

Spirit Fruit: Kindness

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”
Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV)

The Happy Prince

A story is told of a statue prince—covered in gold and jewels—who begs a swallow to take a gemstone to a poor seamstress whose boy is suffering. The swallow does so, and continues to help the statue prince strip himself of his jewels and gold in order to give to those who are poor and in need.





But it is wintertime, and the swallow that had stayed in this cold climate in order to help the prince dies at the prince's feet. Soon after, the town mayor sees the statue of the prince, now bare of gold and jewels, and orders it taken down.

Up in heaven, God commissions His angels to bring to Him the two most precious things in existence, and the angels bring the prince's heart and the swallow before God. God proclaims that the angels have chosen rightly, and that the prince and swallow will live forever with Him, for both prince and swallow gave in kindness, even to their own hurt, so that others could be happy.

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In the story of The Happy Prince we learn that while humans may not always see the far-reaching effects of kind deeds, God sees and rewards acts of kindness and care toward others.

Kindness is such a beautiful act that we are attracted to stories that celebrate its power. When we read of Beauty's kindness toward the Beast in *Beauty and the Beast*, or Bishop Myriel's kindness toward Jean Valjean in *Les Misérables*, this reminds us of the power of kindness to even those we do not know.

So what is kindness, and how can one be kind?

kind (adj.)

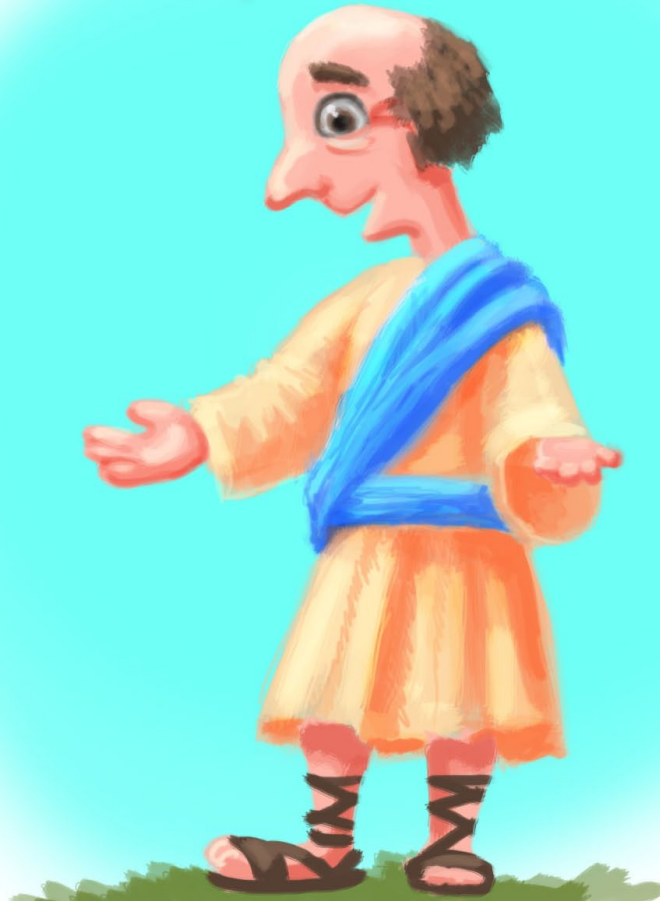
1. affectionate, loving
2. a., of a sympathetic or helpful nature, b., of a forbearing nature, gentle, c., arising from or characterized by sympathy or forbearance

(Merriam Webster; <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/kind%5B2%5D>)

Kindness is a part of God's nature; it is also a fruit of Jesus' Spirit as listed in Galatians 5:22-23 that can be manifested in our lives. In many verses in the Bible we read of God's kindness to His children. Jonah, who had run away from God when God gave him a mission to complete, later said about God, "For I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness. One who relents from doing harm."¹

¹Jonah 4:2 NKJV



TITUS 3:4-6

In Titus 3:4-6, the apostle Paul tells us of the biggest act of God's kindness shown to mankind: "... when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior."²

²NIV

God is love, but His love wasn't a passive thing. It didn't sit on a shelf or stay up in heaven. His love was manifested in action—He sent His Son to save mankind. Kindness is an action done in love; it is a visible part of a caring heart. The reason to be kind to others lies in the knowledge of Jesus and the great act of kindness that God has shown to us, and then committing ourselves to showing love to others, so that they can share in the goodness of His love.

When we have God's love in our hearts, and Jesus' Spirit in our lives, God's love moves us to act with kindness toward others. You don't need to feel "kind" to be kind—it is an action that we can take when we see a need.

Artist's Note: In real life, if you come across a bear in a trap, call wildlife services. Do not try to free it yourself. It may not be grateful.





In Matthew 25:35–40 we learn how it is the actions to show care and kindness to others that Jesus is pleased with—and that kindness is manifested in action. “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’



“The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’”³

Bite-sized: Kindness is an action of love; it is a visible part of a caring heart.

Memorize it: Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32 NIV)

Action: Kindness doesn’t need to be deserved in order to be shown. In fact, sometimes it’s more noteworthy when you show kindness to someone who may be difficult to show kindness to. Think of one person in your life who you feel may be difficult for you to show kindness to, and then commit to one kind deed that you will do for him or her. The more you practice kindness, the easier it will become.

When you do a kind deed for another, even someone who is difficult for you to be kind to, you are doing it unto Jesus.

³ NIV