



fruit

but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, **kindness**,
goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control



Kindness

"You can either
practice being
right or practice
being kind."

Anne Lamott



Power

Kindness, in our culture, is often perceived as soft, fluffy, and even a little boring. Being described as a person who is kind is fine, and certainly better than mean, but we'd often like other adjectives to go with it: risky, adventurous, creative, strong. It conjures up images of walking old people across the street, holding the door for someone, picking up after yourself—normal, everyday things that your standard decent human being should do.

Yet this act, this thing we assume as the bare minimum of human decency, is named a fruit of the Holy Spirit in Galatians 5. It's an outward sign of the grace and power of God. But it doesn't seem like the power and filling of the Spirit would be necessary to be kind. Isn't everyone able to be kind just on their own?

“Don’t be afraid,” David said to him, “for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table.”

- How does the story of Mephibosheth in 2 Samuel 9 show an image of God's kindness?
- Why does God value kindness?
- What does 'supernatural' kindness look like in everyday life?
- How often do you look for opportunities to show love and grace?
- What is one small change you can do to pursue kindness?

*"Do unto those
downstream as you
would have those
upstream do unto you."*

Wendell Berry



Mythic

In the Greek-Hellenistic world, when Paul was writing Galatians 5, the concept and expression of kindness was a unique quality that was reserved for their mythical gods. These gods would periodically express some sort of radical kindness towards humanity—a gift of insight or wisdom, a powerful weapon or tool in time of need, a specific role or title, and many times, mercy when punishment was deserved.

This act was anything but common or soft. It was a gift from the gods. It was a rescue. A grace. A source of power. An act of the divine moving towards the common. It was someone of higher and greater position, lowering themselves in a move of mercy to bring aid to someone beneath them.

They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked and in their rebellion appointed a leader in order to return to their slavery. But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.

NEHEMIAH 9:17

- What about God's kindness makes it divine?
- How can we expand our definition of what it means to be kind?
- Have you ever been shown radical kindness?
- What kind of God shows mercy and forgiveness, even when abandoned?
- How are kindness and humility related?

*"Low views of God
destroy the gospel for
all who hold them."*

A.W. Tozer



Expression

When another New Testament passage uses the word kindness, it refers to the kindness of God appearing in the form of a Savior. And to fill people with the greatest gift—his Spirit.

What kind of power did the word “kindness” hold for the readers of Galatians 5? These were people living in a Hellenistic-influenced culture. They were familiar with the stories and images associated with this word. For them, kindness was neither fluffy nor soft—it represented a powerful, unexpected move.

And here Paul was challenging them to live out this type of kindness as people who live in new-found freedom from the Law, to use their power in a way that demonstrated the same kindness of God. If we write it off as a general humanitarian content, we diminish its power. Kindness is the expression of God’s love revealed in Christ.

When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened. But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry.

JONAH 3:10-4:1

- Is it possible to show too much kindness?
- Is it ever frustrating or uncomfortable to believe in a God so willing to love and forgive?
- When is it the easiest to show kindness?
- When is it the hardest?
- How does someone learn to show love towards those they hate?

"People say, what is the sense of our small effort? They cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time. A pebble cast into a pond causes ripples that spread in all directions. Each one of our thoughts, words and deeds is like that. No one has a right to sit down and feel hopeless. There is too much work to do."

Dorothy Day



Divine

The immense love of God, expressed through Jesus, is then expressed by Christians in our love and kindness to our neighbors. Because of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, it is now possible to be distributors ourselves of this divine and radical grace.

Kindness is so much more than good, humanitarian acts that any human can do. It's more than simply being nice. Kindness is made up of divinely empowered acts that reflect a divine move of mercy to demonstrate the rescue, grace, salvation, and power of God that we ourselves have received.

So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?

ROMANS 2:3-4

- How does kindness change you?
- What makes kindness motivating?
- Does kindness need to have a 'point' to be important?
- Who in your life has shown you kindness? Have you ever told them what their actions have meant to you?

*"There is no value
in inertia."*

Thomas Merton

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