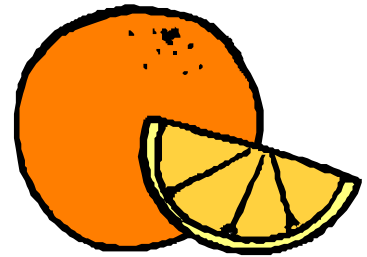


Spirit Fruit

Galatians 5 v 22 - 23



1 fruit 9 segments

5. Kindness

Titus 3 v 4 the kindness and love of God our Saviour

The word 'Kindness' (Chrestotes) is a difficult one to fully translate as it includes many sentiments such as goodness and gentleness. It has close links to philanthropy - loving people, goodwill to fellowmen, including active effort to promote human welfare, if necessary providing or acquiring the required funds.

- Kindness is the outworking of God's grace in our lives.
- It rubs off the sharp, hard edges and softens our hearts towards others.
- It turns our reactions in to actions of love and mercy.
- It helps us to see the other persons situation and to act accordingly

In Matthew 11 v 29 – 30 Christ offers his yoke which is easy (Chrestos) – a word linked with Chrestotes. The yoke which Jesus offers us to share with Him is kind; it offers nothing offensive to our spiritual or physical wellbeing. Being yoked to Christ may not, necessarily be the 'easy option' or 'easy way out', but the burden is certainly made all the more bearable when we recognize who is sharing the yoke.

Matthew 11 v 29 -30 is an interesting passage. Jesus spent His ministry seeking the lost, reaching out to those who were caught up in religious rituals and unable to reach God for themselves. This was all part of the mystery and the Greeks believed that it was almost impossible to find God and if you did, you would be absolutely unable to tell others and explain the way to others. In other words they would become weary in their search and give up.

Job faced this same challenge at the hands of his so called comforters – Job 11 v 7

Jesus tells them '*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*' Jesus was offering them relatively pain free and uncomplicated access to God and that way was through him and the search ended in Him.

The orthodox Jews saw no joy or lightness in their walk with God, rather, their religion was seen as a difficult, burdensome and heavy load to bear, full of rules and regulations to be obeyed to the latter. Later on in Matthew, Jesus condemns the Scribes and Pharisees for building on this thought – Matthew 23 v 4

Jesus offers them a yoke which is easy (Chrestos), a word linked to kindness. The idea here is 'well fitting'. Ox yokes were made of wood by measuring the animal then any final adjustments made before it used the yoke for work.

Jesus is telling them that the life given to us is tailor-made for us and will fit our abilities.

Before looking any further at what kindness is, we need to consider what it is not... (Ephesians 4 v 30 – 32)

- Bitterness poison, piercing
- Rage to be impetuous / violent wind / character of anger
- Anger to desire earnestly / wrath / anger of man / outburst
- Brawling outcry / tumult / grief / violent agitation or outburst
- Slander blasphemy / abuse / the worse type of slander
- Malice wickedness

The context in which we find these words is at the end of a discourse regarding renewed Christian behaviour and thinking, see verse 17 – 19 and the importance of this is found in v30. The list that follows demonstrates the lifestyles which are contrary to kindness.

The list of opposites in Ephesians 4 is to be counter-balanced by the list of right behaviour found in Collosians 3 v 12 – 17, Kindness being found as a virtue in verse 12.

As always, the supreme example of anything is to be found in God...



Ephesians 2 v 6 – 7 Kindness expressed in Jesus



Ephesians 4 v 32 Kindness and forgiveness like Jesus showed



Titus 3 v 1 – 6 Kindness to the unworthy



Romans 11 v 22 Kindness to be considered and shared



Romans 2 v 1 – 4 Kindness to the ungrateful and judgmental

So, if God shows us kindness, then we should surely show kindness to each other and those around us...

- Love should compel us to be kind 1 Corinthians 13 v 4
- Ministry should demonstrate kindness 2 Corinthians 6 v 3 – 6
- Grace should cause us to show kindness – no hindrances
Luke 6 v 32 - 35
- The example of Christ must lead us towards love for our enemies
Luke 6 v 35 – 36
(the word 'enemy' speaks of hate, hostile, adversary, and speaks of Satan)
- Fellowship for one another includes the need for kindness
Colossians 3 v 12 – 13

How does kindness work?

We have already looked at Luke 6, but we need to return there and look in further detail to see how kindness should operate in everyday situations (Luke 6 v 27 - 36).

The Victorians took great delight in Luke 6 v 31, which has been summed up in many ways including 'do as you would be done by', 'the golden rule' and 'the law of reciprocity'

Throughout history, many have sought to describe this scripture in many ways...

- ❖ Hillel, a great Jewish Rabbi – 'what is hateful to thee, do not to another'
- ❖ Philo of Alexandria – 'what you hate to suffer, do not do to anyone else'
- ❖ Isocrates the Greek – 'what things make you angry when you suffer them at the hands of others, do not you do to other people'
- ❖ The Stoics – 'what you do not wish to be done to yourself, do not you do to any other'
- ❖ Confucius – 'what you do not want done to yourself do not do to others'

These are basically different versions of the same statement, but all have limitations and they all miss the point, because what Jesus is saying is 'love your enemies' (v27), where as the above statements say tolerate your enemies. Kindness is a quality which must be borne out of love, not tolerance. It speaks of going out of your way to show an act of kindness to another, not simply avoiding things which you find unpalatable. It is

the act of doing good, rather than not doing bad. Jesus makes this very clear in the verses that follow (32 – 34) where He explains that even the sinners love the lovable, do good to the do-gooders, loan to those who loan to you and give to the giving. The quality that marks out Christian kindness is loving the unlovely, doing good to the bad, giving to the selfish and being merciful to all – without expecting any return (v35 – 36). The good news – there is a reward for that sort of lifestyle, not from man, who may ignore, criticize or mock, but from God Himself (36).

Luke goes on to explain how kindness works...

- it loves enemies 6 v 27
- it does good to those who hate us 6 v 27
- it blesses those who curse us 6 v 28
- it prays for those who mistreat us 6 v 28
- it surrenders to those who strike us 6 v 29
- it gives to those who take 6 v 29
- it gives to those who ask 6 v 30
- it does not ask for things taken 6 v 30
- it acts towards others in a way it would like to be acted towards itself 6 v 31
- it does not judge 6 v 37
- it gives 6 v 38

In Ruth 2 v 14 – 20 we see the beginning of the love story between Ruth and Boaz and his gracious acts towards Ruth are seen as kindness by Naomi. The word for kindness here is the act of kindness, to show kindness and it is also linked to the idea of forgiveness.

Exodus 1 v 15 – 20 shows how God was kind to the midwives

We see God speaking kindly to the Angels in Zechariah 1 v 12 - 13

We have seen that kindness brings rewards, and the book of Proverbs names some of these benefits...

Self benefits 11 v 17

Encouragement 12 v 25

Blessing 14 v 21

Honour to God 14 v 31

Lends to God 19 v 17 (unite/remain)

Another benefit of kindness is found in Daniel 4 v 27

Kindness is no weak, sloppy emotion, 'how kind'! It is a strong word, it is a deliberate act, it brings glory to God and is linked with the idea of forgiveness. Kindness looks beyond the self and beyond hurts, it forgives and therefore heals.