

CHAPTER 27

Kindness/Goodness

KEY IDEA

I choose to be kind and good in my relationships with others.

KEY VERSE

Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else. –1 Thessalonians 5:15

BEGIN BY RECITING THE KEY VERSE AND THE KEY IDEA TOGETHER AS A GROUP.

LESSON

INTRODUCTION

We are grouping two virtues of the fruit of the spirit in this chapter – Kindness and Goodness.

What is the difference between kindness and goodness?

What's the difference in kindness and goodness?

- > Kindness is more about our attitude and goodness is more about the things we do for others.
 - < Some people are born with a kind, gentle personality. This may come naturally to them. But others have to lean on the power of the Holy Spirit to help them be nice.
 - < Even if someone is naturally kind, that doesn't mean that they are using this good nature to do the work of God.

The fruit of the Spirit is developed in us so we can show God's nature to the world around us. GOODNESS is in God's nature.

- > Goodness goes a step further than kindness.
 - < Goodness might, and could rebuke and discipline whereas kindness can only help.
 - ^ This is demonstrated in the actions of God towards us. When he rebukes and disciplines, it is for the purpose of bringing us to repentance so that He can demonstrate His great mercy/kindness. (Romans 11:32; Psalm 25:8)
- > When you do good, you are doing God's work.
 - < Anytime the word kindness is used in the Bible it is accompanied by the word "show."
 - < Goodness can be in your heart, but you have to show it for it to be a kindness.
 - ^ You can't just feel it and think it, you have to take action regarding it.

In order to be good and kind we need to put off any hurt that we may be harboring.

- < Hurt and pain will make you self-centered.

- ^ It will make you protect yourself and will cause you to put yourself before others.
- < It doesn't mean you are bad or mean, rather that you are so scared of getting hurt, that you will not allow yourself to put others first because of the fear of being hurt again.

Is there validity in the above thought? Do you think some people do not act with kindness and goodness because of hurt and bitterness that may be harbored in their heart?

Everywhere we go we should look for opportunities to be good to people.

- > Goodness was God's plan for man from the beginning.
- > The excellence of goodness is summed up in what is referred to as the Golden Rule: "*In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets*" (Matthew 7:12). In other words, we treat others the way God treats us—with mercy and grace.

According to Ephesians 4:31-32, true KINDNESS is accompanied by compassion, love, and forgiveness.

- > How important is kindness?
 - < People want to be *treated* kindly but have a harder time *being* kind themselves.
 - < NOTE: A large-scale study of school bullies was recently conducted to learn why they bully other kids. The conclusion? Most do it because they *enjoy* doing it.
 - ^ This illustrates how cruel, mean, and sadistic human nature is.
 - ^ Kindness must be *learned*, and many children are not being taught it. In fact, much of the media they're exposed to teaches the opposite.
 - } Violence and other harsh influences in media entertainment cause people to become desensitized and calloused toward the needs and feelings of others.

Express your thoughts on that last sentence. Can we blame the media and entertainment for the seemingly lessening of kindness in society?

Lack of kindness is epidemic. Paul foretold a cold and hard-hearted world. (2 Timothy 3:1-3).

Kindness starts with caring – being tenderhearted and compassionate toward others.

- > We should be actively looking for opportunities to show kindness.
- > The Greek word for "kind" is *chrestos*. Part of its meaning is *useful*, which makes it clear that biblical kindness involves *action*. (1 John 3:18)
- > This includes some kind of self-sacrifice and generosity on our part – especially of our time.
 - < A distinguishing trait of Christian goodness is generosity.
 - ^ True security is found in giving generously, because God blesses the one who is generous. (Deuteronomy 15:10-11)

^ In giving a person begins to understand the importance of not holding too tightly to those things which perish. (Matthew 6:19-21)

> Action also includes words.

< We need to exercise encouraging words of comfort, courtesy, complements, and even correction can be acts of kindness.

> Our kindness should not be to impress people or achieve reward.

< A favor done to get some benefit is not true kindness. Genuine kindness is lending a helping hand when you expect nothing in return.



Great examples of kindness can inspire us to greater kindness. We see many examples in Scripture:

>The Shunammite woman and her husband toward Elisha (2 Kings 4:8-10).

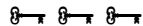
> Dorcas, a woman who “was full of good works and charitable deeds” (Acts 9:36-39).

>The Samaritan in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).

>Barnabas, whose name meant “Son of Encouragement” (Acts 4:36).

> The “virtuous wife” who diligently attends to the needs of her family and others (Proverbs 31).

(We will examine more closely 5 other examples from BELIEVE further in the lesson.)



OUR KIND AND GOOD GOD

As with all the virtues, our God is the perfect example. Psalm 107 was likely written after the Israelites returned from captivity in Babylon and was recited each year at one of the annual religious festivals. Throughout their history the Israelites cried out to God for mercy and help. Each time God responded from a tender and kind heart. As we look back on our own life we will see the same pattern of response from God.(See Psalm 107, pgs. 422-424 in BELIEVE.)

Psalm 107 is a call to praise the Lord for his unfailing love in that he hears the prayers of those in need and saves them.

> It is a type of recital of God’s wonderful acts of goodness for humanity.

> We see pictures of God’s merciful goodness toward sinners:

< *Travelers* – God has saved those who were lost in the wilderness without food or water, and led them to safety.

< *Prisoners* – In prison because of their rebellion their suffering was deserved. But, when they cried out to God, he heard them and set them free.

< *Sufferers* – This speaks of people who were dying because of their foolish way of life. They had “made their own bed” and should lie in it, but God mercifully healed them.

< *Sailors* – Dangers on the water usually exceed dangers on the land because there is no place to go for help in the middle of a storm. When they looked to the Lord, He rescued them. He calmed the storm and brought them to their destination.

< *Farmers* – Only God can send the rain that turns the wilderness into a garden, and only God can make the livestock multiply.

> With all of God’s provision for mankind, we still do not understand his loving-kindness.

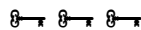


The goodness of God is one of the attributes of God, as well as a description of His very essence. God, by nature, is inherently good (Psalm 34:8). He is the foundation of goodness and of everything good—He did not obtain it from another source.

- > People can have good traits or do good deeds, but goodness is not in our character.
 - < Our goodness comes from God.
- > We cannot earn and do not merit His goodness.
- > God's goodness is available for all of us. (Matthew 5:45, Psalm 145:9)
- > God's goodness is unchanging (Psalm 52:1).
 - < God will always be good. His character does not change. He will continue to be the creator of all things good and we can be confident He will provide good things for us according to His perfect plan.

By knowing God and learning about His goodness we can come to recognize true goodness and strive to do good things. (Psalm 119:68).

- > We can look to God as the perfect role model to teach us about goodness and how to do good things.
- > We should remember, however, that good things may not always show up as happy experiences.
 - < Sometimes good can come disguised as hardship or adversity, but God can use them for good. (Romans 8:28)
- > We can have goodness in us, and even desire to do good, but true goodness comes from the One who is perfectly good and wants good things for all people.



STORIES OF KINDNESS: RAHAB

The Bible contains many stories of kindness throughout its pages. In the Old Testament, Joshua, Israel's great and courageous leader, sent two spies to scope out the land of Canaan in preparation for the conquest. While they were deep in enemy territory, God used a most unusual character to show them kindness. (See Joshua 2:1-24; 6:12-25)

SUMMARY

Israel was about to enter the land God promised to the nation through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Before Israel entered Canaan, Joshua sent a reconnaissance party of two men to spy out the land just west of the Jordan River, paying special attention to the city of Jericho.

In Jericho was a woman named Rahab. She and her family lived within the outer city wall. Her house was apparently part of the wall. It is thought that the house doubled as an inn. It would also seem that Rahab either raised or bought flax that she dried on her roof top.

The whole city had received news about the miraculous events and conquests of the nation of Israel, and it seemed that Rahab was the only resident of Jericho who resolved to fear and obey Israel's God. Although the Canaanites had many gods, she had enough understanding to realize that the God of Israel was no ordinary Canaanite deity.

Because Rahab's house may have also been an inn would give credence to how the spies came into her company. The fact that the king of Jericho, when he had heard that there were spies in the city, sent soldiers to Rahab's house. Whatever the case may have been, the men were at her place.

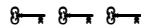
Word got to Rahab that the king's men were coming to investigate. Understanding the seriousness of the situation, she quickly hid the spies under the flax that was drying on her rooftop. Then she made a covenant with them: She would help them to safety; they, in turn, had to spare her and her family. The spies negotiated their side of the agreement: She had to keep their location a secret along with helping them to safety. She was also required to gather all of her family under her roof and hang a scarlet rope/chord from her window so it could be identified as hers.

God gave Jericho into Israel's hands by flattening its walls. (Yet, incredibly, Rahab's house was left standing.) As had been agreed, Rahab and her family were rescued.

Rahab helped save the lives of the Israelite spies, which in turn set Israel on the path to conquering Jericho and moving into the Promised Land.

Rahab not only showed kindness to the spies, she also showed a deep devotion and concern for the salvation of those close to her.

> Considering the destruction about to come to the city of Jericho, Rahab could easily have thought only of her own safety, ignoring the welfare of others. Yet her agreement with the spies was that they should guarantee not only her safety, but that of her entire family.



STORIES OF KINDNESS: DAVID

The prophet Samuel anointed David, when he was just a teenager, to be the next king of Israel. His coronation, however, was a number of years away. Over the next several years God would use the rebellious heart of King Saul to grow David's trust in God. Before David took off running from King Saul, Jonathan, Saul's son and successor to the throne, had a sobering conversation with David. Jonathan acknowledged and accepted God's plan for David, not him, to be the next king. However, he made one request of the future king of Israel.

Fast-forward many years. Saul and Jonathan were both dead, and David was now king. All potential threats from the old royal house of Saul had been neutralized, and David remembered his promise to Jonathan. (See 1 Samuel 20:13-16 and 2 Samuel 9:1-13, pgs. 427-429 in BELIEVE.)

When David and Jonathan were young men, they made a covenant with each other. Since Jonathan knew that David would be the next king of Israel, he asked of David a favor: **1 Samuel 20:14-15** ¹⁴*But show me unfailing kindness like the LORD's kindness as long as I live, so that I may not be killed,* ¹⁵*and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family—not even when the LORD has cut off every one of David's enemies from the face of the earth."*

SUMMARY:

Shortly after David became king, he remembered his covenant with Jonathan-- to show kindness to his family. David promised Jonathan that he would show loving kindness to his family forever. David also vowed to Saul that he would not kill any of the children that came after him (1 Samuel 24:21-22). Now that Saul and Jonathan were dead, and David was king, it would have been easy for David to forget his commitment. But David not only remembered his commitment to Saul and Jonathan, he went far beyond it.

David asked around, "Is anyone left from the royal house of Saul? If there is, I want to be kind to him because of Jonathan."

David called for Ziba, one of the servants who used to serve Saul, and asked him, "Is anyone still alive from Saul's family? If so, I want to show God's kindness to them." Ziba replied, "Yes, one of Jonathan's sons is still alive. He is crippled in both feet."

David asked where Jonathan's son was. Ziba told him, "In Lo-debar at the home of Makir son of Ammiel."

So David sent for him. His name was Mephibosheth; Jonathan's son and Saul's grandson. When he came to David, he bowed low to the ground in deep respect. David greeted Mephibosheth, who replied, "I am your servant."

"Don't be afraid!" David said. "I intend to show kindness to you because of my promise to your father, Jonathan. I will give you all the property that once belonged to your grandfather, Saul, and you will eat here with me at the king's table!"

This is a beautiful demonstration of love and acceptance, but it's even more beautiful when we understand the culture in which David and Mephibosheth lived.

> During this time in history, when one King took over another King's throne, the new King would kill the entire family of the former King.

< This was to insure that the family of the old King would not try to regain the power they once had.

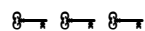
< This explains why Mephibosheth bowed down out of fear.

< This also explains why David comforted him and told him not to be afraid.

> The tradition of the time would have called for David to kill Mephibosheth. But David treated Mephibosheth as an honored guest.

< David didn't follow tradition. He didn't follow culture. He followed God. He exercised Godly goodness and kindness.

NOTE: Mephibosheth had not done anything to earn this kindness and blessing from David. He was not a mighty warrior who had fought a great battle for the King. He had never gone to war because both of his feet were crippled from the time he was a young boy. He was not courageous. In fact, he was deeply afraid to even appear before David. Mephibosheth did not earn the King's favor. David did not bless Mephibosheth because of anything he had done. These blessings were freely given to him as a gift. And they were a gift that he could never repay. This presents an earthly example of the marvelous grace, goodness and kindness that God bestows upon us.



STORIES OF KINDNESS: THE DINNER GUEST

The Jewish religious leaders in Jesus' day held exclusive dinner parties. Only invited guests of significant public standing were allowed to attend. Upon arrival, the host would seat guests in order of importance. On an occasion in which Jesus was invited to eat at the table of a well-known Pharisee, he took advantage of the opportunity to teach a lesson first about humility and then about the kind of people who should be on the guest list of such occasions.

Luke 14:7-14 (CEV)

⁷ Jesus saw how the guests had tried to take the best seats. So he told them: ⁸ When you are invited to a wedding feast, don't sit in the best place. Someone more important may have been invited. ⁹ Then the one who invited you will come and say, "Give your place to this other guest!" You will be embarrassed and will have to sit in the worst place.

¹⁰ When you are invited to be a guest, go and sit in the worst place. Then the one who invited you may come and say, "My friend, take a better seat!" You will then be honored in front of all the other guests. ¹¹ If you put yourself above others, you will be put down. But if you humble yourself, you will be honored.

¹² Then Jesus said to the man who had invited him:

When you give a dinner or a banquet, don't invite your friends and family and relatives and rich neighbors. If you do, they will invite you in return, and you will be paid back. ¹³ When you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. ¹⁴ They cannot pay you back. But God will bless you and reward you when his people rise from death.

Jesus observes how all the guests were clamoring for the best seats as they arrived for this dinner party.

> In Jesus day, as today, there were "status symbols" that helped people enhance and protect their high standing in society.

< If you were invited to the "right homes" and if you were seated in the "right places," then people would know how important you really were.

^ The closer you sat to the host, the higher you stood on the social ladder and the more attention you would receive from others.

^ Naturally, many people rushed to the "head table" when the doors were opened because they wanted to be important.

> God is not impressed by our status in society or in the church. He is not influenced by what people say or think about us, because He sees the thoughts and motives of the heart.

Verses 12-14} Jesus knew that the host had invited his guests for two reasons:

1) to pay them back because they had invited him to past parties, or

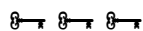
2) to put them under his debt so that they would invite him to future feasts.

> This type of hospitality was not an expression of love and grace but rather an evidence of pride and selfishness.

> In New Testament time it was not considered proper to ask the poor and handicapped people to public banquets. (Many times even women were excluded.)

> Jesus told the group that they needed to put these types of people at the top of the guest list because they could not repay the invitation. This was the type of kindness that was to be expressed.

Warren Wiersbe writes, "Our modern world is very competitive, and it is easy for God's people to become more concerned about profit and loss than they are about sacrifice and service." Do you agree with him? Why? Why not?



STORIES OF KINDNESS: PAUL, ONESIMUS AND PHILEMON

While Paul was in prison, likely in Rome, he met a slave named Onesimus, who evidently stole from his master before running away. Through Paul's ministry, Onesimus became a Christian and eventually decided he would return to his master. As it turned out, the master, a man name Philemon, was a Christian and Paul's close friend. Paul sent Onesimus home with a personal letter he had written to give to Philemon. The letter encouraged Philemon to exercise kindness toward his slave and accept Onesimus as a Christian brother. (See Philemon 1-25, pgs. 430-431 in BELIEVE.)

A kinship existed between Paul and Philemon, one that would serve a significant purpose in light of the circumstance that brought about the letter.

> A slave named Onesimus had escaped from his owner, Philemon, and had run away from Colossae.

> Once in Rome, Onesimus, either by accident or by his own design, came in contact with Paul, who led him to faith in Jesus Christ.

Philemon was a slave owner who also hosted a church in his home. During the time of Paul's ministry in Ephesus, Philemon had probably come to Rome, heard Paul's preaching and became a Christian.

> Paul had told slave owners that they had a responsibility towards their slaves, because slaves were also responsible moral people who were to fear God.

> Paul did not condemn slavery, but he presented Onesimus as a Christian brother instead of a slave.

< Through Paul's witness, Onesimus had become a Christian and Paul wanted Philemon to accept Onesimus as a brother in Christ and not merely as a slave.

^ Paul seemed to know that when an owner can refer to a slave as a brother, the slave has reached a position in which the legal title of slave is meaningless.

Onesimus had robbed his master, Philemon, and ran away, making his way to Rome and to Paul.

> Onesimus, however, was still the property of Philemon, and Paul wrote to smooth the way for his return to his master.

In this story is a wonderful picture of seeing the distinction between law and grace.

> Both Roman law and the Mosaic Law of the Old Testament gave Philemon the right to punish a runaway slave who was considered property. But the covenant of grace through the Lord Jesus allowed both master and slave to fellowship in love on an equal basis in the body of Christ.

Paul's letter to Philemon reminds us that God's revelation to humanity is intensely personal.

> In other biblical works such as the Gospels or Romans or even Philippians and Colossians, it might be easy to get the impression that God does not care or have time for the trials and tribulations in a single household.

> Philemon gives evidence that the doctrines of the love of God, forgiveness in Christ, or the inherent value of humanity, have real and relevant impact on everyday life.

> It illustrates that principles like these can and should profoundly affect the lives of believers.

Paul knew that conversion is nothing to trifle with, but that it should be honored and fostered. So Paul made a request.

> He wanted Philemon to forgive Onesimus, to accept the slave as a brother in Christ, and to consider sending Onesimus back to Paul (vs. 11–14).

> Paul did not minimize Onesimus's sin.

> He knew that he was asking Philemon to extend great grace and sacrifice in forgiving, emancipating and sending Onesimus back to him.

Paul's letter to Philemon presents a beautiful picture of the transition from slavery into brotherhood as a result of Christian love and forgiveness.

> There is difficulty in offering forgiveness when you have been wronged. It does not come easy, yet as believers, we have to recognize that our ability and willingness to offer it are the result of Christ's saving work on the cross.

< Because of that fact, forgiveness serves as a determining factor in who we say we are and how we hope to live our lives.



STORIES OF KINDNESS: ONESIPHORUS

While Paul spent his years in ministry encouraging others to show kindness, from time to time, he found himself on the receiving end and was grateful. At the end of his ministry and life, from a cold dungeon

Paul penned his last letter to his prodigy Timothy, who was pastoring the church at Ephesus. Life in this season had been extremely hard for Paul. In the letter he shared with Timothy his gratitude for one particular believer. (See 2 Timothy 1:15-18, pgs. 431-432 in BELIEVE.)

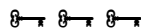
Onesiphorus lives in Ephesus. He travels to Rome to serve Paul while he is in prison.

> Onesiphorus openly shows his loyalty to Paul while others had deserted him, because Paul is now a condemned prisoner.

< He goes repeatedly to give support and comfort to Paul.

< Onesiphorus' actions, along with Paul's blessing of him, should remind us of something Jesus promised: *And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward* (Matt. 10:42).

So often we look at our lives and don't think we've done anything of significance for the Kingdom. Look at Onesiphorus! See his quiet and determined faithfulness. Notice how precious he was to Paul. Now think of how you have done something similar – on the surface not so big or important, but for those whom you served, it was a cup of cold water given in Jesus' name that refreshed the spirit of someone who needed grace. ... And when the opportunity presents itself, be like Onesiphorus again... faithfully serving and refreshing whether anyone notices or not, because we know that the Lord knows and has seen and is pleased and will reward! (Matt. 6:4) - UNKNOWN



TEACHINGS ON GOODNESS

How can one define goodness? Isn't goodness just that--good?

> When we use a word so frequently we ought to think about what we really mean when we say it.

< For example, we say "Good day," "Good night," "Good morning," "Good luck," "Good-bye," "Good going," "Good job," "Good work," and so on. Good is kind of like the word "nice." It really doesn't mean anything.

Do you think the word "good" has lost some of its significance? Why? Why not?

> To get to the true meaning of goodness, we need to see how Jesus used it.

< In Luke 18:18-19, a rich young ruler approached Jesus and asked Him, "*Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*"

^ Notice he referred to Jesus as the "Good Teacher."

< Jesus' responded, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone."

^ This response probably took the young man off guard but Jesus was going straight for his heart and conscience.

^ Even though the young man had kept "all" of the commandments, and society would have probably defined him as a "good man", he wasn't good in terms of Jesus' definition. He loved his things more than God.

When the Bible speaks of goodness as a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 5:9), it doesn't simply mean that a person is a model citizen, polite, respectful, tolerant, and just nice.

> When the Bible tells us that God is good, it means that God is holy, perfect, morally pure, and the very antithesis of anything bad, corrupt, evil, or inferior.

< In order for us to be good like God, we need to be more than nice. We need to be holy and righteous. We need His righteousness because our niceness is not what God wants for us, we must share the goodness that is Christ's and God's by faith in Him.

> Goodness is relative to holiness.

> To experience the fruit of the Spirit called goodness is to show forth the holiness of God through a transformed heart ruled by Jesus Christ.

The goodness of Christ is to be manifested in our lives. (Romans 15:14).

> Some people put on a good show, yet they are not good.

> God calls us to be filled with goodness, being holy in what we do and say because we have a heart that seeks goodness.

There are three aspects of goodness:

- 1) Goodness fulfills a purpose or expectation.
- 2) It includes morality that is defined by God.
- 3) It involves some form of benefit.

Chapters 4 and 5 of Ephesians give specific ways goodness is to be expressed in our lives, beginning in 4:25 which begins to list what goodness is:

> Speaking truthfully, not sinning in our anger, not stealing but doing something useful, building up one another with our conversation, getting rid of all malice and being kind, compassionate, forgiving, imitators of God and Christ, living lives of love.

> Goodness keeps us from lives of sexual immorality, impurity, greediness, disobedience, and fruitless dark lives.

> Galatians 6:7—10, *"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers"*

< God's goodness goes beyond what is legally right, it goes the extra mile, and gives what is needed and what will benefit, build up, and bless others.



Jesus not only showed his followers how to be good and kind to others, but he also left us instructions that are both practical and radical.

FROM Luke 6:27-45

²⁷ "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ... ³⁰ Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. ...

³³ ... if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. ³⁴ And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. ³⁵ But love your enemies, do good to them,

and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. ³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

...⁴³ “No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. ⁴⁴ Each tree is recognized by its own fruit... ⁴⁵ A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

In this passage Jesus was focusing on attitudes. These attitudes involved those toward circumstances, people, ourselves and God.

> Much of Goodness is directed toward people and we see two principles:

< We must treat others as we would want to be treated.

^ This assumes we want the very best spiritually for ourselves.

< We must imitate our Father in heaven and be merciful.

^ The important thing is not that we are vindicated before our enemies but that we become more like God in our character.

} In this is where our reward lies.

> Jesus does not give much credit to those who do good for good people. He comes right out and says that even sinners do this.

< He presents the challenge to do good to those that are not good (at least not good to us).



Two good men who were followers of Jesus — the apostles Peter and Paul — offered instruction to the early believers on living a life of kindness and goodness. From these timeless principles we can find practical guidance for how our relationships with others can reflect the heart and desires of our kind God.

1 Peter 3:8-17

⁸ Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. ⁹ Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. ¹⁰ For, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech. ¹¹ They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it. ¹² For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

¹³ Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened.” ¹⁵ But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. ¹⁷ For it is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

As we list the attributes in these verses (e.g. sympathy, love, compassion, humility) we see they are necessary for us to exhibit the goodness of God in our lives.

> It is through God’s goodness in us that we have the ability to not be vengeful and insulting, even when it is given to us.

- < This type of goodness has the power to turn evil into good.
- < But even if the goodness given is repaid with evil, it is better to go through the suffering.

From Paul's writings:

Romans 15:1-2

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up.

True Christian love is not selfish; it seeks to share with others and make others happy.

- > It is even willing to carry the younger Christians, to help them in their spiritual walk
- > It is willing to give up personal rights so that others might be helped, seeing it as a blessing and not a burden.

1 Corinthians 10:23-24

"I have the right to do anything," you say — but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything" — but not everything is constructive. No one should seek their own good, but the good of others.

As a Christian we have freedom of discernment for our lives, however we need to ask, "What will my participation do to my Christian brother/sister?"

- > Even if it doesn't affect your Christian walk, will people who see you be confused and questioning? Will their faith be compromised if they follow in your footsteps?

Galatians 6:9-10

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Paul tells us to not grow tired of doing what is right. Part of the becoming weary is seeing a lack of gratitude.

- > Have you ever done a good deed for someone and there was no "thank you"? Do you get the desire to give up on him/her and "wash your hands of them"?
 - < If we are going to be people of God we cannot respond this way, even if it is the natural response.

Some people have not been taught to be thankful and do not see their "ingratitude".

- > In the world today many people are psychologically confused, wounded, and scarred by being neglected, rejected, or abused. They can be full of depression, fears, anger, and suspicion.
 - < If you reach your hand out to pet a dog, will he wag his tail or bite you? If he has been repeatedly beaten and abused, he may interpret your gesture as a threat and bite.
 - < Likewise, many people are suspicious of any favors. They assume everyone has a selfish ulterior motive and is out to manipulate them or hurt them.

^ These are the people who need kindness more than anyone.

- > Be persistent. Your efforts to be kind to them can gradually convince them that you are a truly trying to help.
 - < Your persistent kindness can even bring about healing in their lives.

Ephesians 4:31-5:2

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Forgiveness is not a burden God places upon us, rather it is a safeguard for our mental health and emotional stability.

> Bitterness comes from a heart that is not right before God (Acts 8:21-23)

< It is a characteristic of a sinful person.

< It causes destruction and defilement.

> Being kind and compassionate and forgiving comes from constantly remembering that God forgave first.

< Believers are to imitate God's holiness in all of their conduct.

1 Thessalonians 5:15

Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.

"It's Pay Back Time" should never be a serious phrase in the Christian's conversations and thoughts.

Titus 2:7

In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness.

Simply telling someone how to live a life of faith is not enough. We must live the words we speak.

Titus 3:1-2

Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone.

We are to be people who live under authority.

> Yes...our goodness is to be extended to our politicians.

> We are to be courteous to everyone.

Titus 3:14

Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives.

We cannot be lazy. Much satisfaction in life comes from our vocations. They make us feel necessary, creative, and ... productive.

> When we lead this type of productive life we will be able to generate the means to meet our needs and the needs of others.



KEY QUESTION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO DO THE RIGHT THING IN MY RELATIONSHIPS?

PARAPHRASED FROM *THINK, ACT, BELIEVE LIKE JESUS* by Randy Frazee

You probably know someone who will occasionally do a good deed for you, but you wouldn't describe this person as a kind person. You may also be able to think of someone who consistently exhibits a good nature because it is his nature to be good.

> A good way to differentiate the two is through the phrases, "What a nice thing for you to do" versus "You are such a kind person."

> Biblical kindness/goodness is the outcome of an intentional Christian lifestyle. A person whose nature is good will be kind. A kind person will be a good person.

> While kindness has a relatively clear meaning in our culture, goodness can be left open to various interpretations and to individual standards.

What are some of the world's interpretations of goodness and kindness?

We should define goodness in terms of our consistently reflecting the character of God in our motives and actions.

> As goodness gains ground in the maturity of a believer, it will draw people to God, the One who is truly good.

> Jesus' goodness was driven by his love for God; his kindness was driven by his love for neighbor. The two work together.



KEY IDEA: I CHOOSE TO BE KIND AND GOOD IN MY RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS.

PARAPHRASED FROM *THINK, ACT, BELIEVE LIKE JESUS* by Randy Frazee

Let's look at the words for "kind" and "good" in the Bible's original languages to see the full meaning.

> *Hesed* is the primary Old Testament Hebrew word for "kindness." God's kindness toward us is one of an adopted child. He shows us the same love and kindness one would show to a biological child.

< *Hesed* is loyal love, in it over the long haul.

> *Kalos* is a Greek word translated as "good" in the New Testament. It refers to an outward, aesthetic beauty (e.g. in nature).

> In Galatians 5:22 – 23, Paul uses two other Greek words. *Chrestos* (translated as "kindness") and *agathos* (translated as "goodness")

< These words refer to outward acts toward others that are first generated from an inner moral sense of what is right and best.

^ We do what we do for others because inwardly in our hearts we have decided this is the right thing to do.



KEY APPLICATION: WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES THIS MAKE IN THE WAY I LIVE?

OUT OF A PURE HEART TO DO THE RIGHT THING FOR OTHERS, WE SEEK TO BUILD OTHERS UP.

Every morning, we ask God to give us opportunities to take the good he is depositing in our hearts and give it away to others. We approach every day on the lookout to encourage others. In every conversation and encounter, we try to do something or say something kind, because it builds people up. In Christ, we have a bank account with unlimited kindness, and we seek to bless others by giving it away.

OUT OF A PURE HEART TO DO THE RIGHT THING FOR OTHERS, WE DO NOT PAY BACK WRONG FOR WRONG.

Just because someone has done us wrong, we don't see it as a license to return the wrong. Many people feel justified in being nasty to people who have first been nasty to them. ...

In this chapter's key verse, Paul tells us to "make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong." (1 Thess. 5:15) ... we seek to return good for evil, knowing it will drive that person either to madness or to repentance:

Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Romans 12:19-21

OUT OF A PURE HEART TO DO THE RIGHT THING FOR OTHERS, WE DO THE HARD THING OUT OF LOVE.

We know there are times when the morally right thing to do in a relationship, where we've earned the right to do so, is to confront a friend or family member because it is best for them. We do so prayerfully, gently, and thoughtfully, as Scripture reminds us:

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. (Galatians 6:1)

Speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. (Ephesians 4:15)

Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy. (Proverbs 27:6)

When a friend is clearly taking a wrong path, who will love them enough to warn them? You! They may reject you today, but eventually you will be the one over the long haul who proved to be a friend. You are willing to lose today because in your heart you know it is the right thing to do.

Christ modeled a life of complete kindness and goodness toward others. When others bit into the fruit of Jesus' life, they found it always ripe, sweet, nourishing, and refreshing.

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