



grow. pray. study.

February 16, 2020 “The Irresistible Power of One-Anothering”

Scripture: John 13:34-35, Romans 12:9-21 (selected verses)

Questions in this GPS marked with an arrow bullet point are particularly recommended for group discussion. Group leaders may add other discussion questions, or substitute other questions for the marked ones, at their discretion.

Jesus’ kindness to a scolded blind man

MONDAY 2.17.20 Romans 12:10, Mark 10:46-52

“Love each other,” “show honor to each other.” Where did early Christians get that idea? It’s no great mystery. They, like us, followed Jesus, who constantly showed kindness, love and honor to others. In Mark 10 we read that Jesus passed through Jericho, about 12 miles from Jerusalem, just before the last week of his life. A blind man named Bartimaeus cried out a prayer: “Son of David, have mercy on me!” (“Son of David” expressed faith that Jesus was the Messiah.) Keenly tuned to human need, Jesus called the man to him and restored his sight.

- Scholar Craig Keener noted that “The disciples want to get on with the business of setting up the kingdom...not understanding that stopping for a blind beggar is the sort of thing Jesus’ kingdom is all about.” * Have you ever gotten so busy pursuing “important things” that you have become more like the disciples than like Jesus when given a chance to respond kindly to someone else?
- In a world without Braille or any established support services, a blind man had to beg. We might expect Jesus, of all people, would greet a person with a need with words like, “I know just what to do for you.” But he wisely and kindly knew that if we don’t realize our need, we may block his healing power. So he asked even this blind man, “What do you want me to do for you?” Have you learned to treat hurting people with the same kind quality of respect?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, keep teaching me how to love and show honor to others in ways that follow your model. Let my caring acts grow from kindness and respect, not from a condescending sense of superiority. Amen.

* Craig S. Keener, comment on Mark 10:46-52 in *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993.

Jesus’ kindness to a feverish mother-in-law

TUESDAY 2.18.20 Matthew 8:14-17

“It was common for households to include members of the extended family (newly married couples sometimes lived in a room atop the home of the groom’s parents). Here Peter’s family has probably taken in his wife’s widowed mother.” * Fever was “common and (in the case of malaria) often severe and recurrent.”

* Many “healers” in that world used intricate incantations or magical spells. Jesus’ healing power, on the other hand, was simple and kind: “He touched her hand.”

- Too often, Christians either focus their ministry to God’s world exclusively on preaching eternal salvation through Jesus (the “evangelical gospel”), or else exclusively on making the conditions of life in this

broken world better (the “social gospel”). Jesus clearly did both. What do you, as one who follows Jesus as Peter did, learn from observing Jesus pattern of ministry?

- Scholar William Barclay wrote, “Here was no publicity; here there was no crowd to look and to admire and to be astonished. Here there was only a simple cottage and poor woman tossing with a common fever. And yet in those circumstances Jesus put forth all his power. Jesus was never too tired to help; the demands of human need never came to him as an intolerable nuisance.” ** Can you, like Jesus, be kind even if there is no positive publicity to be had from the kindness?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, it’s great when people see and affirm the kind things I do. But save me from an addiction to human praise. Let me be the same person in private as I am in public. Amen.

* HarperCollins Christian Publishing. *NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, eBook: Bringing to Life the Ancient World of Scripture* (Kindle Location 219438-219440). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

** William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of Matthew—Volume 1, Chapters 1–10 (Revised Edition)*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1976, p. 280.

Jesus’ protective kindness to children

WEDNESDAY 2.19.20 Mark 10:13-16

Our world and culture tend to value children more highly than the culture Jesus lived in. In fact, Jesus’ kindness to children was a major force in changing those attitudes. “In ancient society, children were powerless and often overlooked. Ancient speakers and writers typically offered powerful leaders as heroes and models for imitation.” * But Jesus loved children, and children loved him. Mark said Jesus was angry with his stern, overly “grown up” disciples. After he made it clear he welcomed the children, Mark added the lovely eyewitness detail that Jesus “hugged the children and blessed them.”

- The ancients offered “powerful leaders as heroes and models for imitation”? After reviewing the evidence for that, Pastor John Ortberg wrote drily, “Imagine living in a world obsessed with status. (It may not require all that much effort.)” ** How can Jesus’ warm-hearted kindness to children draw you away from limiting your kindness to people who can bring you advantages? If Jesus was kind in strikingly counter-cultural ways, in what ways can you follow his example?
- *The Message* rendered his forceful words in Mark 10:14-15 as: ““Don’t push these children away. Don’t ever get between them and me. These children are at the very center of life in the kingdom. Mark this: Unless you accept God’s kingdom in the simplicity of a child, you’ll never get in.” *** What aspects of childlikeness do you most need to be more open to God’s Kingdom? How could those childlike qualities deepen and enrich your relationship with God?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I need you to hug me and bless me. And I need your spirit to fill me, guiding me to bless even the smallest people who need me to show them your love and kindness. Amen.

* HarperCollins Christian Publishing. *NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible, eBook: Bringing to Life the Ancient World of Scripture* (Kindle Locations 220266-220267). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

** John Ortberg, *Who Is This Man? The Unpredictable Impact of the Inescapable Jesus*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012, pp. 75.

*** Peterson, Eugene H. *The Message Numbered Edition Hardback*. Navpress. Kindle Edition.

Jesus’ kindness to a disciple who three times denied him

THURSDAY 2.20.20 John 18:15-18, 25-27; 21:15-19

Three times Peter denied even knowing Jesus, despite his bold claim that “I’ll give up my life for you” (John 13:37). The resurrected Jesus, a master psychologist, didn’t want that failure to haunt Peter forever. He

made a point of calling Peter by name to meet him in Galilee (cf. [Mark 16:6-7](#)). He offered no scolding or rebuke. He simply allowed Peter to affirm his love three times, deeper and more solid because Jesus forgave him after his humiliating failure. (Thus Jesus acted out for the disciples the type of love he taught them to show in [John 13:34-35](#).)

- Scholar N. T. Wright said, “The three questions correspond to Peter’s three denials. Three for completeness, yes, but three also for reminder. The smell of the charcoal fire lingers. Peter’s night of agony—and Jesus’ own night of agony—returns. But because of the latter, the former can be dealt with.” * Do you realize that Jesus is just as kind toward you as he was toward Peter? Imagine yourself in that scene. Hear Jesus ask you, “_____, do you love me?” Answer, three times, and let Jesus’ kindly sweep away any failures that separate you.
- Wright also noted that as Peter affirmed his love for Jesus, “the answer earns, each time, not a pat on the back, not a ‘There, that’s all right then’, but a command. A fresh challenge. A new commission.” * Our service doesn’t earn forgiveness. Instead, Jesus’ call to join in his work is the clearest sign that he has forgiven us. In what way(s) do you sense Jesus calling you to serve, to feed his sheep, today? How are you answering the call?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, at times I’m haunted by a sense of how badly I’ve failed you. Thank you that your heavenly kindness extends to me the forgiveness for those failures that you already established on the cross. Amen.

* Wright, N.T. *John for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 11-21* (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 163), Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

Jesus’ kindness to an injured enemy

FRIDAY 2.21.20 Luke 22:47-53

We get a sense of the fear and hatred of Jesus’ enemies when we read that they brought “a crowd” to arrest just that one man. Peter bravely drew his sword to defend Jesus. Verse 50 suggests that his courage went far beyond his skill with that sword. Luke, probably showing his physician’s heart (cf. [Colossians 4:14](#)), recorded that Jesus’ kindness moved him even to heal the ear that Peter’s slightly misaimed blow had cut off a servant of one of Jesus’ leading foes.

- Think about the man Malchus ([John 18:10](#) gave his name). “A personal servant of the high priest could wield much authority, including over the temple police.” * We never read more about him in the New Testament. Could he have stayed busy the next day seeking Jesus’ execution, even with his ear restored by Jesus- healing touch? Or might Jesus’ healing kindness have so touched his heart that, if not right away, maybe at least 50 days later at Pentecost he was part of the 3,000 who heard Peter’s preaching and joined the Jesus movement (cf. [Acts 2:36-41](#))?
- Jesus knew the road to finishing his mission ran through the cross. But he also knew that Peter’s life, lived by Kingdom values, would do more to defeat evil than his sword ever would. Later Jesus told the Roman procurator Pilate, “My kingdom doesn’t originate from this world. If it did, my guards would fight....My kingdom isn’t from here” (John 18:36). We still live in a world where violence, verbal if not physical, often feels like the only viable response to evil. Is it? When have you needed to let God’s spirit show you a kinder, more Christ-like way to handle an issue?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, Peter found it harder to live for you than it would have been to die trying to defend you. Sometimes I have that struggle, too. Keep teaching me the power of your kindness in changing hearts and lives. Amen.

Jesus' kindness to a bereaved, helpless widow

SATURDAY 2.22.20 Romans 2:1-4; Luke 7:11-17

Having met the risen Christ, the apostle Paul wrote that "God's kindness is supposed to lead you to change your heart and life." At many points, the gospels show Jesus acting kindly out of his deep concern for hurting people (e.g. [Matthew 9:36-38](#), [Mark 8:1-8](#)). Today's story from Luke 7 is an outstanding example of how Jesus showed God's kindness. He went to a village called Nain. He met a large crowd coming through the city gates, not to greet Jesus but to support a grieving widow and mother going to bury her only son. There's no hint in the story that Jesus knew the woman or had gone to Nain to meet her. But whatever his original plans, he laid aside any other agenda until he brought the woman's son back to life and restored him to his mother.

- "To lose a child is among the most painful of human experiences...[As] the woman Jesus encountered in Nain...walked with her community in sorrow, Jesus had compassion for her. When he told her not to cry (7:13), he was not chastising her emotion but extending comfort and preparing her for the resurrection to come." * In that day, losing an only son was not just an emotional loss. Under Jewish law, only through a male relative did a widow have legal standing to own property or sustain herself. So Jesus kindly saved the widow in Nain from likely poverty and marginalization as well as the loss of her son's love. What has Jesus saved you from? In what ways does a sense of his kindness powerfully at work for you and through you give you strength and a sense of purpose every day?

Prayer: Loving Jesus, your kindness wasn't a dull duty. It flowed from the overflow of your love for all of creation. I'm not you, but I want to learn more all the time about how to let your love flow out of me to all those around me. Amen.

* Ginger Gaines-Cirelli, "Portrait" note on "Widow from Nain" in *The CEB Women's Bible*. Nashville: Common English Bible, 2016, p. 1300.

Family Activity: As a family this week, plan some specific ways you can spread God's love and kindness to others. Some ideas to get you started are: smile at 5 people, take a board game to play at a senior center, Facetime a family member together, bake cookies and deliver them to a neighbor, go through toys and choose some to donate, make a "Kindness Matters" sign to hang in your house or car window, pay for the order behind you in the drive-thru, tell each person in your family 3 things that make them special. Have fun spreading God's love this week!

Prayer Requests – cor.org/prayer *Prayers of peace and comfort for:*

Janet Holt and family following the death of Denver Holt (father-in-Law), 1/31/2020

Judy Kudy and family following the death of Christopher Trick (son-in-Law), 2/1/2020

Family and friends following the death of Jason Collins, 2/4/2020

Chuck Hornback and family following the death of Sally Hornback (wife), 2/6/2020

Laurie Matson-Ritter and family following the death of Neola Mae Matson (mother), 2/7/2020

Howard (Gene) Hinemeyer and family following the death of Helen Hinemeyer (wife), 2/9/2020

Pamela Place and family following the death of Dan Eugenides (partner), 2/10/2020