
The concept of loving-kindness in the Bible has deep historical and spiritual roots, especially in the Hebrew word "chesed" (חֶסֶד), which is often translated as loving-kindness, steadfast love, mercy, or covenantal faithfulness. It reflects God's unwavering, covenantal love for His people and calls His followers to mirror this love in their relationships.

Old Testament Context

1. **God's Covenant Love (Chesed)** – In the Old Testament, "chesed" is central to God's relationship with Israel. It signifies His **loyal, steadfast love**, often shown despite Israel's failures.
 - *Exodus 34:6* – “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in **love (chesed)** and faithfulness.”
 - *Psalms 136* – Repeats "**His love (chesed) endures forever**" throughout, emphasizing God's eternal kindness.
 2. **Human Acts of Loving-Kindness** – God's people are called to reflect His **chesed** in their actions.
 - *Micah 6:8* – “He has shown you, O man, what is good... to act justly, and to love **mercy (chesed)**, and to walk humbly with your God.”
 - *Ruth 2:20* – Boaz's kindness toward Ruth is described as **chesed**, demonstrating faithful love in human relationships.
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New Testament Context

1. **Jesus as the Fulfillment of Chesed** – The Greek equivalent of **chesed** is "**agape**" (**selfless love**). Jesus embodies this through His ministry and sacrifice.
 - *Luke 6:35* – “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, because He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.”
 - *Titus 3:4-5* – “But when the **kindness** and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy.”
 2. **Christian Call to Loving-Kindness** – Believers are commanded to practice **loving-kindness** as a reflection of God's love.
 - *Ephesians 4:32* – “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”
 - *Colossians 3:12* – “Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.”
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Spiritual and Historical Meaning

- **Covenantal Love** – Loving-kindness is not just an emotion but a committed, covenantal love.
 - **Active Compassion** – It is love in action, demonstrated by mercy, justice, and self-sacrifice.
 - **God's Unchanging Nature** – God's **chesed** is eternal, pointing to His faithfulness in both the Old and New Covenants.
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In summary, **loving-kindness in the Bible represents God's steadfast, covenantal love and calls His people to mirror that love in their lives**—through mercy, faithfulness, and selfless kindness to others. The **Gospel message centers on God's love, grace, and redemption through Jesus Christ**. It emphasizes the call for believers to extend kindness and love to others, reflecting the nature of God. Here are some important scriptural verses that illuminate the topic of kindness and loving others, along with their key themes:

Key Gospel Message Themes

1. **God's Love for Humanity** – The foundation of the Gospel is God's love, demonstrated through Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection.
 2. **Call to Love Others** – Believers are called to love others as an expression of their faith and obedience to Christ.
 3. **Kindness as a Reflection of God's Character** – Kindness is a fruit of the Spirit and a way to reflect God's nature in our relationships.
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Important Scriptural Verses

1. **John 3:16** -- "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."
 - **Theme:** God's unconditional love leads to salvation, which calls us to love others similarly.
 2. **Ephesians 4:32** -- "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."
 - **Theme:** Kindness and forgiveness are essential aspects of the Christian life, mirroring God's grace toward us.
 3. **Colossians 3:12-14** -- "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."
 - **Theme:** The call to embody virtues like kindness and compassion as a reflection of our identity in Christ.
 4. **Galatians 5:22-23** -- "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."
 - **Theme:** Kindness is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, indicating that it should naturally flow from believers as they grow in faith.
 5. **Luke 6:35-36** -- "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, because He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."
 - **Theme:** The radical nature of kindness and love extends even to enemies, reflecting God's mercy and kindness toward all.
 6. **1 John 4:7-8** -- "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love."
 - **Theme:** Love is the essence of God's nature, and true knowledge of God is evidenced by our love for others.
 7. **Matthew 25:40** -- "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"
 - **Theme:** Acts of kindness toward others are acts of service to Christ, highlighting the importance of love in our interactions.
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Summary -- The Gospel message emphasizes that kindness and love are not only fundamental attributes of God but also essential characteristics that believers are called to embody. Through scripture, we see that acts of kindness and love toward others are reflections of God's love for us, forming a crucial part of our faith journey and our witness to the world.

Another way of looking at **God's love in kindness** is through the lens of **grace and mercy**, viewing kindness as an active expression of God's desire for relationship and reconciliation with humanity. Here are some key perspectives:

1. Grace as Unmerited Favor

- **Definition:** God's kindness can be understood as His grace—His unmerited favor toward us. It reflects His willingness to bless us despite our shortcomings.
 - **Example:** In *Ephesians 2:8-9*, it states, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” This highlights how God's kindness is rooted in His desire to offer us salvation and relationship, regardless of our actions.
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2. Kindness as a Transformative Power

- **Definition:** God's kindness can be viewed as a transformative power that changes hearts and lives. When we experience God's kindness, it can lead us to repentance and a desire to reflect that kindness to others.
 - **Example:** In *Romans 2:4*, it says, “Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?” This shows that kindness serves a purpose in leading us toward spiritual growth and change.
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Kindness in Relationship

- **Definition:** God's love in kindness emphasizes His desire for relationship and intimacy. Kindness is a means by which God expresses His love, inviting us into a deeper connection with Him.
 - **Example:** In *Psalms 36:7*, it states, “How precious is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings.” This imagery conveys the safety and comfort found in God's loving-kindness, portraying Him as a protective and nurturing figure.
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4. Kindness as an Invitation to Community

- **Definition:** God's kindness is not only personal but also communal, inviting believers to express love and kindness within their communities. It serves as a foundation for relationships among people.
 - **Example:** In *Galatians 6:10*, it says, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” This verse encourages acts of kindness as a way to build community and reflect God's love in tangible ways.
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5. Kindness as a Reflection of God's Character

- **Definition:** Viewing God's love in kindness highlights His nature as a compassionate and merciful God. His kindness reveals His heart toward creation and His desire for humanity to thrive.
 - **Example:** In *Titus 3:4-5*, it states, “But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy.” This emphasizes that God's kindness is inherent to who He is and drives His actions toward us.
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Summary: Looking at God's love in kindness through these perspectives helps us understand its depth and significance. It emphasizes His grace, the transformative nature of kindness, the relational aspect of His love, the communal invitation it provides, and the reflection of His character. This broader view of kindness enriches our understanding of how we are called to embody and express this love in our own lives and relationships.

An Invitation to Receive the Good News of Jesus:

At **Hope Lutheran Church, Phoenix, AZ**, we believe that the greatest gift anyone can receive is the Good News of Jesus Christ. It is the message of God's grace, love, and forgiveness, freely offered to all who come to Him in faith.

- Are you seeking peace, purpose, or hope in your life?
- Do you long for a fresh start or a deeper connection with God?

Jesus offers this to you. Through His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus has opened the door to new life—a life of freedom from sin, renewal in spirit, and eternal hope. At Hope Lutheran, we invite you to come and experience this life-transforming message. Whether you've been walking with Jesus for years or are just beginning to explore faith, there's a place for you here.

Join us in hearing the Good News:

- **Forgiveness:** In Christ, our sins are washed away.
- **Love:** God's love is unconditional and never-ending.
- **Hope:** No matter what you're facing, there's always hope in Him.

You are warmly welcomed to worship with us, grow in faith, and be part of a community that lives out this Good News daily. **Come and receive the love of Jesus, the hope of salvation, and the joy of a life transformed.** We look forward to meeting you and sharing this journey of faith together!

Hope Church Lutheran, Phoenix, AZ

In Christ's Love,

Pastor Mike Sheldon
602-992-1980

Devotional: Acting in Loving Kindness and Responding to God's Love

Theme: Embracing God's love allows us to reflect that love through our actions, inspiring us to show kindness to others.

Scripture Reading: *1 John 4:9-11* “This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

Reflection: God’s love is the foundation of our faith and the catalyst for how we interact with others. The act of sending His Son, Jesus, into the world demonstrates the depth of His love for us—a love that is sacrificial, unconditional, and transformative. Recognizing this love invites us into a deeper relationship with Him, revealing that we are cherished, valued, and worthy of His grace.

When we fully comprehend God’s loving-kindness, we are moved to respond by extending that same kindness to others. Acting in loving kindness is not merely a good deed; it is a reflection of our commitment to God and a manifestation of His character in our lives. We are called to embody His love, reaching out to those around us with compassion, patience, and understanding.

Consider the ways you can show kindness in your daily life:

- **Speak Words of Encouragement:** Lift others up with kind words, reminding them of their worth.
 - **Offer Help:** Be attentive to the needs of those around you. Small acts of service can make a significant impact.
 - **Practice Forgiveness:** Let go of grievances and offer forgiveness, as God has forgiven us. When we commit to acting in kindness, we not only honor God, but we also create a ripple effect of love in our communities. Our actions can lead others to experience the goodness of God through us, drawing them closer to Him.
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Application:

- **Reflect on God’s Love:** Spend a few moments meditating on the ways God has shown kindness and love to you. Consider writing down specific instances where you felt His love.
 - **Identify Opportunities:** Make a list of ways you can actively show kindness to others this week, whether through simple gestures, volunteering, or offering emotional support.
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Prayer: Heavenly Father, -- Thank You for Your incredible love and kindness that You have poured into my life. Help me to grasp the depth of Your love, so I may respond by loving others as You have loved me. Teach me to act in loving kindness, to be patient, forgiving, and generous in my interactions. May my actions reflect Your heart and draw others closer to You. Guide me in identifying opportunities to show kindness this week, and may I be a vessel of Your love in a world that desperately needs it. I commit my heart to You, Lord, and I pray for the strength to live out Your love every day. In Jesus' name, Amen.

We this encourages you to recognize God's loving-kindness, reflect on it, and actively respond by demonstrating love and kindness to others, fostering a deeper commitment to God and a more compassionate community.
