

Kindness



Fruit of the Spirit (Part 6)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you at the beginning of a new week sharing with you out of truths that life has taught me, truths that have made the difference between success and failure in my life and can do the same for you.

But first, I want to say "thank you" to those of you who have been writing to me. Before I finish this talk, we'll be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. Feel free to share with us your personal needs, your problems, your prayer requests.

All last week I was speaking about the various forms of the fruit of the Holy Spirit and this week I'm going to continue with the same theme. The four forms of fruit that I dealt with last week were: love, joy, peace and patience. Today I'm going to speak about the next form of spiritual fruit, the fruit of kindness.

What is the essential nature of kindness? I suggest that it can be defined this way: Kindness is treating other people the way we would wish them to treat us. I think that makes kindness practical and easy to comprehend and, in a certain sense, easy to apply because we usually know how we would like other people to treat us. In fact, we're very clear about that in our mind.

Kindness means that we're equally clear that we treat other people the way we want them to treat us. Jesus has something to say about this in Luke 6:27–31. He says this:

> "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do no withhold your shirt from him either. Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. And just as you want men to treat you, treat them in the same way." (NAS)

There are a number of examples of kindness: loving our enemies, doing good to those who hate us, blessing those who curse us, praying for those who mistreat us. And if

anybody wants to take away something that is ours, we do not withhold it. We give to those who ask of us. I think the various things that Jesus mentions there as forms of conduct really constitute kindness in action. But in the last verse, He sums it up and gives us the key to kindness. He says, "Just as you want men to treat you, treat them in the same way." Treat others as you want them to treat you.

In the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 7:12, Jesus returns to this principle and He says this:

> "Therefore whatever you want others to do for you, do so for them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." (NAS)

That's an amazing statement, isn't it? That the entire Old Testament, the Law and the Prophets, was based on one simple principle. That whatever you want other people to do to you, you do to them. Sometimes we get so lost in the maze of commandments and ordinances that we wonder what it's all about. But here in the New Testament, Jesus sums it all up in that one simple basic principle that you treat others the way you want them to treat you.

Now what I want to tell you at this point is that that's how it's going to work out anyhow. So you might as well know it in advance. In other words, the treatment that you mete out to others ultimately will return to you. This is a law of the universe. It's a law that maybe is not recognized by scientists but it's a law that God has built into human conduct and human relationships. Paul sums it up in Galatians 6:7:

> "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked [or, 'You cannot fool God'] for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap." (NAS)

So you see, in this aspect, really, kindness is just enlightened self-interest. What you want to get back is what you give out. However, in order for this to work, we have to combine kindness with the previous form of the fruit of the Spirit, which I spoke about last week: patience, a willingness to hold out. We don't always look for quick results. Sometimes we have to wait quite a long while before we reap what we've been sowing, whether it's good or evil. But what the Scripture tells us is whatever we sow, that's what we're going to get back.

But Paul emphasizes the need for patience a little further on in Galatians 6:9. He says:

> "And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary." (NAS)

So there's an interval between sowing and reaping. You treat others the way that you want them to treat you and it doesn't necessarily mean that they'll react and respond that way immediately. In fact, it may look like just the very opposite. But Paul says if you go on and don't give up, in due time you will reap what you've sown.

There's great emphasis in the Bible, particularly in applying this principle to the poor. The Bible has a lot more to say about helping the poor than quite a number of modern Christians have realized. For instance, in Proverbs 19:17, and I'm reading from The Living Bible, it says:

> "When you help the poor you are lending to the Lord—and he pays wonderful interest on your loan!" (TLB)

He may keep the loan quite a long while but one day you'll get it back, with interest. And God's rate of interest is high. So, again, that's the same principle: give out, be kind, treat others the way you want them to treat you, and, though it may seem you've given out and you were getting nothing back, remember you've really made a loan to the Lord and even if people are unfaithful, the Lord will see that you're repaid.

The same principle is stated again in Ecclesiastes 11:1–2, in rather beautiful, figurative language:

> "Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again. [Give out and just wait and see how God is going to reward you. And then it says:] Give portions to seven, yes to eight, for you do not know what disaster may come upon the land." (NIV)

I would suggest that seven is the number of duty, eight means you're going beyond duty. It's like what Jesus spoke about, "the second mile." So Solomon says, "Do your duty. Give to the people you have to give to and go a little beyond." Why? Because you do not know what disaster may come upon the land. In other words, one day you may need help. You may be the one who's in a desperate situation. If you've given out and helped others, when that day comes, God will see to it that you're properly cared for.

What I've been saying about treating others the way we want them to treat us applies not only to our actions but just as much to our attitude. Listen to what Jesus says in Matthew

7:1–2:

> "Do not judge lest you be judged yourselves. [In other words, if you judge, it's coming back on you in judgment.] For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it shall be measured to you. [In other words, we better judge people charitably because we're going to want them to judge us charitably at some point in the future.]" (NAS)

In the Sermon on the Mount, again, Matthew 5:7, Jesus says:

> "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." (NAS)

If we want to receive mercy from God, we have to show mercy to others.

One principle has gone with me all through my life as a Christian which has lasted nearly forty years—that I need the mercy of God. I have never been ignorant to that. I'm always aware, continually, that I need God's mercy. For that reason, personally, I do not dare to deny mercy to others simply because I know I'm going to need mercy from God.

Paul talks about the same kind of attitude in Galatians 6:1, when it comes to dealing with our fellow believers who've made some kind of a mistake and gotten themselves into trouble. He says:

> "Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to yourselves, lest you too be tempted." (NAS)

See, spirituality is not being severe and legalistic and dogmatic. Spirituality is being gentle to others when they're in trouble. The reason why we need to be gentle to others: one reason is that the same weaknesses that are in them could easily appear in us.

So many times in my Christian experience I've seen Christians harshly judge another believer who got into trouble and it wasn't very long before the one who had judged harshly was in just the same kind of trouble himself. You see, it's a kind of law. Listen to what James says in 2:13:

> "For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment." (NAS)

If you're not merciful in judging others, you'll be judged without mercy yourself. That verse is rendered a little more fully in The Living Bible:

> "For there will be no mercy to those who have sown no mercy. But if you have been merciful, then God's mercy toward you will win out over his judgment against you." (TLB)

So you could be judged by God. There are things in your life, doubtless, that God could judge you for. God is a God of judgment but He's also a God of mercy. How can you be sure that it's God's mercy you'll receive and not His judgment? By showing mercy to others. If you have been merciful, then God's mercy towards you will win out over His judgment against you.

Well then, I would like to sum up what kindness is. Kindness is treating others the way you want them to treat you or, to put it in another way, kindness is living in harmony with the laws that govern the universe, especially the laws that govern conduct and relationship. In a certain sense, kindness is enlightened self-interest.

Well, our time is up for today. But I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be speaking about the sixth form of spiritual fruit, the fruit of goodness.

Radio Program

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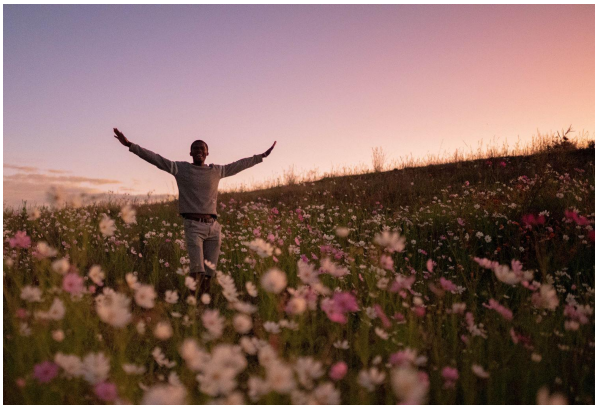

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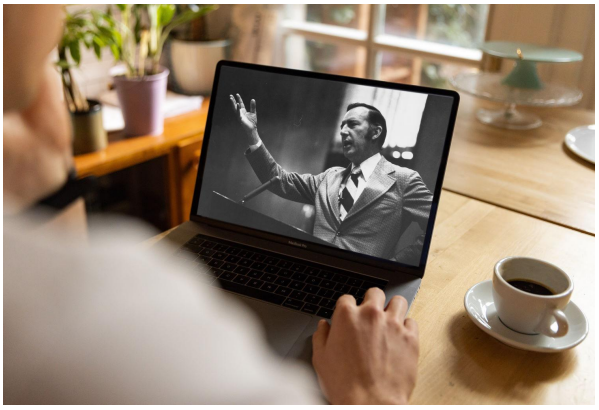

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