Transformed by Fire: The Fruit of Kindness

Galatians 5:22-23 / Eph 4:32 / Col. 3:12 / Titus 3:4-5

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“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, **kindness**, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23).

Some may be asking “Why haven’t I haven’t I addressed the issues of the day?” How we are to be acting and what we are to be doing during these chaotic times. We have been...We been learning how to bear His fruit & develop Christ characteristics!

* To **LOVE** in the midst of all the hate & division
* Experience His **PEACE** in order to share it with others during these stormy days
* To know where our TRUE **JOY** is founded, in Christ during these unjoyful days
* And to develop **PATIENCE**, as God has with us, with others in this day, knowing that we are all going through the same chaos in this journey of life.

These are how we THRIVE in this troubled, divided, chaotic, evil day...Become “Transformed by Fire” 1 Peter 1:6-9 says “So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while.**7**These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold...

* These difficult days should be developing Christ like characteristics in us and purging & removing our “old man” ways.

Today we add another piece to our character development plan. Another piece of fruit for the basket.

If you were around in the 1980s and early 1990s, you may remember these huge square reels call VHS Tapes. They contained movies and there was a place called Blockbuster Video where you could rent them to play in your VCR. This was before the ease and convenience of DVDs, Netflix, YouTube, and Hulu. These tapes had to be rewound after they were watched and before they were returned to the video store. If you were to rent one of these tapes, there likely would be a sticker on the top advising: “Be kind. Rewind.” T-shirts were even made with the “Please be kind. Rewind.” motto on them.

Apparently, people were so self-absorbed and self-centered even in the 80s and 90s that they could not be trusted with the common courtesy, decency, and kindness to rewind their videotapes. The humorous aspect of this whole thing is that you were to feel good about yourself when you rewound these tapes. “Look at me; I am so kind! I rewound this tape.” The profoundness of kindness was reduced to the simpleminded courtesy of rewinding a tape.

Kindness includes simple courtesy, but it is so much more:

A group by the name of “Improve Everywhere” is an improve group that understands kindness.

In one of their improves, “Welcome Back,” includes the random act of kindness of greeting complete strangers at the airport.

The group rallies at an airport and finds taxi or uber drivers who have signs held up for their customers, then they make their own signs welcoming that person home and joins the driver for a greeting that person won’t soon forget. When the person arrives, a huge crowd holding banners and yelling, “Welcome back!” welcomes them home. They give the unsuspecting recipient of this kindness flowers, chocolates and balloons making him or her feel welcomed, loved and like a rock star. At first, the recipients seem confused, but then they become grateful and appreciative of the kindness and grace they have experienced from their new friends.

In a sense, kindness almost has become a novelty in our culture, where rudeness, disrespect, self-seeking self-promotion and self-centeredness seems to be the norm.

**What is kindness?** Do we even know what kindness is? When you think about kindness, what comes to your mind? Probably an action, right? Doing something nice for someone else? Question: If we have ideas and assumptions of what kindness is, why are people not as kind as they could or should be?

* According to the Tyndale Bible Dictionary, ***Kindness is the state of being that includes the attributes of loving affection, sympathy, friendliness, patience, pleasantness, gentleness, and goodness. Kindness is a quality shown in the way a person speaks and acts.***

This definition captures some of what kindness is, but kindness is still so much more than this. Contrary to popular belief, kindness is not an emotion or feeling but rather a choice. But what if we stopped thinking of kindness as just a choice and started making kindness a part of our lifestyle? 2nd nature?

God’s Word is full of examples of kindness.

* One of the most profound Old Testament accounts of this kindness is the story of David and Mephibosheth (muh·fi·buh·sheth). David had made a promise to his best friend, Jonathan, that he would show kindness to his family should anything happen to him.

After Jonathan died alongside his father, King Saul, David took the throne. As king, David could have done what a king traditionally did, which was kill the sons and families who would be a threat to the throne and kingship. David did the opposite. He kept his covenant with Jonathan and showed kindness to Jonathan’s son.

David showed him great kindness and the highest of honors when he gave him his grandfather’s land and a place at the king’s table. What awesome kindness!

* In Matthew 18, Jesus tells the Parable of a servant who owed his master an unpayable debt. The servant could not repay the master, so the master was going to take all the man had and sell his family into slavery to pay back the debt. The man begged his master and was shown mercy.

Matthew 18:27 records the master’s response: “Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.”

This compassion, is the “quality of showing kindness or favor, of being gracious, or of having pity or mercy.” *This is the same kindness and compassion God shows to all of us.*

After leaving his master though, the servant found someone who owed him a much smaller dept & he beat the man, saying, “Pay me what you owe!” When the master found out what this servant had done after his huge debt had been forgiven, he was very angry and held him accountable: “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?'”

The harsh truth we need to take with us today is “If we are not kind, we do not understand the gospel and what Jesus has done for us in showing us kindness. Kindness should lead us to kindness.

Paul gets to the heart of God’s kindness in Ephesians 4:32-5:1 when he says: ***“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”***

* Paul stresses the importance of understanding that God has exercised ultimate kindness toward us in His Son, Jesus’, sacrifice on our behalf.
* He goes on, requesting that we should, “Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

Truth is, IT IS POSSIBLE for us to be kind...How? By following His example of loving kindness toward us.

Paul also wrote in Titus 3:4-7 and stresses: “But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy.”

* The thing about kindness is that none of us deserve it or can earn it. Kindness is free and merciful. God has saved us through His Son, not because of our works, but because of His mercy and 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 Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.”

This is what true and perfect kindness is. Free and Merciful

Col. 3:12 says this: “***Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.”***

* This verse says that we are supposed to clothe ourselves with kindness. Now, when you get dressed for the day, you dress to impress, for others to see…This should be the case with kindness. We should wear it humbly and show it to others to see…

Today I want to challenge us with three ways in which we should dress ourselves daily in kindness: in your words, in your actions, and in your attitude.

* **Kindness in your words**
  + It’s incredibly easy to be unkind with your words. Saying the first thing that comes to mind, or not taking time to think about your before you speak can result in a lot of hurt feelings and a lot of regrets.
  + However, it can also be incredibly easy to be kind with your words. How? By taking a little extra time to think about your words before you speak them out loud.
  + This may sound like a lot of work, but it’s not. You just need to allow that “loving patience” to grow & ask yourself one question: Is what I’m about to say going to be kind?
    - If the answer is yes, that’s awesome. If the answer is no, then don’t say it! Think of a different way to say what you want to say, this time using kindness. – “Nothing nice to say, say nothing at all”
* **Kindness in your actions**
  + Ask yourself—do you take the time to think about whether your actions are done in kindness?
  + In the busyness of everyday life, kindness can quickly become something that is shoved aside in favor of convenience. Why? Because it’s just not convenient to be kind! It’s way easier to just be selfish.
  + So, this week, as you’re going about your normal routine, take the time to purposefully make sure your actions are kind. Don’t think about how your actions affect you, or what people think of your actions. Think about how you can exhibit kindness with your actions.
* **Kindness in your attitude**
  + How many of us struggle with having a kind attitude any time, much less all the time? Think about it—when someone is getting on your nerves, is your attitude toward them kind? What about when someone is unkind to you? Or what about when things don’t work out the way you wanted them to? Does your attitude reflect kindness?
  + There is only one person who has complete control over your attitude, and that one person is you. So, take control of it! When a situation happens that makes you feel irritated, or selfish, or any other unkind emotion, take a deep breath and choose to react with kindness.
  + If this is something you struggle with, ask God to help you! When you feel yourself struggling to have a kind attitude, pray and ask Him to help you.

Closing:

Job 6:14 says “Anyone who withholds kindness from a friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty.”

* In this verse, fear doesn’t mean to cower in the corner, terrified. It means to revere, or to respect.
* Here it says that withholding kindness from a friend or if you’re not being kind to those around you, you aren’t respecting God!

That’s how important kindness is to God. It’s so important that His Word says that withholding kindness from a friend is withholding fear and respect from Him. That’s a big deal!

It’s important to show kindness to everyone, even the people who you don’t feel like being kind to. No matter what people look like on the outside, and no matter what their political view, social view, etc. You never know what they are going through on the inside. It will never hurt to be kind to someone, but it is hurtful to be unkind.

Have you ever heard the saying that “You may be the only part of Jesus that someone ever sees?” It means that there are some people in your life who may never go to church or open a Bible, so you are the only exposure to Jesus that they may ever have. You may be the only example of His kindness that they ever experience. What an awesome opportunity!

Many times, every single day, we are faced with a choice to be kind or be unkind in our words, our actions, and our attitudes. Kindness will not always be the easiest choice. In fact, many times in this day we are living, kindness will be the hardest choice. But it’s ALWAYS the right choice!

Don’t let a lack of kindness cause you regrets. You have no idea how much your kindness could mean to someone. It could mean nothing, or it could mean everything to them. But as a follower of Jesus, and as an example of one bearing His fruit & character, it’s your responsibility to be kind despite how it’s received.

When it is difficult to be kind, remember that we have been shown the most amazing and costly act of kindness that ever has existed.

* While we deserve death, the King blesses us and invites us to His table.
* And just as in the parable of the unmerciful servant, we have been forgiven a debt we can never repay and because of God’s great kindness and compassion, we should forgive others of their debts against us and show them the same kindness we have been shown by our kind & compassionate God.

As a people who have been shown such great kindness, we should clothe ourselves with kindness daily and live as Paul encourages us to: “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God has forgiven us.”

**Kindness is contagious! Begin today living the “kindness” lifestyle and watch the fruit of kindness begin to spread & grow in and around you!**