

*Nine*  
F r u i t s  
*of the*  
S p i r i t

A Bible Study on Developing Christian Character

*Kindness*

R o b e r t   S t r a n d



New Leaf Press

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## *Introduction*

There is an ancient story out of the Middle East which tells of three merchants crossing the desert. They were traveling at night in the darkness to avoid the heat of the day. As they were crossing over a dry creek bed, a loud attention-demanding voice out of the darkness commanded them to stop. They were then ordered to get down off their camels, stoop down and pick up pebbles from the creek bed, and put them into their pockets.

Immediately after doing as they had been commanded, they were then told to leave that place and continue until dawn before they stopped to set up camp. This mysterious voice told them that in the morning they would be both sad and happy. Understandably shaken, they obeyed the voice and traveled on through the rest of the night without stopping. When morning dawned, these three merchants anxiously looked into their pockets. Instead of finding the pebbles as expected, there were precious jewels! And, they were both happy and sad. Happy that they had picked up some of the pebbles, but sad because they hadn't gathered more when they had the opportunity.

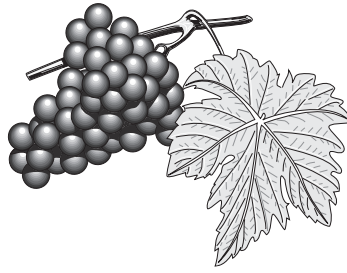
This fable expresses how many of us feel about the treasures of God's Word. There is coming a day when we will be thrilled because we have absorbed as much as we have, but sad because we had not gleaned much more. Jewels are best shown off when held up to a bright light and slowly turned so that each polished facet can catch and reflect the light. Each of these nine jewels of character will

be examined in the light of God's Word and how best to allow them to be developed in the individual life. That is how I feel about the following three verses from Paul's writings which challenge us with what their Christian character or personality should look like. Jesus Christ has boiled down a Christian's responsibility to two succinct commands: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and body, and love your neighbor like yourself. Likewise, Paul the apostle has captured for us the Christian personality in nine traits:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-25).

At the very beginning of this study, I must point out a subtle, yet obvious, distinction. The "fruit" of the Spirit is a composite description of what the Christian lifestyle and character traits are all about — an unbroken whole. We can't pick only the fruit we like.

Unlocked in these nine portraits are the riches of a Christ-centered personality. The thrill of the search is ahead of us!



# Kindness

*CHRESTOTES*, (Greek) pronounced khray-stot'-ace, meaning: useful moral excellence of character or demeanor, gracious, gentle, goodness, and kindness.

*THE FRUIT OF THE  
SPIRIT IS . . . KINDNESS*



Kindness in our rough and tumble, give-no-quarter, shark-eat-shark kind of world is not very high on the characteristic list of most people. Who wants to be kind when you need to be tough and ruthless? Who wants to look out for others when you are busy looking out for #1?

Let's set the record straight at the outset . . . kindness is not weakness or wimpishness! It is not a compromising of the truth. It doesn't give in to evil. Kindness is the way in which you act and speak. It's an attitude, a quality of character that stands firm — yet doesn't have to beat down another in order to stand tall. It has a wide meaning.

### **Theological Insight:**

*The original Greek word is chrestotes, which can mean: "To be mellowed, to be mellowed with age, a person who doesn't act harshly or inflict pain on others, a person who acts different than the serpent, a person who acts in gentleness, and excellence in spirit." This word carries a broad application of excellence in conveying gentleness and kindness in all interpersonal relationships. In other words . . . someone you'd love to have for a friend.*

Jesus Christ is kindness incarnated! In His life and ministry He embodied kindness, modeled it, and expressed it. Why was His presence so sought after by women, children, and men? People are attracted to kindness personified. Kindness is planted in seed form, imputed, and ingrained in the new nature of a new Christian under the code name of "fruit." It's ours to be developed by the work of the Spirit . . . it's to be shown in all of our human contacts. The goal is for each of us to be as kind to others as Jesus Christ in His mercy has been kind to us. **KINDNESS IS A SIGN OF GREATNESS!** It is intended to pervade and touch our entire nature. It is to replace the harsh and hardness. Jesus was a kind person.

Think a moment of how much the world has been changed because of the kindness of Jesus. In His day, there were very few or no institutions of mercy . . . few hospitals, few shelters for homeless,

few places for orphans, few places of protection for the poor. Compare our world with His world. His was a very cruel, harsh place in which to live — ours has created lots of safety nets and places where people can be helped. Think . . . wherever Christianity has gone, the followers of Christ have given themselves to performing many of these acts of kindness.

Have you had a kindness shown?  
Pass it on;  
'Twas not given for thee alone,  
Pass it on;  
Let it travel down the years,  
Let it wipe another's tears,  
'Till in Heaven the deed appears . . .  
Pass it on.<sup>1</sup>

*THE KINDNESS OF GOD*



For our first study on kindness, let's begin at the beginning. Let's look at the kindness of God. It's a major theme of both the Old and New Testaments.

Please read Psalm 103:1–18 and Titus 3:3–8.

List some of the benefits you have already received because of the kindness of God in your life:

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According to the Psalmist, what are some of the kind and loving things God has done for us?

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Each human being has specific yet general needs common to all of us, centered around physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Please show how God’s provisions meet these needs:

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Which one of God’s “benefits” have you experienced this past week?

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Are God's benefits limited only to the righteous? Explain verses 6 and 7:

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What kind of picture of God is presented to you from this Psalm?

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To what is the kindness of God likened?

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