

The Fruit of the Spirit

Part 4 – Kindness

This was in an issue of Readers Digest 2007: I was at the local fruit shop and had a few dollars left on me. The lady in front of me started paying for her fruit and vegetables, but found she was 10c short. It's not something I normally do, but I gave her 10c. She was happy, and the queue moved again. Then it was my turn. Unbelievably, I'd left myself short of 5c when I came to pay, which is not like me at all. For the first time in my life, the lady behind me said: "I've got 5c. Here you go." And so I had enough money to pay for my bananas. The three of us laughed about it. I'd never been part of such a chain of kindness. It made my day.

A great little story, but I found it sad.

Why? Because this woman's greatest experience of kindness amounted to 15c.

Such a small kindness had such big impact. Then I read this:

Proverbs 27:7

A satisfied soul loathes the honeycomb, but to a hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.

If you've got nothing much in your life, the tiniest acts of kindness take on the greatest significance.

Kindness is love in action and the world is hungry for it.

This is the fourth message on The Fruit of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-23

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

1. Kindness is one of God's characteristics

Luke 6:35

But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.

In this passage, Jesus first tells His disciples to be kind.

Then He tells them why they should be kind.

The reason is because that's what God is like.

God is kind.

In Matthew's gospel, he puts it this way.

Matthew 5:44-45

But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

So God demonstrates His kindness towards both good people and evil people by providing sunshine and rain so we can grow food.

Of course, He provides a lot more than that.

But the thing is, He provides for those who reject and hate Him too.

The true nature of kindness is revealed in opposition.

God is rejected and hated, but still shows kindness.

And so that's how He expects us to be.

That's why we should love our enemies, bless those who curse us, do good to those who hate us, and pray for those who spitefully use us and persecute us.

The true nature of kindness is revealed in opposition.

1 Corinthians 13:4

Love suffers long and is kind...

Notice the link between suffering and kindness?

When kindness suffers, it resists the urge to lash out, to return evil for evil, to get its own back.

Instead, it does good.

God's kindness is also expressed by working in our lives to bring us into relationship with Him.

Romans 2:4

Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness (kindness) of God leads you to repentance?

How does a person come to the point of repentance?

God's kindness: He is our example.

2. Kindness is an attribute of the ideal woman

Most of the last chapter of Proverbs – Proverbs 31 – is a description of the ideal woman / wife.

I'm very blessed to be married to the Proverbs 31 woman.

Proverbs 31:26

She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness.

The law of kindness is on her tongue.

This means that what comes out of her mouth, her instructions, are shaped and motivated by kindness.

This is not only a great attribute for a woman, but in my view, women generally seem to do this better than men.

It seems to me that in this aspect of God's nature, women can really reach such great heights.

The law of kindness is on her tongue.

But Jesus said that out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.

So, to have kindness on her tongue, it must first be in her heart.

There's a great account of a woman's kindness in Joshua 2.

Joshua had sent two spies into Canaan, and told them to spy out the land, especially the city of Jericho.

When they got to Jericho, the king of Jericho heard they were there, and sent his men to get them.

But they had hidden in the home of a prostitute named Rahab.

When the king's men came, she told them that the spies had come and gone.

And here's what she said to the spies before she sent them safely away.

Joshua 2:12-14

“Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the LORD, since I have shown you **kindness**, that you also will show kindness to my father's house, and give me a true token, and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.” So the men answered her,

“Our lives for yours, if none of you tell this business of ours. And it shall be, when the LORD has given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with you.”

What was her kindness to the spies?

She protected them and spared their lives.

What was their kindness to her?

To spare her life and the lives of her family.

She showed kindness, and received kindness in return.

And her kindness saved her life and the lives of her family.

Despite the fact that they were enemies.

When I first became a pastor in 1989, we moved into our new house.

Our neighbours wouldn't talk to us; we had absolutely no idea why.

We'd see them in their front garden, call out to them and say "hello", but they'd turn around and walk inside.

One day, my wife, Alli, was making choc-chip cookies.

She said, "I think I'll take some of these next door; and so she did.

It was then that we found out that the source of their animosity was the builder of our houses.

There was a drop from our yard into their yard, and the builder told us that our neighbours were supposed to build a retaining wall.

He told them that it was our responsibility.

The problem was sorted out, we became good friends, and eventually they gave their lives to the Lord.

And it all began with a simple act of kindness.

Kindness: its greatest power is when you give it to the undeserving.

But it's not just women who should be kind.

3. Kindness should be in a man

Proverbs 19:22

What is desired in a man is kindness ...

King David was a great example of this.

As you will no doubt remember, he was persecuted by King Saul for years.

And Saul made numerous attempts on his life.

But eventually, Saul was killed in battle.

And David became king.

Saul's son, Jonathan, who had been David's best friend, was also killed in battle.

But once he became king, David said, "Is there still anyone who is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" (2 Sam 9:1)

Then he found one of Saul's servants, whose name was Ziba and asked him a similar question: "Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, to whom I may show the kindness of God?"

And that's how he found out about Jonathan's son Mephibosheth.

David sent for him.

And when Mephibosheth came before David, he was terrified.

So he fell on his face before David.

Why? Because normally in those days, when a new king took the throne, he would eliminate any competition for throne.

That would definitely include the grandson of the previous king.

So Mephibosheth was expecting to be executed.

But here's what David said to him: "Do not fear, for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father's sake, and will restore to you all the land of Saul your grandfather; and you shall eat bread at my table continually."

He showed kindness to a potential rival.

Let me finish with another story of kindness to inspire you.

It took place before the Battle of Trafalgar.

Admiral Nelson noticed that his signal lieutenant, John Pasco, looked annoyed.

He asked him what was wrong.

Pasco replied, "Nothing that need trouble your Lordship."

But Nelson insisted, so Pasco told him.

The ship containing all the mail had left for England, and was a fair way off.

Unfortunately, someone had forgotten to include Pasco's letter to his wife.

Nelson said, "Hoist a signal and bring her back."

Because of Nelson's kindness, the ship returned for just one letter.

Kindness: it's part of the fruit of the Spirit.

It's what God is like.

When was the last time you showed kindness to someone?

Particularly to someone you don't like, or who may not like you?