

20. Learning to Be Kind to One Another

In our last topic, we saw that one of the ways that we show the love of Christ is by developing an attitude of humility toward others so that each person can experience the respect and service that are the results of such an attitude. Today, our topic will focus on how to help our physical and spiritual children learn to be kind to one another. Ephesians 4:32 says, “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.” In this verse, we see that one of the ways we show the love of Christ to others is by being kind to one another. We will look at some principles that will help us to show our physical and spiritual children how to be kind as they observe our example.

In 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a, we have a Biblical definition of the love of Christ that we are commanded to show as Christians in our relationships with one another. Those verses say, “Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.” In these verses, we see the following things about love:

Love defined:

- Love is patient (suffers long)
- Love is kind

Eight things love is not or does not do:

1. Love is not jealous
2. Love does not brag
3. Love is not arrogant
4. Love does not behave rudely
5. Love does not demand its own way
6. Love is not irritable
7. Love thinks no evil
8. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness

Five things love does:

1. Love rejoices in the truth
2. Love bears all things
3. Love believes all things
4. Love hopes all things
5. Love endures all things

Love summarized:

- Love never fails

In this Biblical definition of the love that Christ gave to us, we see that love is defined by two things: patience and kindness. Christ certainly demonstrated patience toward us. Romans 5:8 says, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Christ showed His patience toward us by shedding His blood to pay the penalty for our sin long before we placed our trust in Him. Luke 6:35-36 says, “But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons

of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.” Here, we see that Christ is kind even to those who are unthankful and evil.

The example of Christ reminds us that kindness is not based on returning the kindness that someone else has already shown to us. Christ chose to show kindness to those who were unthankful. In the same way, we want to show our children how to show kindness even when people do not express thanks or appreciation. Kindness is a choice to please Christ and show that kindness to others with no expectation that they will express thanks or appreciation for the kindness that we have shown. This means that we want to help our children learn to give thanks for the opportunity to be kind to others knowing that the Lord will reward them whether there is a positive response from people or not.

Christ also gave us an example of kindness even to those who did evil to Him. 1 Peter 2:20-23 says, “For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ‘Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth’; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.” Christ chose not to return evil for evil. Christ calls us to follow His example. As we follow His example, we are showing our children how to return kindness to those who do or speak evil to them.

Ephesians 4:32, which we quoted in the first paragraph, speaks about some things that we are called to do to show kindness to one another. First, we see that we are to be tenderhearted. The word that is translated “tenderhearted” is also used in 1 Peter 3:8 where we read, “Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous.” The word “tenderhearted”, means to *have a strong compassion or to be very compassionate*. Matthew 9:36 says that Christ was moved with compassion as He saw the spiritual needs of people. That verse says, “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.” If we are kind, we will be moved with compassion as we see the spiritual needs of others.

We want to show our children by our example what it means to be moved with compassion as we see the spiritual needs of others. Of course, this will only happen as we have a great compassion for others with spiritual needs. In order to really see the people around us the way that Christ sees people, we need to follow His instructions to His disciples. In John 4:35, Christ said to His disciples as they were in Samaria, “Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!” The disciples had just gone into the city of Sychar and only came back with food. A few minutes later, a woman brought a whole group of people who wanted to get to know Christ. We will only be effective in helping our children develop compassion for spiritual needs as we lift up our eyes and see the people around us and help our physical and spiritual children learn to see them also.

Second, Ephesians 4:32 says that a kind person will also be forgiving. That verse says, “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.” That verse also shows us what makes that forgiveness possible. God forgave us because we are in Christ and the Father was satisfied with the payment that Christ made for our sin. Because we have been forgiven, Christ can also give us His strength to forgive others. Only when we forgive others through the strength of Christ are we able to show the kindness that Christ has shown to us. Philippians 4:13 says, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” We want to help our children learn to understand that the thing that makes it possible for them to forgive and show kindness to those who have hurt them is the fact that Christ promises us His strength as we yield to Him.

Christ gave us the perfect example of forgiveness by what He said as He hung on the cross. Luke 23:34 reads, “Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.’ And they divided His garments and cast lots.” Christ asked the Father to forgive the very people who had condemned Him, beaten Him and placed Him on the cross. His disciples learned from the example of Christ and we also learn from His example. In addition to teaching our children about the way that Christ forgave those who condemned and crucified Him, we need to show our children by our example how to forgive those that have said and done things to us in our lives.

Our physical and spiritual children will grow in their understanding of how to forgive as we provide an example of obedience to the words that Christ spoke in Matthew 5:44. That verse says, “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.” In this verse, we see that the Lord gives us four ways to model kindness to those who treat us with evil. We can ask Christ to give us His strength to love those who treat us as enemies. We can ask Christ to give us His strength to bless those who curse us. We can ask Christ to show us opportunities to do good to those who hate us. We can ask Christ to give us His strength to pray for those who mistreat us and persecute us. Our children will learn that Christ can give them the strength to do these things as they see that Christ gives us His strength to respond in these ways.

Kindness is not something that can be taught by words. Instead, it is one of the things that must be taught by example. The Lord allows some of the difficult things that happen in our lives to give us an opportunity to show our children by our example how to respond with kindness. As we ask Christ to give us His strength, Christ will answer our prayers and we will be able to respond with kindness and the love of Christ instead of trying to get even with those who mistreat us. In that way, our physical and spiritual children are shown by our example that Christ does give us His strength when we pray and ask Him for strength. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to show the love of Christ to others by your kindness.