

Christian Character - Kindness

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[0 : 00] Okay, right, now, if you've been here the last few weeks, we've been looking at Christian character. I've got to stay in one place, haven't I? Sorry. We've been looking at Christian character. David last week did forbearance. This week we've got kindness.

I wonder if you can remember, apart from last week, what some of the other topics were we have covered. Christian character. Self-control, we did that, yeah. Forbearance was last week, yeah. Joy, yeah.

I've had a chance, actually, to go through and find out, so this is it. That's what we've done so far. Do you remember those? Humility, love, joy, self-control, gentleness, peace, forbearance.

We're not strictly going through the fruit of the Spirit, Galatians 5, but most of them do come from there.

And that's our jumping off point. So let me read that to you. Galatians 5.22. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

[1 : 20] So kindness is something which is a fruit of the Spirit, one of the fruits of the Spirit. And therefore, it's for you and I, for Christians tonight, it's an essential quality which should be showing itself somehow in us and developing as the Spirit works in us.

But what is kindness? And I don't think I've got the full answer to this, right?

But I've got some of the answer, having thought about it for quite a while now. But what do you think kindness is? How would you define it? If we're going to work towards a definition or maybe an illustration of what kindness is, what can you offer? What can you say?

What is kindness? Now, my wife said to me tonight when we were talking about this, it's not necessarily being nice to people, you know.

Would you like to explain, Liz, what you meant by that? Right, so let me say... Do we need a mic? Sometimes kindness means you have to say things that are probably not nice, but they're necessary.

[2 : 45] So if you love somebody and you know that something isn't going right... Thank you. You might just say, well, I'm going to be nice and you're going to be kind and I'll say...

But actually, true love means that you are going to say this isn't right. So kindness is sometimes saying the things that people don't really want to hear, but actually it's the best thing for them.

Okay. So it's not just always having a smile on your face and telling people what they want to hear. Thank you. What else? You could say that it's a consideration of what's good for the other person now.

And doing good for the other person, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. How about... Yeah, go on, Jeff. Caring for others.

Caring for others, yeah. Do motives come into this at all? Is there any motive which is good or bad when you're showing kindness?

[3 : 51] Okay. This is my question. Have I got it there? No, I haven't. Okay. Right. My definition, all right, is this. Doing others good with no thought to personal gain.

Right. So you do it out of your heart that you want to do them good, not because you want them to like you or because you're trying to get something out of it. So it's an unselfish doing good to others.

So can you give me some examples? And we'll, for this minute, we'll leave Jesus out of this because he's a perfect example. But any other examples of kindness that we see in the scriptures?

Old Testament, New Testament. Who showed kindness? I think the passage you've got there also is Romans 2.

Okay. God's kindness is meant to lead us to repentance. So it's a sense of a piece of holding up the judgment. Okay. No, but that's great.

[5 : 01] That's great. I hadn't actually seen that verse. I'd forgotten it already, David. Would you believe it? God's kindness in holding back and giving us a chance to repent. Amen.

Any other examples? Yeah. Or I'm thinking of a parable myself, but it may not be a parable.

It could be anything. Good Samaritan. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. The ultimate act of kindness to his enemy. Yeah. Yeah. David and Mephibosheth.

Yeah. David looked at, he said, what kindness can I show to the house of Saul? No, to Jonathan, sorry.

And the kindness that he came up with that was suggested was showing kindness to Mephibosheth. So he had nothing to do with Mephibosheth, but he wanted to show him kindness because of his father's sake.

[6 : 03] Anything else? Okay. Okay. Well, let's leave that one there. We're going to look at the text.

We're going to look at the text. Paul here discusses Christian character. So it's not just kindness, but it includes kindness. And if you want to turn in your Bibles, please follow along and be ready to shout out at the right time.

Titus chapter 3, verses 3 to 7. You find it on page 1199. It's interesting.

The three passages we're going to look at are all from Paul, and they were written to the churches. So it's clearly very relevant to us. Verse 3, Titus chapter 3.

At one time, we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived, and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

[7 : 13] But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

So if you scan through those, you'll find the word kindness there. And who in these verses is showing kindness? God, thank you.

Thank you. Everybody's too shy or too tired or too hot to call out. It is God. God is the originator of kindness. Okay, it starts with him.

As we've already looked at earlier, he's kind in giving us a chance to repent. So that's our starting point when we look at the subject. It starts with God.

And why should we be kind? Not so that people will like us, but because one, God has been kind to us, and two, we want to reflect his character.

[8 : 36] We want to be kind as he is kind. I think I missed a slide, have I? Yeah, sorry. Who is showing kindness? The second question, how has God shown us kindness in these verses?

What has he done for us? Verse 5 I'm looking at particularly. Rebirth and renewal.

He saved us. He's given us rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. So that's the kindness that God has shown to us. So our next passage for tonight, we're batting through quickly.

The last passage we'll spend a little more time on. But the next one is Galatians chapter 5, which you will know is the fruit of the Spirit. And that's on page 1172. And verses 22 and 23 say this.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

[9 : 44] Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

So we saw in Titus that God is the originator of kindness. And here we see that God works by his Holy Spirit to produce kindness in us.

It's a fruit of the Spirit. So two things... Forgive me, I'm going to be rubbish at this. But two things we learn here, particularly about the Holy Spirit's work here.

We are totally reliant on God to show us... To show kindness through us. Because it's a fruit of the Spirit. Just as it didn't originate from us, we cannot of ourselves summon it up.

We can't try very hard and, you know, eventually a bit of kindness might ooze out of us. No, it's a fruit of the Spirit. If it's going to be genuine, it's going to be from the right motives. It's got to be God working it through us, through his Spirit.

[10 : 58] But in verse 25 there, we are told to let the Spirit do his work in us. He describes it in verse 16 before this as keeping in step with the Spirit.

If we walk by the Spirit, you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. So we've got two things there. One, it is from the Spirit, this quality of kindness.

But we also must work with the Spirit for that quality to be shown. So our last passage tonight is Colossians chapter 3. And we've got verses 12 to 14, which is page 1184 in your church Bibles.

Just a few pages on from where we were. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Bear with each other and forgive one another. If any of you has a grievance against someone, forgive as the Lord forgave you and over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

[12 : 20] So we'll take slightly longer over these verses and see what we can extract about kindness from them. So kindness and the other fruits of the Spirit are to be increasingly evident in every area of our lives.

So whether we're at work, at school, whether we're at home, whether we're doing sports or whatever we're doing. In every area of our life, we must be showing kindness.

But here in Colossians 3, Paul is particularly talking to us about when we meet as a church, how we interact with our brothers and sisters.

So how does it work in church? In what ways can kindness be seen in our life as a church? Oh, I've given the game away there, but I'm going to leave it on.

The first thing to note here is that although it's good to separate out kindness just for the cause of the study so that we can concentrate on it, as David said last week about forbearance, you can't just consider it as a standalone item, really.

[13 : 38] And in all of the letters of Paul here, you notice kindness goes along with something else, with a number of other things.

So it doesn't work in isolation from the other things. You can't have forbearance, as David told us last week, without showing humility, love and self-control, etc.

So how do these qualities of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience work out in verses 13 and 14? Well, I've told you there.

In three ways, we're told to bear with one another, to forgive one another and to love one another. So, first of all, to bear with one another.

We looked at this last week, forbearance. And this is patiently accepting your brother or your sister. Some people we require to exercise more forbearance than others, right?

[14 : 42] So if I'm one of those people that really get up your nose, as it were, then you've got to be especially kind and forbearing to me, as I do to you.

That's the beauty and the frustration of church life, isn't it? We're all very different. We have different interests. We see things differently.

We're different personalities. And let's face it, we do from time to time get quite irritated with each other. And I'm not just talking about Jeff, who keeps on having a go at us and winding us up.

We all get irritated with each other, particularly on evenings such as a hot evening like tonight. But we're told that despite our differences, and perhaps because of our differences, we are to bear with one another.

If we were very similar in character, maybe it would be easier. I don't know. Maybe it wouldn't particularly be. But we are told to bear with one another.

[15 : 47] Now, the second thing we're told here in these verses is to forgive one another. This means not holding grudges, but as far as possible, work at restoring relationships.

Verse 13 tells us that it's not just a casual thing. We are to forgive as the Lord forgave you.

So how did the Lord forgive you? Think about that just for a moment. What did the Lord do in forgiving you? How kind was he to you in forgiving you of your sins?

It was a great cost. And he just didn't forgive you a little bit. But he forgave you unreservedly and fully for all of your sins.

Isn't that amazing? Now, we are called to forgive one another as the Lord forgave us. What a high calling that is. We might well say, well, that person who I do get very irritated with, it's very hard to love them.

[17 : 01] Well, the Lord loved us, even scoundrels though we were. Forgive one another as the Lord forgave you.

The last thing there, verse 14, is to love one another. Over all these virtues, love is perhaps the biggest virtue that we need in Christian character.

God is love and so we must let the Spirit reflect that character of love in us. Not just towards God, but towards others. Now, I find these verses quite interesting when I started to look at them.

And when I think of kindness, I usually think of acts that you can do to other people. Okay, some benefit that you're giving to other people.

But here, do you notice that kindness is how we should respond to others when we are hurt or offended by someone else's action?

[18 : 06] That's the context of these verses, isn't it? Bear with each other. Forgive one another. Love one another. So if we have, if we've been offended, if we've been hurt, this is how we should react.

Showing kindness in that way. So let me, before just summarising quickly, let me just ask you a question. Is there some attitude or some resentment or some hurt that you find it very difficult to let go of?

Maybe you've been treated very badly. Will you forgive? Will you love?

Will you bear with your brother and sister? If we do that, we will see the fruit of the Spirit increasing more. So that is our job, to call on God, to increase those things in us through his Spirit.

So let me just very quickly tell you what we've seen, and then we will go to prayer. Titus 3, we've seen that God is the originator of kindness.

[19 : 21] he saved washed and regenerated us and we want to be kind to reflect his character Galatians 5 has shown us that we are totally dependent on God for God to produce that fruit in us and we're to live by the spirit Colossians showed us the outworking of the kindness as well as compassion humility gentleness and patience we're required to bear with one another forgive one another and to love one another so what we're going to do now is I will just round this bit off with a prayer and then we're going to sing another song and then we'll have a I think we'll gather into perhaps three or four groups and we can pray for various issues so let me just pray for you father your word calls us to a very high calling your word calls us not just to love those who we get on with but to love all of our brothers and sisters and even to love our enemies thank you that Jesus showed that perfectly in his death and resurrection and ascension the power of his gospel love for us we thank you again for him and we pray by your spirit you would work in us to all of these characters of fruits of the spirit including this one we've been looking at tonight of kindness in Jesus name amen so

Thank you.