Fruit of the Spirit: Kindness
Ephesians 4:32, Luke 10:30-37, Romans 12:2, Matthew 5:14-16

Kindness is a very tangible virtue that people can see. While most of the other fruits are only an internal change that people can't really see, Kindness is both an inward and an outward response to the change that happens inside of us.

Understanding Kindness: Kindness is the outward expression of our inward transformation. Kindness involves being generous, considerate, and compassionate toward others. It's a reflection of God's love in action.

In Ephesians 4:32, Paul encourages us, *"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."* Here, kindness is linked with compassion and forgiveness. It's a tangible way of showing God's love to those around us.

Jesus's Example: Jesus is our ultimate example of kindness. Throughout His ministry, He showed incredible compassion to everyone He encountered. From healing the sick to feeding the hungry, and even forgiving those who wronged Him, Jesus' life was a testament to what it means to live out kindness.

In Luke 10:30-37, Jesus shares a parable about a Samaritan who helped an injured Jew. This is another one of Jesus's sneaky stories. There is always more to the story than what meets the eye. Jewish hated Samaritans, because while they were Jewish, they were only half Jews. Here, a Samaritan goes out of his way to help a wounded man (Jew) left on the side of the road, while others just pass by. The Samaritan's act of kindness wasn't just about offering physical aid; it was about seeing someone in need and responding with genuine care and selflessness. In this story, all of the normal characters you might think would help the Jewish man do not, and yet an enemy stops and takes the time to help a stranger.

While talking in our men's group over breakfast, the question "What does mature fruit look like when it comes to Kindness?" was asked. After a few minutes of discussion, it was decided that being kind is easy when the other person is being kind in response. Mature fruit of kindness looks like being kind to those who do not extend the same to you. When Jesus makes the Samaritan the hero of this story, he expects his mostly Jewish audience to be offended by his remarks because if the tables were turned the Jew would likely have never helped the Samaritan.

Kindness is like a muscle. The more we exercise kindness the stronger it gets in our lives, and the easier it will get to be kind in the face of adversity. Kindness should be our automatic response. Our first instinct. Compassionate and Kind.

Romans 12:2 says, *'Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.'*

A lot of people have interpreted this scripture in many different ways. Some use it to tell Christians not to listen to secular music, or go to the movies, or to wear certain clothes. However, this verse has less to do with what surrounds us but everything to do with our hearts. Our worldly nature is not to be kind. Our worldly nature is to fend for ourselves. To make sure that we have enough, to hoard and stockpile waiting for doomsday.

God's desire isn't for us to conform to the patterns of this world, or to our worldly nature. God's desire is for us to be different. To fight against our natural self, and to lean into a Kingdom

mindset. Part of that Kingdom mindset is to be Kind. In other words, WE don't come by Kindness naturally. It is a learned trait from our father, and Jesus was the perfect example of Kindness for us to follow.

Applying Kindness: So how do we apply kindness into our lives? How can we cultivate this fruit of kindness in our hearts and minds?

- **Be Attentive to Needs:** Look around you and notice where there are needs. Whether it's a kind word, a helping hand, or a listening ear, be proactive in offering your support. Examples: Men's and Women's Group Projects
- **Practice Empathy:** Put yourself in others' shoes. Understand their struggles and challenges, and respond with compassion rather than judgment. Examples: 100 Families. Supporting people in their struggle
- **Forgive Freely:** Holding onto grudges can hinder our ability to be kind. Just as Christ forgave us, we are called to forgive others, freeing ourselves to love generously.
- **Be Intentional:** Kindness should not be an afterthought but an intentional part of our interactions. Make an effort to be kind in both big and small ways, and let it become a natural outflow of your relationship with God.

Conclusion: Matthew 5:14-16 says *"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. '*

You are the light of the world, and how will the world see your light? Through your love, and through your deeds or your kindness. What happens if you light a candle in a dark room? What can you see? You see the light. It does not matter how dark a situation may seem, or how bad the world may seem, if you are shining a light others will see it!

As we strive to live out the fruit of kindness, let us remember that it's not always easy. There will be times when kindness feels challenging, especially when dealing with difficult people or situations. But it's in these moments that our kindness can truly shine, reflecting and shining the love of Christ in a world that desperately needs it.

Discussion Questions:

- The Good Samaritan is a great parable Jesus used to express what kindness should look like. Can you think of any examples from Jesus' actions that also show mature kindness?
- True/Mature Kindness is extended to others without expecting anything in return. Sometimes this can be difficult. What are some actions you need to take to show more kindness to those around you?