

KINDNESS GRACE
Colossians 3:12-17

Good News About Grace
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On this Mother's Day we ask ourselves two questions. One, what is the hallmark of a great mother? And two, what is the greatest gift you could give a mother for Mother's Day? In both cases, I believe we can come up with the same answer—kindness. Kindness is the hallmark of a great mother and kindness is the greatest thing you can do for your mother.

Colossians 3:12 says, *“As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience.”* Kindness is grace and love in action; it is something you do. And yet kindness isn't just for mothers. So this morning I will suggest five ways we can all be a more kind and grace-centered person.

First of all be sensitive. Become aware of the needs around you. The reality is that everyone is having a rough time these days, just in different ways. And yet the number one cause that keeps us from being kind is busyness. When I get too busy I'm too distracted to be aware of what others are going through. I'm too busy to be kind.

And often in that I'm the least kind to my children, my wife, to friends around me. When I have my agenda, my goals, my desires—I don't have time to be kind. If I were to ask you, what are the three greatest emotional needs of the people closest to you would you know? Kindness starts by being aware, being sensitive.

The second way to become a more kind and gracious person is to be supportive. Be supportive in your speech and the way you talk to people. Do you remember how ruthless kids were on the playground when you went to school? They'd exploit every weakness, rub in every failure.

You'd go home and your Mom would say, “Sticks and stones will break my bones but words (or names) will never hurt me.” And yet that's not true. A broken bone heals faster than a broken spirit. Your words have a great power to heal or hurt.

So how much do you support people with your words? Are you an encourager or are you a discourager? Do you lift people up or do you put them down? If God had a contest and gave you a dollar for every kind word you said, and took away a dollar for every critical word, would you be rich or poor? Unfortunately some may be in the hole.

The third way to become a more kind and grace filled person is to be sympathetic. Kind people share in the emotions of others. Romans 12:15 says, *“Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.”* There are some people who really have this gift. They can really feel what others feel.

Now many men are afraid of their emotions. The shortest verse in the Bible was about Jesus at the death of his friend Lazarus. "*He wept.*" Jesus was a man's man. Some people say, "I just don't know what to say when I go to a funeral." The good news, don't say anything.

Just being there is being kind. In fact, they often say that grieving people don't remember anything you say, but they do remember if you were there. The best thing you can do when someone is grieving is to cry with them. That's what it means to be kind.

And if you want to know the key to your teenager's heart it is sympathy. In those teenage years everything is a big deal. You get a pimple and it's a national crisis. And yet they come to you and you say, "It's no big deal; don't fret." It probably isn't, but it is to them.

If your teenager comes home and they've been jilted by some boyfriend or girlfriend and you just say, "Oh, you'll get over it." Yes, the world hasn't ended, but they think it has. You need to treat your teenager's feelings as important. You need to listen and care.

The fourth way to become a more kind and gracious person is to be straightforward. Sometimes kindness means being candid and frank. It means leveling with people, telling them where they are blowing it, telling them where they are making a big mistake.

Have you ever seen the bumper sticker, "Real friends don't let friends drive drunk." It's true. A genuine friend will say, "You're blowing it. I'm not about to let you do this." A real friend doesn't say, "It's none of my business." If you're a friend it is your business.

Sometimes the kindest thing you can do is level with the person and tell them exactly what they are doing wrong. When you go to a doctor, do you want him/her to lie to you or be straightforward? Do you want them to say, "You need surgery or you will die," or "It's no big deal. Just think positive thoughts and it may go away."

Sometimes the surgeon needs to cut you. And sometimes you have to be confronted with the painful truth before you can heal. Sometimes the kindest and most grace centered thing you can do is just level with people and tell them the truth. It is far less kind to overlook a problem that is hurting someone.

Some years ago Dr. Dobson wrote a book entitled, "*Love Must Be Tough.*" Sometimes love must be tough. Sometimes you have to say, "I'm not going to stand for it anymore. I'm not going to sit by in silence and watch you destroy your marriage." Kindness is straightforward.

The fifth way to become a more kind and grace filled person is to be spontaneous. Don't wait to do a kind act. Have you ever had someone do something for you that was really nice and thought, "I need to write a thank you note to that person." But then you put it off, and off, and finally it has been so long that you're embarrassed to write it? Or that phone call?

Opportunities to show kindness do not last. Seize the moment. You must do it now as you have the opportunity. They pass quickly. What I'm saying is give roses while people can still smell them. Some grace and kindness now is much more worthwhile than nice words, or an elaborate bouquet at a funeral.

The old saying goes, “Do your givin’ while you’re livin,’ then you’ll be knowin’ where it’s goin’.” A lot of people say, “When I die I’m leaving some, or all, to charity...to the church...the Lord’s work.” And that’s a really nice idea. I hope you have included Messiah in your will. But isn’t it just a good, or in many cases better, to also do a significant amount of giving while you’re still living? Isn’t it wonderful to watch all the good this money can do right now?

When you have the opportunity be spontaneous in expressing kindness. When it comes to kindness good intentions don’t count. Like horseshoes close doesn’t count. “I’ve been meaning to do something for my wife/husband/parent(s)/that teacher/that business partner/that employer...I’ve been meaning to.” But when are you going to do it?

The classic example of this from the Bible is the Good Samaritan. He saw the need. He saw that the man had been beaten, robbed, mugged. He was battered. He was lying alongside of the road. The religious leaders had passed by and they had not done anything. This guy saw a need. He stopped. He was spontaneous.

He picked him up, bandaged him, took him to the nearest Holiday Inn, gave them his American Express card and said, “I’ll cover the bills for him. I’ll be back later.” Would you do that; for a total stranger? Contrast that with the two religious guys who were calculating along the way, “Is this tax deductible? Is there some way I can write this off from my farm income?”

Contrast the spontaneity of the Good Samaritan with the attitude of the priest who said, “I did my duty at the temple. I gave at the office. I’ve got family priorities. I need to save my money for that rainy day.” We are great at rationalization, aren’t we? “I’ve got family duties. It’s not my fault he got into this situation. I’m sure I give as much as most people.”

You know, my friends, kindness always costs. The Good Samaritan paid the bills. It’s not a free thing. And yet as I said earlier, the number one enemy of kindness is busyness. So many say, “I’m too busy to serve. I’m too busy to be part of a ministry. My time is more important than your time.” And yet true life means that you only bless yourself when you are blessing others.

Who can you be kind to this week? How about at home? Who needs you to spend more time with them? How about at school? Is it possible for you to be kind to that person who no one else likes? How about at church? Do you speak to people you don’t know? How about a friend who doesn’t know Jesus? The kindest thing you can do is to tell them God loves them.

The Christian life, my friends, is a life of grace and kindness. Jesus is the kindness of God incarnate; in flesh; in person; in a body. If you’re ever going to be like Jesus, you’ve got to learn about his grace and kindness. The mark of leadership is kindness. The mark of Christlikeness is kindness. Love is grace in action.

A couple challenges today. First, find a place for you to serve. Find a place where you can give back. And second, this week do seven acts of kindness to someone around you and don’t tell them you did it. Find your joy in Jesus—in the blessing of serving.