

LOVE 3
LOVE IS KIND
Part 3 of 9
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We're continuing in our series "Love" this week as we look at Kindness. The Bible says, "*Love is kind.*" As we go through, verse by verse, this great chapter on love – 1 Corinthians 13 – the Bible says that we need to be kind.

What is kindness? Kindness is love in action. Last week I said love is not a feeling. It is something you do. It creates feelings. It produces feelings, enormous emotions. But love is not a feeling; it is an action. It is a belief that you put in your behavior. The Bible says that love is kindness in action. When kindness is absent in a Christian's life or words you have cruelty instead. Last week I received a letter from a person in one of my previous churches I served. This letter drove home to me the importance of kindness and the pain an unkind Christian can bring. Last Wednesday I received the following letter.

Guess you found me on facebook so I could remind myself of what your status says. *My Son Joe* is facing some pretty wicked charges for beating a man that had an affair with his significant other and love isn't coming easy just pain. Ironically when Dennis died (*Her Husband*) I was told by a church elder that it was my lack of faith that caused his death and I would continue to have punishment until my faith was strong. Guess it's more punishment. I don't really believe that but I struggle not having a church home and wonder how to get through these struggles.

Have we not all experienced well-meaning people who have cut our hearts wide open in their ignorance-hardness-and generally lack of love? We all have said and had said to us unkind

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things-that alone she convince us of the need for kindness. Kindness starts in our attitude and flows to our actions.

I. 3 Attitudes

Jesus once told a story to illustrate what Kindness looks like. It's called the Good Samaritan. It's a famous story. Many, many thousands of hospitals have been named after it.

Jesus tells this story of three men who are traveling on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, which is a very notorious road, known for muggers and thieves. They all encounter a crime scene. Each of these three men responds to the crime scene in a different way. Jesus says these three men represent your three choices in life.

You're going to go through life with one of three attitudes toward the people around you, particularly the people in pain.

The first attitude is what I call the Keep My Distance attitude. Luke 10:30-31 says this: **"In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side." Circle "on the other side."**

This is what I call the lifestyle of avoidance, or keep my distance. Don't ever get close to people because they might ask you for help. Don't ever get close to people because you might be needed by them. Keep your distance. Keep all your

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relationships superficial. Keep them shallow. Be distant. Keep people at an arm's length. Because if you get close, you might get involved. And if you get involved you might get hurt. This guy's walking down the road. He sees a guy who's been beaten, mugged, left for dead on the side of the road, and he says, I'll just keep my distance and go on my business on the other side of the road.

In Elbert County, this is a pretty easy attitude to adopt. It's easy for me to figure out a way to commute to work and back home in this beautiful area and never really come in touch with deeply hurting people. This is the Keep My Distance attitude. And Frankly we have a good number of people who have this attitude.

The second is what I call the Curious but Uninvolved. Luke 10:32 says, **“So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.”** A Levite was not a jeans salesman. He was a temple assistant. *“He went over, looked at the man and then walked on by on the other side.”* This guy's even worse. He walks over across the street, sees this guy victimized, laying there, beaten half dead, naked, bleeding to death, looks at him – stares at him – walks back to the other side and keeps on walking.

I was feeling pretty self-righteous about this until I realized I do this all the time on the freeway. So do you. We like to stare at accidents, but we don't want to stop at them. My guess is that everybody in this room has done this. Traffic always slows down with an accident because of the gawkers. We want to stare. What's

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happening over there? Is it a fender bender? Did anybody get hurt? Did anybody get killed? But does anybody want to stop? No. We want to stare but not stop.

This is the curious but not involved.

Have you noticed it's a lot easier to gossip about people's problems than it is to help them with it? We love to talk about other people's problems, we love to discuss other people's problems, we love to read about other people's problems.

Why do you think the gossip magazines, the people magazines are the most popular magazines in the world? Because we like to read about other people's misfortune but we don't want to do anything about it. Curious but Uninvolved.

Aware but apathetic.

The third response is the response of the Good Samaritan. Treat Others How I Want to be Treated. The Bible says in verse 33, **“But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him..”** If you want to grow in love – then you're going to have to learn the lifestyle of kindness.

This Good Samaritan did four things that I need to do, that you need to do, if we're going to learn to be kinder, loving people. If you want to become a kinder person, a great lover...

II. 3 Actions

1. Start seeing the needs of people around me.

Kindness always begins with the eyes – the way you look, the way you see. It always begins with your vision, the way you observe things, the way you are

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sensitive to the needs of other people. Kindness starts with your eyes. If you're not aware of needs, you can't care about those needs. You have to see the need first. **The Bible says in Luke 10:33, "when he saw him, he took pity on him.."**

Circle "when he saw." That is the starting point. If you want to learn to become a more kind person, you've got to change the way you look at the world. You've got to expand your vision, you've got to become more observant of the needs around you, be more sensitive.

There are wounded people all over the world. There are wounded people sitting on the very row you're sitting in right now. But you don't just see it. Why don't we see the wounds of the people around us? One word – busyness. Hurry is the death of kindness. If you don't get anything else I say today, I want you to get this. If you're going to learn to be a kinder person, you've got to slow down. You don't see it unless you slow down. Hurry, when you're busy, when you're always distracted with other things, you don't have time to be kind. If you want to become a more loving person, you've got to slow your life down in order to see the needs of the people around you.

Let's say you're going to take a trip across country. You're married, you've got a family, and you want them to see what America is really like. You're going to go from Denver to either the West Coast or the East Coast. You've got a lot of different opportunities for transportation. You could take the plane. That would

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get you to the East Coast fastest, but you won't see much of the country. Because the faster you go, the less you see.

You could take a train, which would be slower than a plane. You would see definitely a lot more because you're going slower. On the other hand, if you took a car trip with your family, you'd go even slower than a train and you'd see even more. But if you really wanted to see the country, you'd walk. If you'd walk, you'd see more of America than if you took a plane. If you want to see it, you've got to slow down. The slower you go, the more you see.

The Bible says this: ***“Look out for the good of others.” 1 Corinthians 10:24.***

Circle “look out.” The first step to kindness is to ask God to give you spiritual GPS, that you would find people in need around you who are hurting emotionally, spiritually, physically and in any other way. Those who need help. Those who need encouragement. Those who need concern. Those who need a pat on the back.

But if you care, you'll be aware. So the starting point to kindness is to say God, open the eyes of my heart that I may not only see You but I can see the needs of the people around me.

The essence of kindness – is the ability to anticipate pain, hurt, brokenness, woundedness. And then be able to move in and do something about it.

I'm going to ask you to rate yourself on these four qualities of kindness. One would be “I need to work on this,” and five would be “Everything's great.” How

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would those you work with rate you on sensitivity? How would your children, if you have kids, rate you on your sensitivity to their needs? How would your spouse rate you on sensitivity? How would your neighbors rate you? Do you even know anything about your neighbors? Are you sensitive to their needs? Evaluate yourselves on a one to five basis. Do you need work in this area, or is everything going great? Kindness starts with the way you look at things. You must start seeing the needs of the people around you. It starts with sensitivity.

2. The second thing the Good Samaritan did was sympathize with people's pain.

It's not enough to just see their need, you must feel their emotions. You must sympathize with their pain. The Bible says this in **Luke 10:33**, "When he saw him, his heart was filled with pity." Circle "pity." First, his eyes kicked in. Then his ears and his heart kicked in, and he's filled with pity.

The Bible tells us "*Weep with those who weep.*" In other words, share their sorrow. Enter into their emotion. Feel what they feel. How do you do that? How do I increase my ability to be a more sensitive and more sympathetic person? If sensitivity begins with your eyes, sympathy begins with your ears. It's learning to listen. Learning to listen is the secret of genuine sympathy. The better listener you become, the more sympathetic you become. Sometimes kindness is just listening.

Sometimes kindness is just listening. In fact, advice giving can actually be

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counterproductive to kindness. Joe Bailey wrote a book on grief, on losing a loved one. He called it A View From the Hearse. He says this from his experience: “I was sitting, torn by grief, and somebody came along and talked to me about God's dealings of why it happened, of hope beyond the grave. He talked constantly. He said things I knew were true. But I was unmoved, except to wish that he would go away. And he finally did. Then another one came and sat beside me, and he didn't talk at all. He didn't ask me any leading questions. He just sat beside me for an hour or more, listened when I said something , answered briefly, prayed simply and left. I was moved. I was comforted. I hated to see him go.” Sympathy involves the ears. Listening is a form of kindness.

Sympathy does two things. It meets two of your basic needs: the need to be understood and the need to have your feelings validated. Both human needs. That you're not a weirdo, you're not crazy, that what you feel is something normal and other people have felt it before. The Bible says it like this: “*Share each other's troubles and problems and in this way obey the law of Christ.*” What is the law of Christ? It's called the Great Commandment. “*Love God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself.*” Do you like sympathy? Of course you do. Do you like people to sympathize with you when you're hurting emotionally, physically, whatever? Of course you do. The Bible says do the same to others. God often allows problems in your life just to teach you to be sympathetic to

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others. Some of the things that come into your life, you wonder, “Why is this happening to me?” I'll tell you why it's happening. God sometimes specifically allows certain problems into your life so you can be sympathetic to other people when they go through them and you don't say things like, “Why don't you just get your act together? Why don't you just straighten up? If you'd just change your beliefs or change your life ...” You'll be sympathetic to where they are.

“God comforts and strengthens us in our hardships and trials so that when others are troubled, needing our sympathy and encouragement, we can pass on to them this same help and comfort that God has given us.” So every problem you go through is an opportunity to learn how to be more sympathetic.

Rate yourself on your sympathy toward other people. One means “Needs work;” five means “Things are going great.” How are you in your evaluation of sympathy?

If you're serious about becoming a kinder person, step one is start seeing the needs of the people around you. Step two is to sympathize with them emotionally, with their pain.

3. Seize the moment.

Seize the moment to be kind. Don't wait. Don't delay. Don't procrastinate. Do what you can at that very moment. This is the third thing that the Good Samaritan did.

“Kneeling beside him the Samaritan soothed his wounds with medicine and

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bandaged them.” He took action. As we said last week: Love is something you do. He didn’t just say, “I’m sorry for this guy. Isn’t it a shame? Isn’t that too bad?” He actually did something.

Notice, he stooped down. In other words, he got on the man’s level. He didn’t pretend he was superior, and he didn’t talk down to him. He gets eye-to-eye contact. Important for kindness. He gets down on his level.

Second, he uses what he had. Other translations say he dressed the man’s wounds with wine and oil. Why? That’s what he had on his donkey. The wine worked ok because it’s alcohol. It’s an antiseptic. The oil worked ok because it would be soothing to the wounds that he had.

Then it says he dressed him with bandages. Where did he get the bandages? Obviously this guy’s not a doctor. He doesn’t have a first-aid kit. And the man has been stripped naked so he didn’t have any clothes. The bandages are the Samaritan’s own clothes. He takes his shirt off, rips it up and starts bandaging this poor unfortunate victim.

The point is: He did what he could with what he had at that particular point. He didn’t call a professional. He didn’t dial 911 on his cell phone. He says, “I’ll take care of this guy’s needs. I’ll move into action right now.” And he did what he could with what he had at that particular moment.

Proverbs 3:27-28 says, “*Never walk away from some one who deserves help. Your*

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hand is God's hand for that person. Never tell your neighbors to wait until tomorrow if you can help them now.” Circle the word “never” twice in that passage. Never walk away from somebody who deserves your help.

The world is full of wounded. On the very row you're on, there are wounded people. I wonder how many people in your life you walk around with who are wounded – the walking wounded. They may not be wounded physically, but they're wounded emotionally. They're wounded spiritually. They're wounded relationally. They're wounded financially. And they need your love. They need your kindness. You don't wait for better conditions. You don't say, "I'll call them in a few days." You do it now. When someone loses a loved one, you don't say, "I'll wait a while, and then I'll contact them." When someone you work with gets fired, they lose their job, you don't say "I'll wait a month, and then I'll contact them." When someone has cancer, you don't say, "I'll wait a while, and then I'll contact them." No, you do it now! Spontaneous kindness. Seize the moment.

Conclusion: Galatians 6:10 says, *“Whenever we have the opportunity [and, by the way, you've got it right now] to help anyone, we should do it. But we should give special attention to those who are in the family of believers.”* Who's the family of believers? It's your church family. The Bible says be kind to everybody but give special attention to the family of believers who need your help.

Who needs your kindness this week? Susan Kidd wrote this: “It happened years

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ago on one of those raw December days that make people wish they'd done their Christmas shopping in July. Snowflake winds whipped through the street, and hunched on a sidewalk bench sat an unshaven man. He wore a threadbare jacket and shoes with no socks. He'd folded a paper bag around his neck to keep out the biting wind. A shopper paused, saddened by the man. 'Such a pity,' she thought. But there was really nothing she could do. While the shopper lingered there, a little girl, maybe 11 or 12, walked by and spotted the frostbitten figure on the bench. Wrapped around the girl's neck was a bright woolen scarf. She stopped beside the old man, unwrapped the wool scarf and draped it tenderly around his neck and walked away. The man rubbed the warm wool. Then the shopper crept away, wishing that she had been the one to give the scarf. I was that shopper. And God taught me something that day. Wherever I am, whatever I possess there is always something that I can give – a touch, a smile, a prayer, a kind word, even a scarf." Will you grow in kindness? The first step is giving your life to Jesus; will you come up front as we stand to sing.

Prayer:

I'd like to invite you to follow me in this prayer right now. Just in your heart, say this in your mind: "Dear God, thank You for Your extravagant kindness to me. You sent Jesus Christ to die for me. I'm so grateful for that. Father, I don't want to be a cruel or an apathetic person. I really want to be more loving. Help me to

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take these four steps toward kindness today. Help me to slow down and start seeing and sensing the needs of people around me. Give me spiritual radar. Help me to be a better listener so I can sympathize with people. When interruptions come, help me to see them as opportunities to grow in kindness, to be more loving. Help me to be willing to take risks and move against my fears in order to help others. Starting today, I am making myself available to You to be used, to show Your kindness and love to others. In Your name, I pray. Amen.”