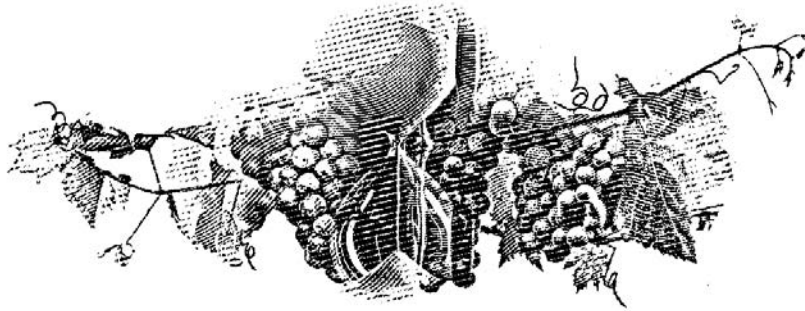


The Fruit of the Spirit Is Kindness



SABBATH—JANUARY 30

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 2 Samuel 9:1–13; Proverbs 15:1–5; Proverbs 25:11–15; Matthew 5:43–48; Luke 6:35, 38; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12–14.

MEMORY VERSE: “You are God’s chosen people. You are holy and dearly loved. So put on tender mercy and kindness as if they were your clothes. Don’t [Do not] be proud. Be gentle and patient” (Colossians 3:12, NlrV).

WHEN PAUL SHOWS HOW LOVE WORKS, patience comes into his mind first: “Love is patient” (1 Corinthians 13:4, NlrV). After patience, Paul writes that love “is kind.” It shows that love and kindness are so close that without kindness, no act is truly done in love!

Patience, we learned, is love in action. But kindness shows a more active example of love. Often we show patience by doing nothing. But we show kindness by what we say and do, by how we say it and do it, and why we say and do it.

Anyone can show kindness. But it may take the sacrifice¹ of time and energy. Kindness is a verb² that shows itself in many ways. And like its close cousin “love,” kindness holds wonderful power. It shows what our God is like.

1. sacrifice—something or someone of value, such as a life, that is given up to save or to help someone or something else.

2. verb—a word that shows action.

SUNDAY—JANUARY 31**THE MODEL (EXAMPLE) OF KINDNESS (Matthew 5:43–48)**

Jesus clearly shows in the Sermon on the Mount the kindness and goodness of God. Read Matthew 5:43–48 and answer the following questions:

- To what high standard (level) is Jesus calling us here?
- What reason does Jesus give for calling us to this standard?
- Notice Christ’s use of the word *perfect* in verse 48. What is the meaning of *perfect*? How can the use of the word help us understand what it means to be perfect as “our Father in heaven” is perfect?

God’s gifts of grace³ are just that. They are gifts. They are unearned and undeserved by all humans. All humans have willingly sinned against God. They either ignored or neglected Him. In this way the greatest sinner is the same as the holiest saint. No one deserves the kindness and goodness that God gives to us all.

With these verses, Jesus is calling us to be “perfect,” even as perfect as God. How so? By loving our enemies, by praying for those who mistreat us, and by being kind to those who have not been kind to us. This is what Jesus means by being “perfect.” Try to think what our church would be like

and what our homes would be like if we could die to self enough. Then we really could live this way! We would have a power and a witness against which the gates of hell never could succeed. What is the only thing that can stop us? Nothing but our sinful hearts, which cause us to act like Publicans.⁴



Jesus calls us to be perfect, even as God is perfect, by loving our enemies, by praying for those who hurt us, and by being kind to those who have not been kind to us.

What painful and deep changes must you make if you are going to follow Christ’s words in these verses?

MONDAY—FEBRUARY 1**KINDNESS TO A “DEAD DOG” (2 Samuel 9:1–13)**

How did David show his kindness in 2 Samuel 9:1–13? How did he, by this act, show the character of God?⁵

3. grace—God’s gift of forgiveness and mercy (kindness) that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

4. Publicans—tax collectors who were hated by the Jews. But in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, the Pharisee is too proud to admit his own weaknesses while the Publican is willing to admit his weaknesses.

5. character of God—who God is; having and understanding the character of Jesus is the same as being kind, loving, honest, and so on. God’s law (Ten Commandments) shows us Jesus’ character.

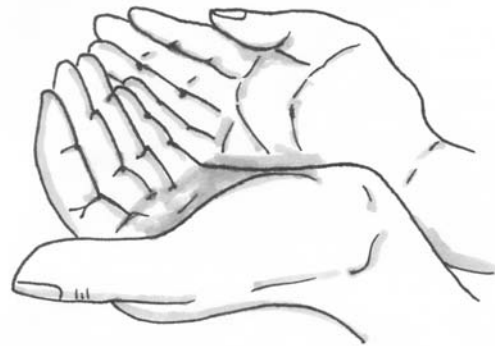
“Through reports from the enemies of David, Mephibosheth believed bad things about David. Mephibosheth hated David. He thought David was the one who stole his throne. But King David’s continued kindness won Mephibosheth’s heart. And he became strongly connected to David. Like his father Jonathan, Mephibosheth felt that his interest became connected with David’s, whom God had chosen.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*,⁶ page 713.

David’s kindness to the house of Saul shows he tried to use God as the pattern for what he wanted to do for Saul’s house. David recognized that he, a sinner like all of us, had received undeserved mercy and kindness from the hand of God, so he shared that kindness with others.

Before we can share God’s kindness with others, what must we first recognize, according to Luke 7:47? What principle (rule) can play an important part in helping us understand the whole question of kindness to others?

Think for a few minutes about the goodness and kindness of God toward you. Do you deserve it? Is it something that God owes you? Are your thoughts, your actions, your words so selfless, so holy, so loving, and so accepting that God is just doing to you as you have done to others? The answer is No. And here

is an important point. We understand God has forgiven us. We understand God loves us no matter what we are and what we have done. So, we truly can understand what it means to be kind and loving to those who do not deserve our kindness or our love. How important it is that we keep the Cross in mind and remember what it means to us at all times!



Think of all the undeserved mercy and kindness you have received from the hands of God.

What things has God forgiven you for over the years? How should that knowledge help you treat those who have done things to hurt you?

TUESDAY—FEBRUARY 2

KIND WORDS (Ephesians 4:32)

Ephesians 4:32 begins with the words, “Be kind and tender to one another” (NIRV). Think about how this verse fits in perfectly with what we learned yesterday, about showing kindness toward others as God has shown kindness toward us.

⁶ *Patriarchs and Prophets*—patriarchs were leaders of God’s people in early Bible times, such as Abraham and Isaac, or other leaders of Israel, such as Moses; prophets are men and women who are given messages by God to give to His people.

The Christian should show kindness at all times. But there are at least three special kinds of people who need encouragement.

First, we are to show kindness to spiritual babies (new Christians). “But we were gentle among you. We were like a mother caring for her little children” (1 Thessalonians 2:7, NIV).

Second, we are to show kindness and encouragement to the weak. “We who have strong faith should help the weak with their problems. We should not please only ourselves” (Romans 15:1, NIV).

Third, we are to serve as a nurse to the spiritually sick (read 2 Timothy 2:24, 25).



We need to show kindness to the weak and to spiritual babies or new Christians in the faith.

A businessman once said, “I cannot wait to get home at night. I get so tired of being kind all day!” What a sad attitude (feeling) to have toward human⁷ life.

7. human—having to do with men, women, or children.

8. influenced by—to be affected or changed by the power of another person or thing.

At home, kindness is important. There is one important way we can show kindness, especially in our homes. It is the way that we talk to one another. The mood of the home is greatly influenced by⁸ the words we speak. So many problems, so many hurts, so many bad feelings and fights could be avoided if we were careful about how we use our words. Often one could say something that does not hurt or insult a person. But at the same time, one could say the exact words to the same person and greatly hurt and insult the person. The key is how we speak. Human speech is more than just the meanings of words themselves. Our faces and voices and actions express (show) our thoughts, emotions, and ideas. So we must be careful that our body language and the way we say something is kind and not hurtful.

What do Proverbs 15:1–5 and Proverbs 25:11–15 tell us about what you say and how you say it? As you read these verses, ask yourself about your use of words when talking to others. In what ways could you be kinder in speaking to others?

WEDNESDAY—FEBRUARY 3

KINDNESS RETURNED (Luke 6:38)

What does Jesus really mean in

Luke 6:38? What principle (rule) of life is He talking about?

So often, how we treat others comes back to us. When we are kind, others will usually be kind to us. It works the other way too. If you are cruel to others, then others will be cruel to you too.

Of course, it does not always happen that way. (Remember how people treated Jesus!) But in the end, how we are treated does not really matter. Why? As Christians, we always should be kind, even if that kindness is not given back to us. In fact, being kind to those who are unkind to us is the best example of being a true follower of Jesus. How we treat others will influence how others treat us. “ ‘In everything, do to others what you would want them to do to you. This is what is written in the Law and in the Prophets’ ” (Matthew 7:12, NIV).



Christians always should be kind, even if the kindness is not given back to us.

How does Luke 6:35 fit in with what we have been talking about all week?

It always is easy to be kind to someone who could help you. Anyone will do that. But it is much harder to be kind to those who can never do anything for you in return. That is the real test.

Examine yourself. Does your kindness come from selfless love? Or does it come from a desire to do what is best for yourself? If it is the second reason, how can you change?

THURSDAY—FEBRUARY 4**PUT ON KINDNESS
(Colossians 3:12–14)**

Rewrite Colossians 3:12–14 in your own words. In what ways do these verses show what it means to be a follower of Christ? (Notice the use of the word *perfect* or *perfection*.) Also, think about how powerful our witness to the world would be if we would put these words into practice through our actions.

Alexander Maclaren, a famous London minister in the nineteenth century, wrote, “Gentleness is the strongest force in the world. You take all the steam hammers that were ever made and battle at an iceberg. The small amount of heat that is created by the blows will melt it only a little. It will still be ice. It might be smashed somewhat, but it is still ice. But let the iceberg move gently down to the southward, where the sunbeams hit the coldness of death.

Then the iceberg is melted into the warm ocean. Kindness is conquering”⁹ (adapted).

As Seventh-day Adventists, we have very powerful Bible verses proving our positions and beliefs. (If we do not, then what are we doing here?) And that is, of course, important. But we need more than just correct teaching, do we not?

“We should humble ourselves before God and be kind and courteous and tenderhearted and pitiful. If so, there would be one hundred believers of the truth where now there is only one.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,¹⁰ volume 9, page 189.

When we teach the doctrines (beliefs) of the church, we include the Sabbath, the state of the dead, the origin of sin, and other beliefs. But are we as careful about showing the importance of kindness and the other fruit of the Spirit? We know that the Sabbath is the seventh day. We know that the dead sleep until the resurrection.¹¹ We know that Christ’s righteousness (holy life) covers us now and in the final judgment. All these truths are important to know and believe. But having knowledge alone is not the same thing as knowing the truth as it is in Jesus (John 14:6). The truth sets us free (John 8:32). The truth also changes us and makes us more like Christ. Could one then ask, Do

we really have the truth if the Truth, Jesus, does not accept us because we fail to show kindness and the other fruit of the Spirit?

FRIDAY—FEBRUARY 5

ADDITIONAL STUDY: “From every Christian home a holy light should shine forth. Love should be shown in action. . . . Love shows itself in *thoughtful kindness*, in gentle, unselfish courtesy. There are homes where this principle is carried out. They are the homes where God is worshiped and truest love rules. From these homes morning and evening prayer goes to God as sweet incense.¹² And then His mercies and blessings come upon the people who pray as the morning dew.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, page 37, emphasis supplied.

“There are many people who believe that loving people is showing weakness. These people turn off others by their cold attitude [feeling]. Their spirit becomes cold and unmerciful. As they push down their warm and kind feelings, their spirits die. And their hearts become cold. We should be aware of this error. Love cannot last long without being shared. Let not the heart of one connected with you starve for the lack of *kindness* and mercy.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, page 107, emphasis supplied.

9. conquering—winning the battle against something or someone.

10. *Testimonies*—the writings of Ellen G. White.

11. resurrection—return to life; raising the dead to life from the grave.

12. incense—perfume.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① As a class, go over the final question at the end of Thursday's study: "Do we really have the truth if the Truth, Jesus, does not accept us?" What does your answer suggest?

② "Love cannot last long without being shared." What does that mean? And why does it show a principle that is so important for us as a church?

③ Review the verses this week that talked about being "perfect." How should we understand what this idea means? What are the common

problems and wrong ideas that we as a church have struggled with over the use and meaning of this word?

④ How have the attitudes (feelings) of other Seventh-day Adventists influenced you and your faith? For example, were people kind to you? If so, how did their kindness influence you? But if the people were unkind to you, how did that influence you? Share your stories with others in the class. What can you learn from these experiences that can help the class better understand how important kindness is in our witness?