Lesson 16 – The Holy Spirit’s Gift – To Bear the Fruit of Kindness

Why is the fruit of kindness more than just kind words?
What are some ways in which the Lord has shown his kindness to us?
How does His Kindness to us help us to become more kind?
How do we allow the Holy Spirit to put to death our flesh so that we can clothe ourselves with kindness?
What are three qualities of Kindness?
What are three actions of kindness?

The Fruit of the Spirit Is Kindness

Kindness is the disposition we should have toward others. It is more than a feeling; it is a quality that causes us to “act” toward others in a kindly manner. Kindness and goodness are similar in nature, yet not identical. Goodness also involves a disposition of kindness toward others, but it includes an additional aspect of honesty or firmness in our relating with others that is meant to lead that person towards reform or change.

The Greek Translation

Kindness and goodness are closely connected words. For kindness the word is chrestotes. It, too, is commonly translated goodness…. The whole idea of the word is a goodness which is kind. The word Paul uses for goodness (agathosune) is a peculiarly Bible word and does not occur in secular Greek… It is the widest word for goodness; it is defined as “virtue equipped at every point” What is the difference? Agathosune might, and could rebuke and discipline; chrestotes can only help…. The Christian needs that goodness which at one and the same time can be kind and strong.

—William Barclay - The Daily Bible Study Series

Kindness. . . More than Words

Kindness is more than kind words—it flows to others through our actions. The Letter of James raises this question: "If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, keep warm and eat your fill,' and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?" (2:15-16). Hearing someone express pity toward another person who is in desperate straits, we might mistakenly conclude that he or she is being kind. But spiritual kindness must also compel us to act! **Kindness, as a fruit of the Holy Spirit, should stimulate us to loving action toward others.** A kind person recognizes that someone—a neighbor, friend, family member, or perhaps even a stranger—has a physical, mental, social, or spiritual need, and then helps to meet that need in some way.

1. (a) Kindness that results in action is described by Jesus in his parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37). What is the primary difference between the Samaritan and the others who saw the injured man?
(b) What do you think causes seemingly good people not to act out of kindness?

Reflecting on God's Kindness toward Us
2. (a) We can perhaps best understand kindness by looking at the source of all aspects of godliness, the Lord himself. In Romans 2:1-5, why is judgment contrasted with kindness, and how does it help to define what kindness is?

(b) What is God's kindness meant to achieve, according to St. Paul?

(c) When you show kindness toward another, perhaps even someone who normally would warrant judgment, what effect can you expect your act of kindness to have?

"Putting on" the Clothing of Kindness
3. (a) Read Colossians 3:1-12. What do you think St. Paul meant when he urged the members of the early church to "strip off the old self with its practices" (verse 9)? Share some practical ways of doing this.

(b) What do you think would happen if you simply tried putting on the clothes of kindness while the old self remained alive?

29 But because he wished to justify himself, he said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

30 Jesus replied, “A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead.

31 A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side.

32 Likewise a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. 33 But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight.

34 He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn and cared for him.

35 The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, ‘Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.’ 36Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers’ victim?”

37 He answered, “The one who treated him with mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

Romans 2:1-5 God’s Just Judgment

1 Therefore, you are without excuse, every one of you who passes judgment.* For by the standard by which you judge another you condemn yourself, since you, the judge, do the very same things.

2 We know that the judgment of God on those who do such things is true.

3 Do you suppose, then, you who judge those who engage in such things and yet do them yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?

4 Or do you hold his priceless kindness, forbearance, and patience in low esteem, unaware that the kindness of God would lead you to repentance?

5 By your stubbornness and impenitent heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself for the day of wrath and revelation of the just judgment of God

Colossians 3:1-12

Mystical Death and Resurrection

1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

2 Think of what is above, not of what is on earth.

3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

4 When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory.
Renunciation of Vice.

5 Put to death, then, the parts of you that are earthly: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and the greed that is idolatry.

6 Because of these the wrath of God is coming [upon the disobedient].

7 By these you too once conducted yourselves, when you lived in that way.

8 But now you must put them all away: anger, fury, malice, slander, and obscene language out of your mouths.

9 Stop lying to one another, since you have taken off the old self with its practices

10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed, for knowledge, in the image of its creator.

11 Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all and in all.

12 Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

KINDNESS - FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Latin translation is BENIGNITAS. Greek translation is CHRESTOTES (khray-stot-ace), which meant to show kindness or to be friendly to others and often depicted rulers, governors, or people who were kind, mild, and benevolent to their subjects. Anyone who demonstrated this quality of chrestotes was considered to be compassionate, considerate, sympathetic, humane, kind, or gentle.

When our free will allows, the Holy Spirit removes abrasive qualities from the character of one under His control.

Kindness is doing something and not expecting anything in return- no conditions. Kindness is respect and helping others without waiting for someone to help one back. It implies kindness no matter what- whether we are being loved on or being persecuted.
NEW AMERICAN BIBLE REFERENCES

The apostle Paul uses Romans 11:22 to depict God's incomprehensible kindness for people who are unsaved: "Now if their transgression is enrichment for the world, and if their diminished number is enrichment for the Gentiles, how much more their full number."

Titus 3:1-7. 1 2 "Remind them to be under the control of magistrates and authorities, to be obedient, to be open to every good enterprise. They are to slander no one, to be peaceable, considerate, exercising all graciousness toward everyone. For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, deluded, slaves to various desires and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful ourselves and hating one another. But when the kindness and generous love of God our savior appeared, not because of any righteous deeds we had done but because of his mercy, he saved us through the bath of rebirth and renewal by the holy Spirit, whom he richly poured out on us through Jesus Christ our savior, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life."

2 Corinthians 6:6-7 suggests that we should live "by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, in a holy spirit, in unfeigned love, in truthful speech, in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness at the right and at the left."

KINDNESS

The quality of understanding sympathy and concern for those in trouble or need. It is shown in affability of speech, generosity of conduct, and forgiveness of injuries sustained.

"Let a good man strike or rebuke me in kindness,..." (Psalm 141:5)

It would appear that the Scripture passage above would seem rather harsh! But it's not; it could save your life! Allow me to explain.

It seems as if all of the Fruits of the Spirit have simple meanings that pretty much anyone with any common sense would know. Perhaps that's the problem. Each Fruit goes further and digs deep into the human condition. And rightfully so, for God established each Fruit Himself in order for us to recognize our own evil actions and to understand what we are really capable of. They are the manifestation of God working within us.

So what is kindness besides the simple definition of being nice to someone? ("Nice" by the way, is not so "nice" after all! It has it's root in a Middle English word meaning foolish or stupid. This, taken from the Latin nescius, meaning ignorant or incapable. Therefore, think twice before referring to someone as being nice!) Kindness has its root in humility. One can only behave in a sincere kind manner only once they are disposed of themselves. But what is actual kindness, then?

Kindness seeks after that which is best for the end in which it's aimed. HUH? God always has our best interests in mind. His main concern for all of us is to see to it that we spend eternity with Him in heaven. Salvation is on the forefront of His activity because we weren't made for this world. We are simply sojourners in this world. With this in mind the greatest thing we can do for our fellow man is to lead them to salvation in Jesus Christ as well. How do we do this? We do this by the example of the lives we lead. Kindness, of which, needs to be at the forefront.
Take into consideration the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. These, if performed with the correct motive and intention, which is sincere love for God, will manifest our kindness. It was Jesus himself who gave us these works in order that we might embrace them and lead others unto Him and to salvation. So what are these works of mercy?

The Corporal ("Corporal" meaning things we do physically) Works of Mercy are..
1) Feed the hungry;
2) To give drink to the thirsty;
3) To clothe the naked;
4) To harbour the harbourless;
5) To visit the sick;
6) To ransom the captive;
7) To bury the dead.

The Spiritual ("Spiritual" meaning things we do by ways other then the physical) Works of Mercy are...
1) To instruct the ignorant;
2) To counsel the doubtful;
3) To admonish sinners;
4) To bear wrongs patiently;
5) To forgive offenses willingly;
6) To comfort the afflicted;
7) To pray for the living and the dead.

These works of mercy clearly show us the path of kindness. They lead us to the greatest good we can do for anyone. It leads to freedom. God showed us His kindness by Christ’s example in humility. The saints all throughout the ages also give us amazing examples of true kindness. I personally enjoy the examples the saints have left us because they were ordinary people like the rest of us. Yet they were able to do extraordinary things through their kindness and love for God.

IN THE END

Kindness extends to many levels. Never under estimate the power of kindness and your own ability, strengthened by grace, to lead others to a life of lasting happiness. Another awesome aspect of kindness is that it’s contagious! We truly do receive when giving! We are created that way! Happiness is found in humility and cannot be underestimated! Remember, then, these works of mercy and that it was our Lord who ordained them. Pray about them and seek Him to grant you the want, the desire and the ability to carry them out!
Catholic Dogma says "God is absolute benignity." Does that mean he's inactive - like the Watchmaker?

I got an interesting question from a young Evangelical about Catholic Dogma. He asked:

Catholic Dogma says "God is absolute benignity." That worries me. Does it mean the Catholic Church is saying God is not active in the Creation of the universe or in or personal lives?

When we in modern society hear the word benign we think inactivity, of a tumor that does nothing. It is not harmful but neither is it helpful. It will not grow and devour the person as an active cancer but it is not a positive thing. They usually have to remove it with surgery, so it's still pretty bad, even though it's not malignant. So I could see why someone reading Catholic Dogma, would think the Catholic Church was teaching the "Watchmaker" theory of creation, which says God winded up the universe like a clock, and then walked away and let it develop and exist on it's own. Actually, it would be a heresy to teach the Watchmaker theory in the Catholic Church.

Before going into the history of the word benignity, it would be useful to look at the other dogmas regarding the character of God. We can learn what benignity is not simply by looking at what God is, as listed elsewhere.

Catholic Dogma is completely contrary the "Watchmaker" theory. Here's what Dogma says about "God the Creator."

God keeps all created things in existence.

The words “God keeps” is a present tense verb which shows that he is active in creation, he didn’t walk away. There are hundreds of other clear statements by the Church that demonstrate we do not teach anything like the "Watchmaker" theory. Simply reading about Jesus' active salvation of man in Dogma demonstrates that God loves his people and is active in their lives, and is active in the world. So benignity is referring to something else.

Princeton University dictionary shows us that our concept of a benign tumor is false. Benignity is the "quality or condition of being kind and gentle," or it is "a kindly or gracious act"\(^1\). It is the opposite of malignity, not the neutral of it. Malignity means "disposed to evil or intense ill will." The opposite of that is “disposed to good, intense good will.” Benignity comes from the Bible.

BENIGNITY- One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, identified by St. Paul. It corresponds to kindness. (Etym. Latin bene, well + gigni, to be born: benignitas, kindness.)
In his letter to the Romans, Saint Paul addresses many different issues, one of which is the basic human tendency to be judgmental—that is, to want the satisfaction of seeing others condemned for their sins. Paul reminds the Christians in Rome that, because everyone will be judged by God, we all should be grateful for the opportunity to repent our sins before it is too late. Thus he says, “Or do you hold His priceless kindness, forbearance, and patience in low esteem, unaware that the kindness of God would lead you to repentance?” (Romans 2:4).

Now, condemnation for the unrepentant will come, but it will come from God alone. Still, God looks on us with kindness—that is, with tender-hearted concern for us—according to the possibility that every soul can be saved; therefore, we, too, should treat others with kindness, not condemnation. “See, then, the kindness and severity of God: severity toward those who fell, but God’s kindness to you, provided you remain in His kindness; otherwise, you, too, will be cut off” (Romans 11:22).

IF YOUR PRAYER is truly effective, then, it should be leading you to repentance for your sins and to a tender-hearted concern for others, that they might be led to their own repentance.

Personal Meditation: How often do you deny the reality of sin by falling into the mistaken belief that kindness means unconditional acceptance of anything?

On Kindness

St. Paul says that if someone lives the Christian life rightly with the help of the Holy Spirit, he will gain the “fruit of the spirit.” This fruit includes lots of desirable things: love, peace, patience, joy, gentleness, etc.

One of the most important in this day and age is the fruit of kindness. Kindness flows so naturally from humility and love. When I really do care about someone and I don’t see them as a threat (which is what pride sees in everyone), then I’m really interested in what someone else has to say and in treating them with respect.

Winston Churchill famously said that “the greatest threat to national security is immorality.” He said this because when people are virtuous, they are brave, loyal, supportive and willing to sacrifice for the good of others… If your nation (or your community) is full of “good people,” you will have a strong and resilient culture. But, if your nation is full of lazy, self-involved, pompous snobs, it will collapse in on itself!

As our nation and our communities become less kind and less virtuous, we have two great opportunities. First, we can head our fall off by recovering and reclaiming natural and supernatural virtue in ourselves and in our children. Second, because these virtues have become more rare, they shine out all the more brightly as something which a non-Christian or a lazy Christian may desire and which may lead them back to Christ.

Either way, we have a natural duty to kindness and to the other virtues that all may see our good works and give glory to God!
Kindness  By Dorothea J. Lotter

The native clutched his dying son and ran through the hot dust for 2 miles until he reached Africa’s Baragwaneth Hospital. Instinctively he knew it was too late. He sadly turned homeward with the baby cold in his arms. The child had died of gastric enteritis.

Vusamazulu Mutwa tearfully built a crude coffin and prepared his tiny son’s body for burial. To a Bantu native, proper burial is vital. To be buried in an unknown grave would be the deepest disgrace that could befall him. But a Bantu has no access to any cemetery unless he belongs to a recognized church and the funeral is conducted by a minister. A well-known authority has said, “Determination to have a proper burial is a strong reason why natives turn to Christianity.”

The grief-stricken parents went to their Christian pastor, whose church the wife had attended for many years; the father had never accepted the faith. When they asked for a funeral, the pastor refused without explanation.

Later Mutwa acidly wrote, “Strangely, the priest knew exactly what he was doing to me when he refused to bury my son. For over the years, I had explained to him all the laws and customs of the Bantu. He refused simply because I was not, with the rest of my family, a member of his church.”

Vusamazulu Mutwa later wrote a scorching essay on “Why Christianity Has Failed in Africa.” It is part of his bitter book, Africa Is My Witness, which charges, “The culprits are those petty dictators and sadists who wear their white collars the wrong way round.”

This abridged story from Charles Hembree’s book, Fruits of the Spirit, vividly illustrates the cruelty Christians, often unintentionally, inflict on others.

By contrast, the Bible emphasizes kindness. It is to be a major Christian virtue, so important that Paul calls it a fruit of the Spirit.

The Greek term for kindness (chrestotes) appears 10 times in the New Testament. The King James Version translates it in Galatians as “gentleness,” but as “kindness” on four other occasions. The New International Version translates the word as “kindness” in 9 of 10 occurrences.

Like the word love (agape), kindness (chrestotes) is closely related to hesed in the Old Testament, which stands for God’s covenant love. Commenting on hesed, the Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament says, “loving-kindness — is not far from the fullness of the meaning of the word.”

The lesson of our text is that the Holy Spirit enables us to show kindness in all our relationships as we sincerely seek His assistance.

Kindness begins in the heart

Helen Brenneman writes: “There was a man who had a heart transplant. But the operation was a total failure. For the man was a mean man and the heart was a kind heart. His body simply rejected it.”

The Bible, however, tells us about a successful heart transplant: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will
put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws” (Ezekiel 36:26).

Like the mean man, we fallen human beings have a predisposition to be unkind! Unfortunately, even our salvation experience does not remove us from that temptation. Christians can be very cruel, like the priest in his response to the Bantu. And probably, without intending to be, all of us are cruel at times. The Word of God teaches us, however, that to please God we must cultivate the virtue of kindness.

Ephesians 4:31-32 says to “get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

In Colossians 3:12-13, Paul admonishes us, “Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.” A kind disposition is possible precisely because the Holy Spirit has given us a new heart as described by Ezekiel. This transformation process of the Spirit is emphasized in Titus 3:5: “He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior.”

Moses tried to do ministry prematurely and in his own strength. He became enraged and killed an Egyptian. Only after long years as a shepherd, followed by a life-changing encounter with the living Yahweh at the burning bush, did Moses become the meekest of men and a powerful leader of the people of God. We, too, can become fundamentally different people when we receive a change of heart which enables us to be kind to others.

**Kindness is a growth process.**

You just don’t get up in the morning and say, “Beginning today, I’m going to be kind.” Even the best intentions fail if we rely on our own strength. Paul called kindness a fruit of the Spirit because it cannot be grown effectively without the Spirit’s continuing work in our lives.

Ephesians 5:18 admonishes us to “be filled with the Spirit.” The wider context shows that spiritual fullness results in changed behavior. “Submit to one another” (5:21); “Husbands, love your wives” (5:25); “Children, obey your parents” (6:1); “Fathers, do not exasperate your children” (6:4); “Slaves, obey your earthly masters” (6:5). Kindness is one of the products of the Spirit at work in our relationships.

Jesus was really stating much the same thing in John 15:5: “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

The Holy Spirit according to Paul is the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9). So to abide in Christ is to live in the Spirit. They are one and the same. Abiding in Christ through the Spirit empowers us to live in obedience to all His commandments.

As we live in Spirit-filled obedience, these scriptural commands will continue to echo and re-echo throughout our lives: “Get rid of all bitterness, rage ... anger, brawling ... slander ... malice. Be kind ... compassionate ... forgiving” (Ephesians 4:31-32). “Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness ... patience ... Bear with each other ... forgive as the Lord forgave you” (Colossians 3:12-13).
In Scripture, you notice how John tried to position himself for power and prestige during Jesus’ ministry. He and his brother asked Jesus, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory” (Mark 10:37). That selfish request came during the childhood stage of John’s spiritual development. But he grew in spirit so that by the end of his life he was the epitome of kindness. John, one of the Sons of Thunder, became the Apostle of Love as reported over and over in 1 John. By the power of the Spirit, he had learned the lesson of kindness.

**Kindness produces results**

The Bible shows that kindness, admittedly costly to us, produces positive results: “A kind man benefits himself” (Proverbs 11:17). This verse brings to mind people like Mark Buntain and Billy Graham. Mark Buntain was loved and honored in life. In death, thousands of people stood for hours in the hot Indian sun to honor him. He poured out his life to minister to the spiritual and physical needs of Calcutta.

Dr. Graham’s presence is requested by kings and leaders throughout the world. President Bush was quick to call him to the White House the night the United States went to war with Iraq. A humble, beloved man who manifests kindness, Dr. Graham has earned the respect of the secular and Christian communities.

Kindness opens doors for service. Barnabas, Son of Encouragement, sold a field and gave the money for relief of the saints (Acts 4:37). He was sensitive to hurting people in need of assistance. The Spirit later marked him out as the first missionary companion of the apostle Paul.

Undoubtedly, this act of kindness in support of the poor was an important part of Barnabas’s growth in service! It testified to the Christian community of his fitness.

Kindness also softens the hard and angry hearts of men. “A gentle answer turns away wrath” (Proverbs 15:1).

Some years ago, while I was working with a student withdrawing from seminary, it became apparent that he was on the verge of an emotional collapse. He was hostile, and somewhat incoherent. It would not have taken much to provoke him. Seeking the Lord for wisdom as we talked, I sensed Him beautifully guiding, enabling me to respond gently and work through his concerns. He left relaxed; satisfied he had secured what he needed.

Our example will also lead others to be kind. Peter Ainslie, in his book, Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit, says, “No influence is so powerful in human society as practicing kindness,” and illustrates with the following story:

A rail fence between two Virginia farms had settled and needed repair. The cattle from one farm wandered into the cornfield of the other, doing considerable damage. The farmer who suffered the loss wrote a severe threatening letter to his neighbor who owned the cattle. The neighbor responded by letter, expressing deep regrets, offering to pay the damages and reminding the farmer that through the years his cattle, too, had made like depredations on him. He had never notified him, however, but had simply repaired the fence, knowing that those situations sometimes occur despite precautions. The next morning, the offended farmer begged his neighbor’s forgiveness, and from that time on they were the best of friends.
Kindness demonstrates Christ to the world.

“The greatest thing a man can do for a Heavenly Father,” said Henry Drummond, “is to be kind to some of His other children.” And Frederick William Faber commented, “Kindness has converted more sinners than zeal, eloquence, or learning.” Prayer for the salvation of others must be coupled with Spirit-empowered kindness if we are to be effective in winning them to the Lord.

Conclusion

Our emphasis on kindness may sound good in theory, but does it really happen in practice? Does the Holy Spirit actually help us to develop kindness? Are not some people just “naturally” kind?

It is impossible to produce genuine Christ like kindness as described in Galatians 5:22 by ourselves. A new heart is required. Then a growth process follows which can only take place as we submit to and obey the Holy Spirit. He nurtures those positive character changes that are reflected in our relationships.

Kindness, or the lack of it, makes a difference in our lives. As a child, I knew very well what it meant to be subjected to the blighting cruelty of a father who punished capriciously, his reasoning unclear.

But then I met the Heavenly Father, who generously poured out His love on me. In kindness, He nurtured me. He was understanding, gentle, and approachable. He gave hope when I had none. He guided, opened doors, encouraged, and listened to my concerns.

Through Him I found the sustaining power of the Holy Spirit, who helped me turn that cruelty into kindness.

We, like the Bantu father who was denied a Christian funeral for his son, may also experience cruelty in the church.

When that happens, we need the powerful ministry of the Holy Spirit to walk through those hurts without bitterness.

If we are willing, He enables us to respond in love and kindness. He gives the strength to forgive, and heals painful memories.

We must purpose in our hearts not to be part of the cruelty in our church and world. Rather, we must be sensitive to the needs of people, showing kindness to those we serve — to friends and enemies alike.

May we resolve, in our cultivation of the fruit of kindness, to seek the inexhaustible resources of the gentle, yet dynamic Holy Spirit whom God has so graciously poured out on us to manifest kindness. For it is “not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty” (Zechariah 4:6).