

## FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT (KINDNESS)

### INTRODUCTION

How important is kindness? In a recent study of 37 cultures around the world, 16,000 people were asked about their most desired traits in a person and the first preference was **kindness!**

Kindness is a characteristic we all admire. We talk about kindness a lot but find it difficult to practice. How many of our lives are filled with this quality? In most cases, kindness is not beyond any of us because it usually costs no money. How much is required to cultivate *smiling* rather than *frowning*? to say a word of encouragement or comfort? It may take the sacrifice of time and energy. It may require the discipline to be thoughtful of others' needs and to make the effort to act. Unfortunately, people have many excuses: "I'm too busy." "The person deserves his suffering." "God is probably punishing him" (like Job's friends assumed wrongly in the book of Job).

The irony is people want to be treated kindly but have a harder time being kind themselves. A large-scale study of school bullies was recently conducted to learn why they bully other kids. The conclusion? Most do it because they enjoy doing it. This illustrates how cruel, mean and sadistic raw human nature is. Kindness must be learned.

We are designed for social and emotional intimacy with those around us, but our desires are polluted by our selfish inclination to make it all about us. The act of kindness can be used to manipulate people so that the one who shows kindness can gain his ends. Jacob showed kindness to Esau to steal his birthright (Gen 25:27). Our motive for "charitable deeds" is to impress people. But a favor done to get some benefit is not true kindness. Genuine kindness is lending a helping hand when you expect nothing in return.

**Mark Twain once said that ... *Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.***

### SHARING

#### 1) **Christians are not a loner**

Kindness is the fruit of the spirit that **holds us** together. It is love directed toward others for their sake and not just our own. Kindness is not a virtue that can be developed **in isolation** but it is all about the quality of our relationships with one another. We must make it our goal and habit to be actively looking for opportunities to show kindness.

When Jesus looked on the multitudes of people with all their problems, sicknesses and confusion, He was "moved with compassion" (Matthew 9:36; 14:14; 18:27). As we look at the people around us, we, too, should be *moved with compassion*. We, too, should be helping, giving, sharing, caring, encouraging, extending mercy, filled with compassion and acting on it as we are able—in a word, *kind*.

There are many examples of kindness in the Bible. Despite all that his brothers had put him through, Joseph repaid them with *kindness*. (Genesis 50:21) Boaz showed *kindness* to Ruth as she gleaned the fields for food for her and Naomi. (Ruth 2:16) The story of the Good Samaritan is a good example of showing *kindness* to strangers. Jesus set an example of kindness by demonstrating mercy, patience, and tolerance toward those who didn't know better -- people like the woman caught in adultery, or the woman at the well who didn't know that life could be better than her present, miserable existence. *Kindness* is extending God's goodness to others without any conditions or prejudice.

#### 2) **Get rid of pride, prejudice and selfishness**

With respect to kindness, what often stifles our progress is **the desire to judge** who is and who isn't worthy of receiving our compassion and help. When encountering those who need help, we tell ourselves things like: "Oh, if he only managed his money better, he wouldn't have this problem; so he deserves it", and "My help would only be wasted on the likes of him." In such ways we excuse ourselves from Christ's command to keep the law of love. That's what makes the **story of the Samaritan** sting us so badly. Here's a guy who is universally hated by the people of the land he's traveling through. If **the**

**Samaritan** had been the guy who'd been beaten and robbed, then *the priest, the Levite, and our traveling Jewish friend* would all not just pass him by, they'd actually enjoy seeing him there half dead, and they'd likely add insult to injury by spitting on him as they went by. The Samaritan knows this very well. And so the *kindness* he shows is amplified by his setting aside of all **the prejudice** he might justifiably feel and **his choosing** to forget the insults and injuries he's received from Jews in the past. All he sees is fellow man – a brother – who desperately needs help. And as the fruit of kindness grows in us, we too learn to see all people this way.

The most important way we can begin to care about others is to move from our focus on self comfort and become living sacrifices, to move beyond ourselves and our own desires. If we truly want to grow in our character, then we must be willing to change our goal from one of safety to one of sacrifice. We're more mindful of what we have, how we can use it and why we've been entrusted with it. If you want to experience the full adventure that your life is intended to be, then you have to be willing to take action and serve those in need with God's love. It is essential that we begin serving others with the blessings God's already given us.

In the widow's situation (2 Kings 4:3-4), Elisha asks her to do something very unusual "Look for empty vessels to fill". She has to go out and get all the empty vessels she can find and bring them home. This is just the opposite of our natural reaction to needs. When we have a problem, our attitude becomes "I can't focus on anyone else's need right now; I have needs of my own. I don't have time for anyone else; I'm overwhelmed and need to take care of myself first". We are usually unaware of "**the empty vessels**" that surround us everyday, because we're blinded by our own problems and worries. If choose to look, empty vessels turn up everywhere, at work, in your family, in your neighborhood, in your church. God asks us to give what we have, no matter how small it may be. He asks us to consider others before ourselves and to trust Him to take care of our needs and to be used by Him to meet the needs of others. Look what happened to the widow when she got the empty vessels: "When vessels were all full, she said to her son, "Bring me another vessel." And he said to her, "There is not one left." Then the oil stopped multiplying (2 Kings 4:6). When we move the focus off ourselves and onto God and start pouring our life into others and yielding to His direction, then He starts pouring His blessings into us. We are blessed to be a blessing.

Most farmers will tell you that **where** you plant is almost as important as **what** you plant. A seed has potential, but if it's planted in bad soil, there's not going to be any fruit. If you plant kindness, you are going to harvest kindness. Whatever you give out in life, you are going to get back. According to the law of harvest, we reap what we sow, but we also reap much more than we sow. If you plant one seed, you don't get one seed or even one apple in return but a tree full of apples, season after season.

To cultivate the spirit of kindness, the key is to remember the nature of fruit itself. Fruit doesn't grow overnight, but grows over time through a process that is under the sovereign control of God. When you focus on knowing God's word and commit to loving others selflessly, you can expect crop of blessing in your life.

## **DISCUSSION**

1. Think through the steps you need to take to put kindness into action in a specific situation. How do we show kindness to people who have wronged us?
2. Why is genuine kindness so lacking in the world today?

## **CONCLUSION**

The wise man will pour his most valuable resources into the investments with the GREATEST returns: "PEOPLE". Our relationships are the only investment that can't be destroyed by a fire or natural disaster or be lost in the stock market. God has invested in each of us the ability to influence others, and He expects a return on His investment. He wants us to take advantage of our opportunities and recognize our responsibility to make a difference in lives of others with love and kindness.