

6. The Fruit of the Spirit is Kindness (1Q 2010—The Fruit of the Spirit)

Biblical material: 2 Sam. 9:1–13; Prov. 15:1–5; 25:11–15; Matt. 5:43–48; Luke 6:35, 38; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:12–14.

Quotes

- True kindness presupposes the faculty of imagining as one’s own the suffering and joy of others. *André Gide*
- My mother worked with my brother Curtis and me, teaching us not to prejudge others—not to decide on their value before we knew them. She stressed treating everyone with kindness and giving every person a chance. *Ben Carson*
- The real influence of the Bible cannot be measured; it is reckoned only in terms of hearts that have been lifted up, decisions that have been changed, the men and women who, in response to its impervious demands, have done justice and loved kindness and walked humbly with God. *J. Carter Swain*

Questions

How would you explain true kindness? How does this relate to us and our concepts of God? What evidence is there that could be used to contradict God’s kindness? In what way does the Spirit lead us to be kind? What biblical stories illustrate kindness—both human and divine?

Bible discussion

David showed kindness for Jonathan’s sake (2 Sam. 9:1–13). What does this tell us—is kindness only because of others? How do “kind words bring life”? (Prov. 15:4 TEV). Jesus’ explanation in the Sermon on the Mount reaches a climax with the words about loving your enemies (Matt. 5:44, see also Luke 6:35). At this point his hearers must surely have thought he was going too far. Yet this is truly the way of God—and while not a human characteristic in our sinful state, is one that God wishes us to have by his grace. Paul in Eph. 4:32 TEV gives instruction with explanation: “Be kind and tender-hearted to one another, and forgive one another, as God has forgiven you through Christ.” Kindness is one of the Christian virtues outlined in Col. 3:12.

Comment

“It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms; but they did not realize it was I who healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love; I lifted the yoke from their neck and bent down to feed them.” Hosea 11:3, 4 NIV. Why does God want to specify *human* kindness? Isn’t it because he knows that we would understand that, rather than *divine* kindness? In this powerful image we see God as our kind parent, holding us by our arms as he helps us to walk, who carefully helps us back to our feet when we fall, and who scoops us up in his arms when we are just too tired to go on: “The Lord upholds all those who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down.” Psalm 145:14 NIV.

On English Bonfire Night (November 5), I had collected as many used fireworks as possible and extracted small amounts of the gunpowder left in them. I placed each in a test tube, and labeled them. (Very scientific!) Now we would find out what did what...

I dipped a spatula into the powder and lifted out a small amount. Carefully I put the end of the spatula in a flame, and noted the color of the burning powder. I wasn't quite sure, so I decided to try again.

What I hadn't reckoned on was that the spatula end would be quite hot. When it touched the powder: *fizz, bang, whoosh!*

A jet of flaming fire came roaring out of the test tube and hit the back of my hand, searing it instantly. I dropped the tube and yelped in pain. I rushed inside in agony, and after a quick inspection by mother of the damage, was taken off to hospital.

The most amazing thing to me at the time was not the shock of an Experiment gone wrong, but the reaction of my parents. Instead of the big telling-off I was expecting, they just wanted to know if I was OK and if my hand hurt too much. No lecture, no complaint, no raised voices. Just quiet questions of concern. I was so surprised that I almost forgot about my throbbing pain. Parents can be quite unpredictable, I decided. I was of course banned from performing dangerous Experiments. As I was discharged from hospital, the staff wished me well and hoped I had learnt my lesson.

Yes, I had learned a few lessons. This world is a dangerous place. If you play with fire, you do get burned. "They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind." Hosea 8:7 NIV. There's a natural consequence to your actions, and you reap what you plant. "All who draw the sword will die by the sword," Matthew 26:52 NIV.

Each action has natural and internal consequences. Results flow from our choices. Sin pays a wage, the wage is death... (see Romans 6:23 Phillips). It does not need to be a penalty that is arbitrarily imposed—sin kills. For sin is that dreadful separation from God, and in the end God allows those who choose to cling to their sinfulness to sadly experience the inevitable result.

Like my burned hand. I experienced firsthand the punishment of my foolhardy actions. I experienced the natural results of sticking a hot spatula into gunpowder. I experienced the shock of almost blowing myself up. It is a source of continued surprise that I am still here.

But the greatest lesson was the loving concern in the faces of Mum and Dad, their calm but worried voices, their grace and acceptance of a son who, though foolish, was still greatly loved.

As God says to His people: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness." Jeremiah 31:3 NIV. "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD." Psalm 107:43 KJV. "Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life." Psalm 42:8 KJV.

Lovingkindness—an old-fashioned word that is so meaningful. It sums up the kind of person God truly is—a parent like the father of the prodigal son who welcomes us all back, without penalty or complaint. One who demonstrates His lovingkindness in His actions towards us.

Ellen White Comments

Every seed yields fruit after its kind. So it is with the traits of character we cherish. Selfishness, self-love, self-esteem, self-indulgence, reproduce themselves; and the end is wretchedness and ruin... Love, sympathy, and kindness yield fruitage of blessing, a harvest that is imperishable. {CG 162-3}

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