

Kindness

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English author John Burbidge writes, "Angry looks can do no good, and blows are dealt in blindness. Words are better understood if spoken but in kindness." The world sees kindness on a very basic, limited plane. Although kind words are important, true kindness is a gift from God, produced in us by the Holy Spirit. The Bible sets the pattern for all kindness in the behavior of God the Father and Jesus Christ toward mankind. God gives sunshine and rain, fruitful seasons and glad hearts, food and all that is good to the just and the unjust alike (Matthew 5:45). He manifests His ever-present mercy, love and grace through the life of Jesus Christ, who set an example for us in all virtues. God is reproducing this character attribute in those who are genuinely living His way of life. In this sixth Bible Study on "the fruit of the Spirit" we will explore the fruit of "kindness"—goodness of heart and love in tender action (Galatians 5:22).

1. What word is most accurate for the fifth fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22)?

Comment: The Greek word *chrestotes* is translated "kindness" in the NKJV and "gentleness" in the AV and RV. *Chrestotes* denotes goodness of heart, kindness, graciousness, and includes gentleness. Kindness has many synonyms: benevolence, generosity, mercy, charity, philanthropy, sympathy, compassion, tenderheartedness, friendliness, etc. Kindness is a major attribute of moral excellence and is intricately entwined with the other fruit of the Spirit. *Chrestotes* is translated as "goodness" in Romans 2:4 and 11:22 (3 times), so *chrestotes* is love in tender action, a quality of goodness, and certainly requires gentleness in word and action.

2. How did King David show kindness? I Samuel 18:1-3; 20:14-17; II Samuel 9:1-7. Does kindness reap rewards? II Samuel 2:5-6.

Comment: David showed kindness by being faithful to his covenant with Jonathan, Saul's son. David often credited God for the kindness he showed to others. Most people usually accept kindness, but when it is refused, disastrous results may follow (II Samuel 10:1-6). Kindness is the full flow of natural affection supported by benevolent action, as seen between David and Jonathan.

3. What are the qualities of God's kindness? Psalm 31:21; Isaiah 54:8, 10; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2. Is God kind to sinners? Nehemiah 9:17; Luke 6:35-36; Hebrews 13:16.

Comment: God's marvelous kindness is great and abundant. To those who obey Him, God will have mercy with everlasting kindness. Mercy is the goodness and abundant grace of God to His own people, His free favor and faithfulness through His New Covenant with His spiritual church. We see the Father's kindness in His sacrifice of His Son for our salvation.

4. What quality do we desire in each other? Proverbs 19:22. What does the virtuous woman have on her tongue? Proverbs 31:26.

Comment: In our human relationships, we want others to sacrifice themselves for us, yet it seems so hard to reciprocate the same toward others on a continual basis. Nevertheless, self-sacrifice is the essence of true Christianity, and we can begin by the kind use of the tongue.

5. What Christian attributes help to build kindness? II Corinthians 6:3-6; Ephesians 4:30-32; II Peter 1:5-10.

Comment: The apostle Paul tells us to "be kind to one another." Peter says to "add brotherly kindness" to the other godly virtues

God is developing in us. Living according to God's instruction, following the example of Christ and aided by the Holy Spirit, we produce the wonderful, spiritual fruit of kindness.

6. How can a Christian put on kindness? Proverbs 31:20; Zechariah 7:9-10; Romans 12:10; I Corinthians 13:4; Galatians 6:1-2, 10; Colossians 3:12-13.

Comment: We can express Christian kindness in mercy, compassion and love toward others. It also includes being zealously affectionate toward God and His church. Kindness is an action not a thought. As a farmer cannot sow and reap without action, neither can we merely "think" goodwill toward others.

7. How does God show His kindness? Acts 20:35; Ephesians 2:7; Titus 3:4-7. Is kindness required for entrance into the Kingdom of God? Matthew 25:34-40; II Peter 1:7, 10-11.

Comment: God shows the exceeding wealth of His grace in kindness toward us through the life, sacrifice and intercession of Jesus Christ (Titus 2:11-12). Jesus' life epitomized kindness—love in tender action.

Kindness is goodness in action, goodness of heart expressing itself in deeds (I John 3:18). It is grace, tenderness, mercy, compassion—self-sacrificing tender action on behalf of others. We have very few opportunities to do "great" acts of kindness for others, but scarcely an hour passes that fails to present us a chance to perform some minor and unnoticed word or act of kindness.