



THE
FRUIT
OF THE
SPIRIT

GALATIANS 5

A CULTURE OF HARSHNESS

Harshness

Unpleasantly rough, jarring to the senses, cruel, severe

In my view, the truly important emerging divisions in the Evangelical church aren't just theological or ideological. They're also dispositional and temperamental....In evaluating the reality of the last five years, what has been more salient and relevant to the daily lives of so many American Christians, the fact of disagreement with brothers and sisters or the manner of disagreement with brothers and sisters? There is a tremendous, yawning difference between humble and kind members of competing Evangelical factions and cruel and self-righteous gladiators in the public square...And make no mistake...there is no single church faction or ideological side that has a monopoly on cruelty.

The spirit of the age declares that if you get the “big” things correct then cruelty and self-righteousness in the pursuit of those goals are either minor flaws (“bad manners”) or outright virtues (after all, didn’t Jesus drive the money-changers from the temple with a whip?). But it’s past time to acknowledge that we’re often turning our priorities upside-down. It’s past time to acknowledge that cruelty is its own form of apostasy. Cruelty is disobedience...Sometimes the world rejects Christians because it rejects Christ. Sometimes, however, the world rejects Christians because Christians are cruel. In that case, alienation isn’t persecution. It represents righteous judgment for our own political sin.

David French

But if you bite and devour one another, watch out, or you will be consumed by one another... Now the works of the flesh are obvious...hatred, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, envy.

Galatians 5:15, 19

**KINDNESS IN A
CULTURE OF HARSHNESS**

What is Kindness?

Hesed: steadfast love, kindness,
lovingkindness, mercy, goodness,
devotion.

Chrestos: kind, mild, easy, helpful

Kindness describes people who habitually behave in a way that blesses and benefits others because that is their character.

**Christopher
Wright**

Firm Centers, Soft Edges

Whereas aggression has a firm center and hard edges, niceness has soft edges and a spongy center. Niceness may be pleasant, but it lacks conviction. It has no soul. Niceness trims its sails to prevailing cultural winds and wanders aimlessly, standing for nothing and thereby falling for everything. Rather than the harshness of firm centers and hard edges, and rather than the weakness of spongy centers and soft edges, why don't we start with kindness? Kindness is the way of firm centers and soft edges.

Barry Corey

The Kindness of God

Yahweh—Yahweh is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in faithful love (kindness) and truth...

Exodus 34:6

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols. Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk; I took them up by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them.

Hosea 11:1-5

**Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; His
kindness endures forever.**

1 Chronicles 16:4

**Jesus:
God's Kindness in the Flesh**

Come to Me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. All of you, take up My yoke and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for yourselves. For My yoke is kind and My burden is light.

Matthew 11:28-30

Come to Me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. All of you, take up My yoke and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for yourselves. For My yoke is kind and My burden is light.

Matthew 11:28-30

Patience, Kindness, and Change

Or do you despise the riches of His kindness,
restraint, and patience, not recognizing that
God's kindness is intended to lead you to
repentance?

Romans 2:4

CULTIVATING KINDNESS

**Whoever pursues righteousness and kindness
will find life, righteousness, and honor.**

Proverbs 21:21

Mankind, He has told you what is good and what it is the Lord requires of you: to act justly, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8

“The Kind Ones”

Kindness is not a virtue limited to grandmothers or Boy Scouts. We devalue its power when we think of kindness as pampering or random acts. Kindness doesn't pamper, and it's not random. It's radical. It is brave and daring, fearless and courageous, and at times, kindness is dangerous. It has more power to change people than we can imagine. It can break down seemingly impenetrable walls. It can reconcile relationships long thought irreparable. It can empower leaders and break stalemates. It can reconcile nations. Kindness as Jesus lived it is at the heart of peacemaking and has the muscle to move mountains. It's authentic and not self-serving.

Barry Corey

Healing Our Image of God

So that in the coming ages He might display the immeasurable riches of His grace through His kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:7

**And be kind and compassionate to one another,
forgiving one another, just as God also forgave
you in Christ.**

Ephesians 4:32

**Sowing Kindness to Those
Closest To Us**

Don't be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a man sows he will also reap, because the one who sows to his flesh will reap corruption from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit. So we must not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don't give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, we must work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith.

Galatians 6:7-10

Be angry and do not sin. Don't let the sun go down on your anger, and don't give the Devil an opportunity. No foul language is to come from your mouth, but only what is good for building up someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear.

Ephesians 4:26,29

**Husbands, love your wives and don't be bitter
toward them.**

Colossians 3:19

To sum up, each one of you is to love his wife as himself, and the wife is to respect her husband.

Ephesians 5:33

Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so they won't become discouraged.

Colossians 3:21

The Crucible of Kindness

The Poor (Proverbs 14:21, 31)

The Refugee (Isaiah 58)

The Widow (Ruth & Boaz)

The Orphan (2 Samuel 9:3)

Our Opponents/Enemies

But I say to you who listen: Love your enemies, do what is good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If anyone hits you on the cheek, offer the other also. And if anyone takes away your coat, don't hold back your shirt either. Give to everyone who asks you, and from one who takes your things, don't ask for them back. Just as you want others to do for you, do the same for them. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. If you do what is good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do what is good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is gracious to the ungrateful and evil. Be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. Luke 6:27-36

Do not be too quick to assume that your enemy is an enemy of God just because he is your enemy. Perhaps he is your enemy precisely because he can find nothing in you that gives glory to God. Perhaps he fears you because he can find nothing in you of God's love and God's kindness and God's patience and mercy and understanding of the weaknesses of men. Do not be too quick to condemn the man who no longer believes in God, for it is perhaps your own coldness and avarice, your mediocrity and materialism, your sensuality and selfishness that have killed his faith.

Thomas Merton

Then, after he had summoned him, his master said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Shouldn't you also have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' And his master got angry and handed him over to the jailers to be tortured until he could pay everything that was owed. So My heavenly Father will also do to you if each of you does not forgive his brother from his heart.

Matthew 18:32-35

**What would I do for people if I were Christ?
(Col 3:17)**

**What would I do for people if they were Christ?
(Col 3:23)**