

# Kindness (and Servanthood)

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## Kindness—an attribute of God

*How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.* (Psalm 36:7)

David, Isaiah, Apostle Paul, and many other Bible and Book of Mormon writers speak of the kindness of God in such glowing terms as—His loving-kindness, great kindness, merciful kindness, everlasting kindness, excellent loving-kindness, marvelous loving-kindness.

God is always and everlastingly kind. Sometimes in weakness we may doubt that. When He cast Adam and Eve out of the garden, do you think they thought He was being kind? But He was. We are told if they had been allowed to stay in the garden, they would have eaten of the tree of life and have lived forever in their sinful state. But God, in His kindness, provided a way that they could repent and be able to come again into His presence.

God's kindness is not permissiveness; it is doing that which will help to bring about our eternal salvation.

*For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.* (Prov 3:12)

*. . . I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth, for in these things I delight . . .* (Jeremiah 9:24)

1 Nephi 5:237-238 (speaking of Jesus) . . . *they scourge him, and he suffereth it; and they smite him, and he suffereth it. Yea, they spit upon him, and he suffereth it, because of his loving kindness and his long-sufferings towards the children of men.*

Like our Heavenly Father and our Savior Jesus Christ, we are called to be kind. When we enter into a covenant relationship with Christ, we are called to be “new creatures.” We are to be recreated *in His image*; take upon us *His attributes*. We are to be kind, even as He is kind.

Ephesians 4: 32 *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

Colossians 3:12 *Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering;*

*13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*

*14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.*

*15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*

*16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

*17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*

Isn't that a beautiful picture of what life should be like and what it will be like in Zion?--concern and kindness toward each other. The scripture talks about putting on "bowels of mercies." To me that means a yearning that comes from the depths of our being—the kind of yearning that made God weep over His creation that was lost in the flood. And in kindness he shut them up in a prison where they could be taught and have an opportunity for repentance and still an opportunity to be saved. We need this Godly yearning for the good of those around us, those we love, and even our enemies.

Remember the Gadianton robbers in the Book of Mormon? They were a great scourge to the Nephites and to the Lamanites. Helaman 2:164 tells us that at one time the Lamanites utterly destroyed these robbers from among their people. How?—by preaching the word of God among them! At a later time the Nephites also had much success with this method (3Nephi 2:86-87).

We were traveling at the time of the September 11 terrorist attack on our country. We shared in America's horror and sorrow. But out of this tragedy, it has been heartening to see indications of, not only patriotism and unity, but a desire to help others and a remembrance of the supremacy of God. People gave money, gave time, gave blood—kindness in action. Everywhere we traveled we saw flags and signs—God Bless and Heal America, Pray for the Victims, One Nation under God, indivisible, Blessed is the Nation Whose God is the Lord, and so on.

A sign we didn't see was: Pray for Our Enemies. But shouldn't we? Think what it would mean if those whose hearts are so filled with hatred could experience charity, the pure love of Christ, and a change could be wrought in their hearts. It would be a kindness to pray for our enemies.

### **The Shunammite Woman—kindness to strangers**

Please read II Kings 4:8-37; 8:1-6

This scripture tells of a great woman of Shunem—a place where Elisha the prophet passed through often during his ministries. There is not an explanation of why this woman was called great—whether because of wealth or social standing or her generous nature or perhaps all three. But one day she invited Elisha (actually constrained him according to the scripture) to come in and eat a meal with her and her husband. This developed into a regular occurrence; whenever Elisha passed through Shunem, he would stop and eat with this couple.

Then the woman said to her husband, "I perceive that this is a holy man of God. . . . Let us make a little chamber." So they built and furnished a room just for Elisha to come and rest in when he traveled through. Elisha really appreciated her kindness and wanted to reciprocate in some way. She, however, had not acted out of desire for reward, but out of kindness and asked for no return. Still Elisha persisted. He talked it over with his servant who pointed out, "Verily she has no child, and her husband is old." Immediately Elisha called for her and told her, "... About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. . . ."

This woman's kindness was a blessing to Elisha; it was a blessing and a worthy contribution to the Lord's work in that place. Although she did it with no thought of reward, over the years the blessings returned many fold to her. In the scripture reference above regarding the Shunammite woman, count how many times she was blessed. There

were probably many more. Her kindness was richly rewarded in this life, and no doubt, in the life thereafter.

Gen. 18:1-8 tells the story of Abraham inviting the strangers to stay and eat; they turned out to be angels who announced the coming of the long-awaited son to he and Sarah.

Hebrews 13:2 ***Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.***

When we think about kindness to strangers,

- what about the strangers we share the roadways with? Do we drive with kindness and courtesy?--in honor preferring one another?
- what about the clerk at the store who takes your money? Do we remember to be kind to her? Or does she see a harried customer, frustrated by long lines, who tends to take their resentment out on the clerk? A smile and a little kindness can mean a lot in her busy work day.

2 Peter 1:4-8 ***Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.***

***And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge;***

***And to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness;***

***And to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.***

***For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

- We want to be partakers of the divine nature; we want to be fruitful. Our attitude, our demeanor, is an effective witness of what is in our hearts. If our attitude is haughty, or if we are scowling and grouchy, we are not good witnesses. If we act with kindness to those around us, if we truly care about others for Jesus' sake, we will be able to witness for Him. Someone will say "what makes you tick?" or "what is the reason for the hope that lies within you?" We need to be ready to tell them.

## **Mary, the mother of Jesus—kindness is servanthood**

***"Charity. . . is kind."*** 1 Cor. 13:4

- Kindness comes from truly caring about people, having the pure love of Christ in our hearts for them.
- Kindness is serving. And to a greater or lesser degree
- Kindness is sacrifice.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, was so beautifully willing to serve. How it must have complicated Mary's life to be "found with child" and unmarried. Joseph could have made her a public example, and she could have been stoned. Instead, he shouldered the responsibility of Mary's baby.

Mary trusted God and was willing to risk all to do what He asked of her—

“ . . . *behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. . .*”

Luke 1:38 Because of her willingness to serve, Mary was blessed to bear the Son of God.

When Jesus took up His ministry, it must have been a terrible loss in the home life of His earthly family—not just the livelihood He must have earned as a carpenter, but more importantly His presence in their home. How hard it is on any mother when her children leave home. Can you imagine what it must have been like for Mary? Even though it was probably hard for Mary to understand his actions at times, I think they must have had a wonderful relationship. Then He left. Luke says that Mary and Jesus’ brothers went to talk to Him, but couldn’t get close because of the crowd. Did they want to ask Him to come back home? Take up his duties as head of the household?

When the disciples told Jesus that His mother and brothers were asking for Him, He answered, “*My mother and my brethren are those who hear the word of God, and do it.*” (Luke 8:21) Was Jesus unkind to His mother? We know He wasn’t because He cannot be unkind. Everything He does is for our good.

Jesus had a new family now—the church, those who would follow Him. He knew that He could not bring salvation to His earthly family as their son and brother. Rather, they must become part of His spiritual family. They must recognize and accept Him as their Heavenly Savior and King.

Mary was at the foot of the cross (John 19:25-27), and after Jesus ascension into Heaven, she was gathered with the believers to rejoice in her risen Lord (Acts 1:14).

Mary took no glory to herself, and would not want us to elevate her to great status or to worship her. But she set for us a beautiful example of servanthood.

#### **How can we serve?**

- Certainly, as women, we serve in our **homes**. Servanthood is part of our job description in being good help mates and good mothers. We are to be homemakers, teachers, encouragers, disciplinarians—all those hats that women in the home need to wear—that is serving.
- At **church**, of course, there are many opportunities to serve. When we first began attending church at Belton Restoration Branch, one of the first ways we were asked to serve was to help clean the church building. That is serving, along with teaching, providing music, etc. etc. etc., being aware of needs and assisting members of our Branches with those needs. In order to be aware, we need to know each other, be in each other’s homes.
- In our **community**. We don’t have to look far to find places to serve in our community—or even in the world community.
- Remember that **prayer** is a service and a kindness.
- Remember that gossip is the opposite of kindness. Prov. 31:26 “*...in her tongue is the law of kindness.*”
- It is a kindness and service to express appreciation to those who serve us. What about the people who **pick up our trash**? We would be in a pickle without them. Sure, we pay them, but a word of appreciation for their service might just make their day. What about the people who **teach our children**? What about your

#### **pastor?**

It would be a kindness to let these people know we appreciate their efforts.

- There are many ways to serve. It is important to reach out to others.

Rom 12:1 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

### **Mary and Martha—do all to God’s glory**

When our Heavenly Father chastises, He is not being unkind—quite the opposite. In the following story, we find Jesus, gently, chastising Martha.

*Luke 10:39-43 Now it came to pass, as they went, they entered into a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister, called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his words.*

*But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me.*

*And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things;*

*But one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.*

Now, since we are called to be servants, how do we reconcile Jesus’ chastisement of Martha with our call to serve?

Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were siblings who lived together. They extended hospitality to Jesus in their home. They loved Him, and He truly loved them. In this situation, Martha has invited Jesus to her home. What an exciting prospect, and what a responsibility. Everything must be just right. What would you do? Wouldn’t you want to serve your best and favorite dishes, lots of choices, plenty of everything, and serve it in style? I think that was Martha’s feeling.

Mary, on the other hand, had no interest in the meal preparation or serving or even the food. She was hungering and thirsting for the words of Jesus.

When Jesus refused Martha’s request to make Mary help in the kitchen, and even went on to tell her that Mary had chosen the good part, was He being unkind to Martha? No. If Martha or you and I are headed in the wrong direction, the only kind thing to do would be to try to head us in the right one.

The difference in Martha and Mary at that point was their focus. Mary was totally focused on Jesus. Martha was focused on fixing a meal for Jesus. It was a good thing to do, but she was too busy and too tired and too irritated with her sister, to sit at Jesus’ feet and hear His words.

Jesus said, “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; But one thing is needful.” I think He was talking about her focus. One author, Carolyn Dipboye, suggests a double meaning to those words, a pun, if you will—that Jesus was pointing out that she had gone overboard—that she had fixed so many dishes when one would have sufficed. In other words, why not just fix a pot of stew, then we could all sit here together and visit.

Now, I can identify very much with Martha. If I invite guests, I want to fix a nice meal. I like to fix a variety of things and plenty of them. But I have been known to get nervous and flustered over meal preparations, so that when company arrived, it was hard to concentrate on my guests and enjoy them as I should. What if I would simplify? What

if I would say to a family or two at church, We would like for you to come over for a visit. I will fix a kettle of soup. Could you bring some raw veggies? Do you think we might invite people more often, and we all might enjoy it more?

So how does this translate for us as homemakers, wives, mothers? We necessarily have a servant role in caring for our loved ones and managing the household. How do we do that and still “choose the good part?”

We must learn to do all that we do for the glory of God. **“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”** 1 Cor 10:31

**“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”** Colossians 3:17

So as we go about our tasks—whether it be cleaning the house, or packing a lunch, attending school or working at a job, having guests into our home, we want to try to fulfill these tasks prayerfully and with thanksgiving and in such a way that it will bring glory to God.

But beyond this, we must take time, as Mary did, to sit at Jesus’ feet. Take time apart, away from the distractions, to immerse ourselves in God’s Word, to pray and to listen. This might have to be when everyone else is asleep—maybe early morning. That is a great way to start your day. It could be while your kids are napping. Try to find your quiet time alone with God.

In your quiet time, ask the Lord to bless you with this loving kindness that is Him, and to help you share it with those who need it. This psalm is one that I like to include often in my morning prayer.

Psalm 143: 1,8

***O Lord. . .***

***Cause me to hear thy loving-kindness in the morning;***

***for in thee do I trust;***

***cause me to know the way wherein I should walk;***

***for I lift up my soul unto thee.***