



Winter warmers

WINTER WARMERS: RARE FRUIT IN A BROKEN WORLD (TALK 1/4: WINTER WARMERS: KINDNESS)

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

CONNECT: How can you share the good news of Ruth with those around you in the coming week?

WARM-UP Questions

1. Did the kindness of a Christian known to you play any role in you becoming a follower of Jesus?
2. What is the kindest thing that someone has done for you? Why do you think they did it?

Read Galatians 5:22-25

3. Which aspects of the fruit of the Spirit do you find most challenging? Why do you think that is the case?
4. How should these aspects of the fruit of the Spirit shape those who follow Jesus?
5. How do you think the fruit of the Spirit – as lived out in Christians – has the power to change the world?
6. If the fruit of the Spirit is in God's power, what is our role to walk *in line* with the Spirit?

Read Titus 3:3-8

7. What is meant by "when the kindness and love of God appeared"? *What evidence is there of this kindness?*
8. In what way do we have both the **evidence** for God's kindness and the **experience**?
9. What is meant by God saving us? How does God save us?
10. Describe how God's kindness *meets our needs, is a gift, and is costly* to God.
11. What does it mean to you that God has demonstrated his kindness in this way?
12. What does it look like to respond to God's kindness through repentance? Why is this essential?
13. What does it mean to be 'washed clean' and be 'renewed'? Who is the source of our transformation?
14. What role do we have in being devoted to what is good and sharing God's kindness to the world?
How is this shaped by God's kindness to us?
15. What happens if we think that we do kindness on our own merit rather than in response to God?
16. How do you think you could show God's kindness to someone this week? (Try to be specific.)
17. How do you think our 1000 Acts of Kindness project might affect people and our city?

APPLY (this week): Practice some acts of kindness in response to God's kindness to you! (And share them on the tree at church to help us reach 1000 acts of kindness in July.)

PRAY: *Dear God, thank you for your phenomenal kindness shown to us through the Lord Jesus. Please help us to respond to your kindness through repentance and by generously demonstrating your kindness to the world every single day of our lives. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

GOING DEEPER

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GOING DEEPER RESOURCES

Potential NEXT STEPS: 1000 Acts of Kindness Project



1. **1000 Acts of Kindness Project (in the month of July):** Do something kind for someone, write it on some of the paper supplied, hang it on the tree at church.
2. **Family Acts of Kindness Packs:** St Bart's Kids want to make it easy for families to get practicing kindness, so they have produced packs of 30 cards (each with an act of kindness and a Bible verse).
3. **Come along Sundays:** We'll be exploring each of the fruit week-by-week. We'll also have some hot food between our morning services and after our evening service to keep us warm! Please stay and chat about ways that we can show kindness in the coming week.

Children and Families

- Order a Set of Acts of Kindness Cards:
<https://stbarts.com.au/orders/acts-of-kindness-family-activity-packs>
- "Fruit of the Spirit" Song:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymNuBZXCK20>

Video & Audio

- "The Fruitful Gospel: Kindness":
<https://resources.thegospelcoalition.org/library/the-fruitful-gospel-kindness>
- "Human Nature as it is" by Dick Lucas:
<https://resources.thegospelcoalition.org/library/human-nature-as-it-is>
- "What is Kindness" by Derek Carlsen
<https://resources.thegospelcoalition.org/library/what-is-kindness>
- "People are Important" by Alistair Begg
<https://resources.thegospelcoalition.org/library/people-are-important>
- "Kindness" by Timothy Keller:
<https://gospelinlife.com/downloads/kindness-6053/>

Helpful Articles & Books

- Virtue Reborn by Tom Wright:
<https://www.bookdepository.com/Virtue-Reborn-Tom-Wright/9780281061440>

Talk 1/4 (WINTER WARMERS): 24/06/18

“Kindness”

by the Rev'd Adam Lowe

Bible Passage: Galatians 5, Titus 3:3-8

I'm excited that having come through Judges and the Book of Ruth, we're taking a few weeks out of our typical pattern looking at a book of the Bible, to explore four of the phenomenal *aspects, of the fruit of the Holy Spirit*.

- *You might recall the list that Paul paints in the letter to the Galatians...*

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

- Three important things to note write up front.
- **First, these fruit should be the defining characteristics of those who follow Jesus.**
And you'll note, that when Paul speaks of these characteristics, he's not speaking in a plural form - the fruit of the Spirit **IS**.
That is, when it comes to the Holy Spirit at work in every believer, the fruit are not things that we can pick and choose from as we please, *yes I'd love a bit of patience but I'm happy to forgo the self control.... No!*
It is in fact one fruit with many dimensions. They all go together.
- **Second, we also note, that we cannot muster any of this up in our own strength.**
This fruit is supernatural - that is, it is *from God* and *by God's* power.
That doesn't let us off the hook from any effort however!
We're not passive passengers being taken for a ride by the Holy Spirit!

As Paul points out, we are to **walk with the Spirit** at work in us:
Submitting to the Spirit, and literally, *being brought into line* with the Spirit.

- **Third, that the fruit of the Spirit has the power to change the world.**
The fruit of the Spirit matters, *not as a mere self-improvement exercise*, but because through it, God's work of regeneration is not only unfolding in us, but through it, people are being pointed back to the saving love of God.
- *Three principles that will underpin our series:*
The fruit, should be the defining characteristics of our lives, they are *distinctively* from the Spirit, but require our response, and they are powerful to change the world.
- We'll see that over-and-over again, starting today, **with kindness**.

Now, I don't know about you, but when I hear **kindness**, it's easy to think, oh, *kindness*, isn't that nice and quaint, isn't that lovely. //

- But what we'll come to see, is that in Bible, kindness is so much more than that.
- The word - in both Hebrew and Greek - most often used for kindness, can in fact be used in a variety of ways, it can be a very general word.
- It can mean fitting, pleasing, compassionate, and long-suffering. It usually has an outward disposition away from self.

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- *But when we look at the word used here in Galatians, and also in Titus where we're focusing, it most often refers two things. BOTH:*
A characteristic of God that is demonstrated to us; and how God expects his people to treat others.
- And as we respond to God's kindness and demonstrate it to the world, it's powerful.
- As someone puts it...

Kindness isn't a soft virtue, expressed only by sweet grandmothers or nice Boy Scouts. Kindness is neither timid nor frail. Instead it is brave and daring, willing to be vulnerable with those with whom we disagree. It is the revolutionary way that Jesus himself called us to live. The way of selfless risks.¹

So as we open up Titus chapter 3, we'll see, is that **kindness flows...**

- **FROM God;**
In RESPONSE to God;
Outward to the WORLD.
- *KINDNESS flows downward, upward, and outward.*

¹ From "Love Kindness: Discover the Power of a Forgotten Christian Virtue" by Barry H. Corey

#1 FROM God \ TITUS 3:3-5a

So first, *kindness flows downward, FROM God.*

- *Kindness begins with God, because it is a defining attribute OF God. It's who he is!*
- If you want to see what it looks like for God to be kind, look no further than Jesus himself: who is very embodiment of kindness.

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the **kindness** and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. (verses 3-5a)

How did God's kindness appear? *How can we see it? How is it evidenced?*

Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus...

- That's the most complete and greatest picture of kindness you can ever know...
*There are many measures by which the world judges kindness.
But the Bible says, if you want to see what kindness looks in full, look to Jesus,
everything else is just a faint shadow. //*

There's at least three dimensions to God's kindness...

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- **First, God's kindness "Meets our Need".**
And not just any need, for in his kindness, SAVED us.
These verses, in fact verses 3-7 are all one very long sentence in the original language. They likely originate from an early hymn or part of Christian worship, and it all hinges on one word, one verb, that God **SAVED** us.
- If you've ever had someone do something proactively for you, so considerate, you know how special that feels.
Recently, when some of the family was unwell, someone just dropped around a meal, they didn't ask, they just saw the need and they did it.
- *Well, in the most extraordinary of ways, God, proactively has looked at the world, seeing the brokenness in which we're entrapped, and the sin to which we're enslaved, and then, without us asking, in fact before we even knew there was a problem, completely unprompted, acts comprehensively and decisively to rescue us.*
- **Second, God's Kindness is a "Gift".**
- We don't deserve God's kindness and we can't possibly earn it.
- *It wasn't because of the righteous things we had done, but because of HIS mercy.*
- So often if we're considering doing something kind for someone, we'll do it on the premise that if they change, or if they repay us later.

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- *But not God.* God - in the full knowledge that we don't deserve and can't repay, saves us in his kindness anyway. It's a gift.
- **He saved us not because of who we are but because of who he is!**
- **Third, God's Kindness is "Costly".**
God doesn't give what he could afford to lose, but loses everything to afford us life. He pours out his gifts **generously**.
- God's Kindness meets us at our need, and is a costly gift... //

Sometimes, in the darkest and toughest times in life, it can be hard, *people can find it so hard*, to understand how God is kind.

- I'm sure you can think of tough times that people are going through right now, or maybe you're going through a tough time right now.
- And amidst the pain, or the uncertainty, it's hard to grapple with God's kindness.
- Therefore, I think it's especially encouraging in these times, that we can find a bedrock, *as we bring our questions and even our doubts*, that God has not just asked us to imagine his kindness, but that we can look to definitively to Jesus as **evidence**.

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That's the **evidence**, but remarkably God also gives us the **experience**.

- That's the promise we see in Titus 3, that he has not only made us clean through Christ's death, but that he's also making us into new creations through his Spirit.
- The very power of God is not distant, but alive in every believer, giving us not only the desire to respond, but also the capacity to.
- Both to God, and to the world.

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#2 IN RESPONSE to God \ TITUS 3:5b-7

See, kindness flows FROM GOD, but also UPWARD IN RESPONSE to him.

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 Saviour, **so that**, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. (vv.5b-7)

- It's not out of our goodness, *or how clever we are that we respond*, but his kindness is the **cause** and the **catalyst** for our response.
- **Do you see how important that is?**
When we respond out of God's kindness, he sets the standard.
When we respond out of God's kindness, he is the source.
When we respond out of God's kindness, he saves us from feeling self-righteous.
- When we decide to be kind, it takes no other decision-making criteria, then to reflect on the extent of God's kindness to us. [...]

And the primary way that God desires us to respond to his kindness is with repentance.

...do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realising that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance? (Romans 2:4)

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- **Can you hear what Paul is imploring here?**
- God doesn't want us to merely look upon Jesus and say how nice!
What a great example, what a lovely thing to do! What a sweet way to live!
- There's a cause and effect. God intends his kindness to cause us to repent, Because God's kindness is mighty to save! **Anything less is missing the point.**
- And when we turn to him - *that's what repent means*, when we trust in Jesus as Lord, accepting all that he has done for us, the effect is that we become heirs of eternal life. *Do you see the link?*
- The connection point between God's kindness demonstrated in Jesus, and the effect that it has on our lives and our eternity, is repentance.

Friends, I want to encourage you, that if you've been looking at Jesus for a long time, or perhaps you've just recently heard of all that he is done, don't ignore it.

- Don't just look at him and think, 'how nice!'.
- God's motivation wasn't to impress you, it was to save you!

#3 OUTWARD to the World \ TITUS 3:8

*And once we do that, God's kindness is to flow **OUTWARD to the World.***

This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone. (v.8)

The logic is beautiful:

Ultimate kindness comes from God and is demonstrated in his Son...

We respond by saying 'thank you!' and turning to him...

And then, because of God's kindness, because he's equipped us with his Spirit,
we do everything in our power to demonstrate God's kindness to the world.

- Not that we would be kind simply because we think it's a grand idea, or I'm so nice, but because in the face of God's profound kindness, we're so compelled, there's no other conceivable option but to show God's kindness to those around us.
- Why? Well certainly not to make us look good. Certainly not to earn us points. But as a reflection of the transforming work going on in our lives, and that through God's grace, that the kind things that we do, might be a glimpse, ever so faintly - of the kindness of God that is our motivation.

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Kindness is not an optional extra.

- Paul is stressing, that if you've responded to God's Good News, *then we must be **careful** - we must be intentional - to devote ourselves to doing what is good.*
- Think about what you're careful about. Maybe paying your bills, feeding your kids, going to work. We need to be just as careful to doing what is good.
- Kindness flowing outwardly, is an indispensable necessity of those who profess to being saved.

What does it look like in practice? It looks like the kindness that has been shown to us.

- It looks like forgiveness. That we should work at resolving relationships, working to forgive, even when it's hard. Why? That it might point people to God's forgiveness.
- But it also means that should be concerned for the welfare of others.
- **Meeting people at their need:** which means thinking about people's needs, looking for the opportunity to help even without prompting.
- **Giving kindness:** even to people who we think don't deserve it, and without any expectation they'll repay it. In fact, Jesus said to even love your enemies, without the expectation of getting it back.

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- **Being willing to pay the cost:** be it time, money, or just the effort.
So often, the difference between showing kindness and not showing kindness, is *just taking a moment to be less concerned about our need and bothered about someone else's.*
- I'm so thankful to be part of a community like this,
in which every week we gather and rejoice at the nature of God's kindness,
but also get to witness kindness demonstrated. //
- The early church we're so enamoured with God's kindness, with his Good News,
that they couldn't be stopped from telling or showing it to the world.

They love all men and are persecuted by all. They are unknown and condemned; they are put to death and restored to life. They are poor yet make many rich; they are in lack of all things and yet abound in all... They are evil spoken of and yet are justified; they are reviled and bless; they are insulted and repay the insult with honor; they do good yet are punished as evildoers. When punished, they rejoice as if quickened into life... yet those who hate them are unable to assign any reason for their hatred. To sum it all up in one word -- what the soul is to the body, that are Christians in the world. (The Epistle to Diognetes, c.AD 130)

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CONCLUSION \ \ KINDNESS PROJECT

Behind every story of conversion, *my hunch is: not only has the Good News been proclaimed,* but someone, somewhere has shown a glimpse of God's kindness.

- Sometimes we can think, well I'm not a particularly kind person, God can't use me, or what possible effect could one small act of kindness make. *I want to say to you...*
- God can use you, and wants to use you, he's even taken up residence in you!
And one act of kindness - it can have a greater effect than you ever imagined.
And when you join our acts of kindness together, it's like an unstoppable wave.

That's why today, we're launching our 1000 acts of kindness project.

- We long for our city swept by kindness, shaped by the very kindness of God.
- And so we're going to embrace the everyday opportunities to be kind,
with the hope and prayer, *that through them,*
that people might be pointed to the ultimate kindness that we find in Jesus. //
- We've been **given** so much. We've been **forgiven** so much.
Our motivation for kindness is greater than any other,
Our empowerment for kindness is greater than any other, *and*
Our experience of kindness is greater than any other.
Now let's share it OUTWARD with the world.

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