

# Lesson Five

## Kindness

### Introduction

What is the world's idea of kindness? The world's reason for kindness?

*Chrestotes* (khray-stot'-ace) is the Greek word we translate as "kindness." Its use in Greek, has a flavor of good will that shows itself in understanding what the object of kindness needs and giving it. However, the Greek word takes us beyond being thoughtful, considerate, and generous. Someone who is *chrestotes* is morally good, gracious, honest, decent, and, consequently, pleasant to be with.

There's an "easy to wear" quality about *chrestotes*-filled people. They are like that favorite pair of jeans that slide on without difficulty, never bind, and always help you look your best.

The Spirit, of course, is *chrestotes*. It's in watching his love in action that we learn best how this part of his gift to us will demonstrate itself.

### Studying God's Word

#### The Source of Kindness

God's kindness shows itself clearly in two ways: in the giving of his Son to be our Savior and in the eternity that awaits us. Read Titus 3:4-7 and Ephesians 2:6,7.

- Titus 3:4-7: *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. 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.*
- Ephesians 2:6,7: *God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*

1. When God sent his Son to be our Savior, how did his kindness show?

2. Why is it amazing that he shows his kindness? Consider the context of Galatians 5:16-21: <sup>16</sup> *So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.* <sup>17</sup> *For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.* <sup>18</sup> *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.*

<sup>19</sup> *The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; <sup>20</sup> idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions <sup>21</sup> and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

3. Why did he show us that kindness?
4. What are the results of his kindness?

The divine *chrestotes* that we experience through the Spirit of God comforts, assures, and encourages us. It springs from God's grace that reached out to sworn enemies and made us his dear children.

## His Word in My Life

1. A Bible scholar has written that *chrestotes* is the "sympathetic kindness or sweetness of temper which puts others at their ease and shrinks from giving pain." Identify an example of this in Jesus' ministry.
2. Look back over the two passages we just studied. Explain which result of God's kindness you value the most.
3. Not every Christian feels that a relationship with God is filled with "easy to wear" kindness. What gets in the way of our fully appreciating God's kindness?
4. A bumper sticker urges us to practice "random acts of kindness." From what you know about the Spirit's kindness, is it random and sporadic or intentional and consistent?

## Studying God's Word

1. Read Luke 6:34,35: *"If you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be [children] of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked."*

According to Jesus how does God's kindness show itself?

How will we want God's brand of kindness to demonstrate itself in our lives?

2. Read Colossians 3:12: *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*

And Ephesians 4:31,32 *Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

Kindness is demonstrated in our caring for others, in tenderheartedness that is moved by peoples' pain, and in loving respect for all. Think about each of the characteristics that Paul commands us to "get rid of." How will they ruin any demonstration of kindness?

- bitterness
  
- rage and anger
  
- brawling
  
- slander
  
- malice

3. Look again at the verses in question 2. List at least three reasons we Christians will dress ourselves in kindness.

## **His Word in My Life**

Expressing the Christlike kindness the Spirit brought with him when he moved into our lives requires a constant refocusing on the eternal treasures that kindness has provided us. God's kindness to us ungrateful and wicked people prompts our similar kindness to others.

1. Gear up your creativity. Paul writes about kindness as being a garment we dress ourselves in. When you think about kindness as a piece of clothing, what does this outfit look like? What does it feel like when you wear it? When others see you dressed in your kindness apparel, what impact does it have on them?
  
2. A Bible scholar has said that kindness "may be soft, but it is not weak; tender, but not feeble; sensitive, but not fragile." How does that balance help you as you think about living out the Spirit's kindness in one situation you know you will find yourself in this week?

3. Jesus' kindness shows itself in his servant service. "*The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many*" (Matthew 20:28). What direction does that give you as you think about serving your family, serving your fellow church members, serving the people you work with? Think of a specific instance where you can better show Jesus' servant kindness.
  
4. Kindness means we must be willing to get close to people—and when we get close to people, we risk being taken advantage of, rejected, and made to look the fool. Without mentioning names, describe a time when someone abused your kindness. After experiencing that, what challenges did you have in being kind? How did you overcome them?
  
5. Kindness is usually experienced in small, simple deeds. Share how others were kind to you this past week when they listened to you, asked about your day, opened a car door, smiled, etc.

## Summary

When we experience God's kindness, we experience love in action. When we live out kindness, we speak gently to the obnoxious loud-mouth. We hug the prickly. We smile at the sullen and sassy. We speak a helpful word of direction to those who have lost their way. We strive to be kind, not just because we have the example of kindly Jesus serving us, but primarily because through Jesus' service our ransom is paid, our freedom is secured, our eternity is in heaven.