

The Fruit of the Spirit

The Fruit of the Spirit Is Kindness

Lesson #6 for February 6, 2010

Scriptures: 2 Samuel 9:1-13; Proverbs 15:1-5; 25:11-15; Matthew 5:43-48; Luke 6:35,38; 1 Corinthians 13:4; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12-14.

1. This lesson is a description of the role that kindness plays in the life of a true Christian. What is the relationship between *agape* love and kindness? *Agape* love suggests that we love those who do not even deserve our love. But then, why does the Bible suggest that we should have *agape* love for God who is the most deserving of anyone in the universe? Would it be correct to describe kindness as *agape* love in action? Why do you think kindness was included in this list of the fruit of the Spirit?
2. While patience can, at times, be manifested by doing and saying nothing, kindness involves action. Could a person act with kindness and not have love? Do you agree with the following words from the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for January 30?

Often patience might be manifested by doing nothing; kindness, in contrast, is manifested by what we say and do and, more important, by how we say it and do it and, even more important, why we say and do it.
3. Is it easy to be kind? Why do humans have trouble with kindness? If it is not easy to be kind, what factors prevent us from exercising kindness on a regular basis?
4. 1 John 4:8,16 tell us that God is love. Love is the very basis of His kingdom. If we hope to be a part of that kingdom some day, shouldn't we be practicing *agape* love every day? Is it also true that God is kind? If we could learn to be constantly kind to those around us, would we truly be more Godlike?
5. Read Matthew 5:43-48. We have Jesus' words recorded in Greek, but Jesus was actually speaking Aramaic. I wish we had His original words in Aramaic. In His Sermon on the Mount and, no doubt, on many other occasions, Jesus challenged His followers to be more like God. Someday, all of us are hoping to live with God in heaven. Do we need to be like God and act like God in order to have a place in heaven? What does it mean to become God's children?
6. As those who are Christians will recognize, the subject of perfection has led to many discussions! What does it mean to be perfect? What is God saying to us here? The Greek verb translated "Be ye" (subjunctive) has exactly the same spelling as the future middle indicative, "you shall be." Thus, an excellent translation of this verb was first suggested by Edgar Goodspeed in his 1923 *American Translation*, "you are to be." This suggests both ideas in English just as they are in Greek. (See also *The New American Standard Bible*, 1995) The Greek word translated *perfect* in Matthew 5:48 is the word *teleios*. It means to be mature. If one were describing a fruit, it would mean to be ripe.
7. Is perfection a gift or something that we earn by practice? Do any of us earn God's gifts? If the fruit of the Spirit is fruit produced by the Spirit, do we have anything to do with producing it? What would our church and even our homes be like if all the members would truly "die to self" and live with love and kindness as their constant guideline? What is it that keeps us from doing that? Is it only our selfishness? Is our selfishness a sufficient reason for us to fail to enter the kingdom of heaven? How difficult is it to die to self? If we could

die to self, would we be naturally loving and kind? Would we be willing to die to self if everyone else would be willing to do so at the same time? This world is a mean place! But if we want the world to be loving and kind, it must start somewhere! Why not with us?

8. What did Jesus say about kindness and love and its effect on our witness? Read John 13:35 and Matthew 5:16. Do people ever look at us and praise God? Are Christians immediately identifiable by their love? Does that mean that no one else is truly loving? Ellen White stated that if we were loving and kind, many more people would be attracted to Christianity and to our church. But being loving and kind does not mean to let other people walk all over us and treat us like a doormat.

If we would humble ourselves before God, and be kind and courteous and tenderhearted and pitiful, **there would be one hundred conversions to the truth where now there is only one. But, though professing to be converted, we carry around with us a bundle of self that we regard as altogether too precious to be given up.** It is our privilege to lay this burden at [190] the feet of Christ and in its place take the character and similitude of Christ. The Saviour is waiting for us to do this. {9T 189.4}

9. Is it easier to be loving and kind if you know you are a child of God? Dr. Nies talked about a young man referred to him by his father who had emigrated from eastern Europe and worked very hard to build up a large business. Fairly late in life, he had a son. He wanted to prepare that son for the day when he would inherit the business. Since the father had been forced to work his way up from the bottom, he believed his son should also. So, the father gave his son a pseudonym so that the people in the factory did not know who he was. The son was assigned to sweep the floors. The young man made his share of mistakes. However, when he was disciplined by his superiors, it never bothered him very much because he knew that the whole company belonged to his father and would eventually belong to him!
10. Why is it that people tend to act in selfish, compulsive, nasty, rude, and hurtful ways instead of loving and kind ways? Does acting in any of those ugly ways really make us feel better? Or, do those kinds of actions and attitudes hurt us perhaps even more than they hurt the people we are mistreating? Is there a difference between being “nice” and being “kind”? Is God able to take care of us if we choose to be and act more like Him? Does “kindness” have anything to do with “political correctness”?
11. Look at some examples of kindness revealed in the Bible. Read 2 Samuel 9:1-13. In that passage David manifested a great deal of kindness, sympathy, and love toward one of the remaining members of Saul’s family. He apparently did that because of his love for Jonathan. What other stories about kindness from the Old Testament can you think of? What about Naomi and Ruth? Abraham and Lot? Abigail and David? Joseph with his brothers in Egypt?
12. Is it more difficult to forgive people who clearly do not deserve it?
13. What are the real reasons for acting in kind, courteous, thoughtful ways toward others here on this earth? Do we expect something from them in return? If we act kindly and courteously towards someone who can clearly never repay us in any way, does that have a different impact on our character than being kind to someone that might eventually repay our kindness?

14. Read Luke 7:36-50. In addition to Jesus, there are three main actors in that story. Simon, a Pharisee, was the uncle to Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. (*ST*, May 9, 1900 par. 15; *DG* 239.4) Since Simon was a Pharisee, it is likely that Mary, Martha, and Lazarus came from a family of Pharisees. Lazarus had been invited to the banquet because people wanted to see someone who had been raised from the dead. With her culinary skills, Martha was probably involved in the food preparation. But Mary who had been led into sin by her uncle Simon (*DA* 567.1) was probably **not** invited! What do you think was going on in Judas' mind? What was going on in Simon's mind? Why was Mary at that banquet, and what was she trying to do? The Pharisees were a very exclusive group. They never had more than 6000 members at any one time. Thus, they were a small minority of the Jewish population. Mary believed that Jesus was about to be crowned king, and she wanted to be the first to anoint Him. A "silver coin" was the usual pay for a day's work for a common laborer. The perfume that Mary poured on the feet of Jesus was worth a year's wages. Judas' only concern was why all that money had not been contributed to Jesus and the disciples and put in the money bag that he carried and stole from on a regular basis! (*DA* 567.1)
15. When considering the cases of Judas and Simon, we realize that they both heard the same words and saw the same events. Judas was annoyed and went out and agreed to betray Jesus. (*DA* 563.3) Simon was thankful for not being exposed by Jesus Christ, and so he was willing to become a true disciple. Why do you think those words and actions had such a markedly different effect on those two individuals? Think how kind Jesus was to Mary, Simon, and even Judas by not revealing what He knew about each of them!
16. Do any of us deserve the love and kindness God shows to us? Do we behave more like Judas did or like Simon did in Luke 7? Are we able to love and show kindness to others because God has loved us? How many times has God forgiven us? In light of that, how many times should we be willing to forgive others?
17. How many examples can you recall of true Godlike kindness in the Bible?
18. Read Ephesians 4:32; 1 Thessalonians 2:7; Romans 15:1; 2 Timothy 2:24,25. These verses suggest that we need to be kind and courteous to "spiritual babes." We also need to show similar kindness and courtesy toward those who are described as weak in the faith. Finally, we need to look after those who are spiritually sick. How would you differentiate spiritual babes from those who are spiritually sick and from those who are spiritually weak?
19. Many studies conducted on the way humans communicate have shown that the words we speak are actually only a small part of what we are communicating. The tone of the words and the expression on the face often weigh more heavily than the words themselves! Why do you think that is?
20. Read Proverbs 15:1-5; 25:11-15; Matthew 5:16. What do these passages teach us about the use of words?
21. Read the story of the interaction between David and Abigail in 1 Samuel 25. David's men had put forth considerable effort to prevent potential harm to themselves and to protect the flocks and herds of many of the shepherds of Israel. Nabal, one of the richest among them, did not show any appreciation whatsoever for that work. David became so indignant when he learned of Nabal's reaction that he was ready to kill him. Nabal's wife, Abigail, recognized the problem; and in apparently characteristic fashion for her, she sent gifts and she herself traveled to beg forgiveness for Nabal from David. That prevented the deaths

of a number of people.

22. Read Luke 6:38. Jesus assured us that whatever kindness we show to others, we will be repaid. Has that been your experience? That is often a very natural occurrence. When we are kind, helpful, and loving to others, they tend to be that way to us. By contrast, if we are mean and ugly to others, people will try to avoid us and will tend to be mean and ugly back. Ancient laws stated that if one did not want someone else to injure or be nasty to him, he should not be that way to that person. But Jesus went way beyond that principle and said that we should do to others the good we would like them to do to us!
23. Read Matthew 7:12. Christ recited what has come to be known as the golden rule. He stated that this is the message of the Law and the Prophets. Where do you find that in the Old Testament? Is this an example of why we must learn to “read between the lines” in the Bible? Do we find many examples of people loving their enemies and treating them with kindness? As Christian’s living in the final times of this earth’s history, are we prepared to be kind, hospitable, and loving to all around us in preparation for living in the heavenly kingdom? If not, what is holding us back?
24. Abraham and Lot had the privilege of welcoming angels and even the Son of God into their homes because they were kind and courteous. Could that happen in our day?
25. Those who cherish the Spirit of Christ will manifest politeness at home, a spirit of benevolence even in little things. They will be constantly seeking to make all around them happy, forgetting self in their kind attentions to others. This is the fruit which grows upon the Christian tree.—Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, pages 423, 424.
26. A famous movie from 2000 entitled *Pay It Forward* suggested that we should “practice random kindness and senseless acts of beauty.” What would happen if we did that on a regular basis?
27. Christians have often been divided into groups based on their particular understanding of Christian theology. Have you ever heard of Christians being divided up into those who are kind and those who are not kind? Into those who are loving and those who are not loving? What was Jesus trying to tell us in Matthew 25:34-46?
28. Those of us who hold to the “larger-view, great-controversy, trust-healing” model of the plan of salvation believe that we have the clearest picture of God based on the very best theology. Are we also the kindest, most loving bunch of people in our area? Are we “perfect”? Why is it that some churches which seem to be doing a great deal of loving and showing kindness to others seem to say little about theology while churches that have a great deal to say about theology often do not show much love and kindness to the world around them? If we could start speaking the truth about God (theology) and at the same time actually love our neighbors, would Jesus be able to come back sooner?

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Last Modified: January 11, 2010

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