

Kindness | Dan Greene

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[0:00] I'd like you to turn in your Bibles to Galatians chapter 5. Man came to Jesus once and asked him what's the most important verse in the Bible.

! And Jesus summarized the whole Bible in one verse. If you want the cliff notes of Christianity, this is it. He said, love the Lord your God with all your heart.

And love your neighbor as yourself. It's your relationship with God and your relationship with others. And so what Jesus was saying is that nothing matters more than relationships. Christians often say Christianity is not a religion, it's a relationship.

And that's right, but sometimes we only think of it as a vertical relationship. But out of that vertical relationship, we're to have horizontal relationships that reflect that same love.

[1:10] That's why the fruit of the Spirit is so important, because the fruit of the Spirit gives us the key ingredients to relationships.

In fact, if you notice in Galatians chapter 5, right before the fruit of the Spirit, Paul talks about the deeds of the flesh. And the deeds of the flesh, some of which are this, immorality, impurity, sensuality, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envies. What is produced by my self-centered nature divides and destroys relationships. And then he comes and says, but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

What is produced by the Spirit of God within me unites and builds relationships. Now tonight, we're going to focus on the characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit that's right in the center of the list.

And it's the thing that needs to be right in the center of your life and my life, and that is kindness.

When General Robert E. Lee retired from the military, he became the president of Washington and Lee University.

[2:47] And people were surprised to find out that he didn't have a list of rules and regulations. And so they often came to him and said, how do you run a college without any rules?

And he said, it's not that I don't have any rules, we just don't have a list of rules. In fact, we only have one rule. And they said, well, what's that one rule?

And Robert E. Lee said, we find that the only rule we need is the rule of kindness. And that if people will treat each other with kindness, it'll take care of all the other problems.

Now, you think that would work today? In prepping for this, I read an article in the Atlantic entitled, America's Epidemic of Unkindness.

Here's what it said, part of what it said. Research proves what is obvious to anyone who has been online in the past decade. For all that the internet and social media have done to connect the world, they have also driven people into political silos, incited violence, eroded confidence in public institutions, and made conspiracy theorists of all of us, while making us more selfish and more socially isolated.

[4:09] Daniel M.T. Fessler, an anthropologist, said, the internet is largely a cesspool. It is not actually surprising because if there is one thing we know, it's that anonymity invites antisocial behavior.

It is easier to be a jerk when you are hiding behind a Twitter egg or a gaming handle. I didn't know this, but there is a national survey that's taken every year called, Civility in America.

This year's study found that 70% of Americans believe incivility has reached crisis proportions, with Americans encountering, on average, 2.4 rude behaviors every day.

And I wanted to name a couple that they listed. One was when you answer your phone in a restaurant with a really loud voice instead of going outside.

The other was when you text while listening to a speaker. I'm watching you. So they said dealing with incivility has become a way of life in America.

[5:32] Someone has said, we have become a society in which the milk of human kindness has curdled. Now what is kindness?

We often think of kindness as, well, I'll just be polite. I'll open the door. I'll do these little things. I'll have good manners. And we kind of call that kindness.

But that really doesn't cover kindness. The word kindness in the Bible is the Greek word *krestos*. And it primarily means to be useful or to be helpful.

And so it's very practical. But it has more angles than that. This is actually the same word that Jesus used in Matthew 11:30 when he said, My yoke is *krestos*.

My yoke is easy. And so kindness is being helpful in a way that is easy, light, and comfortable for the other person.

[6:37] It's also the Greek word used in Luke 5:39 where Jesus described aged wine. And so kindness is being helpful to others in a way that is refreshing, relaxing, mellow, warm, soothing, comforting.

It's an attractive quality. And so the idea of the yoke is that it fits on easily and it's light. And the idea of the wine being that it's something inviting and attractive for you.

And so we would say about kindness that it's being useful to another person in a way that fits just right.

In a way that hits the spot. Now let me say five things about kindness tonight and I'll be done. Five things.

They all begin with an E because I like to do that. Just don't worry about me because that's the way I am. That's the way my brain works. But we're going to talk about five things that begin with an E about kindness.

[7:44] And the first one is the example of kindness. Where do we look for an example of kindness? And the simple answer is that we look to God. Psalm 117:2 says, His loving kindness is great toward us.

Now how does God show kindness to us? Let me give you four ways. Number one, God's kindness provided our salvation. Titus 3:3 says, For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us. It was the kindness of God that gave us what we needed more than anything else, and that is salvation. And how much kindness did that involve? Was He just being polite? Did He sit up in heaven and sprinkle a little kindness on us?

Listen again to the last part of these verses. It says, But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He, personal pronoun, saved us.

[9:04] What he's saying is the kindness of God appeared in the person of Jesus. The kindness of God was personified in the person of Jesus, the one who saved us, who died in our place on the cross.

So the first thing about God's kindness is He provided our salvation. The second thing is God's kindness draws us to salvation. Romans 2:4 says, The kindness of God leads you to repentance. I love that. Sometimes we think to lead somebody to repentance, we need to pound them over the head with their guilt and shame them and so forth. It's the kindness of God that draws us to repentance.

And I imagine if you're a believer here tonight and you think about your testimony, and you think about the circumstances that came into your life, the people that came into your life, was that circumstantial?

I would say no. That is the kindness of God leading you to repentance. God not only provides your salvation by His kindness, He draws you to salvation by His kindness.

[10:19] And then thirdly, God's kindness motivates us to grow in our salvation. And that's 1 Peter 2:1-3 where we read this. Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all

slander, like newborn babes long for the pure milk of the Word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted of the kindness of the Lord.

When we lived in Cape, they had a big senior group, and they used to have fish fries, and I never wanted to miss them because they were really good.

And so my wife and I went one time to the fish fry, and we had a lady there that made the best apple pie in the world.

And so I remember, you know, typically at these events you let the ladies go first, and that's what we did because we were kind and polite. And so the ladies went through, and my wife came by me as I was waiting patiently, by the way, to get in line, and she came by and she said, taste this, and she gave me a little bite of the apple pie, and she said, it's June Thurman's apple pie.

Now, I didn't say to her, you know, I don't want that. I want the stale cookies we got at home. I didn't say that. What I did was skip the line, went over to the dessert table, and got myself a nice big piece of apple pie because I knew that's what I wanted.

[11:56] You see, I had tasted the apple pie, and I knew what I wanted. And this verse says, when you taste the kindness of the Lord, you don't want to go to the stale cookies.

You don't want to go to the malice and the guile and the hypocrisy. You now have an appetite for the milk of God's Word, which is full of His kindness.

And then the fourth thing God's kindness does is it is the completion of our salvation. And I want you to look at this verse, Ephesians 2.7, if you've got your Bibles, Ephesians 2.7, because it's a verse that a lot of Christians overlook because they want to get to chapter 2, verse 8, that they've probably memorized.

8 and 9, hopefully 8 to 10. But if you notice verse 7, back up to verse 6, it says, He raised us with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that, here's verse 7, so that in the ages to come, He might surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

You ever wonder what we're going to be doing for eternity? You're not going to be sitting on a cloud playing a harp. That's false.

[13:26] We are going to be worshiping God, but this verse gives us a glimpse into something else that's going to be happening in eternity. It talks here about the ages to come. Now, a lot of Christians debate about whether there's time in eternity.

This verse... I don't know what that laugh is about, but that could be interpreted a variety of ways. So, okay. Be kind. Okay. This verse says, there's ages to come. So that implies to me, there's going to be some kind of way to measure time, because there's ages to come.

And what's going to happen in those ages to come is that God is going to spend eternity showing you and me the surpassing riches of His grace.

Now, we tend to think of grace as past tense. That's something God needed to save us. But obviously, grace is very present tense, and it's also very future tense.

[14:35] And in the ages to come, God's going to show us the surpassing riches of His grace. And how's He going to show it to us? Is He going to write it on a whiteboard?

Is that how He's going to do it? No. Will He open a big vault and say, look, but don't touch. Here's my grace. No. He's going to show us the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us. So that tells me that in eternity, God's going to say, okay, for the next age, I'm going to show you this much more of my grace.

And I'm going to pour it out in kindness on you. And then He's going to say, have you got that? And we'll go, yeah, we got that. And then He's going to move to the next age. And He's going to pour more grace on us through kindness.

And He's going to show us His grace bit by bit by bit. And when's He going to run out of grace? Never. Because it's the surpassing riches of His grace.

[15:42] It always surpasses whatever we think might be the end of it. Wow. That's kindness. That's kindness. Now, God is the example of kindness.

He has saved us, attracted us, He sanctifies us, and He will show us His grace throughout eternity. And I think it's important for us to understand that because I would say the simplest definition of kindness is treating other people like God treats you.

that's it. That's kindness. Second E of kindness is the expression of kindness. Mark Twain once said, kindness is a language that even the deaf can hear and the blind can read.

It's not confusing. It's not hard to translate. It's not hard to interpret. Let me give you three ways to communicate kindness. Number one, by words.

It says this of an excellent wife in Proverbs 31, 26. The law of kindness is on her tongue. The law of kindness is on her tongue.

[17:01] Kindness controls everything she says. I heard about a fellow who had been away from his family for some time, and he was feeling kind of lonely, and he sat in a little cafe to eat, and the waitress asked him what he wanted, and he said, I want some lasagna and a few kind words.

The waitress soon returned with his order, set it in front of him, turned to leave, and he said, well, what about the kind words?

And she leaned down and whispered, don't eat the lasagna. We show kindness through words. Mamie Adams always went to the same branch post office in her little town because the postal employees were so friendly. One day just before Christmas, she went in there to buy some stamps, and the lines were especially long, and someone pointed out to her that there was a stamp machine in the lobby, and she could go get her stamps there, and she said, but the stamp machine doesn't ask me about my arthritis.

I got an awe. That's pretty good. Kindness is expressed through words. In the whisper test, Mary Ann Bird writes, I grew up knowing I was different, and I hated it.

[18:32] I was born with a cleft palate, and when I started school, my classmates made it clear to me how I looked to others.

A little girl with a misshapen lip, crooked nose, lopsided teeth, and garbled speech. When the schoolmates asked, what happened to your lip, I'd tell them I'd fallen and cut it on a piece of glass. Somehow it seemed more acceptable to have suffered an accident than to have been born different. I was convinced that no one outside my family could love me.

There was, however, a teacher in the second grade whom we all adored, Mrs. Leonard. She was short, round, happy, a sparkling lady. Annually we would have a hearing test.

Mrs. Leonard gave the test to everyone in the class, and finally it was my turn. I knew from past years that as we stood against the door and covered one ear, the teacher sitting at her desk would whisper something, and we would have to repeat it to her to show that we were hearing properly.

[19:57] She would say something like, the sky is blue, or do you have new shoes? I waited there for those words I waited there for those words that God must have put into her mouth.

Those seven words that changed my life, Mrs. Leonard said in her whisper, I wish you were my little girl.

We express kindness through words. Secondly, we express kindness through touch. Listen to these words in Matthew 8, 1.

When Jesus had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him, and behold, a leper came to Him and bowed down to Him, saying, Lord, if You are willing, You can make me well.

And reaching out His hand, He touched him, saying, I am willing, be cleansed. Now here was a man who spent his days outside the city, away from the people, away from everybody.

[21:15] He was required, whenever anybody came near, He was required to cover His mouth and say, unclean. Now Jesus could have healed him with a word.

Jesus could have told him to go to the pool and wash and he'd be clean. Jesus could have said, go your way, your faith has made you whole. But Jesus touched him.

A man who rarely got touched. Dr. Paul Brand is a specialist in leprosy. He was working in India once when they brought to him a young man in his 20s who had been eaten up with leprosy.

Dr. Brand immediately diagnosed what the problem was and wanted to tell the young man how he was going to treat his condition. And so he reached out and put his hands on the young man's shoulders and began to speak to him through a translator.

And the young man immediately broke down in tears. Dr. Brand turned to the translator and asked, did I say something wrong? And the translator said, he's not crying because of what you said.

[22:28] He's crying because you touched him. He hasn't been touched in over 20 years. We've got a good number of widows at our church.

I go out of my way to give them a hug on Sundays because they don't get a lot of touch. And I notice that, because I've got good peripheral vision, I notice that sometimes they're looking to see if I'm going to come by because they're waiting for that hug because when you think about a widow, you realize they don't get a lot of, unless they've got grandkids, they're not going to get a lot of hugs.

And that touch is a way of showing kindness. Third way is actions. Kindness is shown through actions. Tony Campolo told of an incident that happened to him once.

He was headed to work along his usual route where he often passed a number of transient people. And occasionally, they would blurt out the usual panhandling requests for money.

And generally, he ignored them. One day, a bag lady, which he called her a bag lady, whom he had seen often before in his mad rush down the sidewalk, came shuffling by, holding a steaming cup of coffee from a local donut shop.

[23:54] Their eyes met. He forced a smile. She stopped and put down her disheveled coat and bags and said, hey mister, would you like a sip of my coffee? He walked past very quickly, or at least he started to, but something inside stopped him on that frosty morning.

Half a block down, he turned around and said, yes, I would like a taste of your coffee. And she stuck out her coffee in her dirtied hand to him and he swallowed a sip of her coffee.

Isn't it good, she said? Yes, it is good and thank you. You're welcome. And as he turned to go, he asked, say, why did you offer me your coffee?

And she said, because it was so good, I thought someone else would want to share it with me.

That's what kindness is. It's sharing with others the good things that you have and on the flip side, it's sharing the burdens that other people are carrying.

It's when you give to someone in need, it's when you lend to a neighbor, it's when you telephone someone who's in sorrow or visit the sick or the aged, befriend the lonely person, lend a hand to an exhausted friend.

[25:25] A little over a week ago, I had a fellow come into my office. He's actually on our maintenance team and so the head of maintenance came over to my office and asked if I would meet with one of his guys and he came in to share with me that his son had attempted suicide the night before.

Actually drank rubbing alcohol and some other things along with some pills and survived. I tell this story because we're not in Scottsdale but I also tell this story because I want you to understand that you don't have to be a pastor to handle situations like this.

The only thing I really did for him was I related to him that my first wife attempted suicide seven times so we were in the same fraternity and I gave him a hug and I helped him cry and that was it. I didn't say anything profound. I didn't come up with any Bible verses to give to him. It was just a matter of he needed at that moment somebody who identified with him and could show him kindness in that situation and we can all do that.

kindness is expressed in words touch and actions. Third is the extent of kindness and I'll summarize what I mean I mean that kindness extends into all areas of life and to illustrate that I want to underline two areas where the Bible says we're to show kindness.

[27:27] The first is that kindness forgives. Ephesians 4.32 says be kind to one another tender hearted forgiving each other just as God and Christ has forgiven you.

Is there someone in your life that has hurt you in a way that you've held back forgiveness?

kindness? Kindness forgives others and what we have to understand from this verse is it tells us that God or kindness forgives others the way God has forgiven you.

So there's no excuse here. There's no cutting back or limiting it because we have to do it the way God has forgiven us and he has forgiven us all our sins.

So kindness forgives doesn't rub it in it rubs it out and then secondly the other extreme is that kindness confronts.

Psalms 141:5 says let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me it is oil upon my head. [28:50] Can you say that? Let me read it again. Let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me it is oil upon the head.

Why is he reproving you? Because he loves you and wants you to turn around. Sometimes the kindest thing you can do for somebody is tell them the truth. If I go to the doctor and he finds a tumor inside of me and sees it on the x-ray and comes out and says I really like Dan I don't think I want to give him some bad news so I'm going to tell him he's okay.

That's not kindness. See I want him to tell me the truth and schedule the surgery if I've got a tumor inside me. And the fact is we also have a lot of spiritual tumors inside of us and we need someone to tell us the truth in those situations as well.

Kindness is not mushy sentimentalism. It's not the popular approach today of tolerance for everybody. Kindness is not just giving people what they want it's giving people what they need. And we see that in the way God has treated us. We referred to it earlier the kindness of God leads us to repentance. It's the kindness of God that turns us around.

[30:19] Jesus loves you just the way you are but he loves you too much to leave you the way you are. Out of kindness if you have a real friend that real friend will level with you.

Out of kindness a real friend will confront you. A real friend says I'm not going to stand by in silence and see you ruin your life.

Fourth E the excuses of kindness and this one is short because there are no excuses. somebody said I couldn't find who said this whenever possible be kind and it's always possible. Look over in Mark chapter 1 I love the end of Mark and I'll just share a little snippet out of here Mark chapter 1 the end of that chapter verse 33 says the whole house had gathered at the door and Jesus was healing people and casting out demons and then he gets up early the next morning and goes off into a quiet place and the disciples look for him and find him and say everybody's at the house asking for you and Jesus says if you notice in verse 38 let us go somewhere else to the towns nearby so that I may preach for that is what I came for.

I'm leaving this house full of people that need to be healed and need to have demons cast out because I have a purpose to preach and I need to go do that. And what happens next?

[32:30] Look at verse 40 and a leper came to Jesus beseeching him and falling on his knees before him saying if you are willing you can make me clean and moved with compassion Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him and said I am willing be cleansed.

Jesus had a purpose he was going to preach here was a man with a need and even though he was leaving people behind and purposely wanting to be over there he was moved in with compassion and took care of the situation because kindness doesn't have excuses.

And then oh and then look at chapter 3 verse 1 I love this it says he entered again into the synagogue and a man was there with a hand that was withered and they were watching him to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath day.

Jesus comes into the synagogue and they set a trap for him and what's the bait on the trap? It's a man with a need. They said when Jesus comes in we know he'll see this guy and he'll have to take care of his situation and we'll trap him.

Now my question for you is if somebody was setting a trap for you could they make the bait a person with a need?

[33:55] We'll put a person here with a need and we know when he walks by when she walks by they'll be drawn to this and we'll have them. I wonder if that's true of you. Here's a letter from a nurse named Kathy Cooksey.

She said during my second month of nursing school our professor gave a pop quiz. I was a conscientious student that had breathed through the questions until I got to the last one and here was the last question on the pop quiz.

What's the first name of the woman who cleans the school? Surely this was some kind of joke. I had seen the cleaning lady several times. She was tall, dark haired in her 50s but how would I know her name?

I handed him my paper leaving the last question blank and sat down at my chair and we went through the class and before class was done one of the students asked if the last question would count toward the quiz grade.

Absolutely said the professor. In your careers you will meet many people all are significant they deserve your attention and care even if all you do is smile and say hello.

[35:12] And Kathy says I've never forgotten that lesson and also learned her name was Dorothy. Kindness makes no excuses.

Proverbs 3.3 says do not let kindness leave you bind it around your neck write it on the tablet of your heart.

Heard about a young man who went on a mission trip and he was an amateur photographer went to Haiti he was all excited about taking pictures when he was there and was really looking for the ideal great picture that he could bring back and one day he was walking down the street and he saw a young homeless boy in raggedy clothes come up to a bakery put his face on the window and his hands on either side and just stare longingly at the baked goods inside and he knew he had his picture and so he took his camera and he went inside the bakery and he had the bakery goods in the foreground and the little boy in the background and he took the picture and when he got back home he had the picture process now you young people have to understand pictures weren't always the way they are today so you you had to bring them home and take them in and have them done and given back and it was laborious but anyway when he got the picture back it was even better than he thought and so his church asked him to come the next Sunday night with the group and kind of give a presentation so he took his pictures and he put them in the slides and put them up on the thing and he prefaced this picture ahead of time he said now this next one is really my favorite and he put it up there and he heard the people say aww and he was so proud he kind of focused it in really good so they could see the details on the little boy's face and the somebody spoke up and said well what did you do and he said well I knew there was a lot of backlight so I kind of adjusted the shutter speed so I could get the picture and the guy goes no no

I don't care about the picture what did you do about that little boy and he didn't have an answer you see there's no excuse for not being kind we need to grab every opportunity when kindness comes our way Ralph Waldo Emerson said you cannot do a kindness too soon for you will never know when it will be too late and then the fifth and final thing about kindness is the expectation of kindness and let me give you two things you can expect when you're kind and that is the cost will be great you can't go into it like the guy who was coming home from the business trip and he said I think I'll get something nice for his wife so he goes in the department store at the cosmetic counter and the lady says well how about some perfume and he said that'd be great so she brought out a \$50 bottle and he said that's a little pricey brought out a \$40 bottle \$30 do you have like a and then she brought out like a sample bottle like \$15 he said

I'm really looking for something cheap and so she gave him a mirror you can expect when you're kind that it's going to cost you something now let me show you one other verse this is in Luke Luke chapter 6 verse 35 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 here's our word kind to ungrateful and evil men did you get that God is not only kind to people who deserve it he's kind to people who aren't even thankful for the kindness and you're to be kind in the same way to people so what can you expect did you see the phrase in verse 35 expecting nothing in return it's going to cost you something and then the second thing is you can expect that rewards will be great notice what else

[40:22] Jesus said in verse 35 he said your reward will be great that's future tense God has promised great reward to those who show kindness one day mother Teresa was in Calcutta caring for a leper whose nose had been completely eaten off by the disease and she was changing the bandage on that man's nose and an American tourist walked by and observed the scene he soon cringed at the sight as she removed the wrappings and revealed that where he once had a nose he now had a gaping infected hole and this tourist could smell the awful stench and he could see the contagious blood falling down on mother Teresa's hands and after a few moments he leaned down to her and he said to mother Teresa I wouldn't do that for a million dollars and she looked up and said I wouldn't either the reward

for kindness is much greater than that because it's a reward that God provides in fact

I don't know if you've ever thought about this but in Matthew 25 where Jesus talks about the judgment it's going to be based on how you treated other people that's the passage where Jesus said I was thirsty and you gave me a drink I was naked and you clothed me I was sick and in prison and you visited me and they're going to say well when did we do that and Jesus is going to say when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers you did it to me kindness is not a minor issue it's the heart of Christianity because relationships matter our relationship with the Lord translates into our relationship with other people and that explains why we read this in Micah 6 8 he has told you oh man what is good and what the Lord requires of you that you do justice love kindness and walk humbly with your God let's pray

Father thank you for this time spent looking at this word kindness and Lord we thank you that you exude kindness it really comes out of your grace and it's manifest to us and Lord we just thank you for this little this time of looking at that and analyzing that from a little different angle and Lord I pray that we might truly be motivated to walk out of here with a compassionate heart of kindness to those around us and that we would be marked by this characteristic in our lives in Jesus name Amen