

Love is Kind (1 Corinthians 13:4)

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(Introduction to "Kindness")

Kindness - Goodness that Expresses Itself in Action!

There are three New Testament Greek word groups which can be translated "good" or "goodness." Two of these groups focus primarily on the moral and aesthetic aspects of goodness. The third group - the one in this study - has the basic idea of being "useful" and focuses more on the practical outworking of goodness: kindness expressed to others.

Generally speaking, this aspect of goodness (the expression of kindness) is seen by its actions toward others. It is more than just a "kind" attitude or a "kind" manner of communicating to others (although these are certainly a part of it). This is a kindness that is interested in the good of others and is eager to make itself helpful or available for serving others. No wonder it is an aspect of the Bible's concept of love!

For the most part, the Bible uses this word to describe an aspect of God's character. Because God is good, he does what is good, or kind, when he interacts with people. This is true even when he interacts with those who are his enemies.

It is our duty, as those who have been created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27, etc.), to reflect this character quality in our own lives, when we interact with other people. Sin has destroyed our ability to do so, but God - because of his own kindness and graciousness - has given us a new ability, in Christ. (More about this later.)

Word Definitions / Verse List

[You can skip this part, if you don't like N.T. Greek!]

The Greek words which form this "kindness" word group are defined below...

[Based on Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the N.T.]

chresteuomai

To show one's self mild, to be kind, use kindness.

1 Cor. 13:4

chrestos

1. Prop. Fit for use, useful; virtuous, good; 2. Manageable, i.e. mild, pleasant (opp. to harsh, hard, sharp, bitter: of things - pleasanter; of food and drink; yoke: (opp. to burdensome); of persons, kind, benevolent: of God

Matthew 11:30 (an "easy" yoke); Luke 5:39 (older wine - "good")

Luke 6:35; Romans 2:4; 1 Cor. 15:33; Ephes. 4:32; 1 Peter 2:3 ("kind" or "good")

chrestotes

Moral goodness, integrity; benignity, kindness

Romans 2:4; Romans 3:12; Romans 11:22; 2 Cor. 6:6; Galatians 5:22; Ephes. 2:7;

Col. 3:12; Titus 3:4

The following word has been included, though it is actually a combination of two Greek words: **chrestos** (kind) and **lego** (to speak):

chrestologia

Fair speaking, the smooth and plausible address which stimulates goodness.

Romans 16:18 ("smooth" talk)

OUTLINE: What does the Bible say about Kindness?

[** Read the context of these verses. **]

PART 1: GOD & KINDNESS

1. The basic facts

- God is kind - 1 Peter 2:3
- His kindness is rich (plentiful) - Romans 2:4

2. Because God is kind...

- He provides us with the opportunity to repent - Romans 2:4
- He expresses it even to those who are evil and ungrateful - Luke 6:35

3. Our proper response to his kindness:

- [Those who are not saved] Repentance - Romans 2:3-4
- [Those newly saved] Desire to grow spiritually - 1 Peter 2:2-3
- [All Christians] Follow his example (since he is our Father): love and do good to our enemies - Luke 6:35-36

4. God's kindness & those who are saved, who "stay in his kindness"

- They have received a type of kindness that non-Christians do not receive - Romans 11:22
- It is because of his special kindness that he chose to save us - Titus 3:4-5
- When we are saved, we learn/discover that God's kindness is good - 1 Peter 2:3
- We will experience more of God's kindness, in Jesus Christ, in the future (eternity) - Ephesians 2:6-7

5. God's kindness & those who reject/disregard it, who don't "stay in his kindness"

- Judgment will come - Romans 2:3-5
 - They will experience his sternness, they will be "cut off" - Romans 11:22
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PART 2: MAN & KINDNESS

1. THE BASIC FACT:

- We, by nature, have no kindness in us - Romans 3:12

A commentary on this basic fact

In our "natural selves," it is possible for us to have a superficial or self-centered "kindness" toward others. It is possible for us to do things which appear to be kind - especially when those things are done to those who respond back in the same "kind" way. (Pagans can do this, according to Luke 6:32-34.)

The kindness that God requires - a reflection of his own character (Luke 6:36) must come from the heart. It can exist only when the Spirit of God is present, since it is the fruit of his presence (Galatians 5:22-23). We ourselves cannot generate this type of kindness without the Spirit. (If the Spirit is present, the kindness will be present.)

This kindness (which comes from God) is expressed not only to those who might respond back with kindness, but also to those we know will respond back with evil. (These "unfavorable" situations - kindness "paid back" with evil - actually provide the best context in which the true nature of one's "kindness" can be seen.)

2. Kindness WILL be present where the Holy Spirit and godly love are present

- The fruit of the Spirit is... kindness (Galatians 5:22-23)
- Love is kind (1 Corinthians 13:4)
- [An example of what this kindness is - Luke 6:32-36, in this instance, expressed toward those who do evil.]

3. Ability & Obligation: Because of what God has done, we CAN & MUST be kind.

- If we have the Spirit (whose fruit includes kindness), we must keep in step with the Spirit - Gal. 5:22-25
- Since we are loved by God (as his children), we must imitate God (follow his example) - Ephesians 4:32-5:2 & context. [Also, in Christ, we were taught how to live differently from the pagans - Ephes. 4:17-24]
- Since we have been chosen (etc.), we are to put on a heart of kindness, etc. - Colossians 3:5-15

4. Expressing kindness to others

- Example of one who showed kindness: Paul - 2 Corinthians 6:6
- Concerning those who show kindness (who do to others what God did to us): they are "Sons of the Most High" and will receive great reward - Luke 6:35

NOTE: The following two verses mention a "kindness" which is not necessarily a reflection of the heart. As such, it can be changeable or corrupted. It can also be a cover-up for evil. [Of course, it can also be an expression of good, if the Spirit is in control!]

5. Warnings associated with specific types (or expressions) of kindness

- "Kind words" - do NOT necessarily indicate the nature of the heart; evil people can use them to accomplish evil things - Romans 16:17-19 ("by kind words and flattery, they deceive...")
- "Kind (good) morals or conduct" - can be corrupted if we choose the wrong influences - 1 Corinthians 15:33

PART 3: OTHER USES OF THE WORD "KIND" **(slightly different meaning)**

1. A "kind" (easy) yoke, associated with "rest," and contrasted with being weary & burdened - Matthew 11:28-30 (Jesus contrasts his message to the "system" taught by the religious leaders of the day.)

2. A "kind" (smooth-tasting) wine: aged wine contrasted with new wine - Luke 5:39 (Jesus contrasts the "newness" of his way - which people found difficult to accept - to the "old" system that people had become comfortable with.)

A commentary on these two verses

When Jesus addresses those who are "weary and burdened," who is he referring to? John Gill, in his "Exposition of the Entire Bible," describes them quite well:

[They are] ...such who groan, being burdened with the guilt of sin upon their consciences, and are pressed down with the unsupportable yoke of the law, and the load of human traditions; and have been labouring till they are weary, in order to obtain peace of conscience, and rest for their souls, by the observance of these things, but in vain. These are encouraged to come to him, lay down their burdens at his feet, look to, and lay hold by faith on his person, blood, righteousness, and sacrifice; when they should enjoy that true spiritual consolation, which could never be attained to by the works of the law. [Modern edition, edited by Larry Pierce, Winterbourne, Ontario]

The religious leaders of Jesus' day did nothing to ease this burden. Instead, they developed a complex "religious system" of traditions and rituals that the people simply could not follow.

The law of Moses required a perfection that no person could ever achieve (because of sin in our lives), and so it was described as a "yoke" (Acts 15:10). But the Law intended to show people their need for mercy and grace (compare with Gal. 3:24), whereas the Pharisees had replaced mercy and grace with burdensome human works, which could never atone for one's sins! It was for a good reason that Jesus described them in this way:

They tie up heavy loads [burdens] and place them on other's shoulders; but they themselves are not willing to lift even a finger to move them. (Matthew 23:4)

Ironically, the very sins and attempts people make to "appease" God are enslaving. People are unwilling (perhaps even afraid?) to give them up - even for something as liberating and refreshing as the free grace that Jesus offers. They become accustomed to their burdens and slavery and prefer them over Jesus' "new way." And so they say, "The old is better!" (Luke 5:39)

THE BIGGER PICTURE: "Kindness" Occurs in What Type of Context?

GOD'S KINDNESS...

- Related to our salvation - Titus 3:3-7
- Related to our being made alive in Christ Jesus - Ephesians 2:1-10
- [Understanding it...] a reason for our desire to grow-up in our salvation - 1 Peter 2:2-3

OUR KINDNESS - AN ASPECT OF...

- Following the example of our Father - Luke 6:32-36
- Imitating God and living a life of love [building others up]- Ephesians 4:29-5:2
- Living the life of a servant of God - 2 Corinthians 6:3-10
- Living as God's chosen people - Colossians 3:5-15
- Keeping in step with the Spirit - Galatians 5:22-25

Other Concepts that Occur in the Same Context

GOD'S KINDNESS ASSOCIATED WITH...

- Being merciful: Luke 6:35-36
- Tolerance, Patience - Romans 2:4
- Love, Mercy - Titus 3:4-5
- [Opposite] - Sternness, being "cut off" - Romans 11:22

OUR KINDNESS ASSOCIATED WITH...

- Lists of characteristics - found in: 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; 2 Corinthians 6:3-10; Galatians 5:22-23;
 - Lists of characteristics, including "opposites" (incompatible characteristics) - found in: Ephesians 4:32 (see context)
 - List of "opposites" (incompatible characteristics) - Romans 3:10-18
 - Results: reward; being "sons of the Most High" - Luke 6:35
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QUESTIONS:

- How is God kind to us (if we are no longer his enemies)? How should his kindness influence the way we act toward others?
- How is God kind to his enemies? How should this kindness be a pattern for us? If a person rejects your expression of kindness, how should you respond? How does God respond (focusing on his present response, not on what will happen at the Day of Judgment)?
- How does our present response to God's kindness influence God's future expressions of kindness to us?
- God's kindness is expressed to different people in different ways. Describe some of the ways mentioned in the verses in this study. Which aspects of kindness have YOU experienced (now and in the past). [All people have experienced at least one aspect of his kindness.] Under what conditions can you experience FUTURE expressions of God's kindness?
- Why is kindness NOT a part of our nature? What must happen before we can begin to have the type of kindness God requires?
- Who are we to be kind to?

- What has God done to enable us to fulfil our obligation of being kind to others? When we are kind (with the type of kindness the Bible requires), what does it demonstrate or prove about us?
- In 2 Corinthians 6:3-10, Paul mentions many characteristics in describing his life. How can Paul's example teach us? Note also the "unpleasant" things he mentions, including the false perceptions that people had about him. Should such things influence one's willingness to be kind? Explain.
- Other concepts (character qualities, actions, etc.) are frequently mentioned in the same context as kindness. (Some passages include both compatible and incompatible concepts.) Identify which are which (compatible or incompatible), and the relationship of kindness to them (when applicable). Which can exist along with kindness?
- Two warnings were given about specific types of kindness in Rom. 16:18 and 1 Cor. 15:33. Think about what those passages say and about the circumstances in your own life. How should you be careful? Do these passages remind you of areas in your life which you need to change? IF so, do something about it today. (If you have been made aware of sin in your life, you must not ignore it. Otherwise it will become a barrier between you and God.)
- The work "kind" is used in a different way, in Matthew 11:30 and Luke 5:39, to contrast the way of Jesus and the "religious system" that had been developed in Jesus' day. Look at the contrast. Where is your heart? Do you follow a "religious system"? Do you find "rest" in Jesus, or are you more "comfortable" with something else?

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE...

This week, you will probably have opportunity to be kind to people who are not kind to you. Are you going to be just like them, and respond back in an unkind way? Or are you going to follow the words of Jesus, who told us to respond the way the Father responds (Luke 6:35)? In the weeks ahead, consider how you respond in such situations. If you are doing things the way the Father does, it will be a reason for encouragement (and thanks to God). If not, it may show you an area in which you need to repent. Remember this: the way you respond in such situations may be an indication of who your father really is. (The other "father" is mentioned in John 8:44.)