. He looks into your eyes with kindness, picks up your ear and places it back on the side of your head. It’s healed. It’s restored! What an act of kindness to an enemy!

B. DO IT: Bless mean people; don’t burn them!

If we’re not careful, our motive for showing kindness to mean people can be to wound them. If you perform an act of kindness to someone who has mistreated you, you’ll be tempted to think, “Oh yeah. I got them back. I can’t wait to see ‘em burn with shame. Burn baby, burn! Look at that smoke rising up from their heads. I really showed them.” That’s not kindness, that’s meanness.

We should show kindness to our enemies and to stranger to bless them, not to burn them. Roberto De Vincenzo is a hall-of-fame golfer from Argentina who has won over 200 tournaments worldwide. He is most famous for signing an incorrect scorecard in the 1968 Masters. Instead of going into a playoff with Bob Goalby, his mistake put him in second place and Goalby won a green jacket because of a scorecard error.

But there’s another lesser-known story about De Vincenzo illustrating amazing kindness. In 1957 he won first place in a tournament and after being presented the winning check of \$5,000 (which was a lot of money back then), he was walking in the parking lot to his car. A woman approached him in the parking lot and told him that her child was near death in the hospital and needed some treatment that she couldn’t afford to pay. Roberto took pity on her and endorsed his winning check over to her on the spot.

The next week he was approached by a PGA official who had been told by the attendants in the parking lot of Roberto’s encounter with the woman. The official found Roberto and said, “I have news for you. She’s a phony. She’s not even married. She has no sick baby. She fleeced you my friend.” Roberto asked, “You mean there is no baby who is dying?” The official said, “That’s right.” DeVincenzo smiled and said, “That’s the best news I’ve heard all week!”

When I read that story I thought, “Most of us are so cynical and skeptical. We think everyone who is needy is going to take advantage of us. They might, but we’re not the ones who are keeping score, God is.

But you may still think, “But that woman tricked him. She didn’t DESERVE his kindness.” I could remind you that none of us deserve the kindness and forgiveness of God. Jesus said we are to show

kindness even to those who are our enemies. Matthew 5 He said, “If all you do is love the lovable, do you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that. If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that.” (Matthew 5:46-47 *The Message*)

Jesus said, “But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.” (Luke 6:35-36 NKJV)

Jesus said if you only show love to those who love you, there’s nothing special about that.

Can you think of someone right now who has been mean to you? They have mistreated you in the past? Your easiest response is to have nothing to do with them. But I suggest that you do something kind for them, not to make them burn with shame, but to bless them. If you do, God will reward your kindness.

Booker T. Washington, the first President of Tuskegee Institute faced a great deal of hatred and abuse as he worked to educate African-Americans during the time of Jim Crow laws in the south. Through it all, he demonstrated the kindness of Christ to his enemies. He once wrote: “I will not allow any man to make me lower myself by hating him. The only way I can destroy my enemy is to make him my friend.”

III. KNOW IT: *Jesus said, “Anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward.”* (Mark 9:41)

Even a small act of kindness has value when you do it in Jesus’ name. There’s a secular movement in America called Random Acts of Kindness. There’s even a Random Acts of Kindness week. That’s wonderful; we can never have too much kindness. For Christians, every week should be Intentional Acts of Kindness in Jesus’ Name week. If we perform acts of kindness in the name of kindness, or in our name—we receive the glory. But when we perform acts of kindness in Jesus’ name, He gets the glory, and we receive His reward.

A woman in Louisville, Kentucky, who was standing at a bus stop. She had just cashed her tax refund check, so she was carrying more money than usual. She glanced around and noticed a shabbily dressed man standing nearby. And as she watched, a man walked up to him and handed him some money, and whispered something in his ear. She was so touched by the act of kindness she decided to do the same. In a burst of generosity, she reached into her purse, took out \$10, handed it to the man, and whispered to him, “Never despair, never despair.”

The next day when she came to the bus stop, the same man was there again. But this time he walked up to her and handed her \$100. Dumbfounded, she asked, “What’s this?” He said, “You won, lady. Never Despair paid 10 to 1 at Churchill Downs yesterday!”

Kindness does pay off, but we are kind because we want to give honor and glory to Jesus.

A. SEE IT: Jesus showed kindness to an outcast

In Luke 19 Jesus had an encounter with a vertically-challenge man named Zacchaeus. The people in Jericho hated Zach because he was a tax collector and had gotten rich by cheating them out of their money. But Zach had an itch in his heart that money couldn't scratch. When Jesus arrived in Jericho Zach was desperate to see him. Adults don't climb trees unless there's a flood, or they're chased by a dog or unless they are desperate for help.

Jesus could have pointed up in the tree and said, “Zacchaeus, you're a dirty rotten sinner. Repent, or you're going to hell!” But He didn't do that, because Jesus didn't come into the world to condemn sinners, but that through Him sinners could be saved. He said, “Zach, come down from the tree, we're having supper at your house.” Over the meal, God changed Zach's heart and he promised to pay back what he had stolen, plus interest. Jesus said, “Today, salvation has come to this house.”

B. DO IT: Kindness in Jesus' name can point people to salvation

Jesus said the world would know we are His followers by our love. The world is not going to see Jesus until they see our kindness. The world isn't interested in WHAT we believe. They just want to know if it has changed our lives. To put it another way, “People don't care what you know until they know that you care.”

This week I asked some of my Facebook friends to relate the kindest thing another person ever did for them, and many of them talked about when someone led them to Christ. Steven Sherwood wrote, “A classmate walked down the outside aisle during invitation at church and asked me if I knew Jesus as my Savior.” Alysia Wilson wrote, “I can't fit it all on this page how much kindness my father Robert Wilson has in him. The first and foremost act of kindness he has done for me is leading me to Christ.”

The kindest thing you can do for a person is to introduce them to Jesus. And sometimes the easiest way to do it is by performing some act of kindness to them in Jesus' name. Kindness is an evangelistic tool. You may not know the four laws or the seven steps, but you can show kindness in Jesus' name.

In his book, *The Conspiracy of Kindness*, Steve Sjogren writes: “For most Christians, doing evangelism is a lot like going to the dentist; no one really enjoys doing it, but it must be done once in a while. But anyone can do simple acts of kindness...People don't necessarily remember what they are TOLD of God's love, but they never forget what they have EXPERIENCED of God's love.”

CONCLUSION

You should show kindness to everyone, especially those who don't look like they deserve your kindness. In 1956 a poorly dressed young man walked onto the lot of a Cadillac dealer in Tennessee. He was wearing dirty overalls and muddy boots. His hair was sticking out from under an old hunting cap. He walked around the lot for a few minutes and the salesmen watched and made fun of the country hick. Finally the manager asked the newest salesman to go and ask the bum to leave the car lot.

Instead the salesman greeted the bum with kindness and patiently answered his questions about the Cadillacs. After a few minutes the bum asked if they take cash or check. The salesman laughed and said, “Either is fine.”

Then the man said, "Fine, I'll pay cash for this model in every color you make." The man was Elvis Presley and he bought six Cadillacs that day. The salesman's kindness to that "bum" paid off that day. And kindness always pays great dividends.

Stephen Grellet was an unknown missionary who died in 1855. He would have died in obscurity except for one paragraph he wrote that has been quoted thousands of times. He wrote, "I shall pass through this world but once. Any good, therefore, that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer nor neglect, for I shall not pass this way again."

We show kindness because Jesus lives in us and He is kind. Your goal this week is let Jesus show His kindness to others through you. Will you pray, "Lord, use my eyes to be Your eyes of compassion. Lord, use my mouth to speak Your words of kindness. Lord, use my hands and my heart to show Your kindness to those who need it most but can't pay me back."

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes