

The Power of Kindness

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon highlights the critical importance of kindness in Christian life and its impact on relationships and evangelism.

Duration: 30:03

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 3:1, Matthew 5:44, Luke 6:35, Romans 12:20, Galatians 6:10, Ephesians 4:32, 1 John 3:18

Topics: "Kindness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of kindness in our lives as Christians. He mentions that while people may know the Bible, speak in tongues, or preach, they may still lack kindness. The speaker prays for God to help us draw people to Him through our kindness, especially in a world filled with confusion and misconceptions about Christianity. He highlights the need for our actions to reflect our faith and for us to show love through acts of kindness, assisting and helping others. The speaker also references the book of Proverbs, stating that those who are kind benefit themselves, while the cruel bring ruin upon themselves.

Transcript

Today, we collected all of that food. What were we really doing? We were doing an act of kindness, weren't we? You were taking time and money to help somebody less fortunate in Malawi, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Georgetown, Guyana, the Philippines, or wherever else this food might go. Kindness is a very important thing.

D.L. Moody, the great evangelist, said, the hardest thing God has to do is to make people kind. They can learn the Bible, but still not be kind. They can speak in tongues and still not be kind.

They can preach and be in the pulpit and not be kind. There's a lot of unkind people. And what happened in Boston, if there ever was a time to think about kindness, it's now.

As we said on Sunday, before you could make a bomb to blow nine-year-old children up and take off the legs of other people, you got to be baptized in some kind of hatred and unkindness of a unique kind. Yeah, they can teach you how to wire a bomb, pressure cooker, put shrapnel in it. But before you do that, you got to be a mean little person.

You got to really be nasty. Unkindness is what makes people outside the church not want to be Christians. We want to quote verses.

They're looking for kindness. When I was in prep school, I had a roommate who I was trying to witness to, but I was so off the wall myself. I don't know what kind of witness I was, but I was just a kid out of high school.

I'd skipped a grade. So the Naval Academy had recruited me, was sending me to prep school, Bullis Prep School in Silver Spring, Maryland. I was there to play basketball, but also learn how to study, discipline.

It was a semi-military school. Had a roommate who was from Pittsburgh, was a wrestler, smaller than, a little smaller than me, wrestled at a light weight. I tried to talk to him about the Lord and he mocked me.

Wouldn't listen, try to talk, talk. I went to Bullis Prep School with one Bible, a King James Version, which I rarely read, to be honest with you, but it was the Bible my mother gave me and had all kinds of pictures and things that had been in the family for a while. I slept on the top bunk.

The room was very, very small, military school. He slept on the bottom. We would talk at night about everything.

So one night we were talking, I got onto God. He was mocking my belief in Christ. I was doing my best at 17 years old, whatever I was, trying to talk to him.

Well, one word led to another and then he said something that triggered something in me. So I then said something to him. You know, that's how it goes, right, in life? One word leads to another.

And then he really got upset and we were yelling at each other in the middle of the night and he went over to the desk and he started cursing at me and what I was trying to tell him and said I was a fool. And he took my Bible, my mother's Bible, and threw it across the room. And this cover came off and all the stuff that my mom had put in the book came out of it flying.

Pitch black, but just enough light coming in from the window that I could see what was going on. And I jumped down from that bunk and beat the living daylights out of him. And he was afraid of me because I had so much adrenaline and he had done something so horrible to me.

Of course, I was beating the tar out of him in the name of the Lord, but that was different. I hit him until the blood was all over my hands. I just pinned him down and just real act of kindness by me.

I was showing him Jesus in human form, right? The rest of the time I was in that school, I never once talked to him about the Lord. How could I? His eye had been brought out like that. He covered for me and told the people in charge that he had fallen down a flight of stairs.

They didn't believe it, but he wouldn't give me up or I would have been in real trouble. And we both lied our way through it. I couldn't talk to him.

Because once you're unkind and mean to somebody, it's very hard to tell them about Jesus. Am I right or wrong? And a lot of people are turned against Christian society today, not just because of what Jesus said. If they hate me, they'll also hate you.

If they reject my teaching, they'll also reject your teaching. We know that's in the book of John. That's what happens when you follow the Lord.

But a lot of the animosity and rejection comes because we just act so unkind. In fact, the history of Israel changed because of this. Solomon died and his son Rehoboam was the son that succeeded him.

Solomon had been building not only palaces for his wives, but temples for their gods. To build that, he had attacked the people to the hilt. He was robbing the people blind so that he could finance his efforts.

The people, after Solomon died, they had had it up to here, but they were kind of quiet while Solomon was alive. But when this young whippersnapper came along, Rehoboam, they wanted to talk to him and try to reason with him. So we read this.

Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had gone there to make him king. And when Jeroboam, that was the leader of the people who were kind of trying to talk to him, son of Nebat, heard this, he was in Egypt where he had fled from King Solomon. He returned from Egypt.

So they sent for Jeroboam, and he and all Israel went to Rehoboam and said to him, your father put a heavy yoke on us, and now lighten the harsh labor and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you. Just lighten up and we'll serve you. Rehoboam answered, come back to me in three days.

So the people went away. Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who had served his father Solomon during his lifetime. How would you advise me to answer these people, he asked these elderly, wiser people.

Because when you're young, you think you know everything. When you get older, you realize how much you don't know, and you really start to get some wisdom, hopefully. These older advisors said, they replied, if you will be kind to these people and please them and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your servants.

But he didn't listen to them. He had a little posse that he ran with of young guys who were telling him that he was the man, and he was all that, and they told him, no, tell them, you think my father was tough? He beat you with a whip, I'm gonna beat you with a scorpion. How about that? And they were all high-fiving him and giving him the bump and telling him, you go, you go, Rehoboam.

And you know what happened? The kingdom was divided. He ended up with two tribes. 10 tribes went with Jeroboam to the north, called Israel in the Old Testament.

The kingdom of Judah was now established, having to their favor, Jerusalem as their capital. And for the rest of the Old Testament, the kingdom was divided until the dispersion, until they came back to rebuild the temple. You know what the older people said? You want them to react well to you? Just be kind to them.

You draw more flies with honey than you do vinegar. This is why a lot of people don't have friends. They're just so unkind, nobody wants to be with them.

That goes for Christians, too. There are a lot of people who are loners because of a psychological thing, emotional thing, but a lot of the people, other people are loners, they don't get it, nobody wants to be with them, because they talk so unkind, they act so unkind, and we've all been guilty of it, starting with the

speaker, that Moody was right, the hardest thing for God to do is to make somebody kind. A great writer, F.W. Faber, said, this is what separates us from the animals, because animals don't know kindness.

There is no kindness in the jungle. You might be kind to your children, your pups, the babies that you bore, but even sometimes then the father will kill them. But you're never kind to another animal.

No lion chases down a zebra and says, no, I was gonna eat you, but it's going like that with your family? I didn't know it was like that. Your kid is on drugs? I did not know that. I will not kill you and eat you now.

I'm gonna let you slide. There's no such a thing. This is the thing that separates us from the animals, kindness, and when we don't have kindness, we act like animals.

Am I wrong or right here, ladies? And the Bible has so much to say about this, and we need to pray to be baptized in kindness, because a lot of people want power and prayer and the anointing of the Holy Ghost, and they wanna be able to operate in the gifts of the Spirit, but I'm not so sure now that in the world we live in, there'll be no advance in evangelism until we're baptized in kindness, because right now there's such a hostility and a wall and a cynicism by people who aren't Christians that they don't wanna hear your testimony first. They wanna see if you're kind. You almost have to earn a hearing with somebody today.

Have you noticed that? You know, the old idea is just walk up to someone. Hi, Bob, I'd like to give you four spiritual laws. Bob's gonna say, get out of here.

I don't wanna listen to you. You're gonna have to develop a relationship with a lot of people, especially angry young people. Unless you show kindness, then they're not gonna even listen to you.

Look what the Bible says in the book of Proverbs about kindness. Those who are kind benefit themselves, but the cruel bring ruin on themselves. A person who's kind, nobody's getting over, you benefit yourself because God is watching who's kind, because God is the kindest person in the universe.

So when you're kind, you benefit yourself, and when you're unkind and you think you're having your way, we're cutting off our own nose to spite our face. The person who's cruel brings terrible things upon themselves, but it says more in Proverbs. Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up.

When was the last time somebody gave you a kind word? Not a prophetic word, not a critical word, not of you'll never amount to anything word, but when's the last time somebody gave you a kind, building up, encouraging, complimentary word? And better yet, when was the last time I gave one to somebody? When was the last time I complimented somebody and said a kind word? Because people are going through anxiety, and that weighs down their heart. And you could say, well, trust in the Lord, but one of the things the Lord wants to use is people who say kind words. All the words that were spoken today and yesterday, think of all the thousands and thousands of words we've all spoken.

How many of them could be defined as kind words? Words that would build up, you know, let your conversation be seasoned with grace, that it'll benefit those who listen. How many times do we just talk nasty, negative? Just think positive, kind words versus negative words. Some people that you're around, they're so negative, they always see the glass half full.

Do you have anyone like that on the job? They're so negative that you need to have a prayer meeting just when you're with them for a few minutes, just to get encouraged again. No, I'm telling the truth. How many understand what I'm saying? Say amen.

There's just all kinds of people like that. The news is negative. Think of how these heroes in Boston, when these two bombs went off, everybody's saying the first responders ran to the problem in kindness.

They wanted to help instead of saying, yo, what's gonna happen next? There could be four other bombs, I'm outta here. No, they ran to the people who were hurting and bleeding and with their limbs severed. That's kindness.

The most important people in your lives are not the people who had the most ornate sermons. The people that stand out in my life were the people who were just kind, kind to me. I remember someone now when I was a totally off-the-wall college student.

I'm thinking of someone who put up with me and was kind to me. Kindness is powerful. Without kindness, you can talk and you can argue about doctrine and make a point about you once were in a great move of the Holy Spirit.

But how great could it be if you're not kind? So the Bible has a lot to do with the fact that God is kind and that he tells his people to be kind. Love is patient. Love is what? Kind, 1 Corinthians 13.

The one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit that you know someone is under the control of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, kindness. When God is controlling you, you're kind and positive. When the flesh or the devil or the world is controlling you, you're never kind.

But let's go further. It is a sin to despise one's neighbor, but blessed is the one who is kind to the needy. I want you all to know that everyone who brought something or put something in the offering or tomorrow you give even a glass of water to someone in the name of Christ, you are gonna be blessed.

I'm gonna be blessed. There's something about God's heart that when he sees someone being kind, he said, I will bless that person. I will help that person because that's my heart.

I love to bless and be kind. Has God ever been unkind to anyone in this room? That's unthinkable. Was Jesus ever caught ever being unkind to anyone? No.

There not only is a blessing to be kind, but there's a double blessing when you're kind to the right kind of people. Who are those people? Maybe this is the next verse. Yeah, 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. Why? Because he is what? Kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.

Now we're talking about God's kindness. Lot of people were easy for us to be kind to our wives, our children, our grandchildren, our close friends, and we're kind and we show, look what I did, look what I gave. But to be really kind with God's kindness, you gotta find someone who is absolutely obnoxious and ungrateful and evil and now be kind to them.

So every day we have a chance to show whether we have human kindness or divine kindness. And I know that's the test for me because when someone's nice to me, my tendency is to be kind back. When it's my grandson Luke's birthday, I'm gonna be kind to him.

Now somebody is ungrateful, unthankful, and wicked, now be kind to them because God's kind to them. I know it's true because you and I are here in church tonight. What's drawn us here to God? Why do we

love him so much? Because he first loved us and how did he show his love toward us? He didn't talk about it.

He showed it by acts of kindness. That's why the Bible says don't love in word and tongue, but in deed and in truth. Show your love by doing acts of kindness.

Help somebody, assist somebody, say something positive. You don't know the battles they're going through. You think you know the battles I'm going through? I don't know the battles you're going through.

None of us know the pressures and where the enemy's attacks, nobody knows that. That's why a word of kindness is so special. Paul's in prison somewhere now I'm remembering and he talks about someone who came to visit him and who looked him up when he was in prison.

And remember back then there were no prison garments and there was no food served. If someone didn't care for you and bring what you needed, you died and that's your problem. So when you went to prison, it wasn't like three squares a day here, Rikers Island or wherever.

No, and he mentioned someone in one of his letters who looked for him when he got to that city and found him and he said he refreshed me. He refreshed my spirit by his kindness. Now notice you don't have to be a pastor to be kind.

This is a calling on all of us every single day. You can go to the Apollo Diner and be kind. Or you could be unkind.

And we've all battled with unkindness. I can be unkind as all get out. Because Jim Simbala is unkind.

That's who I am. You know wanna know who I am? I'm the guy that beat the tar out of my roommate in the prep school. That's who I am.

If you see anything else, please, it's strictly Jesus. It's only Jesus. Don't say, oh, I love Pastor Simbala, he's such a, I just told you who I was.

I said, what, you threw my mother's Bible? He said, yeah, what are you gonna do about it? I said, oh yeah, I'll show you what I'm gonna do about it. In the name of the Lord, I'm gonna trounce you right now. Threw him down, that's who I am to someone who is ungrateful and wicked.

But Jesus, he's so kind. How many have found him in your life? He's the kindest friend anybody could have. Someone's bad, you're bad back.

And if someone says, why are you being like that? Why am I being like that? Because they did that to me. I'm gonna do it back to them. That is so far from Christianity.

That's the opposite of Christianity. But we all have grown up with that kind of justification. We all have.

I'm speaking for myself. God, I'm speaking for all of us. We pay back wrong with wrong, and nice with nice, and good with good, and gift with gift.

Someone doesn't give us a gift, you're gonna get nothing from me. But God is so different. How many are so, let's put our hands together, so happy God is not like that.

But always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else. Be kind. Some of us have grown up in unkind homes with unkind fathers and unkind mothers.

And we took that in with our mother's milk, unkindness. I've counseled a lot of people over these years. And when I probed, I found out that people who grow up with unkind words, unkind actions around them, they usually replicate that.

You just do it. And I've learned the beautiful blessing to grow up in a house where there's kindness. It's very rare.

Very rare. Think about it right now. Just everyone stop.

Beside your immediate family, spouse or mom and dad, who's the kindest person you ever ran into? We don't think about that, do we? Like, who's the greatest preacher? And that guy opened up Revelation chapter eight and ooh, that was glory. But you know what? You forget that after a while. But who's been kind to you? Who's come along and said kind words? I was at a church recently in another state.

They did something that embarrassed me. I felt uncomfortable, but it was so kind, what they did and what people came up and said. It helped me that day.

Because we're all searching for love and love expresses itself in kindness. Yes, I believe God can heal. I believe in all the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

How many believe all the gifts of the Holy Spirit are for today? Say amen. Amen. I'm all for all those things.

But I'm also for this. Be kind one to another. Put on kindness like a garment.

Just be kind. Don't you love to be around kind people? But grouchy, negative, unkind people always got an unkind remark about someone. Unkind, just unkind.

It's a wonder I'm a Christian today. Not because my dad drank, but when my dad started to drink and my mother started to cry through the night, she's here tonight. She was working at ANS, which is now Macy's, right down that way.

And the church we were going to was a legalistic church like he grew up in. I grew up in the same kind of stuff. No makeup, no cutting hair.

Women couldn't wear red shoes. No jewelry. Don't laugh.

This was old school holiness. So my mother was working and I can see myself now as a boy. She used to have a little bureau.

Remember, mom? In the bedroom where my sister slept and my brother and I had a pull-out bed. Three of us in this little railroad apartment in one room. And I saw my mother.

She had cried during the night. My dad had hit her or something and she took some makeup, some powder, whatever women wear, and she put it on her face. Because she had to be presentable.

She had to go to work. She had to go to the eighth floor, book department, ANS. And I had just heard that week that people from the church we used to go to, her own relatives were saying, ah, Estelle is worldly.

She's gone to the devil. About my mom. My mom didn't tell her why, didn't tell anyone about my dad because when you're kind, you don't go broadcast your husband's problem.

I came this close to just exploding. What kind of hypocrites are those? Don't put on makeup. Talk about holiness.

People out in the playground were kinder than that. But can't we get like that, all of us? We're judgmental. We got an opinion about everyone.

Everybody and everything. Who cares about your opinion or my opinion? What are you, God? What am I, God? What's the matter what you think or I think? Wouldn't it be better just do something kind? You know, I gotta analyze. I have the gift of discerning of spirits.

No, you don't. You're just unkind. Come on, can we put our hands together? Some people are just unkind.

People that are limping don't need an analysis of the problem in their leg. They need a helping hand. Don't you need a helping hand? I know I do.

So the history of the whole of Israel was changed because of one man being unkind. Split the whole nation. God's nation.

And there was war and bloodshed for the next couple hundred years. Why? Because one joker decided to be unkind when he could've just been kind. You wanted more friends? You wanna influence more people for God? Just be kind.

Now, I say all of that and then I say this. And my wife knows this as the witness and Jeremy, who's playing tonight, knows this because we told him last night at dinner. You are the kindest people that I know.

I've never been in a church with kinder people. Never talked to a pastor who I was jealous of because his congregation or setup was like, wow, look at that. No, no, no.

I'd rather be with you than anyone in the world. You are very, wait, no, no, no. Don't clap for yourself.

It won't sound right. The truth is, we could be kinder. The kindest people I've ever met in my life come in this church.

It's not because of me. I don't know. It's because Jesus is making us kind, making you kind.

But you know what? You are kind to the wicked and the unthankful. Oh, that's a challenge to me. Do that, the Bible says, because that's what God does.

He's kind to people that you wanna slam, that you wanna reject, that you wanna get out of town. Let's close our eyes. God, what should we do tonight? Yes, we want power.

We want revival. We want to see young people come to you. We want so many things to happen so your kingdom would be extended, your name glorified.

But we got to something important today, Lord, because how will those things happen if we're not kind? What good is my preaching if I'm not kind? Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels and have not love, patience, kindness, I'm nothing, I'm zero. I'm in a clanging gong. We ask you, Lord, to take away unkindness, negativity, that edge that some of us have.

We ask you to forgive us for the resentments and the justification that we have because someone did us bad, we're gonna do them bad back. When you said just the opposite, don't pay back evil for evil, but show kindness. And remember Jesus, who went on the cross not for the people who were cheering him, he went on the cross for the people who had nailed him there.

So I thank you for people that can play the keyboard like Caleb, I thank you for preachers, I thank you for ushers and all these things we thank you for but God, we ask you now, please, Lord, make us kind. Soften us, make us tender and polite, not rough and crude, critical, negative. Some of us, Lord, have grown up in cultures and families that just say unkind things.

We heard it growing up, Lord, unkind racial things, unkind personal things, unkind church things about other denominations, we grew up around that, making fun of other people in an unkind way. On behalf of the church as the pastor, I ask you to forgive us for our unkindness. I repent of my unkindness, I confess my unkindness, and we ask you to make us like Jesus, the kindest person who ever walked on the earth.

That's why sinners were drawn to him because he was kind, not because of his doctrine, because of his kindness. Help us to draw people to you through our kindness so that you'll open the door for the word of the gospel. Because, Lord, we live in a different day.

Lord, when Paul and the other apostles you sent out no one had ever heard of your name, Jesus. They went to countries and lands where no one knew your name, but now everyone knows your name. They use it as a curse word.

And people go to church and they don't know you, and people think they know what Christians are like, and they think they know what you're like, and they don't. There's mass confusion in the marketplace. And the only way there'll be clarity, Lord, is if we live a life, if we'll let our light shine and that our good works could be seen, good works of kindness, good words of kindness, especially with our mouths, Lord.

Make our mouths kind. And that's what we're gonna pray now, Lord, that you would baptize us. Not tonight so much with power, although we need power.

Oh, God, do I need power? I need wisdom. We need so many things. But there's a time for everything under the sun, and tonight, Lord, we are focusing on your word concerning kindness.

Be kind one to another, especially in the household of faith. Make all of our dealings with each other kind. Not just smart or true, or we know the Bible and this and that, but that people will remark, oh, my goodness, they're so kind, so kind.

Don't let me be known by my sermons that I try to preach, but by kindness, Lord. Strip me of myself, and you know who I am. I'm the one that beat that fellow up, Lord.

That's who I am, and I'll never change. That's who Jim Simbel is, but greater is he that's in me now, Jesus Christ. Christ, live through me and make me kind.

Let's all stand. Just turn right now, man with man, woman with woman. Lay hands on each other's shoulders gently, and begin to pray for kindness, nothing else.

Pray together out loud. Both of you speak at the same time. God will hear it all.

Come on, open your mouth, lift your voice and pray. God, baptize us in kindness. Make us kind.

Take away unkind words, unkind remarks, unkind actions, Lord. Come on, everyone pray for someone.

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