

Step by Step: Kindness (Week 8)

HOOK

The Scarred Hand by Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler (Part 1).

William Dixon lost his wife and her baby. He very much looked forward to raising a son, teaching him to read, and to appreciate literature the way he did. One day a house down the street caught fire. An old lady was pulled dying from the flames, but her grandson Dicky Winslow, was trapped. She was a bitter old lady who had taken in the orphaned son of her deceased daughter and who never cared for him very much. In fact, she ignored him most of the time. In the excitement of the fire, she had forgotten about him. He woke up with flames in his attic bedroom, trapped and calling for help from the window. The old wooden stairs had burned and collapsed, and the onlookers had given up getting to him. Will Dixon shouted, “cowards” as he rushed past the crowd and began to climb the wall gripping onto an iron pipe bolted to the side of the house. He took the boy in his left arm and supported himself on the pipe with his left. Dicky was safe and unscathed, but the iron pipe had been heated up by the fire. Will’s hands were terrible burned. He would be scarred for life.

INTRO

Galatians 5:22-25 - *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **gentleness**, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.*

- Not the “works of a Christian” but the “fruit of the Spirit.”
- These are the overflow of “walking with the Spirit.”
- It’s the impression of walking with Jesus step by step throughout the day.

John 15:4-5 - *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, it is he (she) that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*

- We can only bear the fruit of the vine/tree we’re on.
- We spend so much time with Jesus His character rubs off on us.

Tonight’s emphasis: Kindness. Tonight isn’t about pursuing being nice – that’s what the rest of the world is doing – it’s on what the life of a believer looks like when they PURSUE Jesus. **It’s Kind.**

BOOK

Ephesians 4:32 - "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

LOOK

Foundational Points:

1. Kindness is the action of love. It would seem **kindness is a consistent, inseparable quality of love.** Can you imagine a love which did not act in kindness? Love takes action toward the person being loved. It closes the distance, shows affection, and desires the other's best.

- **John 15:13** – "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." - Jesus
- "The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference." Elie Wiesel
- Kindness is the action of love.
- Referring to **1 Corinthians 13:4** –Patience, humility, giving up one's own way, gentleness, and rejoicing in truth. These are the actions and interactions of love. When love is in action it's called kindness.
 - Who have you not been kind to lately? You are in error because you have not been loving them.

2. Kindness is obedience. Jesus followers are expected to act in love by sacrificing for our neighbors.

- **Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 22:39** - *You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*
 - It's the same in the Old Testament as it is in the New. It is an eternal and timeless command with no uncertain terms without room for rationalization or excuse. God's people are to express kindness. But, to whom are we to show kindness? (Jesus' example: Story of the Good Samaritan)
 - According to Christian ethics, our neighbor includes our enemies too.
- Sometimes it's hard to be kind. Sure, it's easy to be kind to someone you like or even a stranger as long as they are kind to you (**Matt.5:46-47**). But, it's entirely another matter to be kind to someone you don't care for...at all, even an enemy.

- We have the freedom to recognize that people are cruel, even evil, and loathe their actions. But, we have the command to love the person and treat them with kindness anyway.
- This can only be possible if **1)** love is not based on your feelings but on a decision of your will and **2)** love is not a human trait.
 - Said differently: To be loving and kind doesn't mean you have to manufacture affectionate feelings towards people. You don't have to sit and try to make yourself feel love towards them or make yourself believe they are nice people when they aren't. That's a big relief.
 - C.S. Lewis – “Christian Love, either towards God or towards man, is an affair of the will. If we are trying to do His will we are obeying the commandment, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.” He will give us feelings of love if He pleases. We cannot create them for ourselves...”
 - *Continued...* Because Jesus tells us to love others the way we love ourselves, Lewis refers to other people as “selves.” “But, whenever we do good to another self, just because it is a self, made (like us) by God, and desiring its own happiness as we desire ours, we shall have learned to love it a little more or, at least, to dislike it less.”
 - *He closes his thought with this.* “Do not waste time bothering whether you ‘love’ your neighbor; act as if you did. As soon as we do this, we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him.” – Mere Christianity
- **Philippians 2:8** - *And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*
 - Jesus is the ultimate example of loving-kindness in obedience to the Father.

3. Kindness will always require sacrifice. Kindness always gives up something. Big or small, it is always a sacrifice from the person giving love. In fact, kindness is the antithesis of selfishness. Can you imagine selfishness acting in kindness?

- Handing sandwiches to the poor, helping your sister clean her room, staying up late praying with a friend - kindness costs us time, energy, money, reputation, and sleepless nights. It pressures us to leave our comfort zones. To do things we didn't want to do or give up things we thought were important. Kindness costs.
- Consider your Elevate Leaders. Consider the many sacrifices they make every week to love on you. Time, money, family, emotional energy, etc.

- **1 John 4:9-10** - *In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*
- Kindness always costs something. God's loving-kindness towards us was immeasurable and He chose the high cost was worth it.

Kindness is known in these three truths: 1. Kindness is the action of love. 2. Kindness is obedience. 3. Kindness will always require sacrifice.

John 3:16

Forgiveness

Kindness is expressed in an uncountable number of ways, but the greatest kindness is in forgiveness. It is an action of love, requires sacrifice, and is commanded by God.

- **Ephesians 4:32** - *"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."*
- **Matthew 6:14-15** - *For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*
- Sometimes it begins with words only out of a heart of trying to be obedient. And you repeat that heart and those words over and over again praying for God to work in you something you can't do yourself. ("To err is human, to forgive divine.") You may not "feel" like you've forgiven them for a long time or ever. It does mean that every time your bitterness pops up – day by day, moment by moment – you whack it like whack-o-mole. You turn to prayer and surrender and repeat those words of forgiveness.
- *Context:* We may strongly dislike ourselves and be angry with ourselves, but we don't completely hate ourselves. This is seen in our wish to be better and our shame that something we have done is attached to our character and maybe even our reputation.
 - C.S. Lewis – "...we must try to feel about the enemy as we feel about ourselves – to wish they were not bad, to hope that they may, in this world or another, be cured: in fact, to wish their good."
- Forgiveness may be a long journey, but it is a chief tenant of kindness.

If you're anything like me, and you struggle with relying on your own strength, you've probably forgotten the introduction to all of these messages. Not forgiveness, or kindness, or any other fruit of the Spirit is attainable in our own strength. None of them are human traits. **We MUST turn our attention to God and look at His character remembering HE is IN us.**

Titus 3:4-7 - *But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

- God's character is Goodness and Kindness!
- **1 John 4:10** - *not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son.*
- Through, the power of the Holy Spirit He does a regenerating work to transform our nature. God's character rubs off on us and begins to bloom out of us.
- When? **When does His spiritual fruit blossom in His people?**

God's loving-kindness to us was shown in the total sacrifice of Jesus. When is our loving-kindness shown back to Him? When does the miracle happen that God creates in us a new creation – one filled with His Spirit and walking in Kindness?

1. Kindness is the action of love.
2. Kindness is obedience.
3. Kindness is always a sacrifice of self.

TOOK

Answer: When we give up everything to Jesus.

- The boy with the loaves and the fish **John 6:5-9** - *Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little." One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?"*
 - Contrast: Apostles words reveal their hearts – "are you sure we should give up our money?"
 - The boy's action – gives all he has.

- I'm not often like the boy. I'm most like the disciples.
- We must begin with the understanding that everything belongs to God. Jeremy Smith who recently spoke at HCS chapel put it like this: If there are 100 oranges, and God owns all 100 oranges, then you don't own any.
 - Open palm theory: Whatever God gives us we hold in an open hand. This allows God to leave it there, take it away, or give us more. As soon as we close it, "mine!" we may feel that God can't take it, but as closed fist can no longer receive from Him either. Then, when we're stuck with only what we refuse to surrender, our mentality changes to believing we NEED this thing in our hands to be content, fulfilled, to have peace or joy.
 - **Example:** The Rich Young Ruler (**Matt. 19:16-22**)
- When we have the perspective change of everything belongs to God, it is so much easier to 1. Put love into action. 2. Be obedient even if it's uncomfortable. 3. Sacrifice what we "have".
- When does His spiritual fruit blossom in His people? When His people surrender everything/all of themselves to Him and allow Him to put to death our selfishness.
 - **Ezekiel 36:26** - *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*

Then we will walk in obedience to God: **Micah 6:8** - *He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*

Part 2 of The Scarred Hand – Courtroom scene. Finish by reading the green underline in the attached pages.

Jesus shows us His hands, His kindness towards us.

- They are hands of sacrifice.
- They are hands of obedience.
- They are hands of forgiveness.

Jesus held His own life with open palms. Can't we for Him and for others around us?

That's the beginning of kindness.

Spend time with Jesus this week!