
1 Corinthians 13:4b *Love is Kind!*

Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study www.intothyword.org

General Idea: What is love? It is kind and it cares! This aspect of love is active, so it looks for a way to be constructive and useful, to invest in, honor, and declare others valuable. We are to look for the best in other people. We are to spend our energies and time encouraging and building one another up, not tearing them down. We are to bring out the best in our friends and spouses by always treating them with kindness. We are to tell them the truth in love and with care. You see, God takes the circumstances in our lives and uses them in constructive ways for personal growth and for better support for one another. God is not treating us as objects to be manipulated or controlled, because He has given us free will. We should do the same with one another. Therefore, we need to always be seeking the healing of relationships, and be cautious in our judgments toward others.

Authentic Love cares more about others than it does about self!

Contexts and Background:

This passage begins a passionate, polished, rhetorical display of words that rival anything of the classic Philosophers or thinkers or any philosopher of Paul's day, our day, or in any of all world literature. This is considered the height of language and expression—not just the layout of the words and structure of vocabulary or the display of speech, but the impact, purpose, and reason of these words. This is a character description of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the personification of how God deals with us. This is also the pattern that we are called to emulate. Just like the *Fruit of the Spirit*, it is who and what God is that He invests in us and what He expects us to be and do. It is also a call to think upon what God is and is doing, what real love is, and to make sure we correctly define it and then correctly practice it.

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Love is Kind.* Real love is self-giving and sacrificial; it is more concerned with others than with self. Here, the image is the sacrificial, costly, and self-denying love of Christ given to us that should also be given to others by us. Yes, one of the hardest things about being a Christian is to show kindness—especially to a person who has hurt us; but, see how much Christ was hurt on our behalf. The point here is that real Christian love will produce kindness; if it does not, something is off or very wrong in us. Real love and the exercise of it is not simply an outward change of our manners; it is an internal change of our hearts. The love that begets kindness is shown by our tenderheartedness that is the result of God's touching us; therefore, we are sensitive and compassionate toward others. This allows us to react in a healthy and timely approach quickly and assuredly. If our hearts are hard on the inside and we are trying to show our good manners on the outside, it is not biblical kindness, and it will not last. We will be neither tender nor sensitive, and we will not respond as we should. Love and kindness cannot be faked, nor can they be superficial; they have to come from the changed life that rests within as poured out to us from our Lord. It will have depth that has been built from lives that exercise worship, devotion, and study, and that are real and impacting, always learning, trying, and failing, yet continuing to be kind anyway (Mark 12:28-31; John 3:16, Matt. 22:34-40; John 3:16; 13:1, 34-35; 14:1; 15:9; Rom. 1:31; 5:10; 12:10; 1 Cor. 13; Eph. 2:4-7; Phil. 2:2; Col. 1:1-6; 3:12-14; 1 Thess. 1:3; 2:8; 3:6; 12; 4:9-10; 5:8; 13; 2 Tim. 3:3; Heb. 10:24; 1 John 4:7-12).
- *Kind/benign.* The simple definition of “kindness” is our practice of benevolence and compassion with a loving attitude towards others. This is “active,” in its nature and meaning, and in its challenge to our complacency and our relationships. Patience calls us to wait, step back, and not

retaliate a wrong with a wrong, while this aspect of love tells us to move forward and bestow blessings both to those who are loved and those who are undeserving. Kindness encompasses all of the aspects of love that this passage attests to, and then synergistically puts them into practice. It is allowing our interests and attitudes to be focused upon Christ's precepts, and pouring them out on others. This act of love, as with the others, is not merely emotional or factual or intellectual; it is not to be rendered by a mere description or emotion or sentiment, or a saying we have on our walls. It must be real and it must flow unrestricted; our understanding of it must affect our behavior so our emotions and thinking are turned, tuned, and true to Christ our Lord's lead.

- Practicing kindness is a principle aspect of goodness, a character listed as a *Fruit of the Spirit*. The love of kindness synergistically combines with kindness that helps us model *righteousness*. This is what and how God has called us to be to one another. This character of goodness is the cabinet that holds righteousness in plain view. It is the display case that shows the rest of the godly characters and Fruit of the Spirit, making them real, seen, and used. It moves theory into action and theology into practical care and love. Goodness displays integrity, honesty, and compassion to others and allows us to do the right thing even when we do not feel like doing so (Amos 5:15; Prov. 25:22; Matt. 19:16; Rom. 12:17; 2 Cor. 5:20; 6:6; Gal. 5:17-22; Eph. 4:1-6; 5:8-9; Col. 3:12-17; 1 Peter 3:11; 2 Peter 1:3-8).
- Kindness is the essence that shows the world that we are indeed Christians. This character is like the fragrance coming from a flower. It allows our sweet essence and aroma to flow to others. It is being convicted by God's Word, and then modeling it to others. It is the medium through which Christ's love becomes tangible in us, so others can touch, feel, and see it. Kindness is the subject to the object of who we are in Christ! Kindness will replace hits, hurts, and fears as well as all the bitterness, malice, and slander—all that is wrong in relationships—if we are willing to receive it from above, and allow it to be poured out from us. It is being willing to take the risk, to “go for it”—regardless of the outcome. To see how kindness can be used in the field of life, just take a look at the life of Joseph (Gen. 37-50).
- This love is also an essential makeup of our character. *Kindness* is the willingness to allow the love within us to be poured out to others, powered by God's grace and precepts (John 14-15; Rom. 1:16-17; 2:1-17; 8; 11:16-24; 12:9-21; Gal. 5:19-23; Eph. 4:24-5:7; 5:1-2; Phil. 1:3-6; Col. 3:12-14; 1 John 3:16-23; James 1:19; 1 Pet. 1:5-11).

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

Ask yourself this essential question: *Is the love of kindness working in me?* If you are not sure, or, if you think you are kind to others—do others agree? How can we be kind when life has hit us hard? Because God is kind to us, thus, we can be kind; furthermore, the kindness He gives us is undeserved! When we grasp the concept of God's kindness and love, our response must ooze from the pores of our soul. This is kindness. Ephesians 4:31-5:2 gives us not only the picture of this happening, but also the dangers of our pores getting clogged up with pride and anger, resulting in bitterness and slander, the aspects of what love is not.

To get a better understanding of kindness, we need to look at how God is kind with us. Like giving us life and provisions, and of course, His saving grace that we do not deserve. When we get the message of the incredible prize and honor He has bestowed upon us, we should have the inclination to respond by that knowledge. So, who Christ is and what He has done for us builds our faith and maturity; then, that essence we have learned can be poured onto others with whom we are in contact. We can know the value of God's love and allow it to affect us and flow to those around us, as we come to know Him more fully. When this knowledge affects our hearts and feet, we will learn how to build and apply a value system to last a lifetime. That way, we are living in response to His love, in the value that is also expressed by our love and kindness. Also, by knowing more about

God's kindness, we will gain a picture of His providence. This means we can be assured that God is in total control; thus, we can trust our Lord completely, whatever unfolds before us. The ultimate love of God is that He laid down His life for His enemies!

Kindness takes us beyond just being accepting, compromising, or being liberal or open minded; it moves us to be thoughtful and considerate to one another, putting ourselves in another's shoes. We are called to be kind to enemies, to strangers, to family, and to outcasts (life of Jesus). Kindness is not something we confront or control; it is who we are and what we proclaim! We must change our behaviors in how we treat others—on the road, in our work, at school, and with family—to reflect how Christ treats us. As society gets crueler and more complicated and crowded, kindness will decrease more and more, which makes its need greater and greater. Our prime evangelism opportunity can be as simple as being kind and giving the needed light to a “care-less” world. Let us step up to the plate of treating and serving others as Christ would. Then, watch our relationships and churches improve! The essential reason for why a church grows is hospitality, and you can't be hospitable without being kind!

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Read these two passages again in different translations (1 Corinthians 13:1-8; 1 John 4: 7-12)

1. Discuss your thoughts on this aspect of love.
2. Give a positive example.
3. Give a negative example.
4. How is this type of love working in you?
5. Why is this love not working in you?
6. What blocks this love from being exhibited in you?
7. What would it take to get this love working in you?
8. What are you willing to do about it?

Additional Questions:

1. How would you describe the word “kindness?” How does a kind word make you feel?
2. What does love mean in this passage? Why is it important that love is kind and cares? How do you feel when people are caring and kind to you?
3. Who has invested in your life with positive and helpful effects? How did he/she make a difference? What have you done to look for ways to be constructive and useful in the lives of others?
4. How is this aspect of love active? Why is that important? How does love show honor to others and declare them valuable?
5. How do you feel when others look for the best in you? How have you done this for another? How can you do it more?
6. How do you feel when someone spends his/her energies and time encouraging and building you up? In contrast, how do you feel when someone takes the time to tear you down?
7. What must take place in you for kindness to come about from you, even in times of stress and hurt? How would that display our Lord? How can kindness be an evangelism tool for you and your church?
8. Why can't love or kindness be faked or superficial?
9. Do you feel that you know the value of God's love? How can you allow it to affect you and flow to those around you? What would that look like?
10. What are you going to do now to bring out the best in your friends, spouse, coworkers, church folks, and the various people in your life? In what ways can you treat others with kindness?