

The fruit of the Spirit: Kindness

The keys to healthy friendships, businesses,
and marriages

Message for Sunday, February 14, 2016
by Bruce Fraser

Scripture: Exodus 34:6-7, Titus 3:4-7, Luke 6:33-35

Children's Message: Matthew 5:14-16

Put up another fruit on the tree: the symbol for kindness could be a greeting card.

It's *really* cold this weekend! So we're going to take a trip to a nice warm place. Close your eyes, and see if you can picture yourself at the beach on a warm, sunny day. (*Try to be really descriptive, so they can actually feel the cold and the heat*). Feel the sand squish under your feet as you walk. Curl your toes and try to pick up some sand; feel it run out between your toes — it's ticklish!

Now it's time to get wet. Put your towel down on the sand. Go to the water's edge, and put your big toe in. Brrr! After the warm sand, it feels cold. Only one thing to do: go back 4-5 steps, then run straight in, splashing and laughing and shouting. When the water is over your knees, fall right in head first.

You play for a while, then come back out. You find your towel, and spread it out on the sand. Lie down on it. Feel the sun on your skin. You can actually feel it drying you off, drying off the water. A gentle breeze is blowing the warm air across your skin. Mmm it's so nice; you even start to feel drowsy.

All of a sudden you feel cold. You look up, and see a cloud has blocked out the sun. The sky is darker. That breeze is now chilly. You feel your skin tighten up as it makes goose bumps. A shiver starts in the middle of your back, and quickly spreads so that your whole body is shivering with cold.

Just when you can't take it any more, the sun comes back out. Oh, and it feels even better now! The warmth melts your shivers away, and you begin to relax. Stretch out and soak up the sun.

Jesus tells us to let our light shine. In other words, live so that people will see the good things you do and will praise your Father in heaven.

That's what kindness is like: a ray of sunlight shining into someone's life, brightening them up.

Message: The fruit of the Spirit: Kindness

Here is our theme Bible passage for this series:

Galatians 5:22-23, New International Version:
The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

1) God's kindness: part of God's character

The Bible describes God in many ways: merciful, all-powerful, wise, holy and just are only a few. Actually, *all* of the fruit of the Spirit listed above in Galatians 5:22-23 are also part of God's character.

Kindness, then, is part of what God is like.

Exodus 34:6-7, New Century Version:
The Lord passed in front of Moses and said, "I am the Lord. The Lord is a God who shows mercy, who is kind, who doesn't become angry quickly, who has great love and faithfulness and is kind to thousands of people."

The ultimate of God's kindness is seen in the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ:

Titus 3:4-7, New Living Translation:
God our Saviour showed us his kindness and love. He saved us, not because of the good things we did, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins and gave us a new life through the Holy Spirit. He generously poured out the Spirit upon us because of what Jesus Christ our Saviour did. He declared us not guilty because of his great kindness.

So, then, what is kindness? We see here that it's a combination of the qualities of mercy, patience and love, acted out in deeds of caring for others.

- Kindness is merciful and patient: you give it even to those who don't deserve it, who may never do anything kind back to you. So you do it strangers; but also to people you know, but may not like very much (or at all).
- Kindness is done out of love: what else would motivate someone to behave like this?
- It's something you do, not just think about.

2) Our kindness: our response to God

Luke 6:33-35, New Living Translation:

[Jesus said,] “If you do good only to those who do good to you, is that so wonderful? Even sinners do that much! And if you lend money only to those who can repay you, what good is that? Even sinners will lend to their own kind for a full return.

“Love your enemies! Do good to them! Lend to them! And don’t be concerned that they might not repay. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to the unthankful and to those who are wicked.”

Why is God kind to us? It’s certainly beyond my comprehension. But he is, and we are eternally thankful for that. Certainly it’s not because of any quality or goodness he sees in us. But perhaps God sees us as we could become.

The tale is told of a young boy who was watching a man hitting a huge piece of stone with a hammer and a chisel. Finally, curiosity got the better of the boy and he asked the man, “Why are you working so hard hitting that stone?” The man replied, “Young man, there is an angel inside this rock, and I am setting him free.” And thus, as the legend has it, Michelangelo created his masterpiece of sculpture, “David.”

Thus, when we show kindness to others, it is with this same spirit: not that we are doing it to reward someone, but more that we see others as God sees them: selfish yet wonderful; sinful yet precious; unworthy yet people whom Jesus was willing to die for.

It’s not because of what they’ve done, but because of what God has done — and is doing right now through our actions.

Elizabeth Ballard wrote a story which illustrates this beautifully.

Each September, Miss Thompson greeted her new Grade 5 students with the words, “Boys & girls, I love you all the same. I have no favorites.” Of course, she wasn’t being completely truthful. Teachers do have favourites, and what is worse, they sometimes have students they just don’t like.

Teddy Stallard was a perfect example. Teddy just didn’t seem all that interested in school. His eyes had that glassy, unfocussed appearance; his hair was messy; his clothes smelled musty; and when he answered Miss Thompson’s questions, it was always in monosyllables. Whenever Miss Thompson marked Teddy’s papers, she got a strange pleasure out of putting X’s next to his wrong answers and red F’s at the top of his papers.

She should have known better. Teachers have records, and she had records on Teddy:

- **1st Grade** - Teddy shows promise with his work and attitude, but has poor home situation.
- **2nd Grade** - Teddy could do better. Mother is seriously ill. He receives little help at home.
- **3rd Grade** - Teddy is a good boy, but too serious. He is a slow learner. His mother died this year.
- **4th Grade** - Teddy is very slow, but well-behaved. His father shows little interest.

Christmas came and the children brought presents to Miss Thompson and piled them on her desk. They crowded around to watch her open them. All the presents were wrapped in brightly-colored paper, except for Teddy’s present. His was wrapped in brown paper & held together with Scotch tape.

When she opened Teddy’s gift, out fell a gaudy rhinestone bracelet with half of the stones missing, and an almost-empty bottle of cheap perfume. The other boys and girls began to giggle over Teddy’s gifts, but Miss Thompson had at least enough grace to silence them by immediately putting on the bracelet and some of the perfume on her wrist. Holding her wrist up for the others, she said: “Doesn’t it smell lovely?” And the children, taking their cue from the teacher, readily agreed with “ooh’s” and “ah’s.”

At the end of the day, when school was over and the other children gone, Teddy Stallard lingered behind. Slowly, he came over to her desk and said softly: “Miss Thompson...Miss Thompson...you smell just like my mother...and her bracelet looks real pretty on you too. I’m glad you like my presents.”

When Teddy left, Miss Thompson buried her face in her hands and cried and cried. She got

down on her knees and asked God to forgive her.

The next day, the children in room 401 were greeted by a new teacher. Oh, it was still Miss Thompson, but it was as if she had become a different person. She was now committed to loving her kids with a persevering kindness unknown before—especially the strange and rough-cut ones; especially Teddy Stallard. By the end of that school year, Teddy showed dramatic improvement. He had caught up with most of the students and was even ahead of some.

The years went by, and Miss Thompson lost touch with the fifth graders of that class, until one day she found a note in her mailbox. It simply read:

“Dear Miss Thompson: I wanted you to be the first to know: I’m graduating from high school. Love, Teddy Stallard.”

Four years later, another note came:

“Dear Miss Thompson: They just told me I will be graduating first in my class. I wanted you to be the first to know. The university has not been easy, but I’ve loved it. Love, Teddy Stallard.”

And, four years later again:

“Dear Miss Thompson: As of today, I am Theodore Stallard, M.D. How about that? I thought you should be the first to know. I am getting married next month, the 27th to be exact, and I was wondering if you’d come and sit where my mother would sit if she were alive. You are the only family I have now. Dad died last year. Love, Teddy Stallard.”

Miss Thompson went to that wedding, and sat where Teddy’s mother would have sat. It seemed right.

Are you willing to be transformed in the same way that Miss Thompson was? Remember how she got down on her knees in her classroom, and asked for God to help her? That’s the difference the Holy Spirit makes in a person’s life.

We’re not talking about trying harder. We’re not talking about being a better person. What this is all about is, will you ask and allow God to fill you with his kindness, through the Holy Spirit?

Next Steps:

- Pray to become more like Jesus: kind to all.
- Pray that kindness becomes so natural to you that you don’t even think about; it’s just your automatic response.