

Tending the Garden of God – Kindness, Goodness, and Faithfulness

1. Any study of kindness runs up against a real problem: it is not translated consistently in the Bible. Most newer versions put “goodness” there when they are not really the same thing.
 - a. Kindness comes from “kind” which not only describes an action, but also its arc. (each biological group is called a “kind”)
 - b. Giving to Haiti demonstrates goodness and, perhaps, sacrifice. Going to Haiti and personally caring for people shows kindness.
 - c. Giving to OneGenAway or Graceworks is goodness. Going to one or both of these and making a personal connection shows kindness.
2. Kindness is active caring on a personal, intimate level. It is close in work.
 - i. It is not the same as goodness. Goodness can have a severe aspect to it. What is good for the community or for a person may not appear to be kind. (foods, movies, disciplines, school)
 - ii. Goodness can and must draw lines and borders. Kindness can and must involve close contact.
 - iii. Jesus went about being both kind and good. He was kind to the Samaritan woman, the woman caught in adultery, and the demon possessed boy, but he also showed goodness in his life by clearing the temple, preaching against the Pharisees, and confronting evil.
 - iv. Getting this balance right is not easy. I doubt that I will master it before I pass on to another world. Still, it is worthwhile to give this some thought.
 1. How can I do good today?
 2. And while I am doing good, how can I be kind to those within the reach of my arms?
3. The Christian must look for opportunities to show kindness. We can be good to our waitresses, the person beside us on the plane, or a child with a tummy ache, but we must also look for a

way to go beyond “goodness” to kindness. That requires an active, caring response to their presence (and/or their need).

- i. Not just medicine, but rocking the child to sleep.
 - ii. Not just advice, but sharing and caring along the way.
 - iii. Not just a smile and politeness, engagement and elevation (treat them as people, look them in the eye)
- b. There are four aspects of kindness.
- i. **Friendliness:** openness; a willingness to engage. It is ready to step outside of its own interests. That is why First Corinthians 13:4,5 says “Love is kind... is not self seeking.”
 - ii. **Compassion:** we can care for people without caring about people. God calls us to go deeper than just outward action. He calls us to empathize – to feel along with the one inside our circle. (Col. 3:12 – “Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience”)
 - iii. **Generosity:** willing to give of our time, money, or possessions. (Mark 10:51 – “what do you want me to do for you?”)
 - iv. **Forbearance:** patience under pressure or in the face of provocation. Jesus says that God is “kind to the ungrateful and wicked” in Luke 6:35. Paul says God uses his “kindness, tolerance, and patience” to lead us to repentance (Romans 2:4). In Titus 3:4-5, he says we are saved because God drew near to us and showed us kindness and love.

4. Making a Difference With Attitude

- a. Kindness matters. It hits us on a personal level. While goodness can matter to us as a group, a church, or a nation, kindness matters to us as a person – a soul.
- b. Kindness is purposefully gracing another person’s life with good. It is showing mercy, grace, sweetness, caring... and doing it while looking the other person in the eye.
- c. Sadly, kindness is not the same as being a Christian. There are unsaved people out there who are kind, but

who have never accepted Christ as the Son of God. Our kindness alone cannot save us.

- i. And becoming a Christian does not automatically make us kind. There are a lot of unkind Christians.
 - ii. Some of them are kind in church or kind in public but unkind when it matters... when they are around their kind.
 - iii. Only those who accept Christ and who let His Spirit work in them, bearing the fruits of the Spirit, truly live as Christians.
 - iv. God keeps showing us kindness in order to convince us that it is a good thing to show kindness to others in return. It is to be a mark of our beautiful life. Remember -- "Put on, then, as God's chosen ones, compassion and kindness." (Col.3:12)
- d. Love is designed to flow from God to you to others and back to God. We have to keep it moving and that requires thought, planning, and acting spontaneously when the Spirit does something other than that which we have planned.
- i. Acknowledge the kindness that God has been showing you.
 - ii. Determine to pass that kindness along every single day.
 - iii. And return to the source of that kindness in prayer and personal devotion, gaining power to start the cycle all over again.

5. And Faithfulness...

- a. The word used here indicates a faithfulness to each other.
- b. Keep confidences.
- c. Be kind to the closest ones to you.
- d. Do not become weary in well doing. (Galatians 6:9)
- e.

Decide each day this week – make a note and place it where you will see it – that you will, that day, be marked by kindness. Make sure that when you lay your head down at night each night this week, you have something to take back to your source; a story of kindness you received from God and passed on to another, so that you will not be cut off from that power the next day.