

Life on the Vine
Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit in Christian Community

Lesson Five: **Kindness**

Introduction

1. Do you remember the campaign (1995) to “practice random acts of kindness,” or even more recent (2000) the “pass it on” campaign by the Foundation for a better life? Did either of these move any of you to action? What were the results of your efforts?
2. What are elements of our culture or society that work against our practicing kindness toward others? What elements encourage violence or aggression instead of kindness?

Lesson Plan

David, Jonathan, and Mephibosheth (see 1 Samuel 20 and 2 Samuel 9).

How would you define “kindness”?

- The Hebrew word (*Chesed*) translated “kindness” is more often translated _____, _____, _____, _____, _____.
- The Greek word (*Chrestotes*) is also translated as _____, and _____.
- How do these meanings inform our understanding of “kindness?”

Kindness is “the active helping of another who is need of help.” See Micah 6.8 and Zechariah 7.9-10. Why do we seem to view kindness more as a demeanor or an attitude rather than action? Can real kindness be separated from doing something that is helpful to another?

“Christians are moved by the Spirit to reach out and help others because their own identity is intimately tied to the help they have received at God’s hand. To paraphrase 1 John 4.19, ‘we help because God first helped us.’”

The similarity of the Greek word Christ (*Christos*) with the Greek word Kindness (*Chrestos*) led some people in the early days of Christianity to refer to Jesus followers not as “_____” but “_____.”

Again, “What in our culture works against our cultivation of kindness in our lives?”

Obstacles to Kindness

1. Promoting self-sufficiency
2. Nurturing autonomy
3. Underwriting self-sufficiency and autonomy

Cultivating Kindness

1. Remembering our story
2. Nurturing connections
3. Listening to one another

Class Discussion Questions

1. Do you think our culture encourages us to be self-sufficient? If so, how do you see this manifested?
2. How does viewing ourselves as self-sufficient make it difficult for us to offer help to another? How does it make it difficult to receive help from another? How do we tend to respond when another helps us?
3. Is our concept of self-sufficiency more an illusion than a reality?
4. Self-sufficiency and autonomy are closely linked. Does a feeling of autonomy tend to lead us to focus on fulfilling our own needs rather than the needs of others? How does this impact family relationships, marriages and friendships? How does it impact the church?