

Root to Fruit: Kindness
Galatians 5:22 February 17-18, 2018

Introduction

- Pastor Tim shared on our recent board retreat about a taxi driver that I want to share with you today. The story has been around a while, so you might have seen or heard it. **PP** The taxi driver was on the late shift well after midnight in NYC when he got a call to pick someone up from a rough part of the city.
- He drove up to the place and it looked rather rundown and decrepit. He honked his horn and waited a bit and seriously thought about driving away. But not wanting to lose the fare, pushing aside an air of annoyance he got out of his cab, politely went up to the door, and knocked.
- A faint female voice called out from inside, “just a minute”. And waiting several minutes more, the door opened before him to the sight of an elderly woman. **PP** She was outfitted in a fine red dress, with her makeup and jewelry in place, and a fancy pillbox hat atop her silvered hair.
- The taxi driver looked beyond the woman and saw that all of the furniture had been covered over with blankets and she had a very large travel bag stuffed to the gills that she was taking with her.
- Upon seeing this, the cab driver’s demeanor immediately shifted from one of veiled annoyance to a genuine desire to help the woman. “Would you mind carrying my bag to the car,” she asked. And without hesitation he scooped up her overstuffed bag and put in the trunk of his cab. He then returned to the woman’s side, let her take his arm and slowly walked her to the taxi. She thanked the man for his kindness multiple times. He smiled and told her, “I just try to treat my passengers the way I would want my mother treated.” She smiled back, saying “Oh, you’re such a good boy.”
- As she settled in, she reached forward and handed the man a paper with an address written upon it. “That’s where I’m going,” she said. “But please don’t go on the highways, I’d like to take the route through the downtown.” The taxi driver responded that this was the long way.
- “Oh, I don’t mind,” she said. “I’m in no hurry. I’m on my way to a hospice.” The cabby looked in the rearview mirror. The woman’s eyes were glistening. “I don’t have any family left,” she continued. “The doctor says I don’t have very long.”
- Hearing this, the taxi driver’s emotions shifted again as feelings of sadness and compassion washed over him. Almost reactively he reached for his meter and flipped the switch off...having no desire to charge the elderly woman for her final ride. “What route would you like me to take?” he asked.

- For the next several hours they drove through the city. **PP** She showed the cabby the building where she had once worked as an elevator operator. They drove through the neighborhood where she and her husband had lived as newlyweds. They pulled up in front of a furniture warehouse that had once been a ballroom where she had gone dancing as a girl. Sometimes she'd ask the cabby to slow in front of a particular building and would stare into the darkness, saying nothing.
- Eventually, as the first light of dawn began to crest the horizon, she announced that she was tired and was ready to go to her final stop. Silently, they drove to the hospice. When they arrived, two orderlies were there waiting, expecting her. As they took her bag and helped her into a wheelchair, she asked how much the fare was. "Free of charge, ma'am." Came the cabby's reply as he tried his best to smile. "But you must make a living young man," the elderly woman responded. "There'll be another passenger soon enough."
- And then, almost without thinking, the taxi driver bent over and gave her a hug. She held on tightly as she whispered to him, "You gave an old woman a little moment of joy. Thank you." He squeezed her hand, then walked to his car in the dim morning light as the sound of the hospice door shutting echoed behind him. He didn't pick up any more passengers that shift, driving aimlessly, lost in thought. "What if that woman had gotten an angry driver, or one who was impatient? What if I had honked and driven away?" **PP** As his shift ended and he drove home, one thought pervaded his mind: "I don't think I've ever done anything more important in my entire life."
- That's a very touching story and is certainly a beautiful display of kindness in action. It's my hope that as we study the kindness aspect of the fruit of the Spirit, we'll see that this story gives us a beautiful *partial* picture of kindness, and that through the power of the Spirit the follower of Christ can have the true spiritual depths of kindness put on display through them.
- As you turn with me to **Galatians 5:22**, we're going to quickly read through the fruit of the Spirit – which I hope you're all working on memorizing – and then we're going to study the depths of kindness. As you turn to **Galatians 5**, I'm going to pray.

Five Layers of Kindness

- **Galatians 5:22** **PP** "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."
- As with all of these virtues that make up the fruit of the Spirit, there is great depth to what scripture means by kindness. Kindness is one of the attributes of God that's on display throughout scripture as it's the attribute of God that is often appealed to as the basis for forgiveness and mercy or dealing graciously and generously with others.
 - **James Montgomery Boice** **PP** writes that "[kindness] is the divine [quality] out of which God acts toward men. It is what the OT means when it declares that "God is

good," as it so frequently does. The Christian is to show kindness by behaving toward others as God has behaved toward him."

- By way of example, **PP** David appealed to the Lord in **Psalm 25:7-8** "Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your *kindness* [in Septuagint], O Lord! *Kind* [in Septuagint] and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way."
- Jesus taught in **PP Luke 6:35** "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is *kind* to the ungrateful and the evil."
- There are layers of meaning, each one leading into the next. So we're going to peel each of those layers back to get to the core together, and as we do so, **PP** we're going to look at 5 layers to the depths of kindness.
 - There are two ways that these layers move, the world starts at layer 1 and moves inward, while God starts from layer 5 and moves outward. We're going to start at layer 1 as the world understands the progression of kindness – but keep in mind that for the disciple of Jesus, the progression of kindness works the opposite way.
 - The **PP** Greek word for kindness (GK. *chrestotes*) on its most surface level refers to a polite and mellow *disposition*. It refers to someone who doesn't have rough edges and is generally pleasant to deal with. People with a kind disposition make others around them feel comfortable and safe. It's contrasted with someone who's harsh and biting, bad tempered and moody.
 - How many of you have seen the Christmas Carol in one of its various derivations? **PP** Well, think of Ebenezer Scrooge's personality before and after he met the ghost of Christmas future. Before he was biting, harsh, critical, and just plain mean, right? Bah humbug. Afterwards, he was polite, genteel, and mellow. He went from being mean to being kind. This is the first level of kindness.
 - The next layer of kindness we move to is more than just an outward *disposition* toward others, **PP** it actually begins to manifest in kind *action* toward others. On this level, kindness looks like generosity and service toward others. Kindness here is a helping hand or a thoughtful gift...kindness is expressed through benevolent action.
 - The third layer of the kindness onion **PP** that we peel back moves beyond *disposition* and *action* and turns to our *emotions*. This layer of kindness is manifested through compassion and genuine caring for others. It's the desire to respond to a person's need not just because you want to be polite or will

generously help, but because you genuinely feel for someone out of the emotional depths of kindness within you.

- So layer 1 is a polite and mellow *disposition*, layer 2 is generous and helpful *action*, and layer 3 is compassionate *emotion*. Now we come to layer 4 of kindness and are almost at the core level. **PP** On layer four we begin to deal with the inner *convictions of the heart* of kindness as we see genuine mercy and grace displayed toward others that emerge out of the convictions of truth a person holds.
 - The conviction of the kindhearted person is to extend mercy and grace to others regardless of what they deserve. But because you recognize the truth that God extends you grace and mercy every day, you have the conviction to share that with others. The conviction of kindness emerges out of knowing the truth of the kindness our God shows us.
 - This kindness is on display when we run in to people who are, at best, difficult to deal with and, at worst, are our outright enemies, and yet by the grace of God we continue to extend every layer of kindness toward them as the Spirit of God works in us.
- And this brings us to the final and most core layer of kindness, **PP** and this is the layer of *devotion* as we see that when we are devoted to the Lord and submitted to Him above all else, we're able to selflessly put others first in any and all situations. Kindness that's rooted in our devotion to Christ is enabled by the Holy Spirit to selflessly love all those around us. Selflessness is the spiritual core of kindness and the most inner meaning of this fruit of the Spirit.
- Now, it's critical that we understand something about these layers of kindness: **PP** the people of this world who are operating apart from the Spirit of God, at their absolute best, are only truly able to get to the third layer of kindness.
 - People who aren't submitted to Jesus can have a polite disposition, be generous and serving in their actions, and may even show emotional compassion towards others. And I praise God when I see that because those people are still image bearers of our King and the Spirit of God is still seeking after them that they may one day find freedom in Christ.
 - But at the world's best, layer 3 is as deep into kindness as people can go. People walking apart from the Spirit of God can't get to the conviction level of mercy and grace and they certainly can't get to the devoted selflessness that describes the most central core of biblical kindness.
- **Think back on the story of the taxi driver at the beginning of this teaching. Initially annoyed, he determined not to be unkind and drive away, instead going to the door to find his passenger. Here may be seen a polite and mellow disposition.**

- When going up to the door and finding the elderly woman, his annoyance completely disappeared and he was moved to help the elderly woman as best he could, putting her bag into the car, taking her by the hand and leading her to the car. And when he heard her desire to drive around the city as her final farewell, he generously turned off the fare meter. So we see that his kind disposition moved to generous and serving action.
- Finally, as he dropped the woman off and was moved by the sight of her being escorted into the hospice by the orderlies, his emotions were moved to give her a hug and think about her situation the rest of the day. Here we begin to see genuine compassion towards this woman's situation. The man concluded that this was the greatest thing he had ever done, and for someone in this world, this is about as close to greatness as one can get.
- But where the man fell short, and where we all fall short apart from the Spirit of God working within us is in the conviction and devotion layers of kindness. There was no mercy and grace extended in the actions of the cabby nor was there a selfless devotion on display. What he did was beautiful, and kind, and good, but it was ultimately empty of spiritual depth. It didn't point to anything greater than the man himself.
 - Now here's the problem, many people who profess to be followers of Jesus barely exhibit the first three layers, let alone the last two. Which means that many times the self-proclaimed Christian looks no different than the people of this world. And that's a problem, because remember that for the believer, spiritual fruit of kindness is supposed to start at the devotion layer and extend outward to the others.
 - Worse still, Christians often do poorer with the surface levels of kindness than those who don't profess Jesus as Lord and Savior. I was talking with two people this week who do not claim Christ and they were telling me of recent experiences with Christians. The first was driving and admittedly cut off another car. That car proceeded to lay on the horn, tailgate, fly around the side and pass the car while yelling out the window. And then, this person who I was talking to – who initially felt bad for cutting the person off – noticed the little fish symbol on the bumper of the car **PP** speeding off in front of them. And didn't feel so bad about cutting them off anymore because of their hypocritical reaction.
 - The second person I spoke with had a similar story, where they were driving on a Sunday and a church had just let out of their service and many of the congregants were seeking to cross the street through the crosswalk that was painted there. My friend was driving and failed to stop at the crosswalk to let the people pass and immediately received several yells and dirty looks from the people coming out of church.
- These are two small examples of a lack of kindness...but I want us to see which layers of kindness were especially lacking – layers 1 through 3 were completely absent, but the

layers that only Christ-followers can truly display – layers 4 and 5 – were nowhere to be found and these are the ones that the world especially notices when they're on display and it was their absence that made these non-Christians especially resentful.

- Remember, that for the Christian, progression of kindness starts at layer 5 – devotion to our God that produces selflessness. **PP** These “Christians” had opportunity in being wronged to show mercy and grace and a selfless heart in the midst of that wrong. But instead, they responded angrily and failed to seize the opportunity to show that children of God are different from the children of the world and couldn't even display the surface levels of kindness.
- Look, we all have bad days and mess up like this. And we certainly can't go around faking it all the time pretending that everything is great and nothing bothers me and I'm going to be sunshine and rainbows to everyone around me. That will always end bad. We've got to be honest and genuine and are certainly able to express frustration and annoyance.
- But the more we walk by the Spirit of God, the more we will walk in His love, and His joy, and His peace, the more we'll be enabled to live out His patience and His Kindness and His goodness towards others, even as He produces His faithfulness, and His gentleness, and His self-control within us. Do we see how these all work together?
- Our job isn't to be kind in and of ourselves. We're not called to manifest kindness, or joy, or self-control through some inner strength within us. Our calling is to press more deeply into our submission to God and experience the love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control of our awesome God; and having received that from Him begin to reflect that more and more by the power of the Holy Spirit to those around us.
- Because the reality is that no one can give away what they don't possess. **PP** If you haven't received the kindness of our God then you can't give godly kindness to others. At best you'll be able to get to the 3rd emotional layer, but more than likely you'll struggle with ever getting there.
 - The disciple of Jesus is able to show genuine mercy and grace to others and to live an increasingly selfless life because they have received that mercy and grace and selflessness from Christ, and continue to receive it from Him on a daily basis. This is what it means to walk by the Spirit, to be filled with the Spirit, to be led by the Spirit, to stay in step with the Spirit. It means that we're so present and filled by the riches we have in our King that we're able to overflow them to others and be transformed more and more into what we're constantly receiving from our God.
- And let me just say that I feel like I'm terrible at kindness. You know, when I learned I was preaching on this topic I immediately knew what the Lord was doing. He was like, hmph,

kindness, you might want to study that one a bit more closely. And the more I study kindness and understand the layers of it, the more I see how far I still have to go.

- Why is that? It's because in those moments of lacking kindness I've forgotten the kindness that my God shows me and I get taken in by my own selfishness and pride.
 - You want to know why the core of kindness is selflessness? **PP** It's because the enemy of kindness is selfishness. Someone who is selfish can't get very deep into the layers of kindness. Our selfish desires cause us to be devoted to ourselves, to follow our convictions, to only pay attention to our emotions and seek what makes us feel good, to act in ways that suit us and please us, and to only be disposed to what gets us what we want. The heart of selfishness is the quickest way to derail kindness and if you seek to grow in kindness, there are two main things that need to be done: ask the Lord to kill your selfishness and seek after His own kindness more than ever before.
 - Because the more we submit to our God and His Spirit gives us the strength to put to death our selfish desires, the more we'll have victory and be able to devote ourselves to our God instead of devoting ourselves to ourselves. **PP** That's really the core of what this is about, the person who struggles with kindness is more devoted to themselves in those moments than they are to anything else, including God.
 - You show me a person who's unkind at any level and I'll show you a person whose absorbed with themselves, even in those moments when they're seemingly putting on the façade of kindness.
- But the more I am devoting myself to pursuing God's path instead of my path, the more I will experience God's kindness.
 - **Romans 2:4** **PP** says "do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?"
 - **John MacArthur** writes **PP** that "Our salvation from sin and lostness and death issued wholly from God's kindness, His loving, benevolent, and entirely gracious concern to draw us to Himself and redeem us from sin forever."
 - One might say that kindness is the first aspect of God's character that people experience on their journey of salvation. They begin to see that God isn't giving them what they do deserve, in fact He does the opposite and gives them something they don't deserve: forgiveness and hope and truth and transformation through Jesus Christ.

- This is why it's only a disciple of Jesus who can move with true conviction of mercy and grace and selfless devotion, because only God can reveal what that actually looks like, and only God's Spirit can produce that within us.
- One of the most beautiful illustrations of the 4th and 5th layers of kindness is King David's treatment of Mephibosheth (**2 Sam 9**).
 - After Saul had tried for years to kill David, David assumed the throne of Israel and scripture records David's question **PP** -- "Is there not still someone of the house of Saul [the guy that was trying to kill him], that I may show the kindness of God to him?" (**2 Sam. 9:3**) David's desire was to show "the kindness of God" to King Saul's family because of the mercy and grace that God had shown David. In David's devotion to God, he desired to bring glory to God more than he desired to satisfy his selfishness.
 - The young man chosen was Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, who "was lame in both feet." (**2 Sam 9:13**) If David had acted according to justice, he would have condemned Mephibosheth who belonged to a condemned family. But David acted on the basis of kindness, seeking out Mephibosheth, assuring him he had no need to fear, inviting him to live in the king's palace as family and to eat at the king's table "like one of the King's sons." (**2 Sam. 9:11**)

Closing

- **And this is the depth of kindness that we as followers of Jesus are called to. Because the reality is that every single one of us is just like that old frail woman on her way to die. But instead of a taxi cab driver coming to pick us up and take us to hospice, **PP** we have Jesus who invites us into His house, makes us a part of His family, and heals all of our wounds.**
- We don't have to fear death because we've got assurance of our eternal place in the family of God.
- Jesus died so that we may live. He picks us up and leads us on an amazing journey where we don't need to linger in the depths of our past, but instead can be filled with the Holy Spirit that we may be propelled forward into the depths of Him.
- As we go from here, let's remember the depths of kindness that our God has shown to us; ask Him to kill our selfishness so that we can walk fully devoted to Him; selflessly setting ourselves aside to extend mercy, grace, and forgiveness to those around us because of the convictions of God's truth; compassionately caring and empathizing with the brokenness of this world; generously serving and giving of ourselves; always gentle and pleasant to deal with...that the world may look at us and always see the depths of God's kindness on display, to the glory of our God. **PP**
- Amen. Amen.