

Transforming Daily
“. . . the Lord deal kindly with you . . .”
Ruth 1:8

What is kindness? Kindness is hard to define, but you know it when you see it or experience it. Sometimes kindness is exercised without giving it any thought. Usually that's the case when someone has been instructed in or by the discipline of kindness. Of course the best way to learn kindness is to observe it. As it is said, "More is caught than taught." Usually kindness begets kindness; therefore, for one to exercise kindness one must first experience kindness.

What about the motive for kindness? Obviously the best motive for kindness is love – unconditional love. But once again, is it easier said than done. Much of the kindness exercised and experienced today is motivated by the desire to pay someone back or to set someone up to get what the person offering kindness wants to receive from the one to whom kindness is being extended. This begs the question, is it then true kindness? I believe the answer can only be known by the person extending kindness and God. I will say this; kindness is not for the one who extends it, but for the one who receives it.

When we were children my brother, sister, and I were trained to come to the dinner table properly and appropriately groomed and attired, to do otherwise met with the certain and sudden displeasure of my father. For the longest time I couldn't understand why I had to comb my hair and put on a clean shirt to eat dinner (breakfast and lunch were no exception) only to return outside to play after I had eaten. After a while, it finally sunk in that I wasn't sprucing up for myself, but for the other family members and dinner guests who had to look at me. That was not only an act of kindness it was thoughtful and courteous (which both characteristics are usually associated with acts of kindness).

However, today many people are self-absorbed and they could care less how their looks and actions affect others. This is, to say the least, unfortunate. The "right" to "individual expression" has changed the whole complexion of our society and acts of human decency. It now boils down to what makes the individual feel comfortable, unique, uninhibited, or self-satisfied that sets the standard for what is acceptable behavior, privately and publicly. The elderly no longer hold a place of honor in our society. A pregnant woman seldom receives preferential treatment because she is with child. The handicapped are often avoided instead of assisted (I will say though, in some cases the handicapped indignantly and unkindly refuse help from others who are willing to assist). The list goes on to indicate the narcissistic tendencies that now exist in our families and society.

The Christian has a mandate to be kind and considerate of one another. Do you exercise this mandate? How do you exemplify kindness? Is your expression of kindness genuine? Does it reflect the love of God? It's been said, "What goes around, comes around." Based on your expressions of kindness, will the Lord deal kindly with you?