



Characterized by Kindness

by Jeanne Vincent

*She opens her mouth in wisdom,
and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.*

Proverbs 31:26

Philippians 2:4, *Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.*

What is kindness?

A. *Kindness* = sympathetic, friendly, gentle, tenderhearted, generous, etc.

Antonym – *Unkindness* = not kind, sympathetic, or considerate of the feelings of others; harsh; cruel

- English usage – *Kindness* has come to mean warm-hearted and considerate (thoughtful).
- English origin – From the Saxon word *kind* which means *family*, or *child*, as in kin. Kindness literally means being gentle and caring, as with a child, or with family.

B. Bible words

1. *Chesed* (Old Testament)

Translated at least 20 different ways including deeds of devotion, faithfulness, kindly, kindness, lovingkindness, mercy, and unchanging love.

2. *Chrestotes* (New Testament)

“Benignity, kindness, usefulness . . . opposite of severity or cutting something short and quickly. . . translated ‘good,’ ‘kindness,’ ‘gentleness.’”

“It is the grace which pervades the whole nature, mellowing all which would be harsh and austere”
Spiros Zodhiates

“Kindness as spiritual fruit links the spiritual qualities of kindness and goodness and describes kindness as a “sincere desire for the happiness of others. Goodness is the activity calculated to advance that happiness. Kindness is the inner disposition, created by the Holy Spirit, that causes us to be sensitive to the needs of others . . . Goodness is kindness in action – words and deeds.”

Jerry Bridges

Is kindness a distinctively Christian characteristic?

A. An aspect of kindness is “humanly produced.”

B. However, kindness is also Spirit-produced. It is described as part of the fruit of being Spirit-controlled (Galatians 5:22-23).

How can we become uniquely kind?

A. By remembering the kindness of God our Savior to us

For the love of God is greater than the measure of man's mind. And the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.

F. W. Faber

1. Description of His kindness

- *Compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and **abounding** in lovingkindness and truth. . . .* (Exodus 34:6-7).
- *Righteous in all His ways and kind in all His deeds* (Psalm 145:17).
- *With **everlasting lovingkindness** I will have compassion on you . . . My lovingkindness will not be removed from you* (Isaiah 54:8-10).
- *Exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth: for **I delight in these things*** (Jeremiah 9:24).

2. Recipients of His kindness

- **Ungrateful and evil** – *He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men* (Luke 6:35).
- **Sinners** – *The kindness of God leads you to repentance* (Romans 2:4).
- **Mankind** – *But when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, He saved us* (Titus 3:4-5).
- **His chosen ones** – *So that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus* (Ephesians 2:7).

God's love hath to us wealth upheaped;
Only by giving it is reaped.
The body withers, and the mind,
If pent in by selfish rind,
Give strength, give thought, give deeds, give help,
Give love, give tears, and give thyself;
Who gives not is not living.
The more we give, the more we live.
Frank Leslie

B. By remembering to follow the example of Christ

God took flesh and for 33 years walked on earth and showed us how kindness looks and acts and talks.

C. By considering others in the Bible whom the Lord helped to display kindness

- David to Mephibosheth
- Joseph to Mary
- Onesiphorus to Paul

D. By considering the clear commands of Scripture

1. *He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you, but to do justice, **to love kindness** and to walk humbly with your God?* (Micah 6:8)
2. **Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you** (Ephesians 4:32).
 - Verb means “keep on proving yourselves to be kind”
 - Tenderhearted – compassionate
 - Forgiving others (*charizomenoi*) – “acting in grace toward one another” because of all God has done for us in Christ.

Motivations for kindness

A. Wrong motives for kindness

1. To be thought well of by others and self
2. To manipulate a person's behavior toward us

If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men (Luke 6:33).

B. Right motives for kindness

1. Rooted in God's kindness to us and empowered by love. Kindness is one aspect of how love "looks." Kindness grows from roots established in grace and nourished by the "water of love." Pride, selfishness, bitterness, and anger poison the plant of kindness.



2. Rooted in concern for others
 - Strong “Other’s Orientation” – JOY: Jesus and others and you (Philippians 2:4)

“I tend to think of kindness in terms of our awareness of those around us and the thoughtfulness that we can express to them.”

Jerry Bridges

Kindness “requires a sincere interest in the happiness of those around us. Apart from God’s grace, most of us naturally tend to be concerned about our responsibilities, our problems, our plans. But the person who has grown in the grace of kindness has expanded his thinking outside of himself and his interests and has developed a genuine interest in the happiness and well-being of those around him.”

Jerry Bridges

- Rule of “the Highway of Kindness and Goodness” – Others get the “right of way.” Others go first.
- Has “passive” and “active” elements (or “omissions” and “co-missions”)
 - ◆ Passive – absence of unkindness
 - ◆ Active – deeds of goodness done to meet the needs of others and to contribute to their well being
- The royal law of love – *Treat others the same way you want them to treat you* (Luke 6:31).

Spheres of our kindness

A. Our family – Kindness and goodness should begin at home where we minister to the needs of our family first.

B. The body of Christ

So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith (Galatians 6:10).

C. Those outside of Christ

Challenges to being kind

A. When we are mistreated; when we have been wronged (Matthew 5:43-47)

B. In our speech

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1. In what we say

- Not belittling or berating, but building up (Ephesians 4:29)
- Not criticizing, but complimenting

2. In how we say what we say

3. In how quick we are to listen before we speak (James 1:19).

It takes so little to make us sad.
Just a slighting word, a doubtful sneer,
Just a scornful smile on some lips held dear
And our footsteps lag though the goal seem near,
And we lost the joy and hope we had.
It takes so little to make us sad.

It takes so little to make us glad.
Just a cheering clasp of some friendly hand.
Just a word from one who could understand.
And we finish the task we so long had planned.
We lose the fear and doubt we had.
It takes so little to make us glad.
Ida G. Morris

“All of us have the opportunity to administer the kind or encouraging word, to do the little, perhaps unseen, deed that makes life more pleasant for someone else.

Accept the cost of good deeds in time, thought, and effort, but remember that opportunities for doing good are not interruptions in God’s plan for us, but part of that plan. We always have time to do what God wants us to do.

Acknowledge your need of His divine grace to enlarge your soul and enable you to look beyond yourself to the concerns and needs of those around you. Then come to His throne with confidence to receive the grace you need to grow in the fruit of kindness and goodness.”

Jerry Bridges, *Practice of Godliness*