

Kindness:

Reaching Out To Others

By Phyllis J. LePeau

Study 1: God's Kindness to Us

WARMING UP

1. What do you think it would be like never to have experienced God's kindness?

DIGGING IN

2. Read Psalm 103. According to verses 2–5, what kind and loving things has God done for us?

3. In this first paragraph (vv. 2–5), how does God's loving-kindness meet our physical, emotional, and spiritual needs?

4. Which of the Lord's "benefits" have you experienced recently? Explain.

5. As you read the psalmist's description of God in verses 6–14, what kind of portrait emerges?

6. How are God's kindness and love demonstrated in his treatment of the oppressed (vv. 6–7)?

7. How is God's loving-kindness revealed in the way he treats those who sin (vv. 8–12)?

8. In what ways do you struggle with accepting God's forgiveness?

How can these verses help you to live in the freedom of his forgiveness?

9. How does God respond to our frailty and mortality (vv. 13–19)?

10. How do his compassion and love reach even beyond the grave for those who fear him?

11. Reflect again on the ways God's loving-kindness has been shown to you according to this psalm. In what specific ways could you imitate his kindness in your relationships with others?

PRAY ABOUT IT

Praise to God is an appropriate way to open and close this psalm. Using verses 1–2 and 20–22 as your model, pray to God, praising him for his kindness, love, and compassion. Ask him to produce in you the fruit of kindness.

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Study 2: Showing Kindness to Others

WARMING UP

1. Are you ever tempted to treat some people better than others? Why?

DIGGING IN

2. Read Matthew 10:40–42. What various types of people does Christ view as his representatives?

What motivation are we given for “welcoming” each one?

3. How would you respond if Christ himself came to your home, asking for food, shelter, or clothing?

4. How does it help you to know that by showing kindness to the least of Christ’s followers, you are showing kindness to Jesus and his Father?

5. Jesus mentions the word *reward* three times in three verses. What type of reward do you imagine you will receive for showing kindness to other Christians?

Does the promise of a reward give you any additional motivation? Why or why not?

6. Read Mark 9:33–37. Why do you suppose the disciples were arguing about who was the greatest?

7. What are some of the marks and symbols of greatness in our culture?

8. How does Jesus stand the world’s concept of greatness on its head (v. 35)?

9. In what practical ways might you be “the very last, and the servant of all” at home and in your church?

10. Children had a lowly place in Jewish society (v. 36). What types of people are we inclined to view as lowly in our culture?

11. In what sense does Christ’s statement (v. 37) obliterate such distinctions?

12. Think of one person you know who might be viewed as lowly by others. In what specific ways might you treat that person with kindness by receiving, welcoming, or giving a cup of cold water for Christ’s sake?

PRAY ABOUT IT

Make a list of every Christian you know who might be perceived as lowly by those in our culture (e.g., missionaries). Pray for them daily for the next week.

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Study 3: Kindness Illustration with Boaz and Ruth

WARMING UP

1. Have you ever received kindness from a total stranger? How were you affected by that act of kindness?

DIGGING IN

2. Read Ruth 2. Ruth's commitment to Naomi was so great that she left all to go with her to a strange land. How does Ruth continue to demonstrate her loyalty?

3. How do Ruth and Boaz meet?

4. Look closely at Boaz. What do you learn about him in verses 4–16?

5. Why does Boaz respond to Ruth in such a kind way (vv. 10–12)?

How does Boaz describe the Lord to Ruth (v. 12)?

6. What specific needs of Ruth does Boaz meet (vv. 14–18)?

7. How is Ruth affected by Boaz's kindness?

How would you have been affected by it?

8. When have you been "put at ease" by someone's kindness?

9. In verses 19–22, what is Naomi's response to Boaz's kindness?

10. How is the rippling (multiplying) effect of kindness illustrated throughout this passage?

11. Think of someone in your family who needs to experience God's kindness through you. What are the first steps you need to take to show kindness to that person?

PRAY ABOUT IT

Ask God to allow the fruit of kindness to grow freely in you and to be demonstrated this week, especially in your family.

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Study 4: Fulfilling the Law of Christ

WARMING UP

1. Think of your closest friend. In what ways has he or she made life's burdens easier to bear?

DIGGING IN

2. Read Galatians 6:1–10. What instructions does Paul give concerning someone who is caught in a sin?

How would you feel if you were “caught in a sin” by members of your church?

3. Why is gentleness extremely important in the response to someone caught in sin?

4. Paul urges us to “carry each other's burdens” (v. 2). What types of burdens often press down on or even crush you and/or people around you?

5. In what specific ways might you make their burden lighter? How could someone else help make your burdens lighter?

6. In what sense do we “fulfill the law of Christ” (v. 2) by carrying each other's burdens?

7. How might restoring those who sin or carrying others' burdens lead us to feel proud (v. 3)?

8. What does Paul say we should do to avoid this pitfall (vv. 4–5)?

9. What do you think is involved in testing your own actions?

10. What obligations do we have toward those who instruct us in the Word (v. 6)?

What kinds of “good things” do you think Paul has in mind?

11. At first, it seems that Paul's warnings about sowing and reaping come out of nowhere (vv. 7–9). How does his analogy relate to doing good to others?

12. Why might we become weary and be tempted to give up as we express kindness to those in need (vv. 7–9)?

13. Give one specific example of how you might live out the fruit of kindness in the life of a Christian or non-Christian you know.

PRAY ABOUT IT

Thank God for the community of believers in which he has placed you. Pray that the Holy Spirit will make you aware of specific ways that you can express the fruit of kindness to people within your community.

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Study 5: Reaching Out to the Poor and Needy

WARMING UP

1. Who are some of the poor and needy that live in your area?

DIGGING IN

2. Read Proverbs 14:21. Do you tend to view the needy as your neighbors? Why or why not?

3. What acts of kindness might we show to those in need?

4. How have you felt God's blessing as a result of being kind to the needy?

5. Read Proverbs 14:31. In what ways are the poor oppressed in our society?

Why do you think so many have so little materially, while a few have so much?

6. When have you oppressed the poor, either directly or indirectly?

7. "Shows contempt for their Maker" are strong words. Why do you think oppressing the poor shows contempt for God?

8. Conversely, how does being kind to the needy honor God?

9. Read Proverbs 19:17. In what sense are we loaning to the Lord when we are kind to the poor?

10. Do you think our "reward" is something we will receive now, in the future, or both? Explain.

11. What do these proverbs reveal about God's concern for the poor?

What actions and attitudes toward the poor do you think God expects from us?

12. What specific ways can you honor God this week by being kind to the poor and needy?

PRAY ABOUT IT

Confess your sin of oppressing the poor. Ask the Lord to reveal to you any ways that you oppress the poor that you may not be aware of. Thank him for his love for the poor and needy and for his forgiveness to you.

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Study 6: David and Mephibosheth

WARMING UP

1. When have you shown kindness to someone you did not know? Why?

DIGGING IN

2. What do you know about David and Jonathan's relationship?

How would you describe their love for and loyalty to each other?

3. Read 2 Samuel 9. What steps did David go through to find Mephibosheth (vv. 1-5)?

4. What motivated David to find him and show kindness to him?

5. How does your love for and loyalty to a person motivate you to show kindness to his or her relatives?

6. How would you describe Mephibosheth?

Why would he be an unlikely candidate to receive kindness from David?

7. How extensive were the needs that David met?

8. Verse 3 states that David wanted to show God's kindness. How is David's kindness to Mephibosheth like God's kindness to us?

9. Describe a situation in which you experienced God's kindness through a person you did not know. How were you affected?

10. David took risks in showing kindness to Mephibosheth. What risks do we take when we express kindness to people?

PRAY ABOUT IT

Think of someone who needs to experience God's kindness through you. Ask God to give you opportunities to express his kindness to that person.