



[Galatians 5:22](#)

(22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,
King James Version

Chrestotes in Greek and *hesed* in Hebrew are most frequently translated into the English word "[kindness](#)." *Chrestotes*, according to *The Complete Word Study Dictionary* by Spiros Zodhiates, p. 1482, means

benignity, kindness, usefulness. It often occurs with philanthropy; forbearance, and is the opposite of severity or cutting something short and quickly. . . . *Chrestotes* is translated "good," "kindness," "gentleness." It is the [grace](#) which pervades the whole nature, mellowing all which would be harsh and austere. . . . The word is descriptive of one's disposition and does not necessarily entail acts of goodness.

William Barclay, in *The Daily Bible Study Series* on [Galatians 5:22](#), p. 51, adds that the Rheims Version translates *chrestotes* in [II Corinthians 6:6](#) as "sweetness"; that [Christ](#) describes His yoke in [Matthew 11:30](#) as *chrestos*, meaning that it does not chafe; and that the Greeks would describe wine as *chrestos*, that is, mellow. With these illustrations, it becomes clear that this word emphasizes the spirit in which an act is done.

Hesed is more complex, an especially rich word that is at times translated as "lovingkindness," "[mercy](#)," "love," "grace," and even "loyalty" and "devotion" in some modern versions. Some modern critics argue that the word suggests loyalty, something given because of obligation, because the writers sometimes use it in a context with a covenant relationship, such as God's covenant with Israel or a marriage.

Other scholars review the same material and agree that relationships are present (love almost necessitates a subject-object relation), but assert that *hesed* (love, mercy,

The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for Galatians 5:22 (<http://www.theberean.org>) kindness, etc.) is freely given. Freedom of decision to give is essential. The help given by the person showing mercy or kindness is done freely. This seems to be the correct usage because the other can reduce love, mercy, and kindness to a merely obligatory, mechanical, legal act rather than an act of free-moral agency of the heart.

A Pharisee could meet the legal demands of a covenant obligation, but the New Covenant requires a spirit considerably higher ([Matthew 5:20](#)). The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, p. 306, quotes Hebrew scholar Dom Rembert Sorg as writing that *hesed* is "really the Old Testament reflex [reflected image, likeness, or reproduction] of '[God](#) is love.'"

[God's love](#) is hardly just obligatory, given all the expressions of feeling for Israel and the church accounted to Him in the Scriptures. Thus these two words, rich in meaning and usage, clearly reveal that kindness is an active quality God greatly desires His children to exhibit.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:
[The Fruit of the Spirit: Kindness](#)

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