

Read: Ephesians 4:30-5:2

Kindness, Please!

Ephesians 4:31-5:2

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

"Kindness, please." As a kindergarten teacher, Kayla felt like she said that phrase a hundred times a day at school. Kayla said it to her students when they wouldn't share during play time. "Kindness, please." Kayla said it when she saw first and second graders cutting in line in front of other people, "Kindness, please." She said it over and over to the big kids at school too when they were mean in the hallways or yelled at each other during recess. "Kindness, please!"

Why is it so hard for us to be kind and loving to other people? There are probably many reasons, but maybe one reason is bigger than the rest. The devil wants you to love a certain someone more than you love other people. You know who that someone is? You! Satan wants you to love yourself more than other people.

So when children think of themselves first, they don't want to share with friends at school. When children think of themselves first, they cut to the front of the line or say mean things to other students or cheat to win games at recess. Adults do similar things. When adults put themselves first, they aren't so good at being nice to other people. We don't realize it very often, but all of our anger or mean words and actions come from the fact that we are loving ourselves more than we are loving other people.

The apostle Paul helps us to rethink and repent. He wants us to turn away from that sin and to love God and other people before we love ourselves. That's why Paul said, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other."

But why would we do that? Why would we put others first? Paul tells us: "In Christ God forgave you." God has shown us the ultimate kindness in his Son Jesus. Jesus came to this world and put us first. He lived for us. He died for us. He rose for us. All this he did so that we could be God's children and live with him forever. And we hear this great encouragement today, "Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Since we are God's dearly loved children, we can live just like Jesus did, putting others first.

Think about how you can show love to others first. Share with your friends. Let someone else go before you. Try complimenting and saying nice things about others. Listen to parents and teachers. God says in his Word, "Kindness, please," and what a joy it is for us to show others the love and kindness that God has shown to us.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- How has Jesus shown kindness to us?
- How can you show kindness and love to someone at school?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Explain why being mean to other people comes from loving yourself more than other people.
- Why does Jesus' love for us help us to be more loving to other people?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Explain why loving yourself more than other people also breaks the First Commandment.
- Discuss with your family two ways that each of you can show more kindness and love to others this week.

Closing Prayer:

Dear Jesus, fill my heart with your love that I may go and show love and kindness to other people. Amen.

Hymn: CWS 750:1,5-6 – Christ, the Word of God Incarnate

Christ, the Word of God incarnate, Lord and Son of Abraham;
Christ, the radiance of the Father, Perfect God, the great I Am;
Christ, the Light, you shine unvanquished, Light and life you bring to all;
Light our path with your own presence, Grant us grace to heed your call.

Christ, the way that leads unailing To the Father's home on high;
Christ, the truth that frees the captive; Christ, the life that cannot die.
Mediator to the Father, Sacrifice and Great High Priest:
Lead us to your heav'nly mansions, There to share your wedding feast.

Christ, the Alpha and Omega; Christ, the firstborn from the dead;
Christ, the life and resurrection; Christ, the Church's glorious head:
Praise and thanks and adoration And unending worship be
To the Father and the Spirit And to you eternally.