

Reaching Out with Kindness

Matthew 5:16

Good morning! We're starting a new series today. We're calling it "Reaching Out". I thought that summer would be a good time to reach out to people. Weather is warm, people are more open, people are spending more time outside, people are generally easier to make contact with. The past two years have really been difficult, as you know, it was hard to make contact with people. We all know though that by being a little safety-conscious we can continue to obey what Jesus has commanded us to do: Make disciples of all nations.

So, this series is about making disciples of Jesus. As Christians that is what we're supposed to do while on earth. Let me be clear though that it is not by our power that we do this, we do this by the power of God. We are ordinary people, but we can do extraordinary things under the power of God, like leading someone to Jesus. It's so hard to do that nowadays with a kind of culture we live in. Trending now is what is called "Cancel Culture". People in this society are trying to cancel Christians, cancel Jesus, and cancel Christianity as a whole. But Jesus said that the gates of hell will not prevail against his church. And I'm glad there are brave people in the Supreme Court who went against the grain and are trying to take back this nation to its Judeo-Christian roots. I heard it said that the ruling set back America 150 years. No, the ruling has set us forward to the time where it should really be. So, we need not be afraid of the world, of this society we live in. As the Bible says, "You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is

in the world.” (1 John 4:4) Amen? We need to cancel “Cancel Culture”, Amen?

Well, I want us to be bold and strong as we face the headwinds of skepticism, unbelief, and ridicule in this society. But we must be smart and strategic and most of all soft-hearted. In short, we must be kind to others as we reach out to them. People don’t like us because of Jesus but we must like them, in fact, love them because of Jesus. In other words, the first thing we do is to show them kindness. That’s how Jesus modeled it for us. He was kind and compassionate toward others. He used it as a bridge to connect with others.

So, I’ve entitled this message, “Reaching Out with Kindness”. Our passage is from Matthew 5:16, “In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

What is kindness? The Greek term for kindness implies benevolence. Meaning, doing good or gracious acts toward someone. Kindness therefore is love in action. It is expressing your love to someone through your deeds. Someone said it is love in work-clothes.

You see, you can say that you love someone, that you’re concerned about someone but unless that is translated into action, who would really believe you? Like this man who was courting a woman and every time they met he would say, “I love you so much that I’ll die for you.” And the woman said, “You always say that, but you never do it.”

The point is, there’s no point uttering words of caring and compassion if there’s no tangible follow-up. James says in James 2:15-16, “Suppose you see a brother or sister who needs food or clothing, and you say, ‘Well, good-

bye and God bless you; stay warm and eat well'--but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?"

Now, let's get a clearer picture of kindness. Why do we need to be kind? First,

1. BEING KIND IS A COMMAND OF GOD.

Ephesians 4:32 says, "Be kind and compassionate to one another."

This is a command that God has given us through the apostle Paul. God wants us to be caring toward others. Kind is related to the words kin and kindred. The root word is the same. And we know what they mean, right? Family, tribe, clan. The implication is that we should treat others like they are part of our family.

We must admit that this is a tough challenge. Because sometimes we can't even be kind to our own family. But it is a command not a suggestion. It is what God wants us to do. He expects us to act with kindness toward others. To your family members and to those outside your family.

It means being kind even to people you don't like, even to your enemies. *1 Thessalonians 5:15 says, "Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else."*

This applies to everyone: the neighbor that causes you problems, the people at work that are just "hard to love", the people that cause you nothing but endless grief. So, those who deserve your retaliation, need your kindness the most. You see, when we "strike back" at others we hurt our ability to share God's grace with them and we hurt the heart of God.

Note that Paul links the words kind and compassionate together. He's saying you can't be kind without being compassionate.

They are closely tied together. Being compassionate means being aware of a person's needs, hurts, sufferings, and problems. Compassion is the first step to being kind.

So, being kind is a command.

2. BEING KIND IS ALSO A COMMITMENT TO OTHERS.

It means to keep on being kind. It means constantly thinking of others, thinking of ways how we can be of help to them. You're doing it not because of obligation but because of genuine concern for others. **Hebrews 10:24 (HCSB) says, "Let us be concerned about one another in order to promote love and good works."**

Another verse in **Hebrews 13:6 (NLT) says, "Don't forget to do good and to share what you have with those in need, for such sacrifices are very pleasing to God."**

Paul says it's very pleasing to God. Indeed it is because Jesus says that if you are being kind to others, you are being kind to Jesus himself. In Matthew 25 he says, **"I'm telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me--you did it to me."** What are these things? In verses 35-36 he says, **"I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink, I was homeless and you gave me a room, I was shivering and you gave me clothes, I was sick and you stopped to visit, I was in prison and you came to me."**

I think that's good motivation enough. To think that whenever we do good to someone, it's like we're doing good to Jesus.

Being kind is a command of God, a commitment to others, and a

3. CONFIRMATION OF OUR FAITH.

Jesus says in **Luke 6:35-37, "But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward**

will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

When you're kind then that confirms that you're a child of God. Because God your heavenly Father is kind. Like father, like son... or daughter. And the good thing is, people around you will also confirm that you're a child of God if you are doing good deeds toward others. They will see you as a reflection of Christ and that brings glory to God. Jesus says in **Matthew 5:16, “let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”**

So, that's the picture of kindness. Yet, it is something that's hard to develop if we really think about it. Why? There's a lot of reasons but let me give you briefly 3 reasons why.

First, **we find it hard to be kind when**

1. WE'RE THINKING ONLY OF OURSELVES.

Many people are so busy. They do this and that. They go here and there. They get involved in all different types of things with the primary purpose of... helping themselves. So that they can have more money. So that they can climb up the corporate ladder faster than anyone else. So that they can be well-known or famous. And the result is, they don't have time for anyone anymore. This kind of thinking is called the Me-First philosophy. This philosophy says that we should make ourselves happy before others. We should look out for ourselves first before others. And so, this leads to questions like “What's in it for me?” “What can I get out of this” before helping others. This, of course, runs contrary to what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches that we should put others before us. **Phil. 2:3 says, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves.”**

We also find it hard to be kind when

2. WE HAVE AN UNFORGIVING HEART

This one is a biggie. Unforgiveness paralyzes your heart. Unforgiveness makes your heart turn cold. Unforgiveness makes your heart callous.

All of us have been hurt in the past. Like you have been molested when you were a child. Or your father physically abused you. Your spouse has been unfaithful to you. A friend betrayed you. Name it! Everyone has a hurt. It doesn't matter how big it is. Or how small it is. And for some of us, even after years have passed, up to this time you have not forgiven the person who has hurt you. You keep replaying the past.

When you're in that situation, it's hard to be kind. It's hard to be kind especially to the person who has hurt you. The unkindness even affects other people.

If we're holding grudges, if we have bitterness, no amount of kindness toward other people will ever please our heavenly Father. That's why Jesus says in **Matthew 5:23**, *"If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift."*

The point is, God wants you to let go of that bitterness and hurts and woundedness. He wants you to be free of that. This way, he can use you to bless others.

Third, we find it hard to be kind when

3. WE'RE AFRAID OF BEING REJECTED.

Some are just really sensitive. They easily get hurt when someone refuses the offer of kindness. They take it personally.

And after a particular disappointing experience they don't want to do it anymore. They give up. But the Bible says that if we suffer because of doing good, then that is commendable. **1 Peter 2:23** says, *"...If you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God."* Our model is the Lord Jesus Christ. He kept on doing good toward others despite the insults, the persecutions, the sufferings, the mocking and what-have-you.

The Bible says in **Galatians 6:9** *"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."*

So, those are the main problems. But we can overcome them. By the help of these three practical steps I'd like for you to take note of.

First,

1. RECOGNIZE GOD'S KINDNESS TO YOU.

Kindness is a wonderful character of God. God tells us to show kindness to others because he has shown exceeding kindness to us. He is full of loving kindness toward us. How did he show his kindness to us? By saving us! The Bible tells us in **Titus 3**, *"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."* Notice it says that he saved us not because we deserved it—He saved us because of his mercy.

God didn't just tell us He loves us, He proved it. **Romans 5:8** says, *"God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* It's not enough for us to say we love others; we must show it. You don't perform acts of kindness to earn God's mercy and forgiveness or to show others how good you are; you perform good deeds because you have been forgiven.

When God saved you, He began to change you. You no longer want to live like those people who don't know God.

When you show kindness to a stranger, they are surprised. Why? Because that's not normal behavior. Out there, it is every man for himself. It's a dog-eat-dog world. It's a hard-knock life. But for those of us who know Jesus, we live by a higher standard. We show kindness and compassion to others.

The world tends to give people what they deserve. But God is full of grace and mercy. Grace is God blessing you with that which you do not deserve. Mercy is God withholding the punishment you do deserve. The more you understand and appreciate God's grace and mercy, the more you will want to show kindness to others. Kindness becomes a part of our conduct because our character is rooted in God. The kind heart most resembles God.

Second,

2. HAVE A SERVANT'S HEART.

This is a tough challenge. All of us since we were little children just wanted to be served. When a baby cries it's because the baby wants to be served. Now that we're grown-ups, we don't cry anymore but deep inside we're acting like babies when all we want is for others to wait on us.

But Jesus says we have to turn this attitude around. From a self-centered attitude to an others-centered attitude. Jesus had this attitude that's why the Bible tells us to follow his example. It says in **Philippians 2:5**, *"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who... made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself..."*

Jesus who was God became a servant. Imagine the creator, the maker of heaven and earth, a servant?

But that is because humility is a wonderful character of Jesus. In fact, he says in Mark 10:45, *“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.”*

And finally,

3. BE INTENTIONAL

It takes some training to be a servant. It doesn't come overnight. That's why you must do it on purpose. Whenever there's an opportunity,

Do good without being asked. Galatians 6:10 tells us, *“As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people.”* The Boy Scouts have “Do a Good Turn Daily.” Basically, it's looking for opportunities to do good to others.

Now, Christians have their own version of a good turn. We call this Servant Evangelism. Many of you have heard about it. Many of you have even done it. We started this ministry way back in 2010. Let me refresh your memory.

Servant Evangelism can be defined as intentional acts of kindness for the expressed purpose of showing God's love to others in practical ways. It is effective in reaching out to people because it is quick, high-impact, done in groups, allows shy people to launch into evangelism, simple, fun, among other things.

The way it works is that you get a group of people, young or old or both, give them something to give out to people, have them stand on a street corner or tell them to go to the park or a mall or wherever there are people and distribute stuff to people. It could be bottled water. Juicy fruit gum. Soda. Batteries (who doesn't want extra batteries?). Light bulbs (this is a necessity). And the list goes on. Sometimes, it's not just giving out but giving a free car wash, or toilet cleaning, or bagging groceries. The list is endless.

As you give out or do something for someone, you also give them a small card called “Connect Card.” One side of the connect card has something written on it like this one, “Yes...it really is free! Just as God’s love is free, our small gift is too. It’s a simple way of saying that God loves you—no strings attached. Let us know if we can be of more assistance.” Then, on the back is the name of the church, contact number, address and map. It’s a neat way of inviting people to the church.

The point of all this is that you want to draw people to Jesus because of these acts of kindness. It opens the door to witnessing to others although that’s not its main intent. You see, if you hand out gospel tracts instead of connect cards, immediately people will say that there are strings attached. We live in a society where people’s motives are always suspect. All we want to do is plant seeds and hopefully some of these will fall on fertile hearts. Out of the thousands of people in Springfield and Alexandria and nearby cities and towns, some of them are hurting, some of them are searching, some of them are looking for love. Usually, people like this would like to come to a fellowship like a church. And, of course, once they’re inside a church, then they become our captive audience. That’s when they get the chance to hear the gospel.

When I was a pastor in NY, our church did servant evangelism. I remember the Sunday when I introduced it in church and launched it. As I walked to the front, suddenly it came to me that it would be nice if we had a name of for the ministry, like a catchphrase or acronym to make it kind of stick to people’s minds. And as I was speaking I was at the same time, thinking and praying for a name. Then, my eye caught the letters “BKLYN” written on a small board which was resting on a closed window. “BKLYN” is actually a shorthand for Brooklyn.

Our church was located in Brooklyn, NY, and we were renting the cafeteria in an elementary school. **BKLYN is known throughout Brooklyn.** Suddenly, I realized that BKLYN can be an acronym. And it can stand for, can you guess? Be Kind, Love Your Neighbor. Just like that, I had a name for our ministry and I said to the church, “Folks the name of this ministry is Be Kind, Love Your Neighbor, BKLYN, for short. But I didn’t tell them how I got the idea. I’m sure it was from God. So, what shall we call this ministry in Springfield? Springfield seems to be a long acronym.

Anyway, let me just share with you some **pictures of our servant evangelism in the past.**

Now, where do we go from here? Outside. What I mean is, this July, we’re going to restart this ministry. It will be headed by Marco who will be assisted by Brandon. Please watch out for details. In the meantime, please be ready. Because we will come to get you, I mean recruit you.

Folks, kindness is a component of the fruit of the Spirit and has a direct effect on people. It makes them feel loved, important, and they are encouraged. But most importantly, when we show kindness we are reflecting the kindness of Jesus. When we are kind, people see Jesus in us. When we are kind, we make a difference in people’s lives. And guess what? God is glorified. His name is magnified among the people. That’s what God wants.

Psalm 115:1 says, “Not to us, LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.”

Let me close with this story:

It was one hot summer day in Brooklyn and our servant evangelism team was out on the street getting prepared to hand out bottled water. As we were taking out the bottled water from the cooler, I overheard two people talking to each other as they walked down the street.

The woman said to the man something like, “New York is a tough place. People are so mean and unfriendly.” Then, one member of our group gave each of them a bottled water. They were surprised, to say the least. They couldn’t believe it was for free. And as they walked away, I overheard the man said, “See, I told you, New Yorkers are not as unfriendly as you think.” And the woman said, “I was wrong.” We were at the right place at the right time. I’m sure they walked away with a better impression of New York and of Christians as well. Who knows? Their hearts might have opened to the gospel later on.

Folks, one simple act of kindness can make a whole world of difference to one person on this side of eternity.