

“. . . Train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be sensible, chaste, domestic, kind, and submissive to their husbands, that the word of God may not be discredited.” Titus 2:3-5 (RSV)

Lesson One

Kindness

*Give me a heart of kindness, Lord,
Cause my eyes to see,
The needs of those around me,
The ones you sent to me.*

*Give me a heart of kindness, Lord,
For those who are in need,
That they may see Your face in mine
And on Your goodness feed.
—B.H.*

Apple Seeds

Set the mood by singing “Give Me a Heart of Kindness, Lord” (music on p. 139).




Give an example of a kindness shown to you recently. How did it make you feel?

Give an example of a kindness shown by you recently. How did it make you feel?

Apple Blossoms

In Titus 3:8-5, our foundational passage for Apples of Gold, kindness is an attribute mentioned for older women to teach younger women. This fruit of the Spirit is foundational for the rest of the passage. If we are not kind, how can we have a wonderful marriage, or properly love our children, submit to others, or have the consistent moral excellence which is purity? And certainly a household that does not display kindness would not feel comfortable or hospitable to others.

 2 A good friend owns a food business in Michigan. One winter he knew we were entertaining for a week a group of young men with special needs. One morning I received a phone call from his secretary. She told me to expect a package that morning. Our friend sent two boxes of frozen food in dry ice to us in Florida all the way from Michigan. He was a long-distance host to our guests. It was a blessing!

I have been able to pass on that blessing. One day my friend Dee forgot she was having guests for dinner until late afternoon. We had been out to lunch and shopping that day and on the way home, she remembered the dinner. She went home and got the house and table ready. I went home and made dinner and sneaked it through the back door. Her guests never knew the difference. It made a wonderful memory for us, and she has returned the favor of hospitality to me countless times more. We delight in sharing food gifts with one another when we have guests.

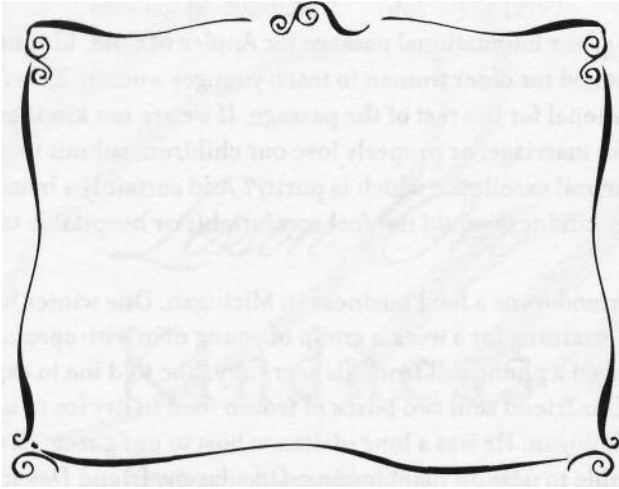
When friends have shown gifts of kindness to me over the years, it makes me want to reciprocate kindness to them, and others. Kindness blesses the giver as well as the receiver.

Kindness is a character quality that is easy to recognize, yet hard to define. One way to describe it is "showing personal care and concern in meeting the needs of others."

What's your mental picture of a kind person? A grandmother tenderly comforting a child? In reality, kindness can be as unique and varied as the ways a caring heart can meet the needs of others.

If we desire to be like Christ, we must ask Him to develop kindness in us. It begins by thinking about God's kindness to us, His generous grace to us, His acceptance and forgiveness of us. It is God's kindness, not our goodness, that allows us to come to Him.

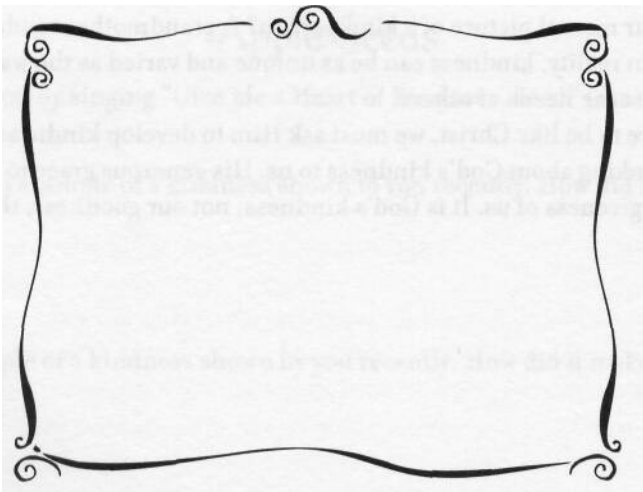
Write out Romans 2:4:




Kindness might be described as a willingness to go the extra mile. It is an attitude, not just actions.

Write your own description of kindness:


Write out Psalm 103:13:



 What does it mean to be compassionate? How is compassion different from kindness? How do they work together?

Kindness is an attitude and a decision. Our decision to be kind and tenderhearted can make a tremendous difference in our lives, our homes, our friendships, our church, or our community. We need the Lord's help to keep an attitude of kindness. Because it is His will for us to be kind, we can be assured He will answer our prayers for help in demonstrating kindness.

Read 1 Kings 17:7-16. The prophet Elijah knocked at the widow's door, asking for kindness and offering a miracle in return. By asking the widow to feed him first out of her meager provisions, what was Elijah requiring of her?

 Many times, demonstrating kindness (meeting the needs of others) takes faith that God will meet our needs. When have you given to others when you thought you had nothing to give? How did God meet your need?

A great pioneer missionary set out on the strength of one final paycheck. Later he would say, "God's work, done in God's way, never lacks God's supply."

Philippians 4:6-7 says, "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything; tell God your needs and don't forget to thank him for his answers. If you do this you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will keep your thoughts and your hearts quiet and at rest as you trust in Christ Jesus" (TLB).

List three steps outlined in this verse for appropriating God's peace in times of need.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



In order to thank God for His past answers, those answers need to be fresh in your mind! It's helpful to record them as they come. Begin by listing a few here:

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:15. What makes this the hardest kind of kindness to offer?

Have you experienced times when it has been difficult to be kind to someone? How did you resolve it?



Relationships can be difficult for many reasons. Sometimes it is difficult to show kindness and compassion to those who are different from us, or with whom we are uncomfortable: the poor, the rich, the emotionally or mentally impaired, those with personalities different from ours. I hope that part of your answer was to pray about it. Prayer may or may not change the difficult situation with someone, but prayer can change your heart. How would thanking God for His past kindness to you help the situation?

The Bible says, "Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matt. 12:34). Today we say, "What is down in the well comes up in the bucket."

If your heart is a well, what would each of these hearts yield?

Angry Heart -	➤	_____	Words
Dirty	➤	Heart _____	Words
Pessimistic Heart —	➤	_____	Words
Agitated Heart	➤	_____	Words
Insecure Heart —	➤	_____	Words
Bitter Heart	➤	_____	Words
Happy Heart	➤	_____	Words
Peaceful Heart	➤	_____	Words
Pure Heart	➤	_____	Words
Contented Heart	➤	_____	Words
Gentle Heart	➤	_____	Words
Hopeful Heart	➤	_____	Words

The way we approach a situation shows our inward heart! Proverbs 14:30 says, "A heart at peace gives life to the body." We have that verse painted over our living-room window. Unkindness among people causes stress to the family and to the body. Though some say, "Peace at all costs," Romans 12:18 shows God's wisdom when it says, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."

Underline the attitudes or emotions that hinder kindness.

Star those that encourage kindness to difficult people. Choose one to work on in a difficult relationship.

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| BITTERNESS | SELFISHNESS |
| COMPETITION | COMPARISONS |
| EMPATHY | DISDAIN |
| DESIRE FOR REVENGE | CARING |
| ATTACHING LABELS | LAZINESS |
| PLACING OTHERS ABOVE SELF | TEACHABLE SPIRIT |
| PRIDE | FEELING THREATENED |
| LISTENING | PATIENCE |
| HUMILITY | |

Try to get to know the people who are difficult in your life. Try to understand what their needs or insecurities are, what causes them to act the way they do toward you. Communicate with them, tell them you want things to be different, and ask how that can happen.

Summarize the advice given in the following verses:

Nehemiah 9:17

2 Timothy 2:24

1 Thessalonians 5:15

The Lord does not allow us to pick and choose those to whom we will be kind. Everyone is every one! Notice also that 1 Thessalonians 5:15 says "try to be kind. . . ." God knows it can be difficult for us at times, and others may not accept our kindness.



It is difficult to love our enemies, especially if they are determined to bring harm to us. Loving them is the choice, because it is the only way to bring a positive reaction to the situation. Is there anyone hard for you to love? Pray for him or her. It is difficult not to care for someone if you are praying for that person on a regular basis. Trust the Lord to change your relationship with that person.

Once we have an attitude of kindness, we must find ways to meet the needs of others—with words and actions.

Jesus was a wonderful example of kind words. In 1 Peter 2:22 we read, "He committed no sin and no deceit was found in his mouth." Jesus' words were truth laced with grace.

Listen to some of the kind words of Jesus. Read them aloud:

- "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28)
- "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you." (John 14:27)
- "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me." (John 14:1)
- "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Matt. 19:14)

Jesus didn't just tell people what they wanted to hear. Many times He told them what they needed to hear. He met their deeper needs. He was motivated by love. Read aloud these examples of the tough love of Jesus:

- "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." (John 3:3)
- "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you? . . . Then neither do I condemn you. . . . Go now and leave your life of sin." (John 8:10-11)

- "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life." (John 5:39-40)

Jesus was able to say hard things in love because He spoke with discernment. According to Proverbs 21:23 and Psalm 141:8, how does this work?

Choice Fruit

Galatians 5:22 says that one of the fruits of the Spirit is kindness. What are some practical ways to show kindness to . . .

- Family

(My friend Jean says, "Let love spill out the door." What wonderful advice! A young mom I know and her children say a blessing to one another in the morning before the children leave for school. They say, "May the Lord protect and keep you today.")

- Friends

(Find a need and fill it. Give others what they need most. Express your appreciation.)

- Church

(One church asks its members not to talk with friends after services until they have spoken with someone they don't know. It is easy to talk with our friends and acquaintances, but it is more important that we welcome a visitor.)

- Neighbors

(In Acts 1:8, Jesus told His followers they would be His witnesses in Jerusalem-right in their own backyard!)

We want to be like our Heavenly Father and respond to others the way He responds to us. The Golden Rule says, "Do to others what you would have them to do to you." (Matt. 7:12). That means being slow to anger and abounding in love (Ex. 34:6). Remember that anger is an emotion; kindness is a decision. We want to treat others as Christ treats us.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, give me a heart full of kindness. Help me to be sympathetic and compassionate to those around me. May my loved ones feel my sweetness and tenderness for them. Keep my tongue from evil and my lips from speaking guile.

Thank You, Lord, for being such a perfect example of kindness and compassion to me, for being tenderhearted to me and forgiving me over and over again, and for not remembering my sinful words and deeds after I confess them to You and ask for forgiveness. Lord, I want to be obedient to the admonitions from Your Word. Amen.

"May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer." Psalm 19:14



Preparing for Next Week's Lesson: The Loving Your Husband study suggests reading through Song of Solomon a little each day throughout the next week.



Suggestions for the Leader



If time permits, have a few participants share their Apple Seeds.



I began with examples of kindness demonstrated in my life that were passed along. You may substitute an enticing description of a woman who demonstrated kindness in your own life—and the wonderful results.



Bring out the fact that where kindness seeks to meet needs, compassion involves identifying and healing hurts.



Offer an example of a time when you had to depend on God to give through you because, like the widow at Zarephath, you had nothing to give.



It might be helpful to show the group some methods of keeping a record of God's answers. One might be a notepad that can be kept handy in a purse. A more elaborate version is a pretty file box where answers are recorded on separate index cards. Extra file cards can be stored in your purse so that new ideas aren't lost. Some families review the contents of such boxes during times of discouragement, as well as at Thanksgiving or New Year's dinner.



Be prepared with examples of ways God's kindness to you has been your strength.



Working to improve relationships with difficult people can be an overwhelming process. Assure the participants that you or the other mentors are available to offer guidance.



Because some of your participants may do their lessons just before the next session, point out that this week they are asked to read Song of Solomon throughout the week.

Show Random Acts of Kindness

Write a note of appreciation to someone special.

Write thank-you notes to your pastor and church staff.

Do something special for your child or husband.

Bake something for a busy mom or a sick neighbor.

Give a gift to someone you don't know but see often (such as a Christmas gift to the person at the McDonald's window).

Do something for your mother and mother-in-law.

Plant a tree in your neighborhood.

Put an extra shopping cart back in its appointed place in the parking lot.

Write a note to the boss of someone who has helped you, thanking him or her for having such a great employee.

When someone tries to merge into your lane, smile and wave while you let the car in.

If there is a garden you enjoy, let the owner know how much pleasure it gives you.

Laugh aloud often and share your smile generously.

Appreciate yourself as a random act of kindness.

Think of your own random acts of kindness.

Enjoy!

Be Kind to Yourself

It is also important to show kindness to yourself. You can do that by pampering yourself from time to time with a new book to read, a luxurious bath, a manicure, a new hairstyle, a walk alone on the beach, or a shopping trip. (Even a window-shopping trip can be therapeutic!)

Even though bouts of pampering can be difficult and make you feel guilty, they are really necessary if you are to be helpful and loving to others.

What would be a wonderful gift from you to you? Do it!

You need to pamper your emotions as well. Moms especially can be really hard on themselves. You need time to pray and study Scripture, to talk with the Lord about anything that is hurting you. Sometimes you need to talk with a good friend. Neglecting your own emotions hurts those around you.

Start today. Make time for yourself—and enjoy it!