

This morning, I am in the sixth week of a sermon series that I've entitled "The Spirit-Formed Life." During this series, I will be looking at what is known as the fruit of the Spirit, a phrase Paul uses in Galatians 5:22 to describe the kind of character that is formed in the person who lives under the influence of the Holy Spirit, walking not according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit of God. In case you're unfamiliar with the concept of the fruit of the Spirit, it comes from Paul's words in Galatians 5:

Galatians 5:22-23 - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control.

This, Paul says, is what the Spirit produces in the life of the person who walks in step with God's Holy Spirit. People marked by love, not hatred, hostility or indifference. Joy, not despair or cheap thrill-seeking. Peace, not anxiety or conflict. Forbearance or patience, not anger, irritability, or impatience. Kindness instead of meanness, callousness or cruelty. Goodness instead of selfishness, corruption, or perpetrating evil. Faithfulness instead of faithlessness, unreliability, or a lack of integrity. Gentleness instead of harshness, abusiveness, or aggression. And self-control instead of living a chaotic, out of control life enslaved to desires. And Paul tells us that these qualities will be ours in increasing measure as we learn to walk with the Holy Spirit of God and to yield ourselves in obedience to His fruit-producing work in our lives. That is the Spirit-formed life.

This morning, we will be looking at the fifth & sixth characteristics on the list: kindness & goodness.

1) Understand the need for both kindness & goodness

I say this because kindness, Biblically speaking, is more about attitude and disposition, while goodness is more about kindness in action, i.e. good deeds done for other people. Kindness is a sincere desire for the well-being of others. And goodness is then actively working to advance that well-being. Kindness is the inner disposition. Goodness is kindness in action.

By telling us that the fruit of the Spirit includes both kindness and goodness, Paul is telling us that God's Spirit will produce not only a benevolent and generous attitude towards others, but also result in benevolent and generous actions towards others. The one who exhibits this fruit of the Spirit will have a genuine interest in the well-being of those around them that displays itself in action.

The problem, of course, is that we often do not care about people around us. In fact, we can isolate ourselves or get easily annoyed by others and not be kind or good towards them. And if you're online, you've seen how easy it is to be unkind, to be rude, to say and do terrible things, often anonymously. And often Christians are seen as unkind in the way they are towards others.

What would it look like to be a people known for their kindness and goodness, not only towards each other but towards everyone? Jesus said:

John 13:35 – “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Galatians 6:9–10 - Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Tertullian, a Christian author in the 2nd-3rd century, wrote in *Ad Nationes* that Christians were recognized by the pagan world for their acts of charity and kindness. They were often mistakenly called Chrestiani instead of Christiani – the kindness people (Chrestus is the Greek word for good, sweet, kind, benign).

We need the help of God's Spirit. Remember that this is the fruit of the Spirit, reflecting the character of God. Pray that God would do that in our midst today.

2) Be transformed by His kindness and goodness towards us

1) We need to begin by recognizing that The Lord is both kind and good.

Psalm 136:1 - Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good. *His love endures forever.*

Deuteronomy 32:4 - He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.

Exodus 33:19 - And the LORD said, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

2) His kindness and goodness are manifest in His treatment of His people. The Lord has been kind and good to YOU.

Acts 14:17 – “Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.”

James 1:17 - Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

Titus 3:4–8 - But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ 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, ⁶ whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. ⁸ This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good.

Matthew 7:11 – “If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”

Hesed – faithful love, mercy, compassion; loving-kindness. God is faithful to his covenant promises, pays careful attention to our needs, acts in generous and merciful love, and generously provides everything for our blessing and benefit.

3) His goodness and kindness are meant to turn you from sinful self-centeredness to trust in Him.

Romans 2:4 - Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?

Psalms 23:6 - Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

There is a classic Christian poem written in 1890 by Francis Thompson about being pursued by God. He finally realizes that God is chasing him down not to

punish or destroy him but to love and comfort him. His goodness and mercy is following you. He is chasing you down with goodness. His kindness is meant to lead you to repentance, to turn to Him and trust in Him. Trust in His goodness towards you and let His loving-kindness transform your heart.

3) Put kindness and goodness into action!

This is where the emphasis of this passage has to be on action – how are you displaying this fruit in your life? Where might you step out in kindness and goodness towards your neighbor? Two books really get at this:

Conspiracy of Kindness by Steve Sjogren (1993) – free gift wrapping, free drinks, cleaning bathrooms

Bob Goff's Bible Doing in Love Does (2012)

Let the fruit of kindness and goodness display itself through good works in your life!

Matthew 5:14–16 - “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Ephesians 2:8–10 - For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

God has prepared good works in advance for us to do. How can you demonstrate the kindness of God by offering to do some act of humble service with no strings attached?

Meet the ordinary needs of people

Matthew 22:37–40 - “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?

³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ ⁴⁰ The King will

reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”

And even be kind to your enemies:

Matthew 5:43–45 - “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”

There are so many opportunities all around us if we would just ask Jesus to give us His eyes. Two good questions: How would Jesus treat this person if He were me? And how would I treat this person if they were Jesus?

Doing chores.

Speaking kind words. Mother Teresa said “Kind words can be short and easy to speak but their echoes are truly endless”

Umbrella escorts

Get the door

Return grocery carts

Give flowers, fruits & veggies from your garden

Rake leaves or shovel snow

Give out free water or drinks on a hot day

Join Street Church

Anyone can do simple acts of kindness. Do it freely, expecting nothing in return, and you reflect the kindness and goodness of God to the world. It makes people curious, it honors God, it recognizes that conversion is a process.

What is an example of a time that the kindness and goodness of Christians was a witness to you or to someone else?

Block party for Hartford Project – giving away free stuff to the community.

May God send us out to be His hands and feet in kindness and goodness!