

Walking in Kindness

Lesson Text: **Ephesians 4:32**

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Kindness or unkindness . . . Goodness or meanness . . . Those are our choices.
1. Certain seasons of the year bring out kindness in some and meanness in others.
 2. Who is the meanest person you have ever known? That person would certainly be one who was not kind to others.
 3. I read part of a story of a man who would give his son a nickel if he would go to bed without supper. Then, in the middle of the night, he would sneak in and steal the nickel from his son. The next morning he would scold his son for losing the nickel and make him go to school without any breakfast. That man must be among the meanest dads in the world. He was not being kind.
- B. **1 Peter 2:21** – “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.”
1. Four great truths are taught in 1 Peter 2:21
 - a. We are called — Called by the Gospel
 - b. Christ suffered for us.
 - c. Christ left us an example to follow.
 - d. We should follow in His footsteps (footprints) — He has gone before us as our guide.
- C. Christ’s footsteps lead:
1. Through the **WATERS OF BAPTISM.**
 2. Through the **WILDERNESS OF TEMPTATION.**
 3. To the **HOUSE OF WORSHIP.**
 4. Through the **FIELDS OF SERVICE.**
 5. Upon the **MOUNTAIN OF PRAYER.**
 6. Through the **GARDEN OF DESPAIR.**
 7. To the **CROSS OF SUFFERING.**
 9. Through the **VALLEY OF DEATH.**
 10. To the **THRONE OF GOD.**
- D. The Lord has become our example in:
1. Love
 2. Meekness
 3. Gentleness
 4. Fortitude
 5. Humility

6. Honesty
7. Faithfulness
8. Truthfulness
9. Forgiving
10. Kindness
11. Etc.

- E. The 2nd stanza of “O to be Like Thee.” “O to be like Thee full of compassion, loving forgiving, tender and kind. Helping the helpless, cheering the fainting, seeking the wandering sinner to find.”
- F. Kindness is a language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.
- G. The opposite of kindness is unkindness. Later we will say something about unkindness . . . but we will do it in a kind way.

THE BIBLE HAS MUCH TO SAY ABOUT KINDNESS

A. Hear God’s Word in the matter:

1. **Ephesians 4:32** – “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”
 - a. Many times Christians are not very kind to one another.
 - b. Many times Christians are not very kind to non-Christians.
 - c. The church needs to teach, preach, and practice Ephesians 4:32.
2. **Colossians 3:12** – “Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering.”
 - a. To put on kindness indicates that we are not automatically clothed in it.
 - b. Some brethren are immodestly dressed spiritually in that they have failed to put on kindness.
 - c. One’s taste in style may change from time to time, but kindness will never go out of style.
3. **2 Peter 1:7** – “To godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.”
 - a. 2 Peter 1:5-7 lists eight attributes that have come to be called the Christian graces.
 1. Faith
 2. Virtue
 3. Knowledge
 4. Temperance
 5. Patience
 6. Godliness
 7. Brotherly Kindness
 8. Love
 - b. In that list as in life, next to Godliness is brotherly kindness.

4. **Proverbs 19:22** – “What is desired in a man is kindness . . .”
 - a. We like people who are kind. We like to be around people who are kind.
 1. Their influence on us is good.
 2. We appreciate their thoughtfulness.
 3. We appreciate their willingness to be helpful to us as well as to others.
 4. We appreciate their kindness put into action.
 - b. We are comfortable and at-ease in their presence.
 - c. By contrast, an unkind person is just the opposite of the person we have just described.

B. Kindness is a characteristic (attribute) of God.

1. **Nehemiah 9:17** – “. . . But You are God, Ready to pardon, Gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, Abundant in kindness, And did not forsake them.”
2. **Isaiah 54:10** – “. . . My kindness shall not depart from you . . .”
3. **Jeremiah 9:24** – “But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight,” says the LORD.”
 - a. The Lord delights in loving-kindness.
 - b. How can the Lord delight in the person who persists in being unkind?
4. **Luke 6:35** – “. . . You will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.”
 - a. Many times we allow others to act toward us, then we react with either kindness or unkindness.
 - b. Act kindly toward those who act unkindly toward you.
5. **Titus 3:4** - “But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared.”

C. Kindness is a characteristic of:

1. The worthy woman described in Proverbs 31.
 - a. **Proverbs 31:26** – “. . . And on her tongue is the law of kindness.”
2. The worthy widow described in 1 Timothy 5:9-10.
 - a. **1 Timothy 5:9-10** – “Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man, well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work.”
3. The worthy Christian in **2 Peter 1:7** – “To godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.”

D. Kindness is associated with love.

1. **1 Corinthians 13:4** – “Love suffers long, and is kind . . .”
2. **1 Peter 3:8** – “. . . Be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous.”

3. **2 Peter 1:7** – “To godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.”
4. **1 John 3:17-18** – “But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?

My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

E. From cover to cover, the Bible is filled with expressions of kindness.

1. Pharaoh to Jacob in moving him to Goshen. Genesis 45:16-20
2. Joseph to his brethren. Genesis 48
3. Pharaoh's daughter to baby Moses. Exodus 2:6-10
4. Rahab to the two spies by hiding them under the stacks of flax on her roof. Joshua 2:6-16.
5. Joshua and the Israelites to Rahab by sparing her, her father and mother, her brethren, and her kindred. Joshua 6:17, 22
6. Ruth to Naomi. Ruth 1:16-17
7. Ruth to Boaz and Boaz to Ruth. Ruth 3:10
8. David to Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan, grandson of Saul. 2 Samuel 9:1-13
9. Joab to Absalom by interceding with David to allow Absalom to return from exile. 2 Samuel 14:1-24
10. Ahad to Ben-hadad the Syrian. 1 Kings 20:32-34
11. Elisha to the woman whose son was restored to life. 2 Kings 8:1
12. Evil-Merodach to Jehoichin. This Babylonian king, in the 37th year of the captivity of the southern kingdom, took Jehoichin out of prison and honored him. 2 Kings 25:28-30
13. Jehoshabeath to Joash, son of Ahaziah, in hiding him in the house of the Lord for six years to protect him from Athaliah. 2 Chronicles 22:11
14. Jews to the people in canceling interest payments, restoring them their lands and vineyards, etc. Nehemiah 5:8-19
15. Mordecai to Esther in that when she was without a mother or father, he took her into his home to rear as his own daughter. Esther 2:7
16. Mebuchadnezzar to Jeremiah in that he assigned a captain of the guard to see after him and his needs. Jeremiah 39:11-12
17. Joseph to Mary in not wanting to make a public example out of her. Matthew 1:19
18. The Roman Centurion to his servant in sending the Jews to ask Jesus to come and heal him. Luke 7:2-6
19. The Jews to Mary and Martha in coming to comfort them when Lazarus died. John 11:29
20. John to Mary in taking her into his home following the crucifixion of her son, Jesus. John 19:27

21. Dorcas to the widows in the form of the garments she had made. Acts 9:39
22. Felix to Paul in that he allowed Paul liberty to have company. Acts 24:23
23. Julius, the Roman Centurion, to Paul as they journeyed to Rome. Acts 24:23
24. People on the Island of Malta to Paul and the total of 276 shipwrecked people. Acts 28:2
25. Onesiphorus to Paul in ministering to him while Paul was a prisoner. 2 Timothy 1:16-18
26. Etc. The list could continue to include Mary, Martha, Lazarus, Lydia, the Philippian Jailor, and a tremendous host of others.

F. ILLUSTRATION: “How They Knew His Lordship.”

Some strangers to Lord Shaftesbury were to meet him at a railway station. They asked, “How shall we know his Lordship?” The answer is challenging! When you see a tall man getting off the train and HELPING SOMEBODY, that will be Lord Shaftesbury.” Sure enough, a “tall man” exited the coach, carrying in one hand his suitcase, and in the other hand the three bundles of a little, old working lady.

1. **Isaiah 41:6** – Everyone helped his neighbor, And said to his brother, "Be of good courage!"
2. Helping others is being kind to others.

G. POEM: Chester Shuler has written the following lines.

If we knew but half the troubles
That our neighbor has to bear;
If we knew what caused those furrows
On his brow, and kept them there.
We should surely try to cheer him
In some kindly, helpful way,
And there-d be a lot more sunshine
In the lives of both today.

If we knew whose feet were standing
Close beside the narrow stream;
If we knew whose eyes could close soon
In the sleep that has no dream;
Then perhaps we'd be more tender,
Lighter judge, more kindly speak—
Oh, why not act as though we knew it –
For life's cords so quickly break.

JESUS' FOOTSTEPS LEAD TO KINDNESS

A. The impotent man, crippled for 38 years. John 3:1-15

1. Kingsley said of Jesus – “The Blessed One—He read the tear-stained book of poor men’s souls.”
2. Review the story in John 5:1-15
3. In this narrative we see:
 - a. **A sorrowful condition.** An infirmity of thirty-eight years. As far as his own ability was concerned, or that of any mere human power, he was past hope of ever being able to walk.
 - b. **A humble position.** He was there among the blind, the halt, the withered, and the waiting.
 - c. **Fruitless effort.** He was doing the best he could, but others ran before him. His best ended in both failure and disappointment.
 - d. **Merciful and Kind Deliverer.** Jesus ministered to him where He was. He asked, “Do you want to be made well?” **John 5:6.** Perhaps there is a sense in which many of our day could be made whole if we would show more kindness.
 - e. **Personal call.** This man, unable to walk for 38 years, was told personally to rise up and walk. At that special moment in this man’s life the Lord’s kindness was directed to Him. We should direct kindness toward others.
 - f. **Sudden change.** Immediately the man was made whole (v 9). Many changes can occur in response to the kindness of God’s children.
 - g. **Fearless testimony.** He told others about what Jesus’ kindness and power had done for him. We have the power in God’s Word, but do we have the kindness?

B. The cleansing of the ten lepers. Luke 17:11-19

1. Wherever Jesus went He found opportunities for expressing kindness.
2. In this narrative we see:
 - a. **A pitiful sight.** Ten men bound together by a common misery. Although there were ten of them, that did not lessen the sufferings and dangers of each. Leprosy is like that . . . sin is like that in that:
 1. It brings uncleanness.
 2. It leads to separation.
 3. It is humanly incurable.
 - b. **Ernest prayer.** **Verse 13** – “Jesus, master, have mercy on us.” This may have been a hoarse cry through throats diseased with leprosy, but there was music in it to the ears of our Lord in that it came from the heart.
 - c. **The Lord’s kindness and a simple remedy.** “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” v. 14

d. **One response of gratitude and nine responses of ingratitude.**

1. The Samaritan said “thank you.” The nine Jews continued on to find the priests.
2. That day ingratitude outscored gratitude by a score of 9 to 1.
3. Even today many respond to kindness with ingratitude.
4. Examples:
 - a. Tipping man at JFK airport in 1968. Returning from Lord’s work in Belgium.
 - b. Some benevolent cases.
 - c. Woman in wheelchair in Nashville.

e. **A searching question.** “Where there not ten cleansed?” v. 17. Jesus can count

. . . but can He count on you? Two of the saddest questions in the New Testament:

1. “**Luke 17:17** – “Where are the nine?”
2. **John 6:67** – “Will you also go away?”

C. **Jesus’ kindness and compassion can be see throughout His life and ministry.** So many of His miracles demonstrate His kindness.

1. The nobleman’s son cured at Capernaum. John 4:46-64
2. The demoniac cured at Capernaum. Mark 1:22-28
3. Peter’s mother-in-law cured at Capernaum. Mark 1:30-31
4. A leper cleansed at Capernaum. Mark 1:40-45
5. The man with palsy cured at Capernaum. Matthew 9:18
6. The healing of the crippled man in Jerusalem. John 5:1-15
7. The withered hand restored in Capernaum. Matthew 12:10-13
8. The Centurion’s servant healed at Capernaum. Matthew 8:5-13
9. The widow’s son raised at Nain. Luke 7:11-17
10. Another demoniac cured at Capernaum. Matthew 12:22-23
11. Demons cast out of the man at Gadara. Matthew 8:28-34
12. The woman in Capernaum cured of the issue of blood. Luke 8:43-48
13. The ruler’s daughter raised at Capernaum. Matthew 7:23-26
14. Two blind men cured at Capernaum. Matthew 9:27-31
15. A dumb spirit cast out in Capernaum. Matthew 9:32-33
16. Feeding of the five thousand near Bethsaida. Matthew 14:15-21
17. Curing the Syro-Phoenician child near Tyre. Matthew 15:22-28
18. A deaf man with a speech impediment in the Galilean part of the Decapolis. Mark 7:31-37
19. Feeding of the four thousand in ecapolis. Matthew 15:32-39
20. Sight restored to two blind men at Bethsaida. Mark 13;22-26
21. Casting the demon out of the man’s child. Matthew 17:14-21 (After the transfiguration).
22. Sight given to a blind man in Jerusalem. John 9:1-7

23. Lazarus raised from the dead. John 11:1-46
24. The woman healed of an infirmity in Galilee. Luke 13:11-17
25. The dropsy cured in Galilee. Luke 14:1-6
26. The ten lepers cleansed in Samaria. Luke 17:14-19
27. Sight restored to blind Bartemaeus at Jericho. Matthew 20:30-34
Restoring Malchus' right ear when the Lord was arrested. Luke 22:50-51

TO WALK IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS IS TO WALK IN KINDNESS

- A. Matthew 25:31-46 – The great judgment scene.
 1. Kindness was characteristic of the saved.
 2. Unkindness was characteristic of the lost.
 3. Are you kind or unkind?
 4. Kindness can be so simple.
- B. Christians, both individually and collectively, need to practice kindness.
 1. The way one acts.
 2. The way one talks. Tone as well as words. Sometimes no words.
 3. In the words of one song - "Little things men a lot."

CONCLUSION:

- A. Kindness always pays, but it usually pays best when it is not done for pay."
- B. Emerson said: "You cannot do a kindness too soon because you never know how soon it will be too late.
 1. Someone has penned these lines:

In this world of hurry, and work, and sudden end,
If a thought comes quick of doing kindness to a friend.
Do it this very minute, don't put it off, don't wait;
What's the use of doing a kindness if you do it a day too late?
 2. William Penn: "I expect to pass through life but once. If therefore, there be any kindness I can show, or any good thing I can do to any fellow-being, let me do it now, and not deter or neglect it, as I shall never pass this way again."
 3. *From the Scrap Book of Joan Winchell* comes this entry: "You have not lived a perfect day, even though you have earned your money, unless you have done something for someone who will never be able to repay you.
You cannot do a kindness too soon, because you never know how soon it will be too late.
Every right implies a responsibility, every opportunity an obligation, every possession a duty.
You never get hurt by the things you didn't say.
There are four things that will never come back: the spoken word, the sped arrow, the past life, the neglected opportunity."

4. Sir James Matthew Barrie in his writing of *The Little White Bird*, said: Shall we make a new rule of life . . . always try to be a little kinder than is necessary.”
 5. Your kindness to others can draw the attention of others to Christ. Jesus said in **Matthew 5:16** – “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”
- C. There is a lot of unkindness mentioned in the Bible just as there is a lot of unkindness in the world.
1. Cain was unkind to his brother Abel. Genesis 4:1-8
 - a. However . . . One does not have to go so far as murder to be unkind.
 2. Abraham was unkind to Pharaoh in lying to him about Sarah. Genesis 12:10-20
 - a. However . . . One does not have to go so far as lying to be unkind.
 3. Jacob was unkind to Esau by cheating him out of his birthright. Genesis 27
 - a. However . . . One does not have to cheat someone in order to be unkind.
 4. Laban deceived Jacob in the matter of Leah and Rachel. Genesis 29
 - a. However . . . One does not have to go so far as to practice deception in order to be unkind.
 5. Joseph’s brothers to Joseph in selling him into slavery. Genesis 37
 - a. However . . . One does not have to mistreat other family members in order to be unkind.
 6. Potiphar’s wife to Joseph is making false accusations against him. Genesis 39
 - a. However . . . One does not have to go so far as to falsely accuse someone in order to be unkind.
 7. David was unkind to Bathsheba in forcing her to commit adultery. 2 Samuel 11
 - a. However . . . One does not have to go so far as causing someone to commit adultery in order to be unkind.
 8. Saul was unkind to David in throwing his javelin at him. 2 Samuel 19
 - a. However . . . One does not have to go so far as to try and hurt someone else in order to be unkind.
 9. Sanballat and Tobiah were unkind to Nehemiah and the Jews by ridiculing them and making fun of their plans and work. Nehemiah 4
 - a. However . . . One does not have to go so far as ridiculing or making fun of someone in order to be unkind.
 10. Judas was unkind to Christ in that he betrayed Him. Matthew 26
 - a. However . . . One does not have to go so far as betraying a friend in order to be unkind.
 11. Peter was unkind to Christ by denying Him three times. Matthew 26

- a. However . . . One does not have to go so far as to deny someone in order to be unkind.
12. Saul was unkind to Christians by persecuting the church. Acts 8:3
 - a. However . . . One does not have to go so far as persecuting someone in order to be unkind.
- D. Ephesians 4:2 – (KJV) “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted . . .”
 1. In order to faithfully follow in the footsteps of Jesus, we must be kind.
 2. Walk in kindness each day.
 3. Someone has said, “If you are not kind . . . you are the wrong kind.”
- E. **Ephesians 2:7** – “That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”
- F. God has extended to us a great kindness in that:
 1. He has loved us when we were un-loving toward Him.
 2. He was faithful to us when we were unfaithful to Him.
 3. He was seeking us when we were not seeking Him.
 4. He was reaching out to us when we were not reaching back to Him.
 5. He sent His Son to do for us what we could not do for ourselves.
 6. He was more patient with us than we were with Him.
 7. He is more gracious and willing to offer us salvation than we are to accept it.
- G. **God’s Plan for Man’s Salvation**