

© Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study, www.intothyword.org

Is the Character of Kindness working in you? Here is how you can find out. Take a careful look at this character and fruit of Kindness from God's most precious Word. Examine the passages below and ask yourself:

1. How do I exhibit kindness in my daily life?
2. What can I do to develop more of a kindness attitude?
3. What blocks the practice of kindness in my life?
4. How can I make kindness function better, stronger, and faster, even in times of uncertainty and stress?

Kindness is the medium through which Christ's love becomes real, tangible, and knowable through us. It is the application of sincere love that manifests itself in practicing benevolence and a loving attitude towards others. Kindness is the essence that shows the world we are Christians, like the fragrance coming from a beautiful flower. It is being convicted by God's Word, and then modeling it to others. Being charitable is an aspect of good positive relationships with others, and a "MUST" part of the Christian experience and duty! Kindness is the subject to the object of who we are in Christ. This is something we replicate as we are kind, and also respond in kindness to others, our response to one another fuels the other's response, and so forth. In this way, we will be escalating love and kindness instead of repression and dysfunction!

(Romans 2:1-4; 12:9-21; 2 Corinthians 6:6-7; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12-14; 1 John 3:16-23)!

Cruelty, spitefulness, being mean, and holding grudges are the opposites. This can include seeking to harm someone, being cruel and rude, or just ignoring people you do not like. God created us for relationships, and when we ignore this, we fail in the most important aspect in life besides our relationship with Him!

We live in a world that accepts cruelty as being cool. Just look at TV and the movies. However, the Christian is called to be higher, while at the same time, lower. This means to be higher in our character and lower by acceptance of others (as long as it does not bring us down to their level!). We must reflect Christ's treatment of us in how we treat others, on the road of life, in our work, school, and family. As society gets more difficult and hostile, kindness will gradually disappear, which makes it increasingly needed.

Kindness allows our interests and attitudes to be focused upon Christ's precepts, and pouring them out on others. This will replace all the bitterness, malice, and slander—all that is wrong in relationships and life—if we are willing to receive it from above, and will allow it to be poured out from us. It is being willing to take the risk, and go for it—regardless of the outcome.

Real Christian kindness is not simply an outward change of our manners; it is an internal change of our hearts. Kindness is our tenderheartedness that we use because God has so touched us, therefore we are sensitive and compassionate toward others. We can react in a timely approach quickly and assuredly. If our heart is hard on the inside and we are trying to show our good manners on the outside, it is not biblical kindness, and it will not last. We will be neither tender nor sensitive, and we will not respond as we should. Kindness cannot be pretended, nor can it be superficial; it has to come from within as poured out to us from our Lord. It has a depth that has been built from a

consistent life of worship, devotion, and study, of being real and impacting, of learning, trying, and failing, yet continuing to be kind anyway.

The Fruit of *kindness* is the willingness to allow the love within ourselves to be poured out to others, powered by God's grace and precepts. Character is the quintessential mechanism that tells others who we are. Our fruit empowers our character. It is the springboard from which comes all we do and say in life. It is the proof text, measuring who we are to others by what we do to others. It is the storybook of our lives that tells of our personality, moral fiber, maturity and faith. Developing solid biblical character in the face of our experiences, both positive and the negative, the setbacks and the triumphs, then applying them to our daily lives, will make us better, richer, and more of use to God. We will be much better able to deal with others, such as friends, relatives, coworkers, and all those we touch in life, especially our spouse—or, when he/she arrives on the scene.

When we develop kindness from adversity, it will be the essential component for us to grow in our faith and maturity, and the proof that we have an honest, tangible, growing relationship with Christ as the Lord of our lives! Character is not just having integrity or honesty, or even doing the right thing at the right time. It is not the only aspect of a personality. What is real character? It is the ensuring of a continual, constant, living, growing relationship in Christ, which produces a synergistic combination of the *Fruit of the Spirit* found in Galatians 5:22-23 and 1 Peter 1:5-11. This is what produces good, Christ-like temperament so we can be kind. It is not just what Christ would do, but what He would have us do.

Being kind means we are aligning our lives so our behaviors are Christ-like. It is the fruit that the vine of our abiding in Christ will produce. Thus, we look to the life of our Lord as our prime example. We seek to know more about our Lord and Savior, so we know how He handled situations, and what He taught, so it affects all that we do, and so we know what Jesus would have us do! This alignment of our will and ways to His ways is what produces this "Fruit of the Spirit," which will be the bond to hold us together, to make us as we should be. Without it, a wedge will form, keeping us away from those good, quality, effective relationships. You can be the wedge of works, or, the light of fruit. Which will it be in your life and relationships (Eph. 5:1-2)?

The strange thing is that many Christians just do not get it; they live their lives in the pretext of the following verses of this passage (Gal. 5:19-21). Thus, the opposites of these characters, which this passage describes as *the works of the flesh*, become the rotten personalities and dispositions. These *works* become who we are to our friends and family, being spiteful, arrogant, pretentious, and counterfeit Christians who are the destroyers of relationships, and that cause us to repeat the same bad patterns over and over. We ignore our Lord, substituting our whims and pretensions, when we could have so much more and better, but our stubborn nature will not allow that goodness to come out. So, we choose our way, and substitute the *works* for the *fruit*; in so doing we are not kind; rather, we bring strife and dysfunction to our relationships instead of His love, call, and character.

When we have the grasp of God's kindness and love, the response that must ooze from the pores of our soul is kindness. Ephesians 4:31-5:2 gives us not only the picture of this happening, but also the dangers of our pores getting clogged up with our pride and anger, resulting in bitterness and slander.

Reflection

Kindness is beyond just being accepting, compromising, or being liberal or open minded; it is a thoughtful consideration to one another, putting ourselves in their shoes. We are called to be kind to enemies, to strangers, to family, and to outcasts (life of Jesus). Kindness is not something we confront, it is what we proclaim! We must change our behaviors in how we treat others—on the road, in our work, at school, and with family—to reflect how Christ treats us. As society gets more complicated and crowded, kindness will decrease more and more, which makes its need greater and greater. Let us step up to the plate of treating and serving others as Christ would. Then, watch our relationships improve (Eph. 4:31-32; James 1:9-11; 1 John 3:16-23)!

- Here are positive examples from Scripture (Gen. 39:21-23; Josh. 2:4-16; Ruth 2:8-16; 3:15; Luke 7:2-6; Acts 24:23; 27:3, 43)
- Here are negative examples from Scripture (Gen. 21:9-14; 37:12-36; Ex. 5:6-18; Luke 22:64; John 19:3)

Further Questions

1. How would you define Kindness? Notice how Joseph's brothers were cruel to him, yet a jailer, who was a stranger, was kind!
2. What are the things that cause you to be cruel or rude?
3. How does rudeness counteract kindness?
4. Boaz had no obligation, outside of tradition, to help Ruth, yet He did. Why did he (Ruth 2:8-16; 3:15)?
5. When have you most been filled with kindness?
6. In what situation did you fail to have kindness when you should have?
7. What issue is in your life that would improve with more kindness?
8. Think through the steps you need to take to put kindness into action in a specific situation. How about learning to drive without rage when someone cuts you off, or spending more time helping someone you do not like, or not letting your circumstances get in the way of being kind to strangers, even if you are in a hurry?

Remember the Fruits of the Spirit are not what we do when we have the time or feel like it, they are what we are to do--period!