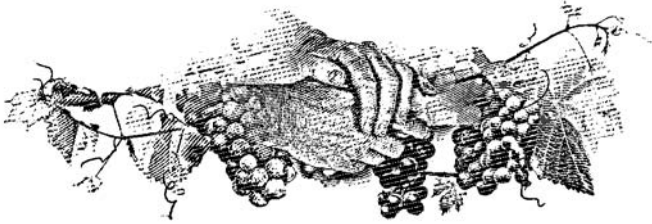


The Fruit of the Spirit Is Kindness



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *2 Sam. 9:1–13; Prov. 15:1–5; 25:11–15; Matt. 5:43–48; Luke 6:35, 38; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:12–14.*

Memory Text: “Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering” (*Colossians 3:12, NKJV*).

When Paul illustrated how love behaves, patience came into his mind first: “Love suffers long” (*1 Cor. 13:4, NKJV*). Immediately after patience, he wrote that love “is kind,” showing that love and kindness so belong together that without kindness no act is truly done in love!

Patience, we saw, is love forbearing. Kindness, on the other hand, implies a more active expression of love. Often patience might be manifested by doing nothing; kindness, in contrast, is manifested by what we say and do and, more important, by how we say it and do it and, even more important, why we say and do it.

Kindness is not beyond the reach of any, although it may require the sacrifice of time and energy. Kindness is a verb that reveals itself in numerous ways. And like its close cousin “love,” kindness contains incredible power; it is a witness in and of itself of what our God is like.

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 6.*

The Model of Kindness *(Matt. 5:43–48)*

Jesus clearly illustrates in the Sermon on the Mount the kindness and goodness of God. Read Matthew 5:43–48 and answer the following questions:

- To what high standard is Jesus calling us here?

- What reason does Jesus give for calling us to this standard?

- Notice Christ’s use of the word *perfect* in verse 48. What is the meaning of *perfect* here, and how can the use of the word here help us understand what it means to be perfect like “our Father in heaven” is perfect?

God’s gracious gifts are just that, gracious gifts. They are unearned and unmerited by all human beings, all of whom have willingly sinned against Him and either ignored or neglected Him. In this sense the greatest sinner is in the same boat as the holiest saint: neither deserves the kindness and goodness that God gives to us all.

With these verses, Jesus is calling us to be “perfect,” even as perfect as God is. How so? By loving our enemies, by praying for those who mistreat us, by being kind to those who have not been kind to us. This is how Jesus defines being “perfect.” Try to imagine what our church would be like and what our homes would be like were we to die to self so that we actually could live this way! We would have a power and a witness against which the gates of hell could never prevail. What’s the only thing stopping us? Nothing but our sinful, vengeful hearts, which, more often than not, cause us to act like “publicans.”

What painful and deep changes must you make if you are going to follow Christ’s words in these verses?

Kindness to a “Dead Dog”

Read 2 Samuel 9:1–13. How did David show kindness here? How did he, by this act, reveal the character of God?

“Through reports from the enemies of David, Mephibosheth had been led to cherish a strong prejudice against him as a usurper; but the monarch’s generous and courteous reception of him and his continued kindness won the heart of the young man; he became strongly attached to David, and, like his father Jonathan, he felt that his interest was one with that of the king whom God had chosen.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 713.

David’s kindness to the house of Saul reveals that he sought to use God as the pattern for what he wanted to do for Saul’s house. He recognized that he, a sinner like all of us, had received undeserved mercy and kindness from the hand of God and was going to reflect that kindness to others.

Before we can pass on God’s kindness to others, what must we first recognize? See *Luke 7:47*. What crucial principle is found here that can play an important role in helping us understand the whole question of kindness to others?

Think for a few moments about the goodness and kindness of God toward you. Do you deserve it? Is it something that’s owed you? Are your thoughts, your deeds, your words so selfless, so holy, so loving and accepting that God is merely doing to you as you have done to others? Most likely the answer is No. And herein is a crucial point. When we realize how much God has forgiven us, when we realize that God loves us despite what we are and what we have done, then we truly can understand what it means to be kind and loving to those who don’t deserve our kindness or our love. How important, then, that we keep the Cross and what it means to us, individually, before us at all times.

What things has God forgiven you for over the years? How should that realization help you treat those who have done things to hurt you?

Kind Words (*Eph. 4:32*)

Ephesians 4:32 begins with the words, “And be kind to one another” (*NKJV*). Look at how this verse fits in perfectly with what we saw yesterday, about treating others as God has treated us!

Kindness is to mark the Christian at all times. But there are at least three specific needs that call for three specific kinds of encouragement.

First, we are to show kindness to spiritual babies. “But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children” (*1 Thess. 2:7, NKJV*).

Second, we are to show kindness and encouragement to the weak. “We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves” (*Rom. 15:1, NKJV*).

Third, we are to serve as a nurse to the spiritually sick (*2 Tim. 2:24, 25*).

A businessman was once heard to say, “I can’t wait to get home at night—I get so tired of being kind all day!” What a sad attitude to have toward human life.

Kindness, especially in our homes, is crucial. And one of the most important ways we can manifest kindness, especially in our homes, is in the way we talk to each other. The atmosphere of the home largely is determined by the words we speak. So many problems, so many hurts, so many tensions and outright fights could be avoided if we were careful not only with what we say but how we say it. Oftentimes one could say something and not hurt or offend, or one could say the exact words to the same person and greatly hurt and offend. The key is how we speak. Human speech is more than just the meanings of words themselves; tone, facial expression, body language, and stress are all part and parcel of conveying our thoughts, emotions, and ideas to others.

Read Proverbs 15:1–5 and Proverbs 25:11–15. What important principles about what you say and how you say it are revealed in these texts? As you read them, ask yourself about your use of words when talking to others. In what ways could you be kinder in your verbal communication with others?

Kindness Returned *(Luke 6:38)*

“ Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you? ” *(Luke 6:38, NKJV)*. What is Jesus saying here? What principle of life is He talking about?

So often, how we treat others comes back on ourselves. That is, when we are kind, it's so much likelier that others will be kind to us. It works the other way, too: be mean to others, and others will be mean to you, as well.

Of course, it doesn't always happen that way. (Look at Jesus and how He was treated!) But whether it does or doesn't, in one sense it doesn't really matter. As Christians, we always should be kind, even if that kindness is not given back to us. In fact, as we have read, being kind to those who are unkind to us is a hallmark of being a true follower of Jesus. In general, however, how we treat others will impact how we ourselves are treated. “ Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets' ” *(Matt. 7:12, NKJV)*.

Read Luke 6:35. How does this fit in with what we've been talking about all week?

It's always easy to be kind to someone who could be of benefit to you down the road. Anyone will do that. What's harder, however, is to be kind, especially when it costs you something, to those who can never do anything for you in return. That's the real test.

Examine yourself. Is your kindness motivated by selfless and self-sacrificial love, or is it motivated even slightly by a desire to look out for number one? If it's the latter, how can you change?

Put on Kindness (Col. 3:12–14)

Read Colossians 3:12–14 and then rewrite it in your own words. In what ways do these verses reveal the essence of what it means to be a follower of Christ (notice the use of the term *perfect* or *perfection*)? Also, think about how powerful our witness to the world would be were we to put these words into practice.

Alexander Maclaren, noted London clergyman of the late nineteenth century, wrote, “Gentleness is the strongest force in the world. You take all the steam hammers that were ever forged and battle at an iceberg, and except for the comparatively little heat that is developed by the blows and melts some small portion, it will still be ice, though pulverized instead of whole. But let it move gently down to the southward, there the sunbeams smite the coldness of death, and it is dissipated in the warm ocean. Kindness is conquering.”

As Seventh-day Adventists, we have very powerful scriptural evidence to back up our positions. (If we don’t, then what are we doing here?) And that’s, of course, important. But we need more than just correct teaching, don’t we?

“If we would humble ourselves before God, and be kind and courteous and tenderhearted and pitiful, there would be one hundred conversions to the truth where now there is only one.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 189.

When we teach the doctrines of the church, we include the Sabbath, the state of the dead, the origin of sin, and other defining beliefs. But are we as careful about emphasizing the importance of kindness and the other fruit of the Spirit, along with the Sermon on the Mount and 1 Corinthians 13? Knowing that the Sabbath is the seventh day or that the dead sleep until the resurrection or that Christ’s righteousness covers us now and in the final judgment is all fine and important. But having knowledge alone isn’t the same thing as knowing the truth as it is in Jesus (*John 14:6*), for the truth sets us free (*John 8:32*); that is, the truth changes us and makes us more like Christ. Could one then ask, Do we really have the truth if the Truth, Jesus, doesn’t have us?

Further Study: “From every Christian home a holy light should shine forth. Love should be revealed in action . . . showing itself in *thoughtful kindness*, in gentle, unselfish courtesy. There are homes where this principle is carried out—homes where God is worshiped and truest love reigns. From these homes morning and evening prayer ascends to God as sweet incense, and His mercies and blessings descend upon the suppliants like the morning dew.”—Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 37, emphasis supplied.

“There are many who regard the expression of love as a weakness, and they maintain a reserve that repels others. This spirit checks the current of sympathy. As the social and generous impulses are repressed, they wither, and the heart becomes desolate and cold. We should beware of this error. Love cannot long exist without expression. Let not the heart of one connected with you starve for the want of *kindness* and sympathy.”—Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, p. 107, emphasis supplied.

Discussion Questions:

- 1** As a class, go over the final question at the end of Thursday’s study: “Do we really have the truth if the Truth, Jesus, doesn’t have us?” What are the implications of your answer?
- 2** “Love cannot long exist without expression.” What does that mean, and why does it represent a principle that’s so important for us as a church?
- 3** Review the texts this week that talked about us being “perfect.” How should we understand what this idea means? What are the common problems and misconceptions that we as a church have struggled with over the use and meaning of this term?
- 4** Trace in your own experience how the attitudes of other Adventists have affected you and your faith. That is, were folk kind to you and, if so, how did that kindness impact you? On the other hand, were folk unkind to you and, if so, how did that impact you? Share your stories with others in the class. What can you take away from these experiences that can help the class better understand how important kindness is in our witness?

The Unseen Bodyguard

Abraham Oril lives in the central Philippines. He operates a small grocery store to support his family, but his passion is sharing Christ.

Abraham hosts a radio program that is aired locally. Every Sunday morning he rides to the radio station to produce his live program. On one of his broadcasts, he discussed the Sabbath. One listener became angry at what Abraham was saying. When the program ended, Abraham left the station, got on his motorbike, and headed home. Along the way he noticed another motorbike approaching from behind. When the second motorbike pulled up beside him, Abraham saw a gun.

The two men on the second motorbike sped on ahead of Abraham and stopped in an area where there were no houses. The man with the gun got off the bike and pointed the gun at Abraham as he approached.

“God, save me if it’s Your will,” Abraham prayed as he neared the two men. Abraham rode past the two men without harm and arrived home safely.

The next Sunday’s radio broadcast was a continuation of the previous week’s message on the Sabbath. When Abraham finished the program, he and his friend Carlito walked out of the station. The same two men he had seen the previous week stood near his motorbike. And Abraham could see the glint of metal in the sun. But this time the men were armed with knives. As the two men moved toward Carlito and Abraham, Carlito raised his hand to block the attack. One of the men raised his knife to attack, but fell down before touching Abraham or Carlito. In the fall the attacker broke his arm. He struggled to his feet, and the two men ran away, leaving Abraham and Carlito standing alone.

The story of the thwarted attack spread quickly throughout the area. The brother-in-law of the man who had tried to attack Abraham told people, “Surely these are men of God. Why else would angels defend them when they were attacked?” Abraham learned that the two men who had tried to attack them intended to kill him, but an unseen force had prevented the men from harming Carlito and Abraham.

Abraham continued broadcasting the radio programs, and at least two young men were baptized as a result of Abraham’s radio broadcast and his testimony of God’s protection.

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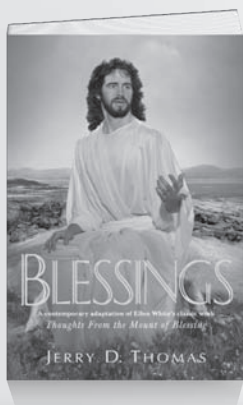
ABRAHAM ORIL *continues to share his faith in the mountains near Dumaguete, Philippines.*

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