

# KINDNESS CAN HEAL YOUR MARRIAGE

## A Kindness Project for Men

It's about your mouth more than anything else.

Jim Ryan, Jr

**24 Weeks** to Discover the "Kind Spot" in Your Soul  
Most chapters are 2 or 3 pages each.



Each chapter has a "7-Day Take-Away Assignment."

Check off each chapter after you have spent at least one week working on it.

Read chapter "A" first,  
then do [other chapters in any order you care](#).

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by Phil Myers

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# A. WHEN DID YOUR DESIRE TO BE KIND TO HER, START TO SLOW DOWN?

You unconsciously chose kindness over almost everything else while you were dating.  
Go back and be as nice as you used to be!

Regard one another as more important than yourselves.

*Philippians 2.3*



## Rate yourself.

How hard is it for you to quit some of your petty unkindness? Choose one.

- I am working pretty hard on this already
- I used to be better and could work harder at this
- It's 6-8 on a 10 point scale of difficulty
- Extremely difficult or demanding

How long ago did you begin to be less polite? Has it been a while since you got a thrill by going out of your way to do something extra nice for your spouse? Was there a period of time when you decided that since she wasn't as nice to you as she used to be, that gives you the right not to be as nice to her as you used to be? Why did you give yourself reason to say or do something less than totally kind?

We remember the profound little list Robert Fulghum penned in All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten. The playground rules were simple but helpful. Here's his abbreviated list:

- *share everything*
- *play fair*
- *don't hit people*
- *say you are sorry when you hurt somebody*
- *hold hands*
- *stick together*



As five year-olds, we started to keep some of these six "tops" spinning as well as a dozen more on Fulghum's list. Then came elementary school and our first formal social setting added another layer of conduct guidelines: promptness, diligence, selflessness, study habits, listening skills, and neatness.

Through junior high I was barely able to walk and chew gum at the same time and life became a blur for me. I can remember one of Dad's mini-speeches about how life would become increasingly complex as I got older. My eyes must have glazed over as I sat there. What did he know about seventh grade anyway? I distinctly remember thinking these exact words, "Dad! What could be more complex than seventh grade?!"

Life has a plethora of challenges. At each mile marker we are supposed to assume a little more responsibility than in the previous stage. It seems to be a part of our earthly journey that we all have difficulty keeping all those tops spinning at the same time. Our earliest memories may be of learning to get along with other small children, and to speak with nice tones. Play Day brought new friends, but also a lot of new rules: do this, don't do that, be kind, don't say that, don't spit on her.

The other kids seemed to negotiate the labyrinth we had to master in those years better than I did. I seemed to lag behind in a lot of the people-skills we were supposed to be learning. But we all managed to keep a few more of the tops spinning.

As the obligations of society multiplied, we started to spot the kids who were overwhelmed with life already. Some became bullies. Others learned to intimidate. Some excelled in dishonesty, while others drew into

themselves to wallow in self-pity. Kids who hadn't learned the basics in kindergarten began struggling during junior high. We didn't know it then, but we would watch them through high school while they grew into adult bodies and went on to become super-sized children with kids of their own, yet they lacked some essential life skills that others had begun to master in pre-school. They still didn't share, put things away, wash their hands before eating, or say "I'm sorry" when they hurt people's feelings.

As we looked around at our classmates, we noticed that most of the kids could keep a dozen of the important tops spinning pretty consistently; but most of us seemed content to ignore the fact that we weren't paying any attention to some of the kindergarten rules or even our parents' rules: be nice to *everybody*, don't make fun of kids who were *different*, *pray* before eating, and obey the *teacher*.

We all know some "grown-ups" who haven't made a point to grow up. They are stuck in kindergarten mode where it is all about I, me, and mine. My feelings. My rights. My things. My money. My time. My fun. My success. Only selfish people constantly keep score:

- Your piece of pie is bigger than mine.
- It's my turn for the TV remote.
- You picked the restaurant for our anniversary for the last three years. It's my turn.
- You're spending too much money on tattoos. I want a gym membership.

We've all heard it said that a good marriage isn't about finding the right one—it's about becoming the right one. You and I gave our mates a special gift on our wedding day. The gift was ourselves. Ask a group of your friends how selfish they realized they were after they had been married a couple years, and they'll all admit they had a lot to learn about altruism and unselfishness.

Hopefully, all of us have made significant progress since then.

### One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.



- ◇ If the truth were known, those who learn the kindness habit enjoy wedded bliss the longest.
- ◇ Think right and you'll do right.
- ◇ Determine to keep that top of kindness spinning no matter whether you feel like it or not.

We were all excited about the person who loved us. It certainly wasn't entirely about "me," but before long we realized that give-and-take in marriage involved a lot more giving than we had anticipated. We thoroughly loved to do special things for each other. It was fun to make each other smile. We went out of our way to be kind, to be thoughtful, and to do nice things; but for some of us who had an underdeveloped sense of kindness, we found we had to become more intentional.

After we had been married for a number of years, Kay told me about an amazingly simple discovery she had made. She told me that she had been working on something for a while. Occasionally she felt as though she wasn't getting as much out of married life as she expected. It was at those times she decided to raise her own giving level. She went out of her way to please me, to put me first, or to concentrate on something else besides her own expectations. The tide would begin to turn. Her satisfaction quotient rose but she didn't know whether the reason was from the joy of giving, or whether I semi-automatically responded in-kind, giving more back. I've begun to practice this also, but she still outshines me in the kindness department.

An interesting informal study was made by a wife and husband team as they conducted weekend retreats for couples nationwide. They asked many questions, and they experimented to see if there was a best question which reflected the health and strength of a couples' marriage. The question was this:

***"In your marriage, who is the kindest? Who seems to give more?"***

In the healthiest marriages both partners were quick to say the other partner was the kinder.

These marriages always had a lot of other healthy signs.

The task laid out in our "Kindness Project" is learning to be kind when we don't feel like it. It is not learning how to get your mate to be kinder to you. If you become kinder and she doesn't budge an inch, you'll still have a better marriage.

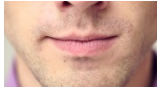
It is ingrained in human nature that we assume others think as we do. Liars assume everyone lies with the same frequency. Those who hold grudges think it is natural that you and I hold grudges as tenaciously as they do. Honest people expect honesty in return from everybody. Gentle people have been truly shocked to learn that others don't work as hard at being gentle.



One sentence nugget of golden kindness.

- ◇ Kindness is our gift of gold to the one we love, the one who has chosen us for a life partner.

**First**, we'll talk about the mouth more than anything else. We need to show kindness by mouth. This includes both things we say, as well as don't say. We certainly think gentle and kind thoughts, but by far, the most effective way to demonstrate kindness is with our words. In another chapter we'll deal with tones.



**Second**, this book is about the brain which gives instructions to the mouth. I'll ask you for a lot of small decisions along the way.

**Third**, it is about the heart which caresses the brain. "The mouth speaks out of the abundance of the heart." *Luke 6.45*

**Fourth**, it is about a godly spirit which gives the heart permission to operate on auto-pilot. Filled with the Holy Spirit we cannot say anything which intends to hurt.

A SKETCH OF KINDNESS

*Of course, we all know people who have no regard for God yet seem to have learned to master their tongues pretty well. I do not know anything about the family of the author Somerset Maugham except what Somerset wrote about his parents' marriage. As I remember it, a family friend asked his mother how she and her husband met and married. Somerset's mother was evidently an extraordinarily beautiful woman. His father was an ugly man by anyone's standard. Somerset's mother made a précis of her soul mate by saying, "He has never said an unkind word to me in his life."*

*Oh, that that might be true of me and you.*

May we be known as those whose words are sweetness, even when we disagree, even when we correct, and even when we are hurting.

Kindness is not an advanced degree in godliness. It's a baby step. It is an art we should have begun to grasp in the home when mom said, "Don't hit. Don't grab. Be nice. Don't stick out your tongue." Kindness is a common duty, a courtesy we render to those we don't even know, but especially to those we love. Particularly in our marriages.

Three nuggets about golden words.



- ◇ Is it kind?
- ◇ Is it true?
- ◇ Is it necessary?

Kindness is necessary in the home, at school, at work, and in the church. You don't get kudos for kindness. Don't expect applause every time you do something nice. Don't anticipate your wife will pin an award on your chest because you weren't as selfish today. Don't expect that she will even notice some of the thoughtful deeds you do. I'd say one-out-of-ten of your altruistic turns might be enough for her to notice.

You'll have to learn to be content simply by realizing you're making progress. Don't demand recognition. Don't expect a big payoff. You're not ramping up the Kindness Quotient to feel good about yourself. You're not doing all these kind little deeds to impress God. You're going to learn to apply a basic principle so that you can give a nicer gift to the one who has chosen you for a life partner. But you certainly can expect a significant improvement in the health of your marriage.

## STOP!

### Decision Time: your seven-day project

Don't go to the next chapter until you have marked just one of these "Homework Assignments."  
Attack it for 7 days and then choose a different chapter to work on next week.

- Here's my list of 2 ways I cause friction in my marriage: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
- I'll apologize to my mate for a recent offense.
- One top I have neglected to keep spinning: \_\_\_\_\_
- There has been a significant drop in kindness in my marriage, I think I can identify the start of the slide.
  - \* change in lifestyle or pace
  - \* job change
  - \* birth of kids
  - \* new mortgage
  - \* kid going through difficulties
  - \* kids' activities
  - \* money
  - \* death of good friend
  - \* grad school
  - \* etc.

[A verse to write out and tape to your bathroom mirror, dash, or desk.](#)

**What is desirable in a man is his kindness.**

*Proverbs 19.22*

If you can only manage to keep one top spinning every day  
of your life—make it kindness.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| A. <input type="checkbox"/> WHEN DID YOUR DESIRE TO BE KIND TO HER SLOW DOWN?                  | N. <input type="checkbox"/> WHEN HER RESPONSE IS SO ICY IT COULD QUICK-FREEZE A WHALE |
| B. <input type="checkbox"/> KIND WORDS   | O. <input type="checkbox"/> MY ANGER TURNED INTO A GRUDGE                             |
| C. <input type="checkbox"/> KINDS TONES  | P. <input type="checkbox"/> GIVING, & GIVING, & GIVING YOUR BEST, AGAIN & AGAIN       |
| D. <input type="checkbox"/> WHEN YOUR HEART ISN'T IN IT <u>OR</u> WHEN YOU DON'T EVEN LIKE HER | Q. <input type="checkbox"/> APOLOGIES BOTH WEAK AND GOOD                              |
| E. <input type="checkbox"/> TAKING APPROPRIATE BLAME   | R. <input type="checkbox"/> LADIES REALLY DO SHOW KINDNESS DIFFERENTLY THAN MEN       |
| F. <input type="checkbox"/> REASONS WHY PEOPLE ARE MEAN  | S. <input type="checkbox"/> "TREAT HER LIKE A QUEEN, SON."                            |
| G. <input type="checkbox"/> REASONS WHY SOME PEOPLE ACT KINDER THAN I DO                       | T. <input type="checkbox"/> LEARNING TO FORGET A WRONG                                |
| H. <input type="checkbox"/> ASKING FORGIVENESS   | U. <input type="checkbox"/> LISTEN!   |
| I. <input type="checkbox"/> GIVING FORGIVENESS <u>AND</u> WORKING TOWARD RECONCILIATION        | V. <input type="checkbox"/> EXPECTING IMPROVEMENT IN YOURSELF FIRST                   |
| J. <input type="checkbox"/> KINDNESS IS A DECISION   | W. <input type="checkbox"/> THE BIBLE SAYS, "DON'T HIT BACK!"                         |
| K. <input type="checkbox"/> STOPPING AN ARGUMENT COLD: THE ART OF DEFERRING                    | X. <input type="checkbox"/> HEY! WHAT CAN I EXPECT OUT OF ALL THIS HARD WORK?         |
| L. <input type="checkbox"/> MARRIED COUPLES DON'T GIVE EACH OTHER ORDERS                       |   |
| M. <input type="checkbox"/> NO EXCUSES   |   |

Pick a chapter for next week—any chapter.

*It's okay to pick one that gives you  
a better opportunity for success, honest.*

## B. KIND WORDS

There is always a way to be honest without being brutal.

De Angelis

**A soothing tongue is a tree of life, but perversion in it crushes *[her]* spirit.**

*Prov 15.4*

### Rate yourself.

How hard is it to speak kind words at tense moments?

- I am working pretty hard on this already
- I used to be better and could work harder at this
- It's 6-8 on a 10 point scale of difficulty
- Extremely difficult or demanding
- other \_\_\_\_\_ [write it]



I appreciate Robert Fisher's reminder that the use of tact is always welcomed but it is especially necessary when speaking "a truth that may strike a sensitive nerve in another."

In our marriages, opportunities to say something irritating occur more regularly simply because we spend so much time together. None of us likes to have someone examine every word spoken in the kitchen. Walking on eggshells in any relationship would be exhausting. The only solution is to determine to speak to others the way we would like them to speak to us.

Kind words don't cost much and don't take much exertion at all if they spill out of a kind heart. If couples listen to themselves they would realize that sometimes they sound like people who don't even like each other. Rather than putting their own nastiness under the searchlight, they take aim at each others' unkind words then twist the tension spring even tighter. Sometimes the kindest word in all the world is the unkind word that went unsaid.

### One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.

- ◇ Using kind words is a decision.
- ◇ If you must speak ill of another, do not speak it. Write it in the sand near the water's edge.  
*Napoleon Hill*
- ◇ Words can cause bruises that are exceedingly slow to heal.
- ◇ Let your speech be seasoned with salt.  
*Col 4.6*



Jesus' little brother, James, said that no man can tame his own tongue. The clear implication is that only with God's strength can we hope to have victory.

Now if we put the bits into the horses' mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and *yet* it boasts of great things.

See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, the *very* world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of *our* life, and is set on fire by hell. For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue; *it is* a restless evil *and* full of deadly poison. With it we bless *our* Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come *both* blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way. Does a fountain send out from the same opening *both* fresh and bitter *water*? Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs? Nor *can* salt water produce fresh.

*James 3.3-12 NASB*



In each of the first four chapters of James' book he reminds his former church members of some of the things he must have preached about while they still attended his church in Jerusalem. Fire! Hell! Tongues! Horse bridles! Shipwrecks!

He describes the destructive power of our words. “The tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity. . .and is set on fire by hell!” Then he declares, “No one can tame the tongue!” If that be true, it evidently takes divine help to control the words we speak. I think of this in two aspects.

Aspect #1—HARD WORK We must practice depending intentionally on the Holy Spirit to help us choose our words. Remember David’s encouragement, “Let the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, my Lord, my strength and my redeemer.” [Psalm 19.14] We both know this takes a lot of effort.

There are those of us who take great pride in speaking our mind. We admire our own honesty and willingness to “tell it like it is.” Sometimes we consider openness a noble quality [even when it hurts others’ feelings]. We like to give advice the same way we like to receive it—straight from the shoulder. We make the mistake that our spouses want us to be forthright and candid. I suppose, like me, you often ignore two of Paul’s admonitions to “speak the truth in love” and “let your words be always with grace, seasoned with salt.” [Ephesians 4.15 & Colossians 4.6]

Aspect #2 WORK ON AUTO PILOT Taming the tongue requires that we spend much time intentionally speaking kindly. The plan is that it becomes second nature to honor the Lord with our words.

I competed on wrestling teams from junior high through college. Every time we learned a new “move” we ran endless drills: Step one—plant your feet. Step two—move to the left. Step three—lower your left shoulder. Step four—drive with lightning speed! Develop the habit. Form a pattern. Perfect a repetition. Etch the motions in your instinct. Train your muscles to move unencumbered. Drill, drill, drill. Practice/Repeat.

Eventually the concentration level evolved into an automatic response. We could focus on our wrestling opponent rather than on the moves we had to make. Some have called this “secondary passive concentration.” But if we will devote ourselves earnestly to honoring God with our words for a long, long time, we will be pleased to see how much He is pleased to see our progress.

A hundred fifty years ago William Makepeace Thackeray uttered a simple slice of advice for couples, “Never lose a chance of saying a kind word.” And do you remember Mark Twain’s take on being nice? “Kindness is a language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.”

#### A SKETCH OF KINDNESS

*Jesus probably spoke to every sort of person you and I have ever met. In three solid years of constant exposure to individuals and crowds, He never sinned with His lips. He was kind. Some words were strong and some were gentle. He lifted the hurting. Encouraged the discouraged. Corrected the confused. And even hammered the proud, “. . .yet without sin.” [Heb 4.15] He was tempted to respond in bitterness. They taunted Him to riposte in anger. His enemies baited Him. His friends behavior was baffling. His allies betrayed and denied Him. Yet He didn’t open His mouth in retaliation. He dumbfounded His assailants with silence, with wisdom, with soft answers, with Scripture, and with genuine humility. Yes, He did embarrass the Pharisees from time to time as He frowned on their hypocrisy, but we know two Pharisees by name who sought Him out and became believers: Nicodemus & Joseph. [John 3.1 & Mk 15.42]*

#### One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.



- ◇  If it is not true, do not say it. Marcus Aurelius 2nd Cent BC, Rome
- ◇  Make it easy for your mate to say “I’m sorry.” or “I’ll work on that,” or “Will you forgive me?” Don’t make her grovel.
- ◇  We have all felt the sting of unkind words [for scowls, or raised eyebrows, or a shrug of the shoulders].

Ephesians 4.29 “Let no unwholesome [rotten] word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification. . .so that it will give grace to those who hear.”

Calling names is mean. Even calling someone “mean” is mean. After a stinging insult, a husband sent a verbal retort designed to lacerate. It came as a missile from a smelter in hell. He followed it immediately with a weak, “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean that.” I believe he lied just then. He meant what he said, but he didn’t mean to say it aloud.



We've all read universal adages about unkind words. Everybody, I mean everybody, has to work on this.

- ◇ If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all. *all American mothers say this*
- ◇ When angry, count to ten before you speak. *European folk saying*
- ◇ Be slow to speak, slow to wrath. James 1.19 *first century Israel*
- ◇ As perfume to the flower, so kindness is to speech. *Germany*

## STOP!

### **Decision Time: your seven-day project** **Choose just one for this week's Homework.**

- I will write myself a reminder to apologize when I interrupt.
- Before I speak in anger I'll count to nine. When very angry I'll say the alphabet.
- I promise myself to stop nagging about \_\_\_\_\_
- I will not call names.
- "If you can't be kind, at least be vague." *Judith Martin*
- "We must eliminate nagging." *Robert Fisher*
- By my own admission I do not always speak as nicely as I want others to speak to me. But I've decided that I will try to fill my cup with sweet water.
- I can't erase an unkind word I recently uttered, but I've decided not to say it again.



[A verse to write out and tape to your bathroom mirror, dash, or desk.](#)

Speak the truth in love. . .let no corrupt communication come out of your mouth. . .  
be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another.

*Ephesians 4:25,29,32*

"A cup, brimful of sweet water  
cannot spill even one drop of bitter water."

Amy Carmichael, IE.



## C. KIND TONES

The words you say mean nothing.  
The way you say them means everything.

*Eileen Parra*

**A gentle answer turns away wrath,  
but a harsh word stirs up anger.**

*Prov 15.1*



### Rate yourself.

How difficult is it to speak in kind tones—when it's really important?

- I am working pretty hard on this already
- I used to be better and could work harder at this
- It's 6-8 on a 10 point scale of difficulty
- Extremely difficult or demanding

Friendship doesn't authorize us to say disagreeable things in a disagreeable way. We can change the tone of our voices at will. Take, for example, a moment when you're in the middle of a very heated argument—and quite loud. A cell phone rings and you shift gears seamlessly. "Hi, thanks for the call. Can I get back with you a little later?"

We can disagree but don't need to raise our voices. Many couples have slowly come to realize that they have developed a little edge to their words, or found themselves finding fault a whole lot more often than they like.

### A SKETCH OF KINDNESS

*As the bus slowed down at the crowded bus stop, the Pakistani bus conductor leaned from the platform and called out "Six only!" The bus stopped. He counted out six passengers, rang the bell, and then as the bus moved off, called to those left behind: "So sorry, plenty of room in my heart—but the bus is full." He left behind a row of smiling faces.*

*It's not what you do, it's the way you do it.*

I'm sure someone has produced a small manual full of physical symptoms which accompany anger, but here's my homespun list:

- the throat tightens
- the heart beat rises
- hormones get dumped into the blood from a half dozen glands
- eyes dilate
- the tongue dries out
- our tone of voice does something it shouldn't, and it doesn't sound polite anymore
- and something inside gets quite hot

Whatever is happening physically, we know that the tones of our voices do something awful. We think we're speaking in a civil tone but our spouses think we're hollering. We're sure we made a polite comment but we watch our mates go berserk.

The Bible even seems to allude to the tone in our voice.

- Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks
- Graciously forgive
- Speak the truth in love
- Don't let corrupt speech come out of your mouth

*Mat 12.34*

*Luke 7.42*

*Ephesians 4.15*

*Ephesians 4.29*

Try saying each of the following sentences with two different tones: 1) kind, and 2) hurtful.

“Are you ready for church yet?”

“I don’t think I like that.”

“You always say the kindest things.”

“Oops! I’m sorry.”

It was probably one of my pastors who mentioned that sometimes someone says something really small, and it just fits right into this empty place in your heart *[and heals it]*.

You may be one of those who learned a long time ago that you were one of the people who:

- Could smother a seething urge.
- Expects the worst *[or best]* in others.
- Could turn any conversation sour *[or sweet]*
- Could diffuse *[or ignite]* an argument.

You may know that you don’t operate well with words especially under pressure or conflict. You learned long ago that at times like this the tone of your voice gets out of control. Let me encourage you to admit the obvious. At a neutral moment of the day, talk to her about your being tongue-challenged and work out some ground rules for confrontation. On top of that, you may know that you’re married to someone who is a wordsmith and knows *[unlike you]* how to think clearly under pressure. You always feel inadequate and disadvantaged in any verbal duel.

In order to be firm in your resolve to speak with kind tones, you’ll have to pour some concrete down your spine. You’d think that a simple thing like controlling our throats would be pretty easy to do. But it’s not. We’ve all been there. I’ve committed more sins with my mouth than any part of the body. It will take a rock-ribbed determination to speak in a way we truly want to treat our mates.

One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.



- ◇ Sitcoms have taught America that sarcasm is an acceptable form of humor. Humor should never hurt anyone.
- ◇ If we recall an event in which we truly forgave, we can re-enjoy the cleansing we received from forgiving.

**STOP!**

### **Decision Time: your seven-day project**

Don’t choose another chapter until you have marked at least one “Homework Assignment.”

- I need to work on silence like a clam. Just saying nothing when I get backed into a corner.
- I will pray. I mean it. I will ask for help. *[silently or aloud]*
- I will write down ahead of time a well thought out sentence. I will read it slowly to my spouse as soon as I realize I’ve entered the “Verbal Stress Zone.”
- I will take a walk, listen to some music, do some target shooting, fix something, or do whatever it takes to defuse the tension bomb.
- I will say nothing except to admit my guilt. I won’t try to defend myself. I know I’m no good when I’m trapped.
- I will try to short circuit an ugly argument by refusing to argue after I’ve asked forgiveness.



[A verse to write out and tape to your bathroom mirror, dash, or desk.](#)

**Speak. . .always with grace, seasoned with salt**

*Gal 6.6*

*We can confront without a bad tone or any caustic words,  
and we can change the tone of our voices at will.*

Remember, there is no set order for these chapters.

Each week pick any one which you’ll tackle next.

The greatest ingredient in the *KINDNESS QUOTIENT* - is Jesus Christ.

Jesus didn't die for us because we are good or kind. He died for bad people, NOT good people!

Somebody took the time to tell me how I could be absolutely sure of having eternal life. I'm going to heaven when I die. Let me take a half page to explain how you too, can be **KNOW** you'll have a home in heaven.

- God is a holy Being, and He is kind. He bled for bad people.
  - You and I have to admit we have done many things we're not proud of.
    - The Bible clearly states that we deserve to pay for our sin. That punishment is death in hell.
      - Jesus loves us and died to pay that punishment.
        - We don't get to heaven just because we're extremely sorry for disappointing God. He doesn't grant forgiveness for sincerity. He demands a penalty for sin. No one earns the right to eternal life by honesty, kindness, or being a good person.
          - We are either trusting in our good works OR we are trusting in Jesus' death for wicked sinners—US.

Let me quote an important Bible verse.

***"By grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast."*** Ephesians 2.8,9

The assurance of our salvation rests on Bible verses which tell us about God's promise to those "who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Acts 16.31

***"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved!"***

3 questions for you. *Check only one.*

- 1. Are you trusting completely in Jesus Christ as the one who paid for your dirty, rotten, filthy sin?
- 2. Are you depending on how honest, and good you have been throughout your life? Are you hoping God will ignore all the bad things, and you believe that the good things will cover up the bad?
- 3. Are you hoping that where you will spend eternity depends on Jesus plus how good you've lived? Do you think His payment on the Cross wasn't enough, you have to earn part of your salvation?

God's promise from another Bible verse. I John 5.13

***"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God***  
***that you may **KNOW** that ye have eternal life."***

Our guarantee of eternal life comes from Bible verses God has already written.

# D. WHEN YOUR HEART ISN'T IN IT

## SUBTITLED

### WHEN YOU DON'T EVEN LIKE HER

Kindness is in your power even when fondness is not.

Samuel Johnson

**Give preference to one another in honor.**

Rom 12.10

#### Rate yourself.

How hard is this for you?

- I am working pretty hard on this already
- I used to be better and could work harder at this
- It's 6-8 on a 10 point scale of difficulty
- Extremely difficult or demanding



I suppose we've all felt moments when we just don't feel like being nice. Even an unkind word seems to satisfy our bitter hearts in some perverted way. It's a sign of our sinful nature. In moments like that the brain simply must take over since the heart is doing such a lousy job of directing things. We know what is right and we must decide to do it. An adult who behaves childishly will continue to embrace little grudges; but those who set their minds on pleasing God will admit their guilt and make amends.

You and I may be concerned whether "acting" in a kind way is actually hypocrisy. Later we'll look at those times in which we have practiced veiling our unkindnesses behind a screen of seemingly nice deeds. [**NO EXCUSES AND CAMOUFLAGING UNKINDNESS**, chapter M]. Are "kind deeds" simply a cloak for my sin?

But there is a large and important difference now. When we cloak our unkindness behind flimsy external actions or false words, we do it to make ourselves look like the "innocent" party." This is hypocrisy. We disguise our wrongdoing in order to gain personal approval.

But on the other hand, we can also choose to "pretend" in a way which is opposite the way we're feeling for the sole purpose of spreading oil on troubled water. Our intent at that point is noble and is designed to create harmony at a pressure packed moment.

One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.

- ◇ Honesty when you don't feel like being honest, is still honesty. Be kind when I feel. . . .
- ◇ Repay his injury with your kindness. *Lao Tzu, 600 BC, China*
- ◇ When you don't feel like being kind still be kind.
- ◇ Recompense to no man evil for evil. *Rom 12.17*
- ◇ Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good. *Rom 12.21*
- ◇ An extensive examination of police records indicates that no woman has ever shot her husband while he was washing the dishes.



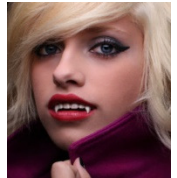
Being kind when you don't feel like being kind is not hypocritical. It is kind. You are not a fake. You're just stumbling along while you are learning. It is not hypocrisy to keep quiet. It is not hypocrisy to stifle sin.

On the other hand, when we are truly [*though sometimes weakly*] willing to be kind in spite of our mean feelings, we are approaching the problem intending to change the dynamics of the situation. There is a willingness to take a first step toward reconciliation:

- “. . . your brother [*spouse*] has something against you. . . .” *Matt 5.23,24*
- “. . . [*you have something against your brother, when he's done something wrong to you, go and*] be reconciled to your brother. . . .” *Matt 18.15*

One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.

- ◇ Molly must have had fangs in the past to entitle her book Nice Girls Don't Have Fangs.
- ◇ Sweet words defuse explosive hearts.
- ◇ Do not let kindness and truth leave you. Bind them about thy neck. *Prov 3.2-6*
- ◇ Our kindness may be the most persuasive argument for that which we believe. *Gordon B Hinckley*



## A SKETCH OF KINDNESS

*Pug fixed cars on the side. He repaired my car sometimes.*

*It was quitting time and I drove over to ask what I thought was a short question. I wanted to know when I could come around and get my car fixed. "I'll take a quick look" he said. Thirty minutes later he was still under my car.*

*His wife drove over to pick him up. She waited.*

*Pug poked his head out from under the car and winked at her.*

*She waited some more.*

*As I watched her sweet patience, I prayed for her. I'm sure that one of the qualities that attracted her to Pug was his kindness. He loved to help people. She knew that when she married him. And I'm sure he loved her patience.*

*Right now he was helping me, and working into his dinner hour. I prayed for them that they would never forget that it was those qualities that brought them together in the first place.*

*I paid him. He opened the car door for his wife as she hopped in. He kissed her and they drove off.*

*Thank you, Lord for couples like that.*

One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.

- ◇ You picked her for certain qualities—major on those qualities.
- ◇ I'm sure you remember the proverb that reminds us that a soft or gentle answer turns away wrath. *[Prov 15.1]*
- ◇ "I always prefer to believe the best of everybody, it saves so much trouble." *Rudyard Kipling*

There is overwhelming evidence that the higher the level of your own self-esteem, the more likely you will be to treat others with respect, kindness, and generosity. If that be true, and you struggle with low-self-esteem, work on the assumption that you've been more unkind with your words than you ever thought you were.

"My name is Bob, I'm an alcoholic. I've been sober for 7 years. I'm glad I'm here at AA tonight. It's been a good week." And very much like Bob, I should belong to MMA [*Mean Men Anonymous*]. "My name is Phil. I am a mean man. Several doctors have checked my DNA and concluded that my natural bent is vindictiveness. By God's grace I've been 'sober' for many years, and by God's grace my mean streak has been temporarily under control."

Selfish people have a hard time being polite when they don't feel like it. We justify our actions. We compare ourselves [*at our best*] with others [*at their worst*]. Too often we paint others' flaws in grays and blacks, while coloring our own misdeeds in much more subdued colors. Selfish people need to grow up, to put themselves in the skin of others. We've all heard that we find out how selfish we are two weeks after the honeymoon. It would be best if we each started our years of marriage assuming that we were much more selfish than our mates.

One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.

- ◇ Most times, the person you find it hardest to love is the one who needs it the most.
- ◇ She needs you most when she is at her worst!!

It is when your wife is acting her worst that she is feeling the worst about her own self-worth. Your mate needs a kind word most after she has said an unkind word. She also may be the most receptive to hearing a genuine apology from you.

*For years I have wanted to write a book about healing highly dysfunctional marriages. I've already picked the title.*

### **She's a Witch! He's a Jerk!**

You've also heard it said that we not only marry an individual, but we also marry a family. Along with that family comes a small unwritten guidebook on how to maintain peace. Each family has its own. You brought along your family's code book as well. Politeness is a segment of life which is very much determined by our society. It often seems like a long list of do's and don'ts. It changes from region to region throughout our country. City folks and country folks value different mealtime rituals, ways to answer the phone, ways to hold a soup spoon "properly," give advice, honor grandparents, refrain from giving one's own opinion, as well as avoiding embarrassment in public.

You may have married into a different sub-culture of America, but you're in it for keeps. You and your wife brought a lot of cultural baggage [*not necessarily negative luggage*], but you soon learned that her family has a weird little slant on things that your family thinks of as entirely insane.

- punctuality
- importance [*or unimportance*] of leisure [*or cost thereof*]
- importance of prayer
- where to squeeze the toothpaste
- acceptable [*and unacceptable*] noises at the meal table
- spending discretionary money
- tolerance of music volume
- purpose of speed limit signs
- tithing
- frequency of guests
- importance of holidays, rituals, and birthdays
- frequency and importance of seeing in-laws or parents
- private space
- child discipline
- and even giving advice to one another can be done differently in different homes

most "prickly" couples  
haven't learned to compromise  
on matters like these

Many of us were just getting our own act together when we got married. We were starting to learn unselfishness when we made one of the most important decisions of our lives—tying a knot. Lots of our own parameters weren't yet set in stone, nor were they even roughed out in our own minds. All we knew was the type of home we grew up in. We made a lot of cultural blunders in our first two years after the wedding. Romantic love covered all sorts of our mistakes. If you had already developed the twin arts of Forgiveness and Not Holding Grudges you had a head start on a smoother marriage. On the other hand, perhaps you found that there was a lot of friction over multitudes of minor offenses. You probably refused to concede [*for longer than you want to admit*] that you were acting pretty immaturely.

It is expected that as we grow older we will become more like Jesus. We will learn to walk in the Spirit more consistently. We will learn to love and esteem our mates, and learn to love them as we love ourselves. We will watch ourselves grow to esteem them above ourselves. [*Phil 2.3*] Joubert said, "A part of kindness consists in loving people more than they deserve." We force ourselves to show politeness to others every day for rudeness, impropriety, mumbling, distracted driving, and a host of others blunders. Politeness is a skill we can all learn. For some of us it will take far more effort than for others. It may even seem like giving up certain inalienable rights.

### One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.

- ◇ "A person who is nice to you, but rude to the waiter, is not a nice person."  
Dave Barry, *16 Things It Took Me Over 50 Years to Learn*
- ◇ "There is nothing so rewarding as to make people realize that they are worthwhile."  
Bob Anderson





- ◇ MOVE? CHANGE? ARE YOU KIDDING?  
No! Sometimes all we have to do is practice what is correct and it helps us think about what is right.
- ◇ “All I’m saying is, kindness don’t have no boundaries.” *Kathryn Stockett, The Help*
- ◇ “He who plants kindness gathers love.” *St Basil, 350 AD, Turkey*

Many insecure people have low-esteem, and keep hunting for a source which esteems them. Woe to the egotistical man who got married because “She made me feel so good about myself.”

**STOP!**

## Decision Time

**Work HARD on one of these for an entire week.**

Don’t go to the next chapter until you have marked at least one “Homework Assignment.”

- I give myself permission to act forgiving even when I don’t feel that way.
- I will remember it is not hypocritical to say a kind thing rather than a mean thing. I will sincerely pretend. No, I won’t really be faking it when I’m feelings are flat.
- I’ve jotted down a couple words next to each of the following situations because I may just have to prepare myself how to respond when I feel:
  - *wronged*
  - *underappreciated*
  - *insulted*
  - *under-esteemed*
  - *like embracing a grudge*
  - *like nurturing an injured spirit*
  - *betrayed*
  - *jilted*
  - *undervalued*
  - *forgotten*
- There is always time enough for courtesy. *Ralph Waldo Emerson*
- It’s nice to be important, but it’s more important to be nice. *John Cassis*  
*It’s also the name of a children’s book*
- Seek to be your mate’s best friend. At first you may have to settle for being one of several best friends.
- No man got very high by pulling his wife down. I won’t knock her. Maybe a month’s truce is in order at some point.

Make this verse your computer’s wallpaper for a week.

If it be possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men.

*Romans 12.18*

Treat people with understanding when you can,  
and fake it when you can’t, until you do understand.

Kim Harrison

# E. TAKING APPROPRIATE BLAME

Every criticism I have received was at least 15% right on target.

*I couldn't excuse myself just because my adversaries were 85% wrong. p.j.m.*

**Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another.**

**James 5.16**

## Rate yourself.

How hard does your wife think it is for you to admit you're wrong?

- I am working pretty hard on this already
- I used to be better and could work harder at this
- It's 6-8 on a 10 point scale of difficulty
- Extremely difficult or demanding



## A SKETCH OF KINDNESS

*It took a ton of determination that morning. I woke to the sound of screeching, "Why did you hit the snooze button?! She's going to be late to school again today! Get up you bum! Pack her lunch! I'm getting her dress out of the dryer!"*

*I had made a decision. I would not yell back. I ran to the kitchen to stuff Twinkies, an applesauce thing, and the last piece of our daughter's favorite pizza into a bag.*

*Silence was not my strength. We had hollered for the last two years. I didn't remember turning off the alarm. Did I? Did she? It really didn't matter. Day six of my promise to myself not to yell wasn't a lot easier than day one.*

*I was scared to make any vow to God, but this kindness thing was awfully tough. Pray! Pray! I kept telling myself. And keep your mouth shut.*  
anon

We've all heard that marriage is a 50/50 proposition, but it's my observation that we have to live as though it's a 70/30 deal and we get to carry the 70% part. On the other hand I heard a couple say that they both wanted to be guilty of giving far more than their share of the effort. But I'm not going to mumble. In this "Kindness Project" I'm encouraging you to give 100% even if you get nothing in return.

I suppose that in many marriages there have been long stretches of time when one partner or the other has had to shoulder the lion's share of the load. Perhaps one spouse enrolled in post graduate courses at the local college for a while, or the other ramped up her work hours to pay off unexpected bills. At some intervals church work consumed a lot of discretionary hours. Perhaps for weeks [or months] sick family members, or neighbors, or family matters demanded greater attention. In times like these, if we are the partner with less pressure, we have to assume more responsibility and exert a greater effort to keep the marriage sweet. Isn't it encouraging when we find ourselves equal to the task? But if we shoulder the burden grudgingly it can wear on us and we succumb to dissatisfaction. We must be careful to carry our mates as cheerfully as Christ carries us.



- ◇ We must NEVER excuse any sin of ours no matter how small or seemingly insignificant. God doesn't ignore ANY.
- ◇ God cannot forgive even tiniest sins of those unwilling to humbly confess.
- ◇ God is obligated to withhold blessings for any unconfessed sin. pjm
- ◇ "Almost every [one of my own] sinful action ever committed can be traced to a selfish motive." Stephen Kendrick

Call your sin by its own name. It is not a flaw, a failure, or just letting God down. You didn't merely blow it. You didn't only goof up. It is anger, malice, or a spirit of bitterness. It is hatred, or wickedness, or spite. Call it by a name God would use—sin.

The beginning runner exerts tremendous effort jogging a quarter mile, but after several weeks of running, he finds that distance quite easy. The more regularly he runs, the easier it becomes. There is hope for us, too. The longer we spend logging time walking in the Spirit, the more accustomed we become to resisting the devil and living above petty feelings. Yes, it actually becomes easier not to sin. The temptation will always be there, [the temptation may even get stronger] but we learn to depend on Him to "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from [doing] evil."

On the other hand, we also see how vile our hearts are. Satan's minions are not intimidated. They come back again, and again, and again. It is evidently their appointed task to harry believers. Satan is called the Accuser of the Brethren [Revelation 12.10] and he seems to thrive on reminding Jehovah that we are miserable and wicked



humans. But there are many verses that can encourage our hearts: we are “in Christ” [read Eph chapters 1-3], He’s our refuge [Psalm 46.1]. We have a paraclete [John 14.16], etc.

You may have been handing your mate bricks of unkindness for a long time. It shouldn’t surprise you if she was building a thick wall of resentment with those bricks. To dismantle it may take just as long as you’ve taken in handing her those construction materials.

Since you’re still on this Kindness Journey, my assumption is that you are serious about ramping up the Kindness Factor in your marriage. You’re willing to admit that you have to make some significant changes in your life. That’s good, so do I. It is one of the hardest aspects of life to tweak. In our “Kindness Project” you and I will be reminded how unkind and hard our own hearts are.

### One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.



- ◇ Your conscience is the measure of the honesty [about] your selfishness. *Richard Bach*
- ◇ If you married so that you would have someone who would be nice to you—you’re selfish.
- ◇ Always write angry letters to your enemies. Never mail them. Then confess your anger to God.
- ◇ Sin can reign in a Christian. You are still a Christian even though you’ve acted like an unbeliever. You simply must stop allowing sin to rule! The Christian himself must decide whether sin reigns or Christ reigns. *Romans 6.12 & 14*
- ◇ A recent First Lady [HRC] said, “In the Bible it says they asked Jesus how many times you should forgive, and He said ‘seventy times seven.’ Well, I want you to know that I’m keeping a chart.” *This lady doesn’t understand forgiveness at all.*
- ◇ Others have the right to feel you’re not lifting your weight if you: whine, cringe, sigh, or moan.
- ◇ If there is one thing I dislike, it is the man who tries to air his grievances when I wish to air mine. *P G Woodhouse*
- ◇ The face of the enemy frightens me only when I see how much it resembles my own.

It is not an attack on your personal worth if she:

- disagrees with your opinion
- finds fault
- appreciates the strengths in others more than your strengths
- finds you are lacking, or shirking
- feels you haven’t explained your point of view very well
- feels you are slow to catch on
- or feels you’re too fast

## **STOP!**

### **Decision Time: your seven-day project**

Don’t go to the next chapter until you have marked at least one “Homework Assignment.”

- I promise myself that his week I will never excuse my own flaws.
- I will make a list of words I commonly use which “add kindling to the fire.”
- I will look for my part of the blame and apologize by starting with the words, “Honey, I was wrong.”
- Make a list of my mate’s words which incense me during an argument or just in general conversation, such as:
  - “I told you before that. . . .”
  - “I already asked you if. . . .”
  - “Don’t you remember when I said. . . ?”

**and I will burn the list!** Remember it no more.

A verse to write out and tape to your bathroom mirror, dash, or desk.

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth.

*Ephesians 4.29*

The standard I have for others  
is higher than I care to live up to.

Dr. Gary Cohen

# F. REASONS WHY PEOPLE ARE MEAN

Mean people are greedy, proud, self-centered, hard, insensitive, and insecure.

**Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,” says the Lord**

*Romans 12.19*

**Rate yourself.**

How hard are you working on not being mean?

- I am working pretty hard on this already
- I used to be better and could work harder at this
- It's 6-8 on a 10 point scale of difficulty
- Extremely difficult or demanding



**A SKETCH OF KINDNESS**

*Hurting people hurt other people. They've been hurt, put down, demoted, passed over, convicted by their own sin which they are unwilling to stop. They may have been insulted, demeaned, criticized justly or unjustly [publicly or privately], lied to, pandered to, "enabled," overshadowed, and rarely esteemed for who they feel they are, or what they have accomplished. They may rationalize the garbage they've brought into their marriages. Things like: hopelessness, lack of goals, no sense of usefulness, no sense of importance to God, no volunteerism spirit, and a false belief that to be valuable they must be better than others and must make others look bad. And they may be lazy.*

*Joel Osteen*

One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.

- ◇ Be kind to unkind people. . . they need it the most! *Ashley Brilliant*
- ◇ Mean people are no fun. They may be funny, but you wouldn't want to spend a year on a small island with them.
- ◇ Find the guy that nobody likes and you've found an insecure guy. Be his friend. He's also the guy who doesn't like anybody. He may be all full of prickles.



**9 REASONS WHY HURTING PEOPLE HURT OTHER PEOPLE**

- They admire mean people who put others down.
- They want a little bit of fame or recognition *[the easy, bad way]*
- They grasp after sin *[by flaunting the Almighty God]*
- Money is often pretty important.
- They grew up in a mean family.
- Some watch a lot of TV sit-coms, and since prime time is one of the funniest hours of television, they absorb the sarcasm; they want to duplicate unkindness. They adopt a habit of insulting others as a normal way of life.
- They rationalize that the law for controlling their tongues has been temporarily suspended.
- The "Put Down" is a way of pulling others down to your level while hoping to pull yourself up a notch.

When you're feeling as though you're getting the short end of the stick in your marriage, make two lists [on paper]

my mate's 10 most common sins  
*[committed in last month]*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

my 20 most common sins  
*[committed in last THREE months]*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If her list is longer than yours, you are what I call a hypocrite or jerk. *Oops, in our home we had a rule, "Never call names."*

If you need help identifying your own crimes, here's some help. For your Quiet Time with God, read one or two lists each day. If you want to know how truly wicked you are, just underline any and all of these 100 bad things below which you have committed in the last year. Go ahead, don't be a chicken.

### The Terrible Twenty-one

unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice, gossip, slander, hater of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful

### Thirteen Bad Ones

evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness

### Filthy Fifteen

immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, disputing, dissension, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing,

### Nasty Nineteen

lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossip, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure, denying God's power

### 8 Don'ts & 2 Do's

no other gods, no idols, God's name in vain, keep the Sabbath, honor parents, murder, adultery, steal, lie, covet

### Eleven Christian Crimes

strife, jealousy, tempers, disputes, slander, gossip, arrogance, disturbance, impurity, immorality, sensuality

### Six [7] Things Doth the Lord Hate

haughty eyes, lying tongue, hands shed innocent blood, heart devising wicked plans, feet run to evil, false witness, spreading strife

### Romans 1.28-32

### Mark 7.21,22

### Galatians 5.19-21

### II Timothy 3.1-5

### Exodus 20.1-17

### II Corinthians 12.20,21

### Proverbs 6.16-19

*Now, thank God that He can forgive you for EVERYONE OF THEM. At this point you can begin to compare yourself to God instead of comparing yourself to your mate. Back off the blame game!*

### One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.

- ◇ My wife had a habit of finding a grumpy person in church and making her smile each week.
- ◇ "The heart is deceitful above all things." *Jeremiah 17.9*
- ◇ If our kindness quotient is pretty low, we missed one of the most important lessons our parents tried to instill in us as pre-schoolers.
- ◇ "When someone has been mean to you, why would you want to be good to him? You wouldn't. Being good is. . .much harder than being bad." *Jeanne du Prau*



## STOP!

### Decision Time: your seven-day project

*Work on one of these for a week before reading another chapter.*

- I don't have a right to speak unkindly.
- Here's my list of the 3 hardest circumstances for me to show kindness?  
a \_\_\_\_\_ b \_\_\_\_\_ c \_\_\_\_\_
- "If you step on people in this life, you're going to come back as a cockroach." *[Willie Davis]*  
The last time I was unkind to my wife was \_\_\_\_\_
- The opinions my enemies have about me often come nearer the truth than my own opinion of myself.
- There is only one way of not hating those who do us wrong, and that is by doing them good. *Henri Amiel*
- Today, I'll give a grumpy person one of my smiles. It might be the only sunshine he sees all day.
- I'll treat everyone with politeness, even those who are rude to me. Not because they are nice, but because I am learning.
- If you haven't any charity in your heart, you have the worst kind of heart trouble. *Bob Hope*
- It is said that even Hitler was kind to his nieces and nephews and they liked him during his worst years. If he could do it—you can, too.
- It's not doing something for someone else because they can't, but because you can. *-Andrew Iskander*
- Kindness is loving people more than they deserve. *Joe Joubert*
- Hugs—one size fits all.



[A verse to write out and tape to your bathroom mirror, dash, or desk.](#)

*As a man thinks in his heart, so he is.*

*Proverbs 23.7*

*Small people feel they have to protect their fragile self-esteem.*

# G. REASONS WHY SOME PEOPLE ACT KINDER THAN I DO

Kindness is always focused on someone else.

**He who is forgiven much loves much.**

“but he who is forgiven little, loves little.”

*Luke 7.47*



## Rate yourself.

How natural does Kindness come for you compared to a couple years ago?

- Pretty easily
- I used to be better and could work harder at this
- It's 6-8 on a 10 point scale of difficulty
- Extremely difficult or demanding

There is no simple explanation as to why two people respond differently to the same stimuli or same adversity. But as an individual, you and I can choose to have a good response. We are never faced with the necessity to speak sinfully. The same sun softens butter, but hardens clay. Never blame your circumstances for your bad behavior, your health, your job, your genes, or your grandma's legendary temper.



One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.

- ◇ It is generally true that those who were exposed from childhood to any consistent outlook on life tend to embrace that philosophy for their own, whether good or bad.
- ◇ Those who have suffered, who have known poverty or oppression, are generally the most prone to kindness.  
*Arthur Lynch, Moods of Life*
- ◇ “Who does not feel happier on showing kindness.”  
*Nicias Ballard Cooksey, Helps to Happiness*



## A SKETCH OF KINDNESS

*During my second year of nursing school our professor gave us a quiz. I breezed through the questions until I read the last one: “What is the first name of the woman who cleans the school?” Surely this was a joke. I had seen the cleaning woman several times, but how would I know her name? I handed in my paper, leaving the last question blank. Before class ended, one student asked if the last question would count toward our grade. “Absolutely,” the professor said. “In your careers, you will meet many people. All are significant. They deserve your attention and care, even if all you do is smile and say hello.” I've never forgotten that lesson. I also learned her name was Dorothy.*

*Joann C. Jones*

One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.

- ◇ Steffie was the thoughtful 9-year old whose grandma told her, “Never forget Steffie, everybody you meet is just a little bit lonely.”
- ◇ When I was young I used to admire intelligent people, as I grow older I admire kind people.



## FOURTEEN REASONS WHY SOME PEOPLE ACT KINDER THAN I

- They love God's smile upon their lives.
- They lived with a kind family.
- They lived in a mean and demeaning home and wanted something better for their own kids.
- They're just plain tired of arguing.
- They revel in the joy of giving.

- They have learned by experience that the joy of giving is a better harvest than the enjoyment of collecting fame, things, power, fun, experience, selfishness, and a lot of other trifles.
- OR
- They are frauds, but they love the recognition from doing all those nice things.
  - They fear hell.
  - They fear family or society's disfavor.
  - They've found that they make more money pretending to be nice.
  - Self-gratification. They like to feel good about themselves.
  - They grasp at the praise of man. They want earthly rewards for being a good Christian. They are trying to earn God's favor and eternal life by good works.
  - They revel in being better than some of their friends.
  - They get to compare themselves favorably to others who aren't quite so nice.

#### A SKETCH OF KINDNESS

*An undercover FBI agent was assigned to infiltrate a motorcycle gang known to have committed several murders. He would be imbedded for many months and perhaps more than a year. He would be away from all his friends at FBI headquarters and have minimum contact with anyone he knew including family. Part of his initiation was so vile [but not illegal] that many wannabe gang members didn't pass. His job was to collect enough evidence and then testify against the gang in court.*

*Over many months he came to know each member quite well. This became his surrogate family but he never wavered in his resolve to put these bad guys behind bars. He lived with them 24 hours a day. They were hardened criminals.*

*During this time his mother died and he asked permission from the king pin to go to his mother's funeral in his hometown far away. The gang lynchpin gave him permission and asked when he'd return. For obvious reasons none of the gang members could accompany him, but it was strange that none of his fellow agents turned up for the funeral even though they lived nearby. No FBI agent called to share in his grief. None of them even sent a card. He was alone in his sadness.*

*When he returned to the gang the king and the gang gave him long man-hugs, sat in silence, shared his pain, and even wept with him.*

*They carried him in their friendship.*



#### One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.

- ◇ Saying you're sorry doesn't mean others will forgive you. Say it, and mean it anyway, and now change your stinking behavior. *Jim Ryan, Jr*
- ◇ Commit your works to the Lord and your thoughts will be established. KJV *Proverbs 16.3*
- ◇ Slow growth and growth deferred is still a sign of progress.
- ◇ Forgiveness is not an emotion, it is a decision. *Corrie ten Boom*

How would you like to have grown up as Jesus' little brother? Well, James did just that and he learned a powerful lesson. Words can hurt—and words can heal. After his brother Jesus rose from the dead, James became the pastor of the huge Jerusalem church. A bit later many Jews fled town as persecution ramped up and his congregation began to disperse. James wrote a long letter to “the scattered believers” [*Diaspora*]. I think of the book of James as a collection of Pastor James' sermonettes; outline notes from sermons these dispersed church members had heard James preach while they were living in Jerusalem. We've all heard our pastors refer to topics they've preached in other sermons.

## STOP!

### Decision Time: your seven-day project

Don't go to the next chapter until you have marked at least one "Homework Assignment."



- I will work hard at remembering that others' feelings get hurt just as much as mine.
- I will remember to be kind.
- I will carry others' sorrows.

A verse to write out and tape to your bathroom mirror, dash, or desk.

Commit your works to the Lord and your thoughts will be established.

*Proverbs 16.3*

Decide to be kind with your words  
no matter how awful you feel.

## H. ASKING FORGIVENESS

To ask another's forgiveness forces us to our knees in front of  
the one whom we have wronged.

Our wrong is not resolved until forgiveness is granted.

**Be reconciled to your brother.**

*Matthew 12:35*

### Rate yourself.

How hard is this for you?

- I am working pretty hard on this already
- I used to be better and could work harder at this
- It's 6-8 on a 10 point scale of difficulty, whew!
- Extremely difficult or demanding, whew!



Let me make an artificial difference between giving apologies and asking forgiveness. An apology is easier. It is a subset of the biblical command to reconcile. It may simply be admission of guilt, acknowledgment of a sin, or disclosure of wrongdoing. It requires honesty. It is certainly a step toward reconciliation, but it comes short of calling one's action a sin as God sees it.

### A SKETCH OF KINDNESS

*I'd been working at a small nonprofit for about two years when I made my first apology -- truly confessing my errors.*

*Now, I'm not saying I'd never messed up before. I apologized each time. But each time, I also made excuses, finding a way to rationalize why what I'd done either wasn't really that bad, or was totally not my fault. I accepted some blame, but certainly not all of it. My pride simply wouldn't allow it. "Never ruin an apology with an excuse," Benjamin Franklin once said. As it turns out, my apologies had been ruined.*

*One day my boss suggested an improvement that could have been made to something I had done. Instead of accepting the feedback, I immediately identified it as criticism. My words after were defensive and short. Even though he was right, I was rude.*

*After the meeting, my boss told me that my behavior had seemed off, that I'd not been as respectful as usual. I was embarrassed. I wanted to "apologize" like I always had in the past. I started to think of all the ways I could justify my behavior and somehow make myself look good. I tried making a mental list, but each item seemed wrong. Each excuse wasn't true. I realized that I'd been given the opportunity to really accept my flaws and admit to my wrongdoing.*

*So I did -- I really apologized. I bought him lunch and explained my behavior, and followed up with a note asking for forgiveness.*

Ryan Blackshere

The thought of asking a mate to forgive us can strike terror into souls of some. But asking for forgiveness is a part of life.

### Forgiveness is expressed two ways in the Bible. #1. Salvation or #2. Cleansing

1st. Salvation is explained in terms of forgiveness. It results in eternal life. *[This occurs only once.]*

- \* Ephesians 1.7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace
- \* Acts 10.43 All the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins."

2nd. Confession regarding the believers' frequent sins is explained in terms of forgiveness. Confession to God cleans us up and provides the means of restoring us to fellowship with God.

- \* I John 1.9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

**Confession brings cleansing**

**Confession pleases God.**

**Confession brings complete forgiveness.**

**Confession:** *con* = with [Latin] *fateri* = declare, avow it means = “to speak the same”

To confess is: *to agree with God about the wickedness of my sin. To see it as God sees it.*

We may beg for mercy from a judge, but we need never beg for forgiveness from our Heavenly Father. It is free. It is freely given. It is automatic based upon sincere confession. In the most well-known Bible verse about forgiveness [1 John 1.9] we learn a simple truth: God is faithful and just to forgive. . .and cleanse.

Asking for forgiveness is a natural human response. It is an admission of our guilt. There are at least three examples of biblical characters asking for forgiveness from other people too late: Saul to David, Achan to Joshua, and Judas to the High Priest.

- a. We will look at God’s command to forgive in the next chapter.
- b. We must forgive whether there is a sincere apology or no apology at all!
- c. The opposite of forgiving is holding a grudge.

One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.



- ◇ Pride is at stake in asking forgiveness. That’s why it is so hard.
- ◇ Asking forgiveness from a mate goes at least one step further than sorrow, regret, or even remorse for our sin.
- ◇ “He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions.”

*Colossians 2.13*



5 steps in a godly apology—don’t miss any of them..

1. Tell God the name of the sin.
2. Tell your mate the name of your sin.
3. Say you are sorry for saying hurtful words.
4. Ask for forgiveness, and give her time to think about it if she needs it.
5. Once she has granted you forgiveness, thank her.

**There is no command in Scripture which specifically instructs us to request forgiveness when we apologize to others, but asking forgiveness seems to be intrinsic in all religions and all cultures.**

One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.



- ◇ “If your brother sins [against you] go and show him his fault in private, if he listens to you, you have won your brother.” *Matthew 18.15*
- ◇ ”Forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions.” *Mark 11.25*
- ◇ “The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now.” *1 John 2.9*
- ◇ “Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. <sup>4</sup> And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ <sup>1</sup> forgive him.” *Luke 17.3,4*
- ◇ “Her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.” *Luke 7.47*

If we confess our sins He is faithful. [*If we don’t confess—He will not forgive.*] *1 John 1.9*

It is the Christian’s bar of soap. Make sure you’ve confessed your sin to God before confessing it to your precious wife. The amount of time you spent premeditating your sin may determine the amount of time you need to spend with God talking about your wicked heart as you confess to God. If we harbor a sin, grudge, hatred, or sense of vengeance in our spirit, it is useless to pray. “If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear” *Psalms 66.18*



All of us have probably experienced “conditional forgiveness” from someone *[you’re forgiven until I revoke it !]*. Many hurting adults speak of parents who continually brought up their children’s past offenses. All the words about forgiveness had been correct, but the next time the kid messed up their parents spilled past failures out on the floor.

Giving forgiveness is not always easy. At times it feels more painful to forgive the one that inflicted the pain than to bury the wound we suffered in the grave of forgetfulness. Forgiveness is a non-negotiable command directly from God.

One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.



◇ “Whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.”

*Col 3.13*

◇ “If he takes your goods. . . .” *[by the way, this is for the 21st century as well as Jesus’ first century]* Luke 6.30

## STOP!

### Decision Time: your seven-day project

Don’t go to the next chapter until you have marked at least one “Homework Assignment.”

- When it is hard to forgive, I’ll sit down and make a list of ALL the ways, and sins God has forgiven ME.
- If you are presenting your offering and remember that your brother has something against you, leave. . .and be reconciled to your *[wife]*. *Matthew 12.35*
- I will not let sin reign in my life. Christians can choose to let it reign *Rom 6.12*
- I’ll try not to put myself in situations where I might make the same mistake again.
- I’ll tell her how I’d like to correct what I’ve done. It shows a willingness to admit I’m wrong, as well as a sincere desire to atone for a mistake.
- To try to sweeten the deal, I’ll show her that my actions are not just about relieving myself of guilt, but making her feel better, too.
- If she delays forgiveness, I’ll say, “I just hope that time can bring us closer together again. I really value your friendship.”

[A verse to write out and tape to your bathroom mirror, dash, or desk for a week.](#)

If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

*Romans 12.18*

Confession is shoveling all the filth in your life  
out onto the barn floor,  
and inviting God *[or your mate]*  
to point out to you how vile it really is.  
*anon*

# I. GIVING FORGIVENESS & WORKING TOWARD RECONCILIATION

Hard feelings are too heavy for our wings to carry.

**Be reconciled to your brother.**

*Matthew 12.35*

## Rate yourself.

How hard is this for you?

- I am working pretty hard on this already
- I used to be better and could work harder at this
- It's 6-8 on a 10 point scale of difficulty
- I come from an entire tribe of grudge-holders.



## A SKETCH OF KINDNESS

*The neighbor of a Christian was furious about the changes that were taking place in his town as a result of the teaching of God's Word. Three times he tried to light fire to the Christian's thatch roof. Twice he was thwarted, but the third time the fire significantly damaged the roof.*

*Other believers encouraged the Christian to pursue legal action and take his neighbor to court. The judge would certainly find the man guilty and perhaps rule to burn that man's house to the ground. The Christian would not press charges. He told the people in his church that he was praying for the salvation of his neighbor. He wanted to bring the man to faith in Christ and then together they both would go to the next village as evangelists. . .*

*. . .AND IT HAPPENED JUST THAT WAY!*



Receiving forgiveness involves trust in the person who is forgiving you.

When someone has wronged us, we have three primary choices:

- A. Withhold forgiveness. Refuse to erase the hurt. Rationalize our bitter feelings. Nurture ill will.
- B. Accept an apology at face value and bear no grudge. Bury the hatchet. Forgive as though the incident never occurred.
- C. Forgive without an apology from the other person. Blot the event from your mind and memory as much as possible.

Giving forgiveness is not simply curtailing malice, ceasing to operate as an antagonist, and desisting from active hostility. It also demands walking in the Spirit and being clothed with the righteous attitudes of God. Paul puts it this way, "Forgive one another AS Christ has forgiven you." [Eph 4.32] We expunge the offense from our souls. We obliterate the possibility of revenge. It may be tough, but you may find it can be learned with practice.

Sometimes forgiveness hurts, but it is necessary to attempt hard things. You and I have been forgiven by others for more things than we care to recall. In those relationships God's love has covered multitudes of sins. Feelings have healed, albeit with some scar tissue.

If we choose to forgive, we also need to take another step—reconcile with the offender.

RECONCILIATION: the step beyond forgiveness [based on Steve Cornell: TGCoalition]

- Reconciliation focuses on restoring a broken relationship.
- I forgive you, but it will take some time for you to regain my trust and heal our friendship.
- Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. <sup>18</sup> If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. "BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD." *Romans 12.17-21*
- Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. *Matt 7.16*

- 6 Signs of Genuine Repentance
  - a. feels responsibility for personal sin
  - b. welcomes accountability
  - c. stops hurtful behavior
  - d. rescinds defensive attitude
  - e. doesn't resent doubts about the need to demonstrate sincerity
  - f. makes restitution when necessary

#### THERE ARE AT LEAST 7 RESULTS IF WE DO NOT FORGIVE

1. There are serious and dire consequences of sins. We all live with the results of our own as well as others' sins.
2. God stops listening to our prayers. “. . .even his prayer is an abomination.” *Prov 28.9*
3. “. . .for this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep [*metaphor for death*].” *1 Cor 11.30*
4. You may regret some sin every day of your life and tell God daily how sorry you are, but the very first time you remorsefully confess a sin, **that prayer brought forgiveness** for the first time.
5. Mere acknowledgement is not complete confession. Agreeing with God about your wickedness is confession. Saul, Pharaoh, and Achan acknowledged. . .too late. . .and received full punishment.
6. For Christians, a lack of confession puts a barrier between us and God. It doesn't negate our salvation, but it absolutely destroys fellowship. “If I regard iniquity in my heart, THE LORD WILL NOT HEAR ME.” *Ps 66.18*
7. “If you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.” *Matt 6.14,15*

#### GENUINE FORGIVENESS NEVER REQUIRES ANOTHER CONFESSION

*This is especially comforting if you struggle wondering whether you must keep on confessing a past sin, or whether you were “sincere enough.”*

- Your forgiveness to others must be a genuine, and deep, and sincere as God's.
- We are cleaned up every day as we regularly [*and quickly*] confess our sins.
- Once a sin has been set at the feet of Jesus it is no longer on our rap sheet. It is wiped away.
- Confession involves such a complete rejection of our sin that it almost involves a vow never to commit that sin again.
- God knows our hearts. He is more willing to forgive than we are to be forgiven.
- Repeated offenses do require additional confession when they occur.

#### One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.



- ◇ If you. . .remember that your brother [*wife*] has something against you, . . .go, first be reconciled to your brother. *Matt 5.23,24*
- ◇ The Lord's prayer *Luke 11.4*
- ◇ Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong. *Gandhi*
- ◇ Life's most persistent and urgent question is, “What are you doing for others?” *MLK jr*
- ◇ Move on. Forgive. Be healthy and happy.

#### RECONCILIATION

OK! The next facet may be the hardest. Reconciliation. Healing the wound that was made. We might be able easily to forgive and forget about the thief who drove our car into the ditch and perished in the flames, but it may be harder to forgive the scumbag who raped our sister, or daughter, or mom. Especially when he seems to have no remorse. And, yes, forgiveness has been granted thousands of times by people just like you and me [*saved & unsaved*].

- 9 Tips for Reconciliation, especially with your mate
  1. don't lord it over the offender
  2. pray for the one who hurt you
  3. admit your part in the conflict [*in writing*]
  4. no manipulation
  5. explain why you are hesitant about reconciling
  6. be clear about guidelines: financial accountability? holding down a job? seeking treatment for substance abuse?
  7. be careful about anger
  8. be wary of Satan's attempts to thwart the process
  9. allow the offender to grow slowly. Setbacks are part of growth.

For married men, the devastation from an unfaithful wife seems to be the hardest single deed to forgive. They find it hard to forgive because they can't believe even a sincere apology. It is because our own hearts are not willing to forgive. But God does not listen to our prayers if we have a grudge on our hearts.

*"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."*

*Psalm 66:18*

*"If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination."*

*Proverbs 28:9*

*"[When praying] forgive if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions."*

*Mark 11:25*

Someone said that one of God's greatest gifts to humans was the ability to forget. We all know that we cannot always eradicate loved one's misdeeds from our memories with the same ease we forget a nasty comment from an angry passenger at the bus stop. But recalling the memory of a slanderous statement from a wife must not re-ignite a bitter spirit. If it does, confess the bitter spirit right there on the spot and ask God to give you victory over malicious thoughts.

#### GOD'S FORGIVENESS

*After a college girl finished explaining to a Hell's Angel motorcyclist why Jesus died on the Cross, this huge man took her by the elbow, looked deep into her eyes, and growled, "That means Jesus died for me too, doesn't it?"*

*Yes, Jesus died for bad people—not good people! The biker trusted Jesus as his Savior.*

#### One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.



- ◇ "The willingness to forgive is a sign of spiritual and emotional maturity." *Gordon Hinckley*
- ◇ "Forgiveness is a gift you give yourself." *Suzanne Somers*
- ◇ "Forgiveness is the fragrance that the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it. *Mark Twain*
- ◇ "Forgiveness. . .relieving oneself of the burden of being a victim. *C R Strahan*
- ◇ [*After I forgave*] pain packed up its things and slipped away in the night. *Khaled Hosseini [paraphrased]*

## STOP!

### **Decision Time: your seven-day project** **Don't read any more for at least a week,** **until you've processed this chapter well.**

Don't go to the next chapter until you have marked at least one "Homework Assignment."

- If she demands proof before she'll forgive me, I'll thank her for the opportunity and set about to earn her forgiveness.
- I'm picking one of the 9 Tips for Reconciliation: \_\_\_\_\_
- Once a woman has forgiven her man, she must not reheat his sins for breakfast. *Marlene Dietrich*
- Never attribute to malice what can be adequately explained by stupidity. *Nick Diamos*
- I'll grant her forgiveness freely [*and fully*], but won't demand that she forgives me freely *or even partially*.
- I won't bring up her past failures.
- They stayed together not because they forgot, but because they forgave. *based on Demi Moore*

[A verse to write out and tape to your bathroom mirror, dash, or desk for a week.](#)

**Freely you have received. Freely give.**

*Matthew 10:8*

*Forgiveness is an act of the will*

*Corrie ten Boom*

# J. KINDNESS IS A DECISION

Don't be yourself—be someone a little nicer.

Mignon McLaughlin

**Be good to those who are nasty to you.**

*Matthew 5.44 [paraphrased]*



## Rate yourself.

How hard is it to control your feelings and engage your brain?

- I am working pretty hard on this already
- I used to be better and could work harder at this
- It's 6-8 on a 10 point scale of difficulty
- I usually let my feelings dictate my behavior, instead of my brain.

“Beginning today, decide to treat everyone you meet as if he were going to be dead by midnight. Extend to them all the care and kindness and understanding you can muster, and do it with no thought of any reward.” *Og Mandino*

Spontaneous acts of kindness are great but they just don't happen often enough. Being prepared with a verbal response allows us to be proactive when we inadvertently get our hackles up. We can use our planned responses instead of saying the first nasty thing that creeps into our heads.

## PROGRESS TOWARD KINDNESS

*I'm a pretty strong believer in New Year's Resolutions, because they have helped me make some significant strides in areas I had neglected. I've tackled some tough ones that needed tweaking: promptness in returning students' papers, putting stuff away, not interrupting my wife, listening more carefully, not complaining, asking for others' opinions, and 328 more [one each year].*



*At the end of the year I give myself a final exam. Although it is often encouraging to realize how much progress I have made, it is even more humiliating to see how much work I had to invest—which means I must have been really bad to start with.*

*Some of my negative traits have appeared a couple years in a row, and some have recurred on the docket for longer than I want to admit to you. The two which have most consistently been on my list of resolutions are Patience & Kindness.*

*By perseverance, even the meanest of us can make progress. I'm proof, but there's still more progress to be made.*

pjm

## One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.

- ◇ Hastily spoken words to your wife can roll around in her head for a long time after you decided you ought to take them back.
- ◇ “Be kinder than necessary, for everyone you meet is fighting some kind of battle.”  
*T H Thompson & John Watson*  
*Matthew 5.41*
- ◇ Go the second mile.
- ◇ Real generosity is doing something nice for someone who will never find out. *Frank A. Clark*



## A SKETCH OF KINDNESS

*The nurses on the floor knew that a certain doctor kept swiping the strongest nippers from their supply cabinet. They would disappear for a while and surreptitiously reappear days later, sometimes in unusable condition.*

He was a young doctor and very kind. He had several elderly patients at a facility across the street from the hospital and he would take his lunch hour over there occasionally.

Old people's toenails become so thick sometimes that the elderly can't clip them by themselves anymore. But the young doctor found that those little nippers he borrowed would work the best and he spent his entire lunch hour going from bed to bed cutting toenails at the hospice.



#### A SKETCH OF KINDNESS

A Chinese river bandit came to faith in Christ. He had been a gambler, thief, and a drunkard. His heart was changed and he had a passion to see his wife come to Christ also. He stopped cursing, beating his wife, and mistreating her.

She began to beat him, she swore, and became as disagreeable as she could be. But her husband [a baby Christian] made no attempt to get even. She wouldn't cook, do the wash, or do anything around the house.

He went to the missionary and said, "There is nothing else I can do." His friend told him, "Tie her up with the strongest rope in the world. The only rope that will hold her is the love of Christ."

He bought her an expensive meal and cloth for a new dress. He cooked dinner for her and washed the dishes. She remained resolved to show disdain. He learned not to make excuses for his bad behavior. He learned to love, forgive, esteem her, and appreciate all the good years they had had together.

...I don't know whether she ever came to faith in the savior.

#### One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.



- ◇ Everyone has done kind deeds from the heart and been rebuffed for them. Persistence is needed.
- ◇ Kindness in marriage is not the only thing, but it is the main thing.
- ◇ Some of the kindest people we know had to pursue kindness fiercely with many failures.

#### CAN YOU THINK OF 30 SWEET THINGS TO SAY THIS MONTH?

Pick a couple of these ways to compliment your wife, and add some more.

- She tries to make me happy.
- She tries to make me the center of her life.
- She tries not to bother me when I'm busy.
- She tells me what disappoints her.
- She's patient about. . . .
- She doesn't nag me about some things my friend's wife does.
- She doesn't infringe on my "intense" activities.
- She complains less than I do.
- She tells me what she expects.
- She reads the Word.
- She is aware of her bad attitudes.
- She complimented me in front of someone else recently.
- She kisses me when I'm sweaty.
- She stopped just to listen even though she was busy.
- and on, and on, and on. . . .



#### One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.

- ◇ It is more important for me to be gentle than to get my way.
- ◇ "Making you look good makes me look good." Kay Myers
- ◇ There will hardly be a day in your life when you can't do something nice for someone else. anon
- ◇ "Treat others the same way you want them to treat you." Luke 6.31 The Golden rule
- ◇ "Love your enemies. . .for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men." Luke 6.35 The Platinum rule
- ◇ What does she think demonstrates kindness, but it is really no big deal?
- ◇ Being nice is not a fire as often as it is an ember. anon
- ◇ If it's hard to be kind, at least you know there is still a desire in your heart.





- ◇ Your soul hasn't turned to stone. Keep at it.
- ◇ "Decide to do little nameless, unremembered Acts of Kindness and Love." *anon*
- ◇ Don't wait to be asked to help
- ◇ I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do something I can do. *Edward Everett Hale*
- ◇ You can't live a perfect day without doing something for someone who will never be able to repay you. *Coach John Wooden*
- ◇ A happy marriage is the union of two good forgivers. *Robert Quillen*
- ◇ Question: "What do couples fight about most?"  
Answer: "Nothing." *Dr. John Gottman, Secrets of the Love Lab*
- ◇ You may never feel you receive the kind of respect you deserve. You may be compared to an unimpeachable ideal. Don't use acting "nice" as a means to a selfish end.
- ◇ Trying to get preferential treatment is deceptive, shallow, and cruel. Real kindness seeks no return. *Tiruvalluvar*
- ◇ Don't invent a behavior in order to change your mate.

#### SEVEN WAYS I [*Phil*] HAVE IRRITATED MY WIFE

1. I want to be right. Being wrong hurts my pride.
2. I want you to be wrong. It makes me feel better.
3. Unkindness to you no longer hurts my heart. It used to.
4. It is more important for me to get my way than to be gentle to you.
5. Somehow I've convinced myself that if I'm right more often than you, I'm better than you.
6. Retaliation feels so good.
7. Making you look bad make me look good. If I compare myself to you when you're right, I really look bad. I'd rather compare myself to you after I've made you look stupid, sorry. Nothing personal. It's all about how I want myself to feel.

Of course, not all people value kindness in the same way. The dear little old lady who provides cookies and milk may be considered kind by the kids on a soccer team; however, an executive secretary in a busy office would show kindness to other workers in an entirely different way. The boss wants that gentle spirit expressed in a way that makes the workplace run smoothly and makes company sales to go up.

*Think of a habit you developed intentionally. Choose it from one of these five areas: sports, hobby, health, business, or routines. It could be complex or simple—putting your keys in your left front pocket, erase pencil lines completely, put away tools as soon as possible after completing a task, exercise before breakfast, close doors & cabinets, file things promptly, or assuming the other person is telling the truth.*

*Attack kindness like you attack crabgrass and it will also become a habit.*

*For many of us kindness is a skill which we have had to develop consciously. Others may have assimilated kindness by osmosis simply by watching kind parents speaking kindly. But you may find yourself taking baby steps in kindness, while all around you friends are miles ahead. It's time to grow up.*

#### One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.



- ◇ Cultivate a regular habit of giving more than you get.
- ◇ Decide to do little nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and love.
- ◇ "People shouldn't have to earn kindness." *Maggie Stiefvater, Forever*
- ◇ We all know a couple thoughtful people. They are usually good listeners, and they don't hold any grudges.
- ◇ "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer." *Psalms 19.14*
- ◇ "Keep doing good deeds long enough, and you'll probably turn out [to be] a good man in spite of yourself." *Louis Auchincloss*

### A SKETCH OF KINDNESS

*Our daughter, Anna, had a job cleaning rooms in a motel. One day she asked a customer, "Is there anything I can do for you?" The lady said, "No thank you," but later caught my daughter in the hallway and said, "I'm coming back to your motel sometime because I met you."*

#### One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.



- ◇ Kindness can become its own motive. We are made kind by being kind. *Eric Hoffer*
- ◇ You cannot do a kindness too soon, for you never know how soon it will be too late. *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

We don't get good at our jobs by chance. We don't just get lucky and get a promotion—we earn it. We don't make a sale, or golf in the low 70s, or bag a buck by sheer good fortune. My friend didn't fire 22 rounds of ammo using 4 different wild west guns in 17 seconds with no misses without lots and lots of practice. Neither will kindness become second nature to you without concerted effort. If you're waiting until you feel kind—you'll probably never become very kind.

### A SKETCH OF KINDNESS

*Steffie was the most thoughtful child everybody knew. Those who watched her realized that she had learned some extremely important lessons in her nine years of life. She was kind, helpful, gentle, and considerate of other kids' feelings. An adult once asked Steffie how she knew how to be so kind. She said, "My grandmother took me aside one day and said, 'Steffie, I want you always to remember this. Everybody is a little bit lonely. Be a good friend to everybody.'"*

### A LESSON I LEARNED ABOUT PERSISTENCE

*I had the privilege of competing in the state wrestling championships in college. A strange thing happened each November when the season began. I trained under six different head coaches with different wrestling styles and in three school, but every coach knew the same routine: push-ups sit-ups, run around the track, calisthenics, stretching, then drill, drill, drill. If you wanted to be a good wrestler you had to do thousands of push-ups and sit-ups, and you had to run around that big oval behind the school a lot of times. There are different Basics [capital B] in any endeavor of life. In wrestling it is flexibility, balance, and a great deal of muscle. Once I calculated the number of push-ups and sit-ups I had probably pounded out. It was staggering.*

*In marriage, one of the Basics is common kindness. Nobody gets a wonderful love life without dedicating himself to practicing being nice for years [and years, and years]. I have to ask myself if I am willing to be as diligent in speaking kindly as I was in doing those thousands of push-ups.*



## STOP!

### Decision Time: your seven-day project

Don't go to the next chapter until you have marked at least one "Homework Assignment."

- I'll make a list of all the nicest things my mate ever did.
- I'll spend an hour in prayer thanking the Lord for past blessings even if it is hard to praise Him in my present situation.
- I'll plan some kind words, as well as things I won't say
- Let today be the day. . . You look for the good in everyone you meet and respect their journey.  
*Steve Maraboli, The Life, the Truth, and Being Free*
- I'll read this speech to her. "I want to change. I'd like you to be patient with me. I won't abuse your patience."
- I'll stop keeping score. I have no right to be inconsiderate no matter what she's done.
- I'll choose one of my most annoying flaws and, by God's grace *[and an enormous amount of human effort]* RESOLVE that in the next 2 weeks it will get a lot of my attention.
- Never retort.
- I'll look for opportunities to offer praise and appreciation.
- I'll take 10 minutes right now to think of some things to say that makes her feel important.
- I'll write 2 things I do that I'm pretty sure hurt or bother her feelings.
- I'll do a little bit "extra" ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) without feeling like a martyr.
- I'll find pleasure in making things run smoothly, by SHUTTING MY MOUTH!
- I'll pick one thing I know my mate would like me to do *[or say]* with greater *[or less]* frequency: backrubs, turn off TV, breakfast-in-bed, stop interrupting, putting things away, discretionary money, speak more quietly, turning off the pride, listen, *[I've underlined at least one.]*
- I've determined to eliminate one annoying habit this month. \_\_\_\_\_

[A verse to write out and tape to your bathroom mirror, dash, or desk.](#)

Love is kind.

*If you're not kind, I think you don't love her enough.*

*1 Corinthians 13.4*

There is no gene for nastiness.  
No, you didn't get it from Grandma.  
It is your own choice.

# K. STOPPING AN ARGUMENT COLD: THE ART OF DEFERRING

Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle.

*Plato, 400 BC, Greece*

**In honor preferring [esteeming] one another.**

*Rom 12.10*



## Rate yourself.

How hard is it for you to put her feelings before yours?

- I am working pretty hard on this already
- I used to be better and could work harder at this
- It's 6-8 on a 10 point scale of difficulty
- My parents and even my grandparents were pretty selfish, too.

## A SKETCH OF KINDNESS

*My friend, Brenda, was dating a fellow at the University of Miami. They were planning to go out for dinner at 7 pm, but he called to say he had to study for a big exam. Could they make it another night? "Okay."*

*Shortly after 7 she went down to the lobby to get a snack. There was her "date" going out the door with another girl from her dorm. No mistake! He was wearing a sweater she had given him. He wore his favorite jeans and slouch hat. They got into his car and drove off.*

*She asked me what she should do. I had no clue.  
"Are you positive?" I asked.  
"Absolutely!"*

*Well, it wasn't Steve.  
She didn't attack.  
Somewhere there is a Steve-look-alike on campus.  
She made an honest mistake and admitted it to him.*

*Learn to give everyone the benefit of the doubt.*

To err is human. To defer is divine.

*St Vincent de Paul*

Make it a practice to judge persons and things in the most favorable light. Perfect love has perfect forgetfulness about the right things. Stop reminding each other about which part of their last sentence was partially wrong. You know, it doesn't actually matter. If the correction doesn't have substantive content. Let it go.

When the guy in front of you drives like a jerk, remember, he might just be one of the thousands of drivers with a brand new license on the road for the first day *[or a guy who just got fired, or divorced, or whose girlfriend dumped him, or who just won the lottery]*. Everyone who annoys you in traffic is probably committing a driving blunder you and I have probably committed yourself sometime.

One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.

- ◇ Our family and friends don't mean to insult or offend us most of the time.
- ◇ Thin-skinned people aren't much fun to be around. No one likes to feel as though he's walking on egg shells around a mate.
- ◇ . . .esteem other better than themselves.
- ◇ give cups of cold water to those in need

*Phil 2.3*

*Matt 10.42*

Need a break in the tension? Here are 4 "PAUSE-CREATING" statements.



- ❑ “We’re getting off track. You started talking about [blah, blah, blah]. . .sorry I interrupted you.”
- ❑ “Actually what is bothering me is. . . .”
- ❑ “To be honest, I’m actually upset about. . . .”
- ❑ “Thanks. I think you’ve turned the spotlight on my problem. I have to go think about that point.”

During an argument, speak in a normal tone of voice. Look each other in the eyes. Stay on topic. Don’t attack. Expect to be held accountable for every word you speak. Remember Jesus is in the next room taking notes. Exhale deeply when you’re through.

### One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.

- ◇ “By swallowing evil words unsaid, no one has ever harmed his stomach.” *Winston Churchill*
- ◇ “Kindness is the velvet of social interaction.” *James Gordon*
- ◇ “Be patient with everyone. . . seek what is good for all people.” *I Thes 5.14,15*
- ◇ Are you man enough to simply walk away when you have so much verbal ammunition already loaded?
- ◇ “What I cannot love, I overlook.” *Anais Nin*



### SKETCH OF UNKINDNESS

*At one point in my life I was exceedingly conscious of using my time wisely, so I butted in front of others who probably weren’t using their minutes to glorify God.*

*I also:*

*made sure I got the last piece of cake if the hostess was running low  
sat on the cleanest chair on the outdoor patio  
got the best view at the parade [even if I blocked others’ view]  
sneaked into the event ahead of others  
ate more than my share of the chocolate chip cookies  
held the door open for fewer people than anyone else  
talked more than I listened  
tried to top other people’s stories*

*pjm*

- ◇ “They do not waste their energies in considering the good of others.” *Ouida*
- ◇ “Think of ways you ended arguments amicably. Build on your success.”
- ◇ We can object to their sins, but we defer to their preferences.
- ◇ Selfishness is not living as one wishes. It is asking others to live as one wishes them to live. *Oscar Wilde [paraphrase]*
- ◇ “In case of dissension, never dare to judge till you’ve heard the other side.”
- ◇ *Euripides [400 BC] as well as Solomon, Proverbs 18.17 [BC 900]*
- ◇ “The most important trip you may take in life is meeting people halfway.” *Henry Boye*
- ◇ “A mistake made by many people with great conviction is that they will let nothing stand in the way of their views, not even kindness.” *Bryant McGill*
- ◇ “Decide right now that you won’t allow her most annoying habit keep you from addressing the point under consideration.”
- ◇ **Home is where each lives for the other and all live for God.** *a plaque on our living room wall*



### 10 Rules to Stop an Argument Right in the Middle.

**Make 10 cards.** Put them in a bowl. Write the following on them. When you’re in the middle of an unkind argument pick one of these up at random and do what it says.

1. “Let me go write down what’s bothering me.”
2. “You’re right and I’m pigheaded.”
3. “I never thought of it that way before.”
4. “I have to go to the bathroom.”
5. “I’m sorry. I handed you the match and you lit my fuse.”



6. "I shouldn't have said it with that attitude [*or men tone of voice*]."
7. "Let's finish this in 45 minutes. I'm going to take a walk [*after we wash the dishes together*]."
8. "Tell me again what you just said. I was so mad, I was distracted."
9. "I'm too upset to give you a fair hearing. I don't think I'm really listening to your point."
10. "I just need to stop talking. I'll listen, but don't ask me to respond. I think it will help me to hear better."

### FIGHTING FAIR

Make up your own rules about these 4 items for fighting fair in an argument:

- A. volume
- B. name calling
- C. bringing up past mistakes
- D. time limit

Identify the thing that irritates you most about your mate's arguing techniques:

- pettiness
- volume
- timing
- tone
- sarcasm
- intent to hurt, belittle, or intimidate
- going straight to the jugular without giving you warning that she has her talons out already
- delaying until crisis time.

Determine ahead of time how to depressurize. Maybe: each one concludes the "tension-filled discussion" with a statement of what he/she thinks the other one said. "Tell me what you think I said." No rebuttals afterwards. You each walk away from the discussion remembering what the other person thought was important to you.

## **STOP!**

### **Decision Time: your seven-day project**

Whoops! Don't skip this part.

- I'll ask her for a list of three things that would make me a kinder person.
- I will break the habit of seeing the worst in my mate. . .starting today!
- I'll give her a break. Give her the benefit if there is a doubt.
- I will start to see everything in the most favorable light. I'll stop being suspicious.

[A verse to write out and tape to your bathroom mirror, dash, or desk.](#)

**Abandon a quarrel before it breaks out.**

*PROV 17.14*

If you treat people right, they will treat you right. . .  
ninety percent of the time.

FDR

# L. MARRIED COUPLES DON'T GIVE EACH OTHER ORDERS

When you're in charge, you're the biggest loser in town.

my pastor, Tom Koch

**...not to think more highly of [yourself] than [you] ought to think.**

*Rom 12.3*

## Rate yourself.

How hard is it not to be bossy on insignificant stuff?

- I am working pretty hard on this already
- I used to be better and could work harder at this
- It's 6-8 on a 10 point scale of difficulty
- You know, I've had friends tell me I'm a tiny bit of a control freak.



**When we became a couple we forfeited the right to give commands to each other.  
We have to learn to ask, or suggest.**

You may have heard a friend bark things like this to his wife. You may do it yourself.

- “Close the door!”
- “Go take care of those kids!”
- “Bring me the . . . !”
- “Give me the remote!”
- “Don't bother me! Can't you see I'm busy?”
- “Get in the car!”
- “Park there!”
- “Call your sister!”

We must never say these in a bossy way. These are commands of a czar, not a spouse. “Please” and “Thank You” are such nice words. Look at each of the above imperatives and change it to a nice statement or request.

So, start to resist the habit of telling her which light she must turn off, or where the furniture should go, or how to arrange her desk, or where her things should be placed, or where to sit, ad infinitum. You may even wonder how you got to be such a control freak.

On the other hand, the truly selfish and domineering are almost always completely unaware that they never consider how often they dominate the decision making process. They haven't a clue that they are constantly running over others feelings. They simply think it's their responsibility to tell their mates, “Put on your turn signal.” “Bring in the mail.” “You need to put more salt in this.” “That's not the way to it.” Blah, blah, blah.

Now, if you are seriously guilty of this, you are also blind. You don't know it. You probably have no idea that you sound this way. Go ask your wife and kids. I dare you.

Especially if you are positive you never come across this way—you are probably doubly guilty. To prove you don't tilt toward control freaking, ask them. Are you up to it? And will you believe the answer you get?

Your wife must have the liberty to tell you how she sees it [*with no repercussions, and no sulky-wulky attitudes from you*], and you have to believe it. If your defense mechanism is kicking in hard right now, it is almost a sure bet that you're guilty. The less defensive you are, the better. By the way, you must also give her the freedom to make an unkind [*or unreasonable*] demand immediately after you make any unreasonable demand.

Many times there are 6 correct ways to get from point A to point B. You choose option #1. She picks option #4. They're all good. Some are faster, others are safer, others are cheaper. The control-freak [*maybe you*] thinks that his

way is not only obviously the best, but he also feels that others should do it his way. If you need proof of how controlling I can be, ask my wife—don't ask me.

If this chapter was intentionally one of the last you chose, I can almost guarantee you that you're the kind of guy who gives far more orders to his wife than you think you do. If you can't bring yourself to follow all the instructions [above] you'll never know if I'm right. *[And I'm sure I'm right.]*

If this chapter was one of your first choices, maybe it was because you thought your wife was the control freak.

Somehow, we can't exactly explain it, the two of us became a couple *[one unit]* when we got married. God says so. Now we have to learn to live with that relationship. Although God gives certain authority to the husbands as head of the home; he is not a dictator or head-of-state. In a partnership spouses ask each other to do things, give their opinions, make requests, say "please" as well as "thank you."

Eph 5.22-24,33 I Cor 11.3 I Tim 2.11-15 Gen 2.18

### One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.



- ◇ Brother, this is a moment where you could really blow it. Put on your gentle gloves.
- ◇ You vowed "for better or for worse" publicly in front of all those people who showed up. You may never break that vow even if you get written permission from all those who attended the ceremony.
- ◇ Use the word, "NO" sparingly.

### A SKETCH OF KINDNESS

*Somewhere along the way I was encouraged to start a new habit. So whenever someone asks me "May I ask you a favor?" Before I even find out what he wants I blurt out, "The answer is 'Yes!'" Of course, it catches them off guard, but it has brought a lot of happiness to me as well, and I've had many opportunities to do something nice for others.*

You'd have to ask my wife whether I'm as good at it at home as I think I am with my friends.

You know you have a pretty healthy marriage when

- ◇ both pray for each other
- ◇ both could make a long list of each others' strong points
- ◇ both brag publicly *[occasionally]* about something each other have done
- ◇ both try to say, "I'm sorry" first when there's been a wrinkle or disagreement

If you're skipping a lot of the Decision Time boxes, it's okay. You're being honest, but afraid you'll fail. I'm glad you're still reading this KINDNESS PROJECT. That's good. You might have to read it twice this year before you're willing to make some of the changes you feel you need to make.

The Crabbiness Factor in your marriage may not have reached a critical mass yet, but everyone of us can spend time adding luster to our love. My wife has edited this whole project for me and agrees that there's room in my life for added attention.

### A LIFE SKETCH FROM OUR BASEMENT

*I was in the cellar and I couldn't get something apart. I hollered, growled, and made a lot of noise in the shop. Kay heard me making all that racket she chided me for my anger. Well, I may have been angry, but I don't think it was the kind of anger I had to confess to God. I was just exerting an awful lot of physical energy and grunting.*

*Kay knows that if she were making that kind of noise *[and I don't think she ever does]*, she would be sinfully angry. *[She never grunts or growls.]* She would have passed over the imaginary line of what she considers acceptable to her Lord. However, in this case she imposed and misapplied her own morality gauge on me. But my reaction wasn't right either. I felt she was being judgmental. I told her I wasn't angry. Well, I was mad, but this thing wouldn't come apart. As I said, it wasn't the kind of anger which I felt it was a sin against God. I guess I should just have said, "Thanks, Honey" and not growl anymore. After all, I am*

aware that I may be pretty close to my own boundary.

As a matter of fact, I did reach that level of frustration while working on the computer another day, the noise which I made was only a mild, "Hmmpf." She didn't chide me for that, but I confessed it, to my Heavenly Father. It was a sinful, "Hmmpf."

## STOP!

### Decision Time: your seven-day project

Don't go to the next chapter until you have marked at least one "Homework Assignment."

- Honey, I'm playing catch-up. I've acted like a spoiled brat.
- I'm going to ask her what constraints I put on her? She'll answer you only if she's brave. She may have learned to acquiesce to my demands long ago.
- I'm going to say something like, "I've been thinking, I'm a pretty demanding person. I've probably brought my business practices right into our marriage, haven't I? Would you be gentle with me and tell me where you think I may have overstepped my bounds and laid down rules I shouldn't have? I'm working on trying to be better in a lot of areas right now. It might take me a little time to lighten up, but I'll try if you'll help me."  
[Maybe I'll even read this aloud to her.]
- I'll encourage her to keep a list of her "demands" for a month. I'll have to read it back to her and not defend or explain myself one time. Then I'll sign it.  
*If you're dead serious about this you'll take a friend out to breakfast and then read it to him and get him to sign it and promise to pray for you every day for a month. At the end of a month have breakfast again.*

A verse to write out and tape to your bathroom mirror, dash, or desk.

*Sometimes we need to beseech, ask, or beg.*

# M. NO EXCUSES

May no one say, "He could have been kinder."

**Love does no wrong to a neighbor.**

*Romans 13.10*



## Rate yourself.

How hard is this for you?

- I am working pretty hard on this already
- I used to be better and could work harder at this
- It's 6-8 on a 10 point scale of difficulty
- I've been told *[and not very nicely, I might say]* that I'm always rationalizing or making excuses for my behavior.

He could have lived a good life. He could have made life sweeter for those around him. He could have gone out of his way to think of others first. He could have left less hurt feelings in his wake.

But, but, but. . .she was wrong, too!

Stop right now! If I understand what you're trying to say, it is this. Since she is wrong, she is sinful. Then it is acceptable for you to do something wrong, too. You get to set your standard at the lowest point of her behavior. At her worst deed of kindness. Admit it. Sorry, you've missed the whole point of this kindness thing.

COMMON EXCUSES You use them. I use them, too.

Are you willing to check **3** of your most common excuses?

*I'm not going to tell you mine, but I had to put checks beside five of them.*

- I forgot.
- I thought you understood.
- I thought you would understand.
- It was easier my way.
- Well, you've done it too, sometimes.
- You didn't actually say you didn't want me to do it that way.
- You started it!
- You think your way is the only right way.
- You're not the rule maker in my life.
- Who cares?
- You went first last time.
- I couldn't help myself. Sorry I ate all the chocolate chip cookies. *[I sometimes exempt myself from guilt for this item since my wife just barely tips the scale at 105 lbs, and since I am much larger than she, I feel entitled to more.]*
- I know finances are tight, but it wasn't that expensive.
- I almost forgot.
- You're so picky.
- Can't you ignore it once in a while?
- Nobody's perfect.
- \_\_\_\_\_ *You get to add one more.*

These are these the same excuses you gave your parents, right?

One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.

- ◇ Can we forgive others even if they do not accept our forgiveness? Yes.
- ◇ We project onto others our own unkind attitudes and assume that our vitriolic juices also reside in the hearts of others.
- ◇ [Learning to be] considerate of others will take your children further in life than any college degree.

*Marian Wright Edelman*





Do you remember that little guilt producing adage: “God sees everything you do.” Many people grow up with the idea that God has a spyglass trained on them waiting to catch them doing something wrong. If He has a spyglass at all, I’m absolutely sure that He just goes wild every time He sees one of His children doing something nice. I personally think the label on His spyglass is “The Kindness Catcher.”

Explaining vs excusing oneself for doing wrong. STOP IT! STOP IT!

It may take a spoonful of **Predetermined Dedication** to address future uncomfortable moments. I try to decide before the event occurs what I will do when my wife says something or does something which annoys me. I think about the hurtful things I’ve said in the past, or the words I’ve spoken and later wished I could erase. I try to dedicate my actions **before I am called on to act spontaneously**.

## 6 WAYS TO CAMOUFLAGE UNKINDNESS

I’ve observed these SIX patented insignias for half-hiding unkindness:

- #1 a special hurtful tone
- #2 a short delay before a curt answer *[to an obviously dumb question]*
- #3 a half-hearted effort to please
- #4 a less-than-hearty compliment
- #5 a “sort of” promise to try to do better.
- #6 a carefully chosen barb - “Gorto”

DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES PROBABLY LEAN TOWARD DIFFERENT STYLES. We all have a propensity to hurt others. Try to spot your tactics below.

### CAMOUFLAGE #1 A SPECIAL HURTFUL TONE

I don’t know whether being easily offended is a personality trait which is embedded in some people’s DNA, but I have a friend who seems to expect me to say something intentionally unkind. Actually, since I know this is his tendency, I try to steer clear of statements which may be obtusely construed as hurtful. To be honest, when I perceive this in others, I mostly attribute this trait to immaturity, or self-pitying pride, or sometimes to intentional unkindness on their part. But I’m not even sure this is a kind response on my part. My own tendency is to respond in a tone that is less than God-honoring, and it is certainly not friend-honoring.

You know my routine. My Irritation Gauge rises incrementally. My voice carries a little edge. I feel my mother’s presence and remember her words, “Philip, it’s not the words you say, it’s how you say them.” Sadly, both my wife and kids have echoed similar proverbs to me. This is clearly a target area for improvement.

Hurtful tones come in several flavors.

- “I don’t want to listen to this, again.”
- “I think that sounds stupid.”
- “Oh, you mean I’m the one who’s the bad guy?”
- “I’m annoyed with you.”
- “I’m right no matter what anybody says.”
- “I’m having a bad day. Leave me alone.”

### CAMOUFLAGE #2 A SHORT DELAY before a curt answer *[served in six flavors]*

A. Humiliation This one is hard to define, but if you’re guilty of it I’m sure you know it all too well. It is a tactical delay. I can think of several modes it comes in. I’ve seen it used effectively *[on TV]* by a guy who pauses long enough to fixate eye contact with his adversary while he frames a withering but quiet retort in such a way to humiliate.

B. Haughtiness There is the haughty delay which is delivered so smoothly it seems to allow no contest. The words have no substance at all, but the effect is in the confidence of the speaker. Vice president candidate Dan Quayle had compared himself to Kennedy during a debate with Lloyd Bentsen. Senator Bentsen scoffed in a way designed to shame Quayle, “Senator *[pause]*, you’re no Jack Kennedy.” Many political pundits consider this to be the ultimate public put down in our generation.

C. Pomposity There is the “pause-while-I-look-around-the-room-and-back-to-you” as though what I see is sufficient evidence to verify my position.

D. Embarrassment Then we have the hesitation while we choose just the right word to describe our adversary’s greatest flaw. It casts aspersions on an obviously dumb question, or statement, or opinion.

E. Scalding Sometimes a slight halting to create a sense that this will be the *[meanest]* putdown. Touché.

F. Disgust And finally, the delay to show disgust, or pity, or disappointment.

Those kinds of “delays” are all unkind. Which ones have I ever used? *[M-m-m-m. . .Well, let’s move along.]*

### CAMOUFLAGE #3 A HALF-HEARTED EFFORT TO PLEASE

There are moments in a marriage when we want the other person to feel as though we are willing to make a concession, admit we are wrong, and back down. We don’t really want to inconvenience ourselves, but we know that kindness is often appreciated and so we want to act kind –even if we don’t feel kind. We may be hypocrites trying to look sincere. Hypocrisy is unkind.

### CAMOUFLAGE #4 A LESS THAN HEARTY COMPLIMENT

Seeming to affirm someone else’s ideas, opinions, or actions can be a way of posturing. We know in our hearts that we are trying to get the other person to think more highly of us, and so we make our words sound as though we are esteeming our friend, or spouse, or boss. It is a dishonest smile, a deceitful word, or a misleading compliment.

Sometimes we find ourselves in a jam, not knowing what to say. Someone asks, “Does this dress make me look fat?” A wife asks, “How did you like my liver omelet?”

In some situations we don’t think of the right things to say until 30 minutes after we’ve spoken the wrong words, but there is something veiled when the only reason we answer the way we do is to cause others to think more highly of us or less of others. These self-serving compliments are veiled unkindnesses.

### CAMOUFLAGE #5 A “SORT-OF” PROMISE TO TRY TO DO BETTER

Like the less-than-hearty compliment, the dishonest promise is an attempt to make ourselves look better than we are. We want others to esteem our willingness to help. We are centered on ourselves and don’t actually expect to be called on to fulfill our promise. We sort of plan to “forget” or overlook any commitment. A mate asks us to finish a task which we’ve managed to postpone for months. Or she asks us to remember to pick up something at the store, or to make a telephone call, or to fix something, mend, put away, say something to a child, or tidy up.

We say we’ll do it because we have developed selective amnesia. The terrible part of breaking a promise is that I have calloused a little corner of my heart so that I feel no sorrow when I break my tiny little promises. My word is no longer my bond. I excuse myself by telling myself I didn’t actually make an oath or a solemn vow. It isn’t something I have to confess to God. It was simply a kind gesture to her. It was unkind.

I heard a radio speaker say, “The words, ‘I’ll try,’ really means, ‘I’ll make a half-hearted attempt, and I’ll fail.’”

### CAMOUFLAGE #6 A CAREFULLY CHOSEN BARB

I met a couple at a party. Their last name was Gorto. She was chubby. As they left that evening he said, “Hurry up, Gordo.”

What he said was not kind. He called her Gordo, not Gorto. Gordo is Spanish for “fat.”

## STOP!

### Decision Time: your seven-day project

Don't go to the next chapter until you have marked at least one "Homework Assignment."

- If my mother had been a little kinder, I wouldn't be the idiot I am today. *[Sorry, it's not my fault].* Bob Cowman
- Just suck up and be nice. Ani di Franco
- Great opportunities to help others seldom come, but small ones surround us every day. Sally Koch

A verse to write on a wide rubber band and wear on your wrist.

It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.

*I Corinthians 4:2*

I feel ashamed for what I had done. I don't have any excuses.

I did what I did.

I take full responsibility for myself and my actions.

I'm sorry it happened, and I hurt people.

*Louie Anderson*

# N. WHEN HER RESPONSE IS SO ICY IT COULD QUICK-FREEZE A WHALE

People are unreasonable, illogical, and self-centered. Love them anyway.

*Kent Keith*

**Be patient when somebody treats you badly.**

*II Timothy 2.24*

## Rate yourself.

How hard is it for you to respond gently when her soul turns to ice?

- I am working pretty hard on this already
- I used to be better and could work harder at this
- It's 6-8 on a 10 point scale of difficulty
- Tough, very tough.



## A SKETCH OF KINDNESS

*He drew a circle that shut me out,  
"heretic," "rebel," a thing to flout.  
But love and I had the wit to win,  
We drew a circle and took him in.*

*Edwin Markham*

The male's terror of rejection is a fear many do not handle in a godly way, especially if he is scorned by sexual infidelity. It causes men to feel inferior, at fault, to admit blame, to doubt their completeness as a human, to become defensive, to be anxious, and irrationally angry. We wonder what could cause her to deny our worth.

Part of the healing process demands us to unravel the difficulties in her own life. We must learn to pray for her, that she will soon find her true value in Christ. People who hate, despise, or reject others have universally lost or weakened their own link with God. We must guard our own hearts from getting sucked into the vortex of hate. Our prayers are not to be from pity but from a heart of enormous love for her. Love is not mostly a feeling. That would be affection. Love is a decision to do my best to please her.

I cannot understand the pain you're going through. I can only be a brother who is willing to carry you and to help carry your load.

Work on the assumption that she feels her rejection of you is somewhat justified by your past behavior. Don't be too sure you are reading her accurately. Don't be too sure you can *[ever]* judge any person's motive entirely correctly. People who intentionally threaten others are almost always feeling threatened themselves. Consider what elements are wreaking havoc on her right now.

Carry her in your prayers. Be the rock she can depend on in this storm. Allow yourself to be the punching bag so she can handle pernicious doubts in her own life. Be the "love anchor" she needs today. She's probably been your anchor in a different time and place. If she has served as your stabilizer all these years, now it is time to become a man and be her refuge.

For every exaggerated fault she finds in your life, work doubly hard to allay her fears of capsizing her own boat. She may have inflated each flaw you've ever feared, ever committed. Every lie you've told is now seen through a huge magnifying lens. Whatever you do, don't try to minimize it in her mind. It is her perception. It is her feeling. It is accurate from where she stands. You cannot deny she feels this way even if you feel she has blown it all out of proportion. She may exploit every chink in your armor. She may be trying to make the ground beneath you crumble. Your only hope is in God, not in proving her wrong.

Cling to Him. Rest, rely, relax. Rest in His love. You want grace at this point, not justice. If He dumped justice on your head *[or my head]* instead of forgiveness, you might be in very hot water yourself. Love her. Don't be bitter. Don't reject her. Don't reject her just because she is rejecting you. But don't expect quick changes either. It has

taken a period of time to arrive at this point. It will probably take twice as much time to turn this situation around. Be patient. You've already come to the *[accurate]* conclusion that there is no easy solution. Embrace that idea.

Set about employing kindness beyond all reason. Diligently defer *[without hesitation]*. Go the second and third miles in praying for her, gently, sweetly, caressingly. Perhaps you need to be spending an hour on your knees telling Him how much you love her, and would give your life for her.

And if nothing changes, still be the man she needs—not the man you think she deserves at this point in her life.

One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.

- ◇ How do you react when someone you admire does not appreciate you?
- ◇ Be kind and godly even if she never changes.
- ◇ You mean I have to keep it up even if she keeps being mean to me? Forget it!
- ◇ Is there some area where your wife used to admire you but doesn't anymore?
- ◇ "Be kind, be kind, be kind." *[servant. . . must not strive, but be gentle]* *II Timothy 2.24*
- ◇ When is it most important to be kind to your wife?
- ◇ God grades on effort. Man grades on results.
- ◇ As you become kinder, she may resent the fact that she is now in your debt. She may retaliate. Make sure you never expect a return.
- ◇ Kindness is like snow—it beautifies everything it covers. *Croft Pentz*
- ◇ ". . . even if she never grows emotionally past her teen years."
- ◇ "Take them by the hand and watch over them in tenderness." *J Smith*
- ◇ Even after Saul, Pharaoh, and Achan said, "I have sinned," they were punished severely for their sin.
- ◇ "No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted." *Aesop 600 BC*
- ◇ "Kindness begets kindness." *Sophocles 500 BC*
- ◇ "The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer."  
As a husband you have to learn how to weigh how she is going to perceive what you say. *Prov 15.28*
- ◇ Start your evening prayer, "Lord, was I kind today?"
- ◇ "Kindness is not without its rocks ahead." *Honore de Balzac*



Note the sins involving the mouth. Now circle them in your Bible. *[almost half the list]*

There are six things which the Lord hates,  
 Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him:  
 Haughty eyes, a lying tongue,  
 And hands that shed innocent blood,  
 A heart that devises wicked plans,  
 Feet that run rapidly to evil,  
 A false witness who utters lies,  
 And one who spreads strife among brothers.

*Proverbs 6.16-19*

## STOP!

### Decision Time: your seven-day project

At least one! Or you could write your own or choose a goal from another day.

- ❑ *[I'll]* practice kindness - particularly when you feel irritated or things are not going well. Kindness hardly ever goes wrong. *Lewis Richmond*
- ❑ Gotta start someplace. One intentionally kind word—every day this week.

A verse to write out and tape to your bathroom mirror, dash, or desk.

For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated,  
you endure it with patience?

But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it*  
you patiently endure it,  
this *finds* favor with God.

*1 Peter 2.20*

Disagreement is not an attack on your character.

It is often simply a different viewpoint she has.

Learn to discern the difference.

# O. MY ANGER TURNED INTO A GRUDGE

*Anger makes you smaller,  
while forgiveness forces you to grow beyond what you were.*

*Cherie Carter Scott*

**The LORD is compassionate and gracious,  
Slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness.  
GO THOU AND DO LIKEWISE!**

*Psalms 103.8*



## Rate yourself.

How hard is it for you to yield your feelings of anger to the Holy Spirit

- I am working pretty hard on this already
- I used to be better and could work harder at this
- It's 6-8 on a 10 point scale of difficulty
- My ancestors for several generations are to blame. I gotta stop going to bed every night with a grudge on my heart.

Words can cause bruises that are slow to heal. Hastily spoken words can roll around in your head for a long time after you wish you could take them back. You have a choice. When you're the one who has been hurt, you can allow the wound to fester then rivet all your attention on the one who caused the wound, or you can begin the healing process immediately.

You want to come to the point in your life when gentleness, love, kindness, and manly compassion spill out of you every time you are poked, ignored, irritated, reviled, or accused. Anything else is refusing to grow up. You'll be in danger of acting like a junior high kid for the rest of your life.

Resentment and grudges will eat at you from the inside until it tumbles outside. Grudges and a hateful spirit in your heart will consume you. You stand where mass murderers took their first steps toward evil crimes. A grudge is a sin you cherish. Never take communion at church while bitterness resides in your heart.

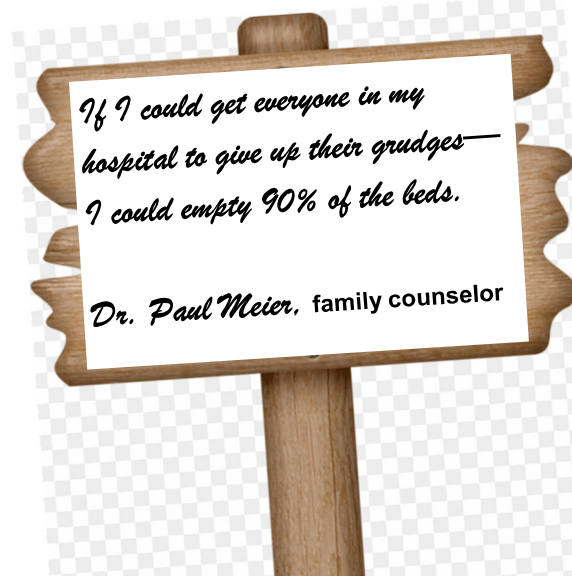
We have all met adults who were so childlike they held grudges, and some of us have been fortunate enough to know children who were grown up enough not to hold a grudge. Now, it might be hard to tell a grown man who bears a constant grudge that he's acting like a pre-schooler in a tantrum, but the simple fact is that the grudge is one of the most self-centered, childish deeds a grown-up can commit.



## REASONS FOR ANGER

I've made a little survey of reasons friends and acquaintances of mine have held grudges. This list is not encouraging.

- trifling humor gone wrong
- frivolous suspicion
- piddling insults blown out of proportion
- skin deep comparisons of beauty, wealth, intelligence, or influence
- scanty evidence of possible wrongdoing
- petty pride
- diminutive sarcasm
- paltry mistakes or errors by others [or self]
- dinky misunderstandings
- inconsequential debts
- thoughtless name calling



As I write this today, I'm engaged in ministry in the mountains of "Bloody Breathitt County" in eastern Kentucky. This is the actual county where the Hatfields and McCoys lived. Local residents have committed thousands of murders of people they knew by name since the early 1800s because of political and land ownership feuds, one as recently as 1998. Feud leaders were Harvard grads as well as uneducated grandmas. The disputes were over family pride, political autonomy, mineral rights, and money.



They all held grudges.

#### A SKETCH OF KINDNESS

*We sat in a prayer circle and praised, and asked, and thanked, and worshipped; but it was Maureen's transparent and painful intercession which brought us to our knees at the Throne Room of our Heavenly Father. She whispered, "Lord, I lift up this person in prayer that I feel so justified to despise."*



*She was talking to her dear friend who rules heaven and earth. In quiet desperation of heart, she bared her soul and spoke of a wonderful friend who had brought enormous hurt to her spirit. There was no vindictive anger. No edge. No imprecations the way David prayed for his enemies. No condescension. She just seemed to be holding her friend's hand as she brought him/her to the God of the universe simply asking God to work in her own heart and heal a breach. Touch two souls. Unite two spirits.*

*It has been many years since I sat in that room and heard Maureen unburden the pain in her heart. She opened a window of understanding in my mind. I have not experienced the same anguish she felt, but I have learned to carry my friends into my prayer closet.*

#### One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.

- ◇ Don't hold a grudge. Forgive and forget. Make yourself work through disagreements toward resolutions. If these things fester, the door opens to hard heartedness.
- ◇ "If a small thing has the power to make you angry, doesn't that indicate something about you?"  
*Sydney Harris*
- ◇ "For every minute that you remain angry, you give up sixty seconds of peace of mind."  
*Ralph Waldo Emerson*
- ◇ "Anger dwells only in the bosom of fools."  
*Albert Einstein*
- ◇ "No man can think clearly when his fists are clenched."  
*George Jean Nathan*
- ◇ What kind of results occur in the hearts of people who are not forgiven by others?
- ◇ Anger is mean.
- ◇ Anger is never kind.
- ◇ Bury your favorite Grudge and put no marker in the back yard. But stay on your knees out there until you are sure it will not follow you into the house. *anon*
- ◇ Anger expressed often hurries toward forgiveness. Anger concealed often hardens into revenge.  
*Edward G Bulwer-Lytton [paraphrased]*
- ◇ When it was your words that hurt her, don't think it is all going to go away just by your actions. It will take words to heal the hurt.
- ◇ "You are afraid you might forget [the reason for the hurt]." *Barbara Kinsolver, The Poisonwood Bible*
- ◇ "He who angers you, controls you."  
*Elizabeth Kenny*
- ◇ "The worst tempered people I've ever met were people who knew they were wrong." *Wilson Mizner*
- ◇ Remembering and replaying a grudge in your head makes you a slave.
- ◇ We're not entirely responsible for others' response or reaction.
- ◇ The fruit of the Spirit is Love: [and it comes in 8 flavors] joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, & self-control. *Galatians 5.22,23*
- ◇ Nobody can stand nose to nose in a shouting match and display even one of the fruit of the Spirit.
- ◇ You are failing to display any of the 9 fruit of the Spirit when you shout at each other. You can't throw a plate or a verbal barb at your mate and be godly. It is wickedness.
- ◇ "To be wronged is nothing, unless you continue to remember it." *Confucius, 500 BC, China*
- ◇ "Kindness can turn the bad man's heart." *Bharitrhari*





- ◇ I have become angry because of perceived wrongs. Nobody had actually “done me wrong.”
- ◇ To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover the prisoner was you.
- ◇ “I am often thought of as being remarkably bright, and yet my brains, more often than not, are busily devising new and interesting ways of bringing my enemies to sudden, gagging, writhing, agonizing death.”  
*Alan Bradley*
- ◇ Don’t save ammunition from your last argument. Talk only about the present issue.

One of the greatest gifts God ever gave man was the ability to forget. All of us are thankful that the memory of painful or embarrassing events don’t regularly come back to haunt us. Have you ever wondered why you suddenly recall a street corner or room in a house even though you haven’t been there for years? Of course. I’m convinced that God wired our brains to scroll through its contents randomly and somewhat regularly. As this process takes place it will run across pleasant as well as unpleasant memories.

When our brains open closet doors we choose to keep closed, it is okay to shift gears and concentrate on other things. We will certainly recall sinful thoughts as well as times when others “have done us wrong.” It is not as though we have not forgiven a person enough. It is not that we are secretly bearing a grudge. It is not a sin to remember sins in the past, but it can become sinful if we polish the marker that we’ve stuck in the ground. It only takes a moment to thank the Lord for the grace He has given us grace to forgive that person or repent of that deed.

“Don’t be an “Injustice Collector.” There are people who have actually written all the injustices shown to them in a “hate book” of some sort—just in case they forget one of them.”  
*Pastor Bob Hickman*

Yes, we can forgive and not entirely erase it from our memory, but remembering is not the same as harboring it in our soul. But to camp out on a sinful attitude, to cherish it momentarily, to caress its evil, to fondle the memory is indubitably sin. To embrace a vile thought is sin. We must learn not to fantasize about doing wrong or being wronged.

“Forgiveness is not about forgetting. It is about letting go of the other person’s throat. Forgiveness in no way requires that you trust the one you forgave. . .you may have to declare your forgiveness a hundred times. . .until one day you have forgiven completely.”  
*Paul Young*

### One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.

- ◇ “. . .if he has wronged you in any way. . . .”  
*Philemon 18*
- ◇ “Whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.” *Col 3.23*
- ◇ “If your brother [*spouse*] sins, go and show him his fault in private [*not in front of the kids*]; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen *to you*, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”  
*Matthew 18.5ff*
- ◇ “If you suffer for doing right and patiently endure it. . . .”  
*1 Peter 2.19, 20*
- ◇ “Any good that I can do or any kindness I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it for I shall not pass this way again.”  
*Stephen Grellet*
- ◇ “Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies.”  
*Nelson Mandela*



## STOP!

### Decision Time: your seven-day project

Don't go to the next chapter until you have marked at least one "Homework Assignment."

- I'm going to ask my sweetheart what I've said that has really hurt. I'll ask for the opportunity to apologize. I'll be ready for a strong pause. What she wants to say may be too painful for her to repeat.
- I don't have to attend every argument I'm invited to.
- I'm sorry I haven't been kind. I will grieve.
- I gotta stop going to bed every night with a grudge on my heart.
- I will never allow my anger to be unkind.
- Name calling and profanity are cousins of anger.
- In the margin of Proverbs I've drawn 15 small red flaming heads next to verses that speak of anger. Note especially those which link anger with the mouth.  
Proverb 14.17,29 15.1,18 16.29,32 17.1 19.11,19 22.24 27.4 29.8,9,11 30.33



A verse to write out and tape to your bathroom mirror, dash, or desk.

The anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

*James 1.20*

Ah, you know me, I'm too lazy to hold a grudge.

Sid, the Sloth, Ice Age [movie]

# P. GIVING, & GIVING, & GIVING YOUR BEST, AGAIN & AGAIN, & AGAIN, & AGAIN, & AGAIN, & AGAIN.

*A kind gesture can reach a wound that only compassion can heal.*

*Steve Maraboli*

**Trouble brings about patience.**

*Romans 5.3*



## Rate yourself.

How hard is this for you?

- I am working pretty hard on this already
- I used to be better and could work harder at this
- It's 6-8 on a 10 point scale of difficulty
- I'm keeping track of the "seventy times seven" thing, then "POW!"

## A SKETCH OF KINDNESS

*A kind woman who lived in the mountains found an exceptionally precious stone in a stream. The next day a traveler met her on the road. He was hungry and as she opened her bag to give him some of her lunch he saw the stone. He also realized its value. He accepted the food and asked her if he could have the pretty stone. She gave it without hesitation.*

*The traveler left rejoicing in his good fortune. He would be a wealthy man. But a few days later he came back to return the stone.*

*"I've been thinking," he said, "You probably also knew how valuable the stone was. I am returning the stone but want you to give me something even more valuable. Give me the heart that enabled you to give me the stone."*

## One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.



- ◇ "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." *Matt 18.21*
- ◇ Do more than expected of you to defuse your enemy's unkindness *Matt 5.40-41*
- ◇ I waited patiently for the Lord, . . . [He] heard my cry. *Psalm 40.1*
- ◇ Everyone who has been married for 40 years must have a kind streak in him somewhere. *John Gottman, The Secrets of the Love Lab, RD 10/12 p*
- ◇ "Even if just one of you begins to slide the door open with greater frequency, your relationship will improve." *John Gottman*

It takes twelve nice deeds to partially erase one nasty outburst [*but the nasty deed may still stick in the memory*]. Kindness can wear you out. Be kind anyway. It will take more than a few moments and a quick apology to repair the damage from the last dozen caustic things you've said. Be generous with your blessings. Nobody knows you as well as your spouse, and that means no one will be quicker to recognize a change when you deliberately start sacrificing your wants and wishes to make sure her needs and wants are met.

You know kindness when you see it. It isn't sticky sweet but it comes from the heart. It may be giving time or money or gifts. It may be lending a hand or sharing a load of responsibility. It is often an affirming or encouraging attitude.

There is a myth about kindness;

“Kindness is like a boomerang and always returns to bless the giver.”

You will find **many** quotes like the above. If you are looking for returns on your kindness investment, you already blew it. It just tain't so. I hope you don't just keep kindness up as long as somebody else is kind back to you. What if she never gets the hang of it and stays her selfish little old self? Huh?

Make a list of the things she has done for you beyond the call of duty. There was no marriage contract that indicated these were NOT YOUR JOB, you simply renege or refused to do them.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| turned off the TV when I left the room                 | called the plumber   |
| filed the taxes  | bought new light bulbs   |
| kept the checkbook                                     | served guests while I sat & talked                               |
| served me my favorite dish                             | organized the photos   |
| gave her dessert to a kid                              | bought the tickets   |
| washed my _____  | brought in the mail [200 x]                                      |
| cleaned up puke  | drove the kids when I could have called me to remind me to . . . |
| mowed the yard   | put up Christmas decor   |
| went shopping for me <i>[though inconvenient]</i>      | washed her car   |
| took out trash   | made the bed   |
| cleared the table after dinner                         | did the laundry  |
| cleaned the tub after you took a shower                | weeded a garden  |
| cleaned up wax from candle <i>I forgot to blow out</i> |  |

### One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.

- ◇ Kill her with kindness.
- ◇ Rejoice at her baby steps. Rejoice at your own baby steps. We're all probably taking some tiny steps in some area of life.
- ◇ Give without hesitation.
- ◇ “Guard well within yourself that treasure, kindness. Learn how to give without hesitation, how to lose without regret, how to acquire without meanness.” *George Sand*
- ◇ There is no use in trying to get revenge on people.
- ◇ “A fellow who does things that count, doesn't usually stop to count them.” *Albert Einstein*
- ◇ “I want to be defined in what is etched in the lives and hearts of those I've touched.” *Steve Maraboli*
- ◇ “Forget injuries, but never forget kindnesses.” *Confucius, 600 BC, China*
- ◇ “A tree is known by its fruit—a man by his deeds.” *St. Basil, 350 AD, Turkey*
- ◇ “Love trembles lest it has done too little.” *Hannah More*



### Not-So-Random-Acts-of-Kindness *[could become]* Deliberate Acts of Kindness

|  |  |
|--|--|
| breakfast in bed                       | turn off the TV                        |
| rub her feet                           | lady's night for TV remote             |
| make the bed                           | scrub kitchen floor                    |
| scrub the tub                          | wash the dog                           |
| put something away                     | compliment her choices                 |
| don't _____ <i>[you fill in blank]</i> | buy her an orchid because it's Tuesday |
| turn down the volume                   | look her in the eye, kiss her lips     |
| make her favorite dessert              |  |

## STOP!

### Decision Time: your seven-day project

Don't go to the next chapter until you have marked at least one "Homework Assignment."

- It is more important for me to be gentle than to get my own way.
- How diligent am I at praying for my broken little family?
- Sometimes kindness in the mall parking lot is easier than kindness in the kitchen.
- When I feel I need more out of our marriage—I'll give more!

A verse to write out and tape to your bathroom mirror, dash, or desk.

*Be devoted to one another in brotherly love,  
give preference to one another in honor.*

*Romans 12.10*

Every farmer knows that not every good seed will turn  
into a blossom.  
But the odds are good that if you plant a lot of good seed,  
you'll reap an abundant crop.

# Q. APOLOGIES— BOTH WEAK AND GOOD

You're not allowed to say, "I'm sorry"  
without looking in her eyes.

**He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper,  
but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.**

*Proverbs 28.13*



## Rate yourself.

How hard are apologies for you?

- I am working pretty hard on this already
- I used to be better and could work harder at this
- It's 6-8 on a 10 point scale of difficulty
- Extremely difficult or demanding. When I was a kid, I learned never to apologize for any decision I made.

## A SKETCH OF KINDNESS

*It was hard for her to tell him about a costly mistake she made. He was an ungrateful man. He rarely praised her, and absolutely never said, "I'm sorry." He told her lots of times he loved her, but he would never admit he was wrong.*

*After all, he was a key businessman in town. People admired him in public. His wife less so. But she had made a promise she would love, cherish, and obey him until "death do us part."*

*He never changed. The lustre had disappeared from his marriage, but not from hers. She had vowed to God she would make their home a wonderful place for him. She did it well. She was not a doormat. She was a gentle soul committed to God. She would serve the Lord with her whole heart, forever. She had friends with better marriages, but she taught herself to be content with the husband she had picked out.*

*She loved him dearly. And when it came to apologies, they were genuine, clear, honest, and quick, even though they were hard. She blossomed in her circumstances.*

*When life gives you a lemon—make lemonade.*

## SOFT WORDS—HARD HEART

*She told him, "I'm sorry" for something trivial which annoyed him, but behind the smile were clenched teeth. She stabbed him to death in bed that night.*

*Their life had been comfortable. He made lots of money and she spent it. He immersed himself in business and out-of-the-home hobbies. He missed birthdays, anniversaries, and vacations. He promised to slow down but it never happened. He forgot what was important in life.*

*He bought her a phenomenal cutlery set last night for her magnificent kitchen. She threw it in the trash—all except one knife.*



If it is hard for others to apologize to you—go get your head screwed on right. You've got a problem. Why? Shut up. Accept the apology and don't say anything except "thank you." *[give no speeches]*

*(and never say, "Shut up!")*

There must be 50 ways to say I'm sorry. But it only counts if it you truly believe it was your fault. You were partly to blame. You and I must admit that 100% of our part was actually sin.

Look her in the eyes and say you're sorry with a tear in your eye. You have hurt someone. There should be some pain over the hurt you have inflicted, not just sadness because you argued.

One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.



- ◇ Sometimes, "sorry" is not enough.
- ◇ "An apology is the superglue of life. It can repair just about anything." *Lynn Johnson*
- ◇ Kindness makes you stoop.
- ◇ Try this once. Note her response. "I think I've hurt your feelings and I just wanted you to know I'm sorry."

To break the ice you might actually say something like *[or read it to her]*, "I want to change. I'd like you to be patient with me while I try to rebuild our relationship back to where we had it before. I have more items on my self-improvement list than I want to admit. It may take a while."

- ◇ Sincere forgiveness isn't colored with the expectation that she has to change because you forgave her.
- ◇ We actually have to tweak a longtime bad habit. It's annoying, easy to forget, and humiliating.
- ◇ Weak apologies are sometimes perceived as bandages.
- ◇ Saying you're sorry doesn't mean others will forgive you. Say it and mean it anyway, and start to change your bad behavior.
- ◇ Apologies show that we recognize our limitations. They focus on us, even though it may be a fleeting moment.
- ◇ Don't send apologies by mail, text, or e-mail. We are NOT trying to document the strife. We are hoping to erase it from both our memories. Face-to-face or on the phone.
- ◇ "A stiff apology is a second insult. . . .The injured party does not want to be compensated because he has been wronged; he wants to be healed because he has been hurt." *G K Chesterton*
- ◇ "Apologizing doesn't always mean you were wrong, but it always means you value the relationship more than your ego." *Cynth*
- ◇ "Sometimes the best way to say "I'm sorry" doesn't involve words." *Susan [14 yrs old]*
- ◇ Whoever says "Love means never having to say you're sorry," is a bonehead. *(Oh, and never call names.)*
- ◇ "My ex- heard me say, "I love you" a thousand times, but she never heard me say, "I'm Sorry." *Bruce Willis*
- ◇ "In some families please is the magic word. In our house, however, it was **sorry**." *Margaret Laurence*
- ◇ "I'm sorry that you are annoyed." *[bad apology]*
- ◇ "I'm sorry you got mad when I said that." *[bad apology!]*
- ◇ "I'm sorry you're offended." *[bad apology]*
- ◇ The Christian's only solution to sin is confession.



## STOP!

### Decision Time

Do this homework for 7 days. Pick just one.

- Huh? Too proud to say "I'm sorry"?
- I'll apologize and try to fix whatever I wrecked.
- "Laugh when I can, apologize when I should, and let go of what I can't change." *anon*
- Personal confession in a court of law carries greater weight than any evidence. *an Americanism*
- Others besides my wife have told me that I'm proud. I just think I'm self-confidant. I think they are jealous.

A verse to write out and tape to your bathroom mirror, dash, or desk.

Go to your brother.

*Jesus*

Never ruin an apology with an excuse.

**Ben Franklin**

# R. DO THE LADIES UNDERSTAND KINDNESS DIFFERENTLY THAN MEN?

Be kind to people whether they deserve your kindness or not.

James Fadiman, *Essential Sufism*

## Pursue. . .gentleness

1 Tim 6.11



### Rate yourself.

Check those which you think others [not your wife] probably see in you.

- gentleness
- forgiveness
- an absence of grudges
- soft deeds
- generosity
- genuine approbation
- tender tones
- a sensitive spirit
- the iron fist in a velvet glove
- consideration for those who have not yet traveled as far

### WAYS MEN ARE DIFFERENT

- ◇ We don't talk as much.
- ◇ We get tired of listening to extended discussions before the ladies do.
- ◇ We are satisfied with receiving less out of marriage and probably expect the ladies should, too.
- ◇ We believe that if we said it once and meant it, that should be enough. We shouldn't have to prove it over and over again.  
*We've all heard the story of the farmer whose wife said, "You never tell me you love me." The farmer expoded, "I told you I loved you when we were married, and I haven't rescinded it yet."*  
Of course, it's an exaggeration, but it somewhat reflects the way men think sometimes.
- ◇ We think that a kind deed is a decisive act. It doesn't have to be supported by multitudes of similar deeds. Take it or leave it, lady!



### ON THE OTHER HAND:

- ◇ To men—a lady seems to need more and more words to validate her feelings. That's strange.
- ◇ To men—a deed is like a thousand words.  
To ladies—a deed is like ONLY a thousand words.
- ◇ To men—we can't understand why it is so important to listen. Men can sit around a campfire when no one speaks. Ladies can't do that. Why not?



### One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.

- ◇ The importance of kindness is implanted in the heart of every man.
- ◇ As husbands and wives, it is inevitable that we view the "Kindness Quotient" through a different prism than our mates.
- ◇ "Put on a heart of: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience." *Col 3.12*
- ◇ "The Lord's bondservant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged." *II Timothy 2.24*
- ◇ "I shall not bear ill will toward anyone." *Mohandas Gandhi*
- ◇ Those who have to be carried should grow up!





- ◇ “A good head and a good heart are always a formidable combination.”
- ◇ “No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.”
- ◇ “Do your little bit of good where you are.”

Nelson Mandela  
Aesop  
Desmond Tutu

#### SKETCH OF KINDNESS

*I rebuked a fellow believer gently at work one day and he never missed an opportunity to curse at me for the next year. On his birthday I bought him a cake. It served as a firststep in healing the breach.*

*Lee Adams*

#### One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.



- ◇ “There is a God and He is good, and His love, while free, has a self-imposed cost. We must be good to one another.”  
*George HW Bush acceptance speech '88*
- ◇ I caught myself cheering for the bad guy on a TV program once, because in spite of his criminal behavior he was genuinely kind to several people along the way.
- ◇ “One dies forever in debt to those who are kind.”  
*Malaysian proverb*

The two of you will have to determine what is polite and rude. Scripture doesn't define “coarse jesting” [Eph 5.4 NASB] but the words are also translated as obscenity” [NIV], “filthiness” [KJV], and “crude joking” in others. Talk about what is unpleasant, uncomfortable, impolite, or impure. No one gets to pass down an edict. Agree to defer to the “weaker brother.” Romans 14.2 *[read the entire chapter]*

## STOP!

### Decision Time: your seven-day project

Don't go to the next chapter until you have marked at least one “Homework Assignment.”

- I will never hate my enemy. It affects my judgment.
- Constant kindness can accomplish much.—*Albert Schweitzer*
- Chocolate says, “I'm sorry” so much better than words. *Rachel Vincent*

*A verse to write out and tape to your bathroom mirror, dash, or desk.*

*An elder [overseer]. . .above reproach. . .temperate, prudent. . .gentle, peaceable. . .*  
*[ Timothy 3.2*

*We are held responsible not only for what we do,  
but also for what we do not do [and say].*

# S. TREAT HER LIKE A QUEEN, SON

“Always treat every girl you date as though she were a queen.”

*Mom, just before my first date*

**The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome,  
but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged.**

*II Timothy 2.24*

## Rate yourself.

How hard is this for you?

- I am working pretty hard on this already
- I used to be better and could work harder at this
- It’s 6-8 on a 10 point scale of difficulty
- Whoa! This is a brand new thought.



## A SKETCH OF KINDNESS

*My friends, Mark and Sconie, lived in the woods and were true tree huggers. Sconie told me she surprised Mark with a dandelion salad one evening. After dinner she searched Mark’s eyes for a glint of affirmation. Mark wasn’t much on words, so finally Sconie asked, “Well, how did you like the salad?” Mark smiled, paused, and then in his very nicest voice said, “Thank you, Honey. We can have this again sometime. . . . [pause] when there is nothing else to eat on the face of the earth.” They both smiled. Sconie was disappointed, but Mark was kind. He just couldn’t think of a way to give a compliment on the spur of the moment.*



To a queen, you would always say, “Please” and “Thank you.” You would always speak in kind tones. You wouldn’t burp, and you’d *[almost]* always clean up after yourself. You’d take the trash out even if she didn’t ask you—just because you knew she’d be happy. And you’d open the door on her carriage that had 300 horses under the hood. Then you’d apologize if you interrupted her. In other words, you’d always be polite.



## One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.

- ◇ “. . . to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.” *Titus 3.2*
- ◇ “Be gentle.” *Matt 5.5*
- ◇ Give cups of cold water to those in need *Matt 10.42*
- ◇ Put on a heart of compassion & kindness *Colossians 3.12*
- ◇ Put on a heart of gentleness *Colossians 3.12*
- ◇ Put on a heart of patience *Colossians 3.12*
- ◇ Be gentle *Titus 3.2*
- ◇ Be considerate *Titus 3.2*
- ◇ Practice kindness to fellow believers *II Peter 5.7*
- ◇ “Woe to the one who falls and there is no one to lift him up.” *Eccl 4.9-11*
- ◇ Be kind. Always, if you have a choice, be kind. *Anne Rice*



In our Pastoral Counseling class at Dallas Seminary, the prof said that sometimes people ask him, “How did so-and-so get a loser like him? Or how did that fellow wind up with a disappointment like her?” His answer was simply, “If you really knew them, you wouldn’t have to ask.”

“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.” *Marc Estrin*

A boy reaches manhood when he can turn his other cheek, as Jesus did, eagerly and willingly with NO thought of retaliation when somebody insults him.

One study of hundreds of workers shows that the person with the shortest list of people whom he doesn't like is also the person with the longest list of people who like him.

One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.

- ◇ A bit of fragrance always clings to the hand that gives roses. *Chinese proverb*
- ◇ "Always try to be a little kinder than is necessary." *James M Barrie*
- ◇ Love her especially if she doesn't deserve it, because she needs you most, then. Especially at the times when she doesn't deserve it.
- ◇ The one who dies with the shortest list of people and things he hates—wins!
- ◇ Remember there is no such thing as a small act of kindness.
- ◇ My Mom's only marriage advice to us was, "When you disagree, don't criticize with the words ALWAYS or NEVER." *pjm*
- ◇ Is there a favorite thoughtless nickname, or unkind adjective you use just to needle Her? "The Czar" "Mrs. Clean" *for "Miss Messy"* "Look Who's Never Wrong!" "Yes, Mother."



A study of court records was made a while ago. Married couples leveled many accusations against each other in divorce court. The most frequently mentioned single crime that husbands committed was failing to clean up after himself in the bathroom. Were all those ladies just being petty. No. It wasn't the deed. It was the attitude of being inconsiderate about something that they knew annoyed their wives. Human nature hasn't changed.

## STOP!

### Decision Time: your seven-day project

Don't go to the next chapter until you have marked at least one "Homework Assignment."

- I'll touch her gently & often.
- I'll tell her I'm adding a line to our wedding vows, "I promise to act kinder to you than I do to anyone else in the world."

A verse to write out and tape to your bathroom mirror, dash, or desk.

You man of God, pursue. . .gentleness.

*1 Timothy 6.11*

Treat her like royalty when she's acting like dirt.

# T. LEARNING TO FORGET A WRONG

Keep a fair-sized cemetery in your back yard,  
in which to bury all the faults of your friends.

Henry Ward Beecher

**If he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything,  
charge that to my account.**

Philemon 18

## Rate yourself.

How hard is this for you?

- I am working pretty hard on this already
- I used to be better and could work harder at this
- It's 6-8 on a 10 point scale of difficulty
- Others, besides my wife, have told me I'm proud. I think of it as self-confident.  
I think they're a bunch of \_\_\_\_\_.



## One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.

- ◇ Remember Jesus' words, "Father, forgive them."
- ◇ It is common courtesy to give kind words freely to strangers. Why not give kind words freely to the one closest to you?
- ◇ "Kindness makes you stoop." anon
- ◇ Unfortunately, we can never get ahead on points with kindness. We always have a debt to pay.
- ◇ "As he thinks within himself, so he is." [You are what you think.] Proverbs 23.7
- ◇ "To be wronged is nothing [unless you continue to remember it]." Confucius, 500 BC, China
- ◇ "More than anything else, kindness is a way of life. It is a way of living and walking through life." Jean Maalouf, *The Healing Power of Kindness*



## A SKETCH OF KINDNESS

*He faced enormous pressure at work—she at church. He was daily aware of being the only believer on the job and was doing everything in his power to be light and salt, to bring his co-workers to Christ, get a promotion, honor God, and provide for his family. It took a great deal of emotional energy. He was only marginally aware of the toll the stress took on his family, but he was sure they could put up with it for a couple more years.*

*She volunteered her time cheerfully to help the church staff, prepared diligently for her girl's Sunday School class, and helped out at VBS, but always made it home before the kids got out of school. Housework consumed more time than it should have, and she couldn't help the older kids with their advanced schoolwork anymore. She loved hubby but the kids soccer, band, and play practice ate up a lot of discretionary time. Intimacy slowed, communication became short sound bytes, meaningful kindnesses were genuine as well as infrequent. Something had to give.*

*A New Year's Resolution to talk and pray for 30 minutes every Sunday evening at 10 pm halted the slide. Items were eventually dropped from both schedules. "Dates" became regular. Family Worship was reestablished. It worked!*

The ability to forget is a wonderful asset. I'm convinced that in His grace He allows us to submerge many unprofitable thoughts. Forgetfulness is a possession we must cherish.

## A SKETCH OF KINDNESS

*A fellow professor of mine was known throughout the campus for being thoughtful and full of compliments. One day I stopped him in the hallway and said, "Gary, either you grew up in a family rife with compliments or else in a family with constant criticism." He told me, "Unfortunately, it was the second." Graciousness was a habit he pursued all his life.*

One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.

- ◇ There may be some things you don't do around the house because they are hard or unpleasant. Your wife may find them hard or unpleasant, too, but she does them because she has surpassed you in kindness.
- ◇ One of the keys to happiness is a bad memory *Rita McBrown*
- ◇ You cannot find a deeply contented person who hasn't done a lot of nice things.

**STOP!****Decision Time: your seven-day project**

Don't go to the next chapter until you have marked at least one "Homework Assignment."

- My self-esteem is pretty fragile. I can't shake moments when others show disrespect to me. Something has to change.
- I'll announce my "4-Week Intention," then work on my end of the deal with the fanaticism of an Olympic athlete.
- I'll cultivate not remembering how I have been wronged
- I'll ask God to replace my evil memories with thought of Himself.
- I will work on patiently enduring each wrong that sneaks into my brain.
- I'll be glad that it was I who was wronged, and not I who was the one who committed the wrong.

A verse to copy and post.

Forgiving each other, *whoever has a complaint* against anyone;  
just as the Lord forgave you.

*Colossians 3:13*

The Second Commandment is harder for me  
than the First Commandment.

#1 *Love the Lord your God with all your heart.*

His love for me is perfect.

It is easier to love Him.

#2 *Love your neighbor as yourself.*

To love someone who doesn't have to love me, demands more from me.

# U. LISTEN

**NO!**

What you have to say is NOT important enough to interrupt your wife.

**My dear friends, you should be quick to listen and slow to speak or to get angry.**

*James 1.19 pjm paraphrase*

## Rate yourself.

How hard is this for you?

- I am working pretty hard on this already
- I used to be better and could work harder at this
- It's 6-8 on a 10 point scale of difficulty
- You sound too much like my wife. Did she talk to you already?



## A SKETCH OF KINDNESS

*I was an analytical chemist. My job required me to quickly, logically, and efficiently discover answers. That's a tremendous asset for a chemist, but can be an awesome liability for a Christian husband. When my wife was ready to sell the kids to the gypsies or put the dog in the food processor, the "answer man" was on the spot with a smorgasbord of solutions to her problem!*

*I had just what she needed. With one exception—sensitivity.*

*She needed an ear, not a mouth. Probably no area in our marriage has been so difficult for me as that of learning simply to listen to my wife. The more my wife resisted my sage counsel, the more vocal I became, until my earnest desires to help deteriorated into a crushing harshness.*

*"Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them." Col 3.19*

*Frank Sciacca*

We've all heard our wives say, "I never said that! What makes you think I'd say a thing like that?"

And then, have you heard yourself trying to convince her that those were the exact words which came out of her mouth? Huh? STOP IT! Don't argue with her trying to convince her about what you heard. You already know now, what she meant to say. LISTEN, or you're a fool. Let her change her mind. You and I have changed our minds. We, too, have had mixed up words come out of our mouths. LET IT GO!

Many, many arguments have one item in common. Two people disagree on what was said or not said. Rather than listening to what they now mean, they are wrangling about what was previously said. Robert Fisher said, "No behavior on our part is more self-centered than the demand to speak and the refusal to listen."

STOP ARGUING! LISTEN TO THE WAY YOU JUST SPOKE. Would you talk to anyone else besides your wife like that about the same topic in that tone of voice? WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU? Would you ever interrupt your boss the way you interrupt your wife with your job on the line? [confession time, go ask my wife]. Your marriage is on the line!

## Another golden nugget of kindness.



- ◇ Interrupting is basically a self-serving and egotistical act. It blatantly states that what you and I have to say is more important than what she has to say.

*Robert Fisher*

NO! What you have to say is NOT important enough to interrupt your spouse. Interrupting before hearing a person out is the one essential ingredient in an argument. NO! She will not automatically be convinced of your argument even if she has to stop talking and you shout at her across the room with that vitriolic tone of voice.

Listening with your eyes buys you the right to speak with your mouth a little later. You must hear what your mate MEANS, so you must listen even if you are positive you know. Look at her eyes.

Be a good listener. It takes a lot of effort. Stifle the desire to comment on every sentence. Pause for a breath. Sometimes kindness is keeping your mouth closed. Silence is prized by many people. Is there a friend who doesn't seek you out anymore? Perhaps you dominate more conversations than you realize. Commenting on everyone else's statements may be viewed as "one uppage." You may seem too eager to meet or top another's story. Please don't correct others in the middle of their sentences UNLESS IT IS IMPORTANT. Then ask to comment.

One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.



- ◇ We all have friends who won't let us get a word in edgewise—don't be one.
- ◇ Let it go. If your pastor /or boss/ said what your wife just said, would you correct Him?
- ◇ Someone noticed that the guys who got promoted at work were often the guys who listened to the boss the best.

Hey! You always hog the conversation. YOU NEVER ASK ME ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT WHAT I THINK! Poor listeners rarely ask good questions. They're probably afraid they might lose the floor. They don't value others' opinions or input.

One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.



- ◇ A wife is a person who says so much about everything that she has to be right part of the time!
- ◇ "There is no greater loan than a sympathetic ear." *Frank Tiger*
- ◇ "It is better to listen to the rebuke of a wise man." *Ecc 7.5*
- ◇ "The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer,  
but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things." *Proverbs 15.28*

Your friend is anyone who tells you what you need to know. He may say it sweetly. He may holler at you with veins popping out of his neck. He may be the meanest man in the neighborhood. It may come from your boss or your littlest kid. But he/she cares enough to tell you that you're wrong. Strangers will let you be your own stupid self. Friends won't. Listen to your wife—especially when she's angry!

## STOP!

### Decision Time: your seven-day project

Don't go to the next chapter until you have marked at least one "Homework Assignment."

- I will listen until she has explained herself.
- I will not interrupt when she is angry. **Pick this one first!**
- I will tell her that I will not interrupt except to ask questions for clarification.
- I will look at her when she speaks.
- When I'm confused, I will ask questions which are not designed to make her sound stupid.
- I will watch the tone of my voice.

*A verse to write out and tape to your bathroom mirror, dash, or desk.*

*The first to plead his case seems right,  
until another comes and examines him.*

*Proverbs 18.14*

*Listen to counsel and accept discipline that you may be wise the rest of your days.*

*Proverbs 19.20*

**We must hear what our wives MEAN.**

*I remember hearing my dad say to me,  
"It's not what I said, it's what I meant that's important."*

## V. THE BIBLE SAYS, “DON’T HIT. . .BACK!”



The Bible says, “Don’t laugh! When somebody else gets hurt.”

The Bible says, “Don’t grab!”

The Bible says, “Don’t hit back!”

*Proverbs according to [7 year-old] Sarah  
[giving instructions to her playmate]*

### **Never pay back evil for evil.**

*Romans 12.17*

#### **Rate yourself.**

How hard is this for you?

- I am working pretty hard on this already
- I used to be better and could work harder at this
- It’s 6-8 on a 10 point scale of difficulty
- Extremely difficult or demanding

#### A SNAPSHOT OF OUR PARENTS’ KIND MARRIAGES

*Both my wife and I had the privilege of growing up in homes where kindness was the motto of the marriage. I’m sure my parents weren’t perfect, but I even asked my sister a couple years ago if she remembers ever hearing our folks argue. She said, “Nope.”*

*Kay’s family was the same. Neither of us saw our parents belittle each other, practice nastiness, insult or mock each other, raise their voices, or hold a grudge.*

*In my home, my parents were both very opinionated, yet gentle. I’m sure they disagreed, even said things that weren’t nice, and had to apologize to each other; but they treated each other the same way they treated us kids. They were polite, honest, thoughtful, gentle, encouraging, and most of all—kind.*

*When Dad passed away the cards mom received from all across the country [and around the world] echoed the same tribute, “Jake was kind.”*

*pjm*

Nobody gets to pick his own family, and I’m sure that many of you who struggle with a tempestuous past wish you could have traded childhood experiences with others you know. But all of us get to establish our own house rules for how we treat spouses, siblings, or kids. None of us will be able to say, “I couldn’t help it. It’s my parents fault.”

“Nothing is so strong as gentleness.”

*Ralph Stockman*

What is your most common knee jerk response to those who criticize you in meanness?

- Anger
- Retaliation
- Defensiveness
- Self-doubt
- Contrition
- Sorry, my bad

In this era of immediate gratification, we must learn to be content with any gift we receive, regardless of the sincerity of the one who gave it. Incremental progress is still progress. Accept the effort even when the results of our mate are pretty feeble.



One sentence nuggets of golden kindness.



- ◇ Stop watching sit-coms for two months or more. They feed the “Big Nasty” in the soul.
- ◇ “Vengeance is MINE! I will repay [*maybe it will be slower and different than you want*],” says the Lord. *Romans 12.19,20*
- ◇ DON’T INFLATE THE FACTS in your favor, *not even a little bit for emphasis—ever!*
- ◇ The happiest man you’ve ever met is probably the one who loves to see others happy.
- ◇ “The mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.” *Matt 12.34*
- ◇ “To forgive means that it finally became unimportant to hit back. You’re done.” *Anne Lamott*

A SKETCH OF PERSISTENCE

*If you and I are going to see any changes in our lives, it will come only as a result of diligent concentration. I’m thinking of a record setting NFL quarterback who seems to have an exceptional natural talent for reading the defense. However, his coaches say it isn’t his innate ability that gives him the edge. It is his tremendously focused attention before the game that enables him to look for weaknesses in the other team. His time in the film room is absolutely crucial to his performance on the field.*

*Even Michelangelo said that if people knew how hard he worked to get things just right, they wouldn’t think he was all that spectacular.*

*Time to work harder at this kindness stuff.*

## STOP!

### **Decision Time: your seven-day project**

Don’t go to the next chapter until you have marked at least one “Homework Assignment.”

- How do I show kindness best? I’ll make a list.

*A verse to write out and tape to your bathroom mirror, dash, or desk.*

Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God. . .  
 . . .do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

*Romans 12.19,20*

*You’ve got to try hard not to be nice.*

*Vince Gill [Parade magazine]*

# W. EXPECTING IMPROVEMENT IN YOURSELF FIRST

## Rate yourself.

List two ways you've changed to become kinder.

1  
2



If you haven't done this yet, now is the time to list all the nice things your mate has ever done. Print small. Write on both sides of the sheet. Use as many pages as you need.

PRACTICE.  
PRACTICE.  
PRACTICE.  
Practice doesn't make perfect.  
Perfect practice makes perfect.

Keep at this kindness thing with the tenacity of a weed.



Forty years ago in the *American Scientist*, Herbert Simon and William Chase drew one of the most famous conclusions in the study of excellence:

There are no instant experts in chess—certainly no instant masters or grandmasters. There appears not to be on record any case (*including Bobby Fischer*) where a person reached grandmaster level with less than about a decade's intense preoccupation with the game. We would estimate, very roughly, that a master has spent perhaps 10,000 to 50,000 hours staring at chess positions.

Simon & Chase

The 40-hour workweek comes out to about 2,000 hours per year, 8 hours per day. 10,000 hours is equivalent of 5 years fulltime employment.

### YOUR FINAL ASSIGNMENT

Pursue gentleness with the determination of a master,  
not only at home, but in business,  
church, ministry, raising kids,  
in-laws, neighbors, and friends.

Godliness does not come to slackers.

*FINAL ASSIGNMENT [cont'd]*

Jesus was gentle:  
 and firm,  
 and theologically unmovable,  
 and helpful,  
 and hard on sin,  
 and rabid about reaching lost neighbors.

Make kindness in your marriage an obsession.  
 There is nothing casual about this Kindness Project.  
 Make a chart if necessary.  
 Keep careful records if you must.

REAL MEN ARE KIND.

**STOP!**

**Decision Time: your seven-day project**

Walk with me back to our kindergarten class. Remember there was no prize given if you:

- shared everything
- didn't hit people
- said you were sorry when you hurt somebody
- held hands
- stuck together

It was right to be kind. Still is.

See if you can identify significant lessons you have learned in this project.

Ways you grew a little in kindness

Something that is going to take a while

According to your own standard, how kind are you?    1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What level are you planning to hit this time next year?    1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

*It is never too late to be what we might have been.*

*Start NOW!*

*George Eliot*

# **X. HEY! WHAT CAN I EXPECT TO GET OUT OF ALL THIS HARD WORK?**

**Sorry. Please choose another chapter.**

**You're looking for the wrong answer.**

**You asked the wrong question.**

**You may not get anything in return except the satisfaction of being kind.**

*She may never change!*

**Period.**

**End of discussion.**



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# KINDNESS CAN HEAL YOUR MARRIAGE

## A Kindness Project for Men

It's about your mouth more than anything else.

***24 Weeks***  
to Discover  
the "Kind Spot" in Your Soul

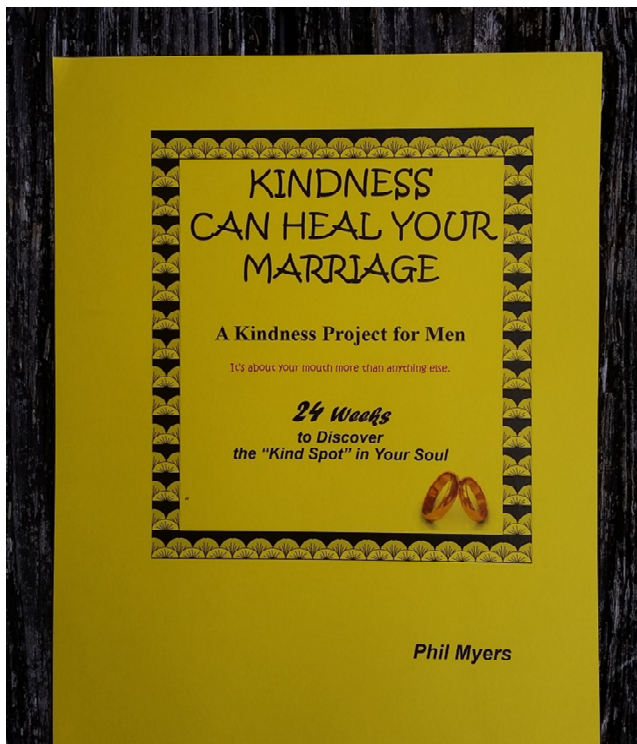
"If some of the luster has worn thin in your marriage,  
this KINDNESS PROJECT may be just the help you need."



***Phil Myers***

**\$18**  
**\$4 S & H**

1. A major heading: 24 Weeks to discover the “Kind Spot” in your soul.  
You get to choose twenty-four assignments and work on each for a solid week.
2. List the table of contents
3. Dozens of “One Sentence Nuggets” about kindness.
4. “When did your desire to be kind to her, start to slow down?”
5. 3 sample chapters: G,B,U
6. Photos - pjm head photo, book cover, wedding rings, gold nuggets
7. Bottom of home page “You unconsciously chose kindness over almost everything else while you were dating. Go back and be as nice as you used to be.”
8. There is a “Quote for your mirror [or dashboard] at the end of each chapter.
9. “Write me a tiny note if you want, when you order your book. I’ll put it on my Dart Board and remember to pray for you by name. Some guys want to send me a photo, too.”
10. No sermons, I promise. But a bunch of straight-from-the-shoulder stuff from a guy who is a fellow traveler.  
The whole project is only 67 pages.



To be honest, the greatest help in my own marriage is a spiritual one. I know where I'm going when I die because I've trusted Jesus Christ as my Savior. Because I have a relationship with Him, I also have the power to be kinder to my wife.

Let me encourage you to read these verses from the Bible. Thanks.



## Am I going to Heaven?

Check off your opinion. What do you think you should be depending on to get to heaven?

- A**
1.  Keeping the 10 Commandments
  2.  Obeying the Golden Rule
- B**
3.  Trying my best
  4.  Living a good life
  5.  Doing good works
- C**
6.  Tithing or giving money to the church
  7.  Attending church
  8.  Praying
  9.  Fasting
  10.  Baptism
  11.  Holy Communion
- D**
12.  Other \_\_\_\_\_

**The Bible gives God's answers to these opinions:**

- A**
1.  10 Commandments
  2.  Golden Rule



Though these are good, none of us has ever been able to keep them perfectly. The Bible says. . .

**"Whoever shall keep the whole Law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."**  
James 2.10

- B**
3.  Trying my best
  4.  Living a good life
  5.  Doing good works



These can't help to save us from the punishment of hell. The Bible states. . .

**"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. . . the wages of sin is death."**  
Romans 3.23 & 6.23

**"For by grace are ye saved through FAITH, and that not of yourselves, it is the GIFT of God, not of works, lest any man should boast."**  
Ephesians 2.8,9

- C**
6.  Tithing
  7.  Attending church
  8.  Praying
  9.  Fasting
  10.  Baptism
  11.  Holy Communion



These are all good things, but they can't take away our sin either. Here's what the Bible says again. . .

**"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us."**  
Titus 3.5

**"A man is not justified by the works of the Law, but by the faith of Christ."**  
Galatians 2.16

- D**
12.  Other **The Correct Answer!**

The Bible is very clear that the only way to reach heaven is by FAITH ALONE in the Lord Jesus Christ. Even trying to do our very best to be good could not make us good enough to live forever in God's perfect heaven.

Since Jesus has paid for both my sins and yours by dying on the Cross, He can give us eternal life as His special gift.

**"The GIFT of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord."**  
Romans 6.23

When we trust Him as our Savior, God gives us the perfection we need to enter heaven. God sent His Son to die as our substitute. He rose from the dead to prove that He had paid for our sins completely.

**"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. . . He was buried, and . . . He rose again the third day."**  
1 Corinthians 15.3,4

All He requires is that you and I. . .

**"BELIEVE in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."**  
Acts 16.31

**"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever [ \_\_\_\_\_ your name \_\_\_\_\_ ] believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."**  
John 3.16

Someone took the time to ask me, "Will you will trust Jesus Christ as the one who paid for all your sin? You'll receive eternal life." **I BELIEVED ! I RECEIVED !**

The Bible says that now I have eternal life.

If you can honestly put your name on the line above because you are trusting Jesus

Christ alone as your Savior, **you also have** eternal life right now. Jesus said. . .

**"He that believeth on Me HATH everlasting life."**  
John 6.47

If you continue to trust in the things on the list on page #1 you are really not trusting in Jesus Christ. Let me ask you, which of the following 3 statements can you check?

**[Only one is correct.]**

1.  I am trusting in Jesus Christ alone for my salvation.
2.  I am trusting in Christ PLUS my good works to save me. I don't believe that Jesus did enough to pay for my sin. I must help.
3.  I am trusting in my good life to earn my salvation.

**"These things have I written unto you that BELIEVE in the name of the Son of God; that ye may KNOW that ye have eternal life."**  
1 John 5.13

Phil Myers, PhD