

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

- *kindness* -

... Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place...

(Mark 6:31)



Kindness is another fruit that the Holy Spirit grows in our lives as we co-operate with His indwelling presence and power.

It is a word frequently used to describe God's attitude and acts toward his people throughout history. His kindness toward his people does not depend on their obedience or faithfulness – he is kind simply because that is who he is. God is love and love is kind. When used of God, kindness speaks of his goodness and abundant grace, his free favour and faithfulness.

In English, as in Greek and Hebrew, the words used to translate 'kindness' are not clearly distinguishable from similar words such as goodness, mercy, pity, love, grace, favour and compassion.

As we focus on this particular fruit of the Spirit, reflect on how you would define kindness: the kindness that flows from God to his children, and the kindness that is meant to flow from his children back to God and out to others. Think about how you have experienced this in your life and how others might see it flowing out of you.

(On-line link) <https://youtu.be/iaAjz5mYl30>

KINDNESS - FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Call to worship

Come, tell of the kindnesses of the Lord, the deeds for which he is to be praised,
according to all the Lord has done for us.

Yes, tell of the many good things he has done for Israel,
according to his compassion and many kindnesses.

I will tell of the kindnesses of the Lord, the deeds for which he is to be praised,
according to all the Lord has done for us.

Yes, I will tell of the many good things he has done for us,
according to his compassion and many kindnesses.

Based on Isaiah 63:7



Prayer

Lord of kindness and compassion,
you have given me life and shown me kindness
and in your providence watched over my spirit.
Your love and mercy have always been at work in my life,
long before I ever knew you were there.

You have loved me with an everlasting kindness
and have showered me
with an abundance of grace and goodness.
Let my eyes always be open to see your presence
and your kindness at work in the world around me.ⁱ

Scripture

The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying:
“I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.
⁴ I will build you up again, and you, Virgin Israel, will be rebuilt.
Again you will take up your timbrels and go out to dance with the joyful.
⁵ Again you will plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria;
the farmers will plant them and enjoy their fruit.
⁶ There will be a day when watchmen cry out on the hills of Ephraim,
‘Come, let us go up to Zion, to the Lord our God.’”

Jeremiah 31:3-6

SONG

Everyone needs compassion
A love that's never failing
Let mercy fall on me

Everyone needs forgiveness
The kindness of a Saviour
The hope of nations

[Chorus:]
Saviour, he can move the mountains
My God is mighty to save
He is mighty to save
Forever, author of salvation
He rose and conquered the grave
Jesus conquered the grave

So take me as you find me
All my fears and failures
Fill my life again

I give my life to follow
Everything I believe in
Now I surrender

[Chorus 2x:]

Saviour, he can move the mountains
My God is mighty to save
He is mighty to save
Forever, author of salvation
He rose and conquered the grave
Jesus conquered the grave

Shine your light and let the whole world see
We're singing for the glory of the risen king Jesus [2x]

Scripture

In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you," says the Lord your Redeemer.

I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the Lord.

Isaiah 54:8; Jeremiah 9:24

REFLECTION

The stork is known, since the time of the Hebrews, Greeks and Romans, for its gentleness and affection, especially for its kindness toward its young. It has been known to seek out food for its young that it itself doesn't eat. The tender love between mated pairs as well as for their young has long been attested to.

The story is told of a house, on the top of which was a stork's nest, that caught on fire. The mother bird, after repeated attempts to save her young who were not large or strong enough to fly away with her, chose to stay with them rather than save herself and they were all burned together.ⁱⁱ

It is also believed that the young repay the care of their parents by attaching themselves to them for life, and tending them in old age.

The Hebrew word for kindness (*chesed*) is connected to the name given to the stork (*chasidah*) – the very name of the stork speaks of the kindness that is also seen in the love of God for his children.

The stork also has the reputation of faithfulness – on returning from its winter migration it will frequently return to the same summer nest, year after year.

Whether or not such stories are true, the words are connected, and perhaps there is something that we can learn from the faithfulness and gentleness of the stork.

The prophet Hosea reminds us of a God who is gentle and loving in the same way: "I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love. To them I was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek, and I bent down to feed them." Hosea 11:4



This is a beautiful image of the kindness of God.

Think about some of the ways you have experienced the kindness of God over the years and in recent days.

What do these experiences tell you of the nature of God?

Offer your own prayer of thanksgiving.

Scripture

Your Father in Heaven...causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good,
and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Matthew 5:45
He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons;
he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy. Acts 4:17

Pause



SONG

Don't assume that God's dismissed you from his mind,
Don't assume that God's forgotten to be kind;
For no matter what you do, his love still follows you;
Don't think that you have left him far behind.

Chorus

For his love remains the same,
He knows you by your name,
Don't think because you failed him he despairs;
For he gives to those who ask
His grace for every task,
God plans for you in love for he still cares.

2.
Don't assume that God will plan for you no more,
Don't assume that there's no future to explore;
For your life he'll re-design, the pattern be divine;
Don't think that your repentance he'll ignore.

3.
Don't assume you cannot give what he'll demand,
Don't assume that God condemns you out of hand;
For he gives to those who ask his grace for every task;
Don't think that God will fail to understand.

Scripture

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness,
humility, gentleness and patience. Colossians 3:12

So clean house! Make a clean sweep of malice and pretense, envy and hurtful talk. You've had a taste of
God. Now, like infants at the breast, drink deep of God's pure kindness. Then you'll grow up mature and
whole in God. 1 Peter 2:1-3MSG

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.
Ephesians 4:32

Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, and pour anew the loving-kindness of God into my heart.
Open my eyes to the little unkindnesses I have shown today –
the sharp word, the impatient tone, the frustrated roll of the eyes when things have not gone my way.

Show me where I could have been kind and because of my busyness or self-absorption,
I missed the opportunity to take time to listen, to be helpful, to notice another person's need.
Help me to shed the covering of inattentiveness, impatience, pride and self-importance
and clothe me anew with the kindness and compassion that comes only from the Father of Heaven,
through God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.ⁱⁱⁱ

Song

There is an everlasting kindness you lavished on us,
When the radiance of heaven came to rescue the lost.
You called the sheep without a shepherd to leave their distress,
For Your streams of forgiveness and the shade of Your rest.

What boundless love, what fathomless grace
You have shown us, O God of compassion.
Each day we live an offering of praise
As we show to the world Your compassion.

And with compassion for the hurting You reached out Your hand,
As the lame ran to meet You and the dead breathed again.
You saw behind the eyes of sorrow and shared in our tears;
Heard the sigh of the weary, let the children draw near.

We stood beneath the cross of Calvary and gazed on Your face,
At the thorns of oppression and the wounds of disgrace;
For surely You have borne our suffering and carried our grief,
As You pardoned the scoffer and showed grace to the thief.

How beautiful the feet that carry this Gospel of peace
To the fields of injustice and the valleys of need;
To be a voice of hope and healing, to answer the cries
Of the hungry and helpless, with the mercy of Christ.



Benediction

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace
as you trust in him,
so that you may overflow with hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit.
Romans 15:13

GOING DEEPER: Here are some suggestions that may help you to engage more deeply with this theme.

- **Reflect:**

The Bible is full of stories of kindness: God's kindness to his people, and the practice of kindness among those who follow him.

Reflect on ways you have experienced the kindness of God...

How have you lived out that kindness in your relationships with others?

When you think about kindness, what comes to mind?

Where in your own life would you like to be more kind?

- The **Bible** has many references to kindness. The story of Ruth and Naomi has a number of references to kindness – and the kindness shown by firstly Ruth and then by Boaz makes a significant contribution to the history of God's people. Read this story through slowly and thoughtfully and reflect on what God might be saying to you through this. Of course, this is just one example –there are many other references to kindness in Scripture that you might like to read and reflect on.

Some examples are: 2 Samuel 9:1-7; Acts 4:8-12; Acts 28:2

There are also a number of Proverbs that tell us something about kindness:

Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up. Proverbs 12:25

It is a sin to despise one's neighbour, but blessed is the one who is kind to the needy. Proverbs 14:21

Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker,
but whoever is kind to the needy honours God. Proverbs 14:31

Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord,
and he will reward them for what they have done.
Proverbs 19:17

- You could use one of the Bible passages or songs provided in the material to practise **Lectio Divina**.
- If you enjoy being **creative**, think about some ways you could creatively express something of God's kindness. You could use collage, paint, clay or even objects you find outside to show this. Or, you could create something that shows the place of kindness in your own life, or the world around you.
- Go for a **walk**. Where do you see God's kindness at work in the world around you? What would you like to say to God about what you have discovered?
- If you are **sharing** this retreat day with someone else, spend some time worshipping together and praising God for the kindness you have experienced, and what you have learned about kindness in your own life.
- If you like to **journal**, make a note of what you have experienced during this retreat time in your journal. A simple way to do this is to:

Thank God for who He is and what He is doing in your life
Notice what is happening around you and in you
Respond to what God has shown you, by thanking Him, repenting, or recommitting yourself to Him

- **Simply sit in His presence.** We don't have to do anything to enjoy being in His presence! We are in His will when we are fully and completely in His presence, with our hearts focussed on Him.

EVEN DEEPER

LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina is an ancient spiritual practice from the Christian monastic tradition. Its title derives from the Latin words meaning reading and divine/holy. In Lectio Divina, we seek to experience the presence of God through reading and listening, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. Lectio Divina can be practiced both by individuals and in groups.

Practicing Lectio Divina Individually

1. Text

Begin by choosing a section of Scripture that you would like to read and pray. You can choose the text randomly or use a liturgical book, such as The Book of Common Prayer. Try not to set a goal for how much content you will cover; the goal is to listen for God and to experience his presence.

2. Preparation

Do what you must to quiet and prepare yourself to hear from God. If you need to find a quiet room, sit in silence for several minutes, or sit in a comfortable chair, take whatever posture will help you prepare to receive and experience God's presence.

3. Reading/Listening

When you sense that your heart is prepared, begin by slowly reading the passage of Scripture that you have selected. Move slowly through sentences and phrases. As you read, pay attention to what word, phrase, or idea catches your attention.

4. Meditation

Begin to meditate on the word, phrase, or idea that has captured your attention. Repeat it again and again.

Consider:

What thoughts come to mind as you meditate on this word, phrase, or idea?

What are you reminded of in your life?

What does it make you hope for?

Meditation is no easy task—as you try to concentrate don't be disappointed if random thoughts enter your head. As they do, offer them to God.

5. Prayer

Now begin to speak to God. Tell God what word, phrase, or idea captured your attention and what came to mind as you meditated upon it. How is God using this word, phrase, or idea to bless and transform you? Tell God what you have been thinking and feeling as you've listened and meditated. Tell God how you hope this word, phrase, or idea will change your heart to be more like His.

6. Contemplation

Finish by focusing your attention on the fact that God's presence is with you. If as you try to focus on God's presence you sense a need to read the text again, to continue meditating, or to simply continue talking with God, allow yourself to do so. As you do, know that you are in the presence of God.

THE PRAYER OF EXAMEN

Finding the movement of the Spirit in our daily lives as we review our day.

1. Recognize the presence of God

Be still and know that you are with God.

2. Look at your day with gratitude

Acknowledge God in the big and small things of life.

3. Review your day

When or where in the past 24 hours did you feel you were cooperating most fully with God's action in your life? When were you resisting?

Ask yourself

- What habits and life patterns do I notice?
- When did I feel most alive? Most drained of life?
- When did I have the greatest sense of belonging? When did I feel most alone?
- When did I give love? Where did I receive love?
- When did I feel most fully myself? Least myself?
- When did I feel most whole? Most fragmented?

4. Reconcile and Resolve

- Seek forgiveness
- Ask for direction
- Share a concern
- Express gratitude
- Resolve to move forward

Mars Hill Bible Church marshill.org/teaching/sp

SONGS

Mighty to Save – Hillsong United

Don't assume that God's dismissed you from his mind – John Gowans, SASB

Compassion Hymn - Stuart Townend , Keith Getty & Kristyn Getty; Copyright © 2008 Thankyou Music

ⁱ Jo-anne Brown (with reference to Job 10:12)

ⁱⁱ <http://biblehub.com/topical/s/stork.htm>

ⁱⁱⁱ Jo-anne Brown