



Family Values

Virtual Realities

Kindness

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One of God's (Yahweh's) attributes is kindness. It is a characteristic that is basic to the covenant relationship that God establishes with his chosen people. On Mt. Sinai God passes by Moses and describes himself as: *"a God of tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in kindness and faithfulness; for thousands he maintains his kindness, forgives faults, transgression, sin; . . ."* (Ex. 34:6, TJB). This description appears in a number of Psalms along with the following in Ps. 145:17: *"The Lord is just in all his ways, and kind in all his doings."* (RSV). Kindness is a component of love. It involves loyalty and mercy. It is part of God's sacred relationship to His people.

In 1Cor.13:4, the Apostle Paul reminds us that *"Love is patient and kind; . . ."* (RSV) emphasizing that acts of kindness connect us to our divine roots. Paul also accuses those in Rome who pass judgment on others, while doing similar things themselves, of despising the *"riches of his (God's) kindness,"* (NRSV) and asks, *"Do you not realize that God's kindness is meant to bring you to repentance?"* (NRSV) When we understand that God continues to respond to us with kindness even when we do not deserve it, we are in no position to look down our noses at others. Rather it is an opportunity for reflection and changed behavior. In truth, we need to follow Paul's suggestion to *"be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you."* (Eph. 4:31, NRSV)

Although I have not seen it for some time, there is a bumper sticker that encourages people to: *"Practice Random Acts of Kindness and Senseless Acts of Beauty."* This suggestion is good advice, especially for Christians. Not only does it encourage people to do nice things to others, it recognizes the added value when such acts are unexpected. Kindness is its own reward. It results in good feelings both for the recipient and the doer,

especially when nobody else knows about it. It actually loses something when we tell others about it. An act of kindness can dramatically change the mood of a situation, such as offering to get coffee or run an errand when tensions mount in a meeting. It can also make someone's day, such as bringing flowers to a fellow worker or smiling and wishing the check-out clerk a nice day just out of the blue. The opportunities are endless. To be kind means to reflect God's grace at work in our lives. Acts of kindness are authentic marks of discipleship.

The following are ways to put kindness into practice:

1. **Practice daily random acts of kindness.** What could be a better way of generating positive energy for others and good feelings for yourself?
2. **Don't tell anyone about the nice things that you do.** Let the act itself be its own reward. Don't expect anything more in return.
3. **Remind yourself regularly of God's everlasting kindness.** Humbly appreciate what you have received and share it.
4. **Choose being kind over being right.** It is easy to point out other people's mistakes or to correct them. Let kindness rule. Rather than be right, do the right thing.
5. **Recognize and appreciate the acts of kindness that come your way.** Use them as incentives to reciprocate.

Affirmation: *I am an act of kindness about to happen.*

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