



## TIME OF GRACE®

### *Help Me Have More: Kindness*

#### Study Notes

#### *Summary*

Most people would agree that we could use more kindness in our world. Gentleness. Warmth. Consideration for others. Yet such character qualities are challenging when the whole world seems selfish, angry, and anything but kind. So, how can Christians stand apart from such a world? This message focuses on the kind, generous, Giving heart of Jesus, and Christians' connection to him, a relationship that changes us into kind, gentle, generous people.

- **Galatians 5:22-23:** <sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Kind = \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Problem = Kindness costs us \_\_\_\_\_

- **Isaiah 54:8** <sup>8</sup> In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you," says the LORD your Redeemer.
- **Isaiah 63:7a** <sup>7</sup> I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised,
- **Jeremiah 31:3** <sup>3</sup> The LORD appeared to us in the past,<sup>[a]</sup> saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.
- **Luke 6:35b:** because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.
- **Titus 3:4-5a:** <sup>4</sup> But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup> 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,

Solution: \_\_\_\_\_ is kind.

### *Points to Ponder*

1. Check out your personal calendar and the variety of service times at your church. Make a personal commitment to be present whenever possible.
2. Life groups/Small groups give people the chance to remind each other of God's kindness. Be open to the possibility of "doing life together" with other Christians.

### *Homework for Next Week*

Read Proverbs 15:21; Acts 14:17; Psalms 21:6; Isaiah 12:6; Acts 2:28; Hebrews 12:2

Time of Grace Ministry  
**Help Me Have More: Kindness**  
Galatians 5:22,23; Isaiah 54:3; Isaiah 63:7; Jeremiah 31:3; Luke 6:35b; Titus 3:4,5  
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*Pastor Mike Novotny*

Starting today, and for the next few weeks, I want to talk about a few of the things on this list. Five of them to be precise. I want to talk to you about joy. I want to talk to you about peace. I want to talk to you about patience. I want to talk to you about self-control and today I want to talk to you about the fruit of kindness.

When I sit down and talk with you about life, and we schedule a time to meet in my office or go to a coffee shop or I come to your home, and you tell me what's going on in life, what you want in life, what you hope to change in life, almost always, I can barely think of a single exception, when what you want isn't one of those words that I've listed.

Maybe you met a special someone. You've seen relationships go well. You've seen relationships tank. Your brother's marriage didn't make it. Your parents were more partners than lovers. And you just want, you want a relationship that's full of selfless love, affection, gentleness, faithfulness and so you reach out. That's what you want.

Or maybe you're a person who's looking for peace with God. If you had to answer this question honestly, "Where do I stand with God? Am I sure that I'm going to heaven if I would die today? I've tried to be good, but I'm not 100% sure." You want peace. You just want to know at the end of the day that it's good, that I'm good. I don't have to worry about that. I'm in, I'm part of God's family. You want peace. Or maybe the peace you want is the kind that isn't frazzled by all the headlines, right? Everyone freaks out, everyone's outraged, everyone's at each other's throats. It's the pandemic and there's the politics and there's everything with everything. And you just want to become the kind of person who says, it's okay. Not that everything's okay, but there is a God, he sits on a throne, and he rules all things for the good of people like me, who are a part of His family. I don't have to lose sleep, I don't have to freak out, I don't have to be anxious, I don't have to worry, he's God and I'm his. That's peace.

Or maybe when we talk, what you're looking for is self-control. There's that one temptation and it's like you can't control yourself. And it's getting out of hand and it's messing with relationships. Maybe it's drinking, maybe it's the internet, maybe it's spending and you're reaching out because you want to know how do I change this before it gets even worse, before I burn more bridges? Like, what do I do? Pastor, how can you help?

And there's 50 variations of these conversations but they're always the same conversations. I want loving relationships. I want peace with God. I want joy in life. I want self-control with my own behaviors. I draw those words because of you and then I turn those words into a big tree,

because of this. There's this passage in the Bible that some of you know from Galatians chapter five. It says this, "But the fruits of the Spirit," that's God the Holy Spirit, "is love, joy, peace, forbearance," aka patience, "kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."

If we sat down for coffee and you said, "Pastor Mike, I want to be beautiful and rich and famous." I wouldn't have a picture to draw you. I'd say, good luck. But if you said, "You know, I want this stuff. I want love and joy and peace." Now we can talk. Because God produces that kind of fruit in us. Like, what exactly is this stuff? How does God produce it in our life? What can you do that might sabotage God's process? What can you do to throw fertilizer on, so that fruit grows faster? What does it look like? What does God have to do with it? We're going to slow down on this single passage of the Bible and talk about the fruit of the Spirit, the things that we want, things that God wants and how it happens in our daily lives. Now to kick things off, I want to start right in the middle of that list of the nine different fruits of the Spirit with the word kindness. Because, is it just me or is our culture infatuated with kindness? I've seen the t-shirts, sweatshirts, slogans, the memes, the social media posts? It's like you look in every direction and if your eyes are open to it, you will see the word kind or kindness everywhere.

I actually did a little cultural study and found that way back in 1982, a Californian author named Ann Herbert wrote a phrase on the welcome mat in front of her home. It's the first time that we know this phrase appeared. It said, "Practice random kindness." You've heard that before? "Practice random acts of kindness?" She even wrote a book connected to that idea in 1982. Fast forward to the year 2007 and the comedic classic movie 'Evan Almighty,' have you seen it? So, it's Steve Carell from *The Office* and he's like Noah and Morgan Freeman is God. Because if Morgan Freeman is in a movie, he has to be God. And Steve Carell's character, Evan, he wants to be a politician because he wants to change the world. And then suddenly God appears to him and tells him to build an ark and he's confused. "But I want to be a politician; I don't want to be Noah", Evan says. But God insists that he do it. Do you know why at the end of the movie God tells Evan to build an ark? Because you spell Ark, A-r-k, which God explains stands for 'Acts of Random Kindness.' "You want to change the world?" he says, "Don't worry about politics be the kind of person who practices kindness."

Five years after that in 2012 a book was published called *The Wonder*. Have you read it? Or seen the movie? It's about a kid in school who has some facial abnormalities, or deformities, and he's trying to fit in, His classmates are very cruel and unkind. And in that movie, there's this famous quote maybe you've heard it. It says, "If you have the choice between being right or being kind, choose kind." That phrase has stuck around in our culture.

Five years later Harry Styles, remember him? From the boy band One Direction? No? Any One Direction fans here? Yeah, it's a safe place. It's church you can admit it. Harry Styles came up on stage. He had a guitar strap across his chest, and it read, "Treat people with kindness." And those four words caught on for him too. It turned into a clothing line, a song on his next album and his personal slogan.

And in case you thought that the kindness craze stopped a few years ago, two Sundays ago at church, just after I had written a sermon, a little girl comes into the lobby and her shirt says,

"Kind people are my kinda people." And then just last Friday two days ago I'm walking to that same coffee shop. And just before I get to the door this woman comes from the other direction on the sidewalk. And she just has this big shirt bright colors, it says, "Be kind, (or be quiet)" Alright, so local coffee lovers, young women at our church, former boy band members, authors, movies, Morgan Freeman - everywhere you turn our culture is saying to you, and saying to me, "Be kind. Choose Kind." What this world needs is a lot more kindness. And this isn't always the case but, in this instance, God says, "Amen." In 1 Corinthians 13:4, God says, "Love is kind." In Ephesians 4:32, he says, "Be kind and compassionate to each other." In Colossians 3:12, the Apostle Paul says, "Clothe yourselves with kindness." God would actually one up our culture. Don't just choose kind or be kind on occasion, he says clothe yourself with it. Just like you're going to wear a shirt, or socks, or pants hopefully for most of this day, be the kind of person who is kind to other persons throughout this day. God says, "Amen."

And that's what I want to dig in with you today. What exactly is that? How does it work? What gets in the way of it? And how can God help us be the kind of people who are kind people? Well, let's start with a definition. If you're taking notes in your program, taking notes as home, the standard dictionary definition for kindness has three parts. Write these down.

A kind person is friendly, generous, considerate. What is a kind person? Someone who's friendly, and generous and considerate. That's the recipe for kindness. So friendly; if you smile at someone, "Oh, they seem kind." If you wave at someone. That was kind. If you're the kind of person who kind of slides in from the end seat at church. I'm not going to preach this sermon all over again. You know, you slide over, so you're welcoming people to come and sit next to you. That's kind. If it's the second time you're meeting someone and they're kind of embarrassed because they should know your name, but we never know names by the second time and you say, "Hey, I'm Mike", again. That's friendly, that's kind. Opening your home, opening your dinner table. Holding doors, it's what friendly people, it's what kind people do.

I was trying to self-reflect the other day and I don't want to be like overly critical, and oh, I'm just a terrible, horrible, rotten person. That's not true. And I don't want to be too flattering like I got this all figured out, like I'm Jesus. I was trying to figure out, am I friendly plus generous, plus considerate? And actually, I remembered a story from the first church where I served. Where I told this sweet, kind, elderly volunteer, and I quote, 'Well, suck it up for Jesus.' I should back up a bit. I was part of this initiative to try to make our congregation a kinder place for guests to visit. And we were thinking of what it's like to be a first-time guest at a church. Maybe some of you had this experience today. Like, you've never been there, you don't know what's inside, you're nervous, you're anxious, are you parking in the right spot? Am I entering through the right door? What's going to be inside when I go through the door? Will it be awkward? Will it be weird? Will I feel pressured?

You know, often when you're new at something you have all these questions. So, I thought what if we take these amazing greeters and ushers at our church -- they're friendly, they're amazing, they're considerate. What if we take one of them from inside the building and put them outside the building? Right? So, when a person parks, they get a friendly wave, and from 30 yards away

they see a friendly smile. And they know they're in the right spot. It's the right door. Like, instant impression is, "We're glad you're here, we've been waiting for you, we love you." Good idea? Yeah, I thought so too. The problem though with my last church was that it was in the state of Wisconsin. And Wisconsin, if you haven't heard, is frigid like 212 days out of the year. And so, Louise, who is so sweet and so godly and so forgiving after this happened, she was inside the building on this particular Sunday, and when she saw me, I think she knew what I was thinking. She said, "Oh, Pastor, I'm sorry, it is so cold out today." And I said, and I quote, "Well, say it with me. Suck it up for Jesus."

Yes, and the kindness award did not go to this guy. I was thinking about that, like what is it, the books and the movies and the Bible all say be kind, be kind, be kind. Why is it so difficult in so many moments to actually be a kind sort of person? I thought about that and if you want to write down my answer. Here's the best I came up with. The problem with kindness is that kindness costs us 'us.' Kindness costs us 'us.' If you're going to be a kind person you have to be willing to choose less of you. And in my experience, that's the hardest thing in the world. What I want, what I prefer, what I had planned, what's on my list, kindness doesn't prioritize those kinds of things. So being friendly? Maybe I like sitting where I like sitting, and I like parking where I like parking. And sometimes when you're at the grocery store, isn't it just easier to pull out your phone and stare at it instead of smiling at anyone? Right, it costs us 'us.'

Being generous. I mean you're busy enough. To help a friend move will cost you 'you.' To stay late after the event to help people pick up will cost you 'you.' To give more money to him or her or to pitch in for that will cost some of what you could do for you. And being considerate, will cost you about four things on your to-do list. It will slow down the pace of your life to be able to walk with those who are limping through life. To really listen to what your mom or dad is going through. To really try to understand the point of view of someone you don't agree with. That's going to cost you. If you're like me, if you're a goal setter, a productive person, a planner, you make all the boxes, you plan to check them, and then invariably people will interrupt what you had planned.

And love is kind, it's considerate, and it will cost you. Which means the big question today isn't, should we be kind? The big question is, how do we change the part of our heart that doesn't want to? Did you watch Evan Almighty? Read Wonder? Go on Spotify and listen to some Harry Styles? Will that do it? Or just read the passages again and again and again. Be kind, be kind, be kind, be kind, be kind. Clothe yourself with kindness. Will that work? The Bible's answer is no. You and I need something more than that to actually get to the level of our heart and soul, and transform us into selfless, kind, considerate, generous, friendly people. In fact, the only thing that is big and powerful enough to change you, to forgive me, to save us and transform us, the only thing that could possibly do that is God. Not a tip, not a to-do list. The only thing that could flip that switch in your heart is a God who is kind to us when we deserve the opposite of his kindness.

And did you know that is exactly what we find in this book? Let me machine gun a bunch of passages at you. I searched for the word kind or kindness throughout the whole Bible, and I found a treasure. In Isaiah 54 God said this, "In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a

moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you." Does a holy, perfect God get angry when people are inconsiderate, selfish and stingy? He does. But compared to his kindness, his anger is nothing. "But with everlasting kindness," he says it, "everlasting." He is friendly forever. He is generous with you forever. He is considerate of your need for forgiveness forever. He's not a one and done kind of God. He's not even a God of second chances. It is everlasting the way he treats us. So, we give thanks to the Lord for he is good. Because his kindness endures forever. But Isaiah wasn't done. Isaiah 63 says, "I will tell of the kindnesses of the Lord," I love that word. Kindnesses. Say it ten times fast after church is done, I dare you. Kindness, like not just once, it's in the plural because God has so much kindness that today he considers that you need to be forgiven for your sins. And you know what he does tomorrow? Exact same thing. His face shines upon his baptized forgiven people today. You know what he does next week? Exact same thing. He blesses you with daily bread, with earthly joys, and with unfailing forgiveness. Do you know what he's going to do next year? The exact same thing. "I will tell of the kindnesses of the Lord."

Isaiah's fellow prophet, Jeremiah, said the same thing. He said in the words of God, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, I have drawn you with unfailing kindness." I love that phrase, unfailing kindness. Do you know who his kindness fails? The pastor. "Well, suck it up." Do you know who his kindness fails? Even your mothers. Your wives, your sons, your best friends. People are people, they cannot be this. But God is so beautiful because His kindness is unfailing, it never fails when you need him to give to you. He always does. When you need Him to consider what you're going through. "I'm hurting, God, I need help." He always does. He clothes Himself with kindness because he is a God who is inherently kind.

And that was just the Old Testament. When I flip the pages to the New Testament, things got even better. Here's my favorite. Jesus once said in the gospel of Luke, "The most high God is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked." That's so crazy. There's God and there's good people and there's normal people and there's bad people, and there's really bad people and then there's wicked people. Who's God kind to? The bottom. You might feel so unworthy to be in church today. Maybe you're watching at home because you didn't feel worthy to be in a church today. But do you know who God is kind to? The wicked. You might be the most promiscuous, jacked-up, broken, maybe you don't just feel it, maybe on paper you are it. Listen to Jesus. The most-high God is kind to wicked people, to dumb pastors, to people who get caught up in their own to-do list. He is so friendly and generous and considerate of our needs. Is there any God like this God? The answer is no.

And the Apostle Paul knows it. In Titus chapter three he said this, "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared," what did he do? "He saved us," why? "not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy." He was kind to a woman who had been divorced five times. Tax collectors who had sold out for the love of money. Prostitutes who had given their bodies and so much more. He was so kind to people back then. And I want to preach at you today, he still is. He still is. We love God not because he gives us the top five tips to be kinder people, we love him because he loved us first. And, friends, I have to tell you when you get close to a God like that, when you hang your head because you know you don't deserve his friendly face, and he picks you up by the chin, and he looks you in the eye, like something

happens in here. The Spirit produces something in you. Secular culture can lecture us and command us, but no one can change us like the kindness of God.

So, how do you become a kind person? Write this down. I think with these three words by remembering, God is kind. God is kind. And the Bible says that, "God is love and that love is kind." Therefore, by correlation God must be a kind God, a friendly God, a generous God, a considerate God. Ever notice when you spend time with certain people you start to act like them. A chip off the old block. The apple doesn't fall far from the tree. Have you ever lived one place, like here in the Midwest, and then you traveled south for a while for business? And you came back, and you started saying, "Y'all" to people? Right? Like being around other people affects us, the way we talk, the way we think, the way we behave, and it's really the same with God. He says, "Spend time with me. Walk with me." So, Galatians five is about keeping in step with the Spirit, walking with Him. Because when you walk next to a kind God who is that kind of God, you might be a little more friendly, a touch more generous and much more considerate. It won't happen overnight. You'll still have struggles. Fruit isn't microwaved, it's organic and it takes time to grow. But it will happen. How beautiful is it when people choose kindness? How much more beautiful when you have a God who is kind? Let's pray.

Dear Father, thank you for being you. All the other gods of all the other religions are gods of judgement and justice. You're so rare that you are the only one who is kind to the wicked. We don't have to sugar-coat it; we don't have to lie to ourselves about it. We can admit all the times that we have fallen. All the times that we have failed and yet we can still believe at the end of the day that we're good because Jesus did it all.

Thank you, God, for being kind. Thank you for kindnesses. Thank you for everlasting kindness. Thank you for unfailing kindness. Thank you for filling your word with these reminders that you're exactly the kind of God that we need.

And now we ask you, Holy Spirit, to fill our hearts and produce in us what we simply can't produce in ourselves. Remind us of these words and best of all remind us of the way that we have been loved and received kindness first. Spirit, we're about to go out into the same world, same drama, the same people, the same neighbors, the same classmates, the same life. And so, if we're going to be different you have to change us, and so we ask you to change us. So, that we can be the friendly face that immigrant sees this week. So, we can be the friendly student or church member who opens our arms and recognizes the guests and the first day student when she arrives.

God how beautiful it is when we live together in compassion and kindness. We're asking your help to do it well this week. We pray all these things, God, not because we are righteous, but because Jesus is. And through him we become righteous too. I ask it all in His name and all God's people say, amen.