

KINDNESS

Heavenly Father blesses us with a continual flow of kindness. In turn, we can also bless others with kindness.

By Barbara A. Lewis

“For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee” (3 Nephi 22:10; see also Isaiah 54:10). This promise from the Lord not only offers us comfort but also reminds us of the importance of the attribute of kindness.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that Jesus Christ is our example of kindness: “He healed the sick [see Matthew 9:35]. He spent much of His time ministering to the one [see Mark 5:25–34] or many [see Matthew 14:14–21]. He spoke compassionately to the Samaritan woman who was looked down upon by many [see John 4:6–26]. He instructed His disciples to allow the little children to come unto Him [see Luke 18:15–17]. He was kind to all who had sinned, condemning only the sin, not the sinner [see John 8:11].”¹

Thinking kind thoughts is a Christlike attribute. Kindness originates in hearts and minds. A lack of kindness can begin with critical thoughts of others, and it can develop into a habit of finding fault. However, if we accept responsibility for our own reactive thinking, we can become more charitable. Rather than judging others, we grow in understanding and kindness.

Kindness in the home, workplace, church, and school can open passages to hearts that have been blocked with misunderstandings. Showing kindness to others allows them to let go of angry feelings so they can focus on real issues. Kindness helps us and others feel acceptance and gain confidence.

Following are stories of kindness.

Kindness through Service

The Prophet Joseph Smith showed kindness one day when two children got their feet stuck in the mud on the way to school. They both began to cry because they couldn't get loose. When Joseph saw the predicament, he bent down and pulled each child out of the mud. He cleaned the mud from their shoes. Then he took a clean handkerchief from his pocket and wiped away their tears. The children smiled as he spoke kind words to them and then sent them on their way.²

Kindness through Patience

When President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) was in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, he displayed patience and kindness one evening when he was hungry and tired after a hard day's journey. He and his traveling companions stopped at a café to buy some dinner. Since Elder Lee was not feeling well, he asked only for a bowl of "milk toast." The young waitress looked puzzled and then told him that he needed to order something else because milk toast was simply not on the menu.

Elder Lee then patiently asked for two slices of toast and a glass of warm milk. When she brought his simple meal, he asked if he might have an empty bowl. When she brought it, he sincerely thanked the young woman, broke the toast into pieces in the bowl, and poured the warm milk over it, making "milk toast." Instead of getting upset, Elder Lee showed kindness and patience.³



Kindness through Compassion

We often remember Elder James E. Talmage (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles for his wise teaching of doctrine. However, Elder Talmage was also filled with compassion and human kindness. When he was a young father, he learned that three children at a home in his neighborhood were suffering from diphtheria, a dreaded respiratory disease. Elder Talmage went to the neighbor's house to help the parents care for their sick children. He found that one of the children had already died, and a second passed away sometime after. He cuddled and carried the third child as she coughed and struggled to breathe. Later she died in his arms. Elder Talmage didn't stop there. He also assisted with burial arrangements and spoke at the children's graveside services.⁴

Kindness through Love and Friendship

Chandler was born with Williams syndrome, a rare genetic disorder. It caused medical problems, development delays, and learning disabilities. However, his whole ward in Park City, Utah, USA, rallied around his family. As Chandler grew into a very social and loving little boy, Mason, Porter, and Judd became his friends. They took him to the movies and rock climbing and loved hanging out with him. If his mother couldn't pick Chandler up at the bus stop, Mason, Porter, and Judd took him to one of their homes until his mother could come get him.

One day on the school bus, a bully threatened to hurt Chandler unless he gave him his lunch money. When Mason and Porter saw what was happening, they whisked Chandler to another seat, where they protected him. The boys constantly lit the world with kindness.

Kindness through Words

Linda K. Burton, former Relief Society General President, encouraged us to intentionally speak kind words to each other. "We might test ourselves by asking a few questions,"

she said. "With a little adaptation, these questions can apply to most of us, whether we are married or single, whatever our home situation might be.

1. When was the last time I sincerely praised my companion, either alone or in the presence of our children?
2. When was the last time I thanked, expressed love for, or earnestly pleaded in faith for him or her in prayer?
3. When was the last time I stopped myself from saying something I knew could be hurtful?
4. When was the last time I apologized and humbly asked for forgiveness—without adding the words 'but if only you had' or 'but if only you hadn't'?
5. When was the last time I chose to be happy rather than demanding to be 'right'?"⁵



LOOKING INSIDE: DEVELOP KINDNESS WITHIN YOURSELF

- Look for times when God has touched your life with kindness.
- Read the scriptures on kindness in the Topical Guide.
- Pray to recognize opportunities to be kind to others.
- Think of kind things you could do and say each day.
- Practice how to react with kindness.

Kindness through Giving Time

“If we would keep the commandment to love one another, we must treat each other with kindness and respect,” said President Thomas S. Monson in an April 2014 general conference talk.⁶ During this talk, he also shared the following story.

During the Great Depression, employment opportunities were scarce. Arlene Biesecker found a job as a seamstress at a clothing mill, where she was paid only for each correctly completed piece of clothing. Soon she faced a new sewing procedure that she didn’t understand and began to quietly cry. Bernice Rock was a more experienced seamstress and left her own work to kindly help Arlene. She stayed with Arlene until she could successfully



LOOKING OUTSIDE: FIND WAYS TO SHOW KINDNESS TO OTHERS

- Recognize those who might need service or a kind act.
- Apologize whenever you should.
- Remain silent when someone speaks sharply to you.
- Notice the good things that others do and thank them.
- Forgive others and show them an increase of love.

complete the new procedure. Then Bernice went back to her own work. Because she chose to help Arlene, Bernice sacrificed the opportunity to complete the number of pieces she otherwise might have. “With this one act of loving kindness, Bernice and Arlene became lifelong friends,” President Monson said.⁷

As he concluded his talk, he counseled, “Let us determine to respond with love and kindness to whatever might come our way.”⁸

Radiate Kindness

As we seek to develop the Christlike attribute of kindness, opportunities to bless the lives of others will abound. “There is no end to the good we can do, to the influence we can have with others,” said President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008). “Let us not dwell on the critical or the negative. Let us pray for strength; let us pray for capacity and desire to assist others. Let us radiate the light of the gospel at all times and all places, that the Spirit of the Redeemer may radiate from us.”⁹ ■

The author lives in Utah, USA.

NOTES

1. Joseph B. Wirthlin, “The Virtue of Kindness,” *Ensign*, May 2005, 26.
2. See Joseph B. Wirthlin, “Virtue of Kindness,” 27.
3. See K. Richard Young, “Kindness: A Celestial Touchstone” (Brigham Young University devotional, Nov. 1, 2005), 3, speeches.byu.edu.
4. See Joseph B. Wirthlin, “Virtue of Kindness,” 28.
5. Linda K. Burton, “We’ll Ascend Together,” *Ensign*, May 2015, 31.
6. Thomas S. Monson, “Love—the Essence of the Gospel,” *Ensign*, May 2014, 93.
7. Thomas S. Monson, “Love—the Essence of the Gospel,” 91.
8. Thomas S. Monson, “Love—the Essence of the Gospel,” 94.
9. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Need for Greater Kindness,” *Ensign*, May 2006, 61.

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