

Being nice...?

- I used to get a hard time for using the word nice!
- Is this "kindness" more than "the milk of human kindness"?
 - being nice to children and small animals?!

David and Mephibosheth

- When are we in story of David?
 - established his throne... (see chapter 8!)
 - first thing he does is seek to show kindness for the sake of Jonathan
 - David and Jonathan friends (1 Samuel 18:1, 19:1)
 - Jonathan intercedes between Saul and David... picture we have from Scripture is a good, upstanding, godly (1 Samuel 14:6) young man
 - 1 Samuel 20 for David and Jonathan's parting, the warning arrow...
- David then becomes king, Saul and Jonathan are killed along the way
- David goes out of his way to act kindly
- David does not get any benefit from acting kindly
 - note how a cripple would have been viewed in the culture of the day - blighted by God...
- The kindness shown is not merely human kindness, but God's (v.3)
- This type of kindness has a profound effect (v.8)

Conclusion: This is Kindness / This is Church!

- In the introduction to 'Rediscovering Church', Bill Hybels tells a few short stories:
 - American context - diapers! And a "mega-church"...
 - but they still have a power to illustrate in a more contemporary way the kindness Paul has in the back of his mind: people praying for one another, people encouraging one another, people supporting one another... people being kind
- "He's gone." *The paramedic speaks slowly and softly as if to ease the truth into Karen's mind. But the truth strikes like a missile and explodes in shock and loneliness. She feels jerked from reality, thrust into a twilight zone of pain. Then the gentle touch of Ann's hand draws her back. Jeff's firm embrace surrounds her with strength. Jenny's whispered word reminds her she is not alone. The tears that fall from David's eyes help her find her own.*
- *For over two years Tim and Karen had poured time, energy, and love into each member of the small group they led. Now the love circles back and soothes the raw edges of grief.*
- **This is kindness... This is church.**
- *Angie pulls into the parking lot as she does every Monday night, but on this night she pulls past her usual parking area and parks her car by the maintenance building at the rear of the church property. Walking back towards the church building, she silently thanks God - again - for the mechanics who volunteer their time on Monday nights. While Angie attends the ministry for single mothers and her daughter attends a class for children of divorce, a grease-smeared hero with back on a concrete floor replaces the U-joints on her car.*
- **This is kindness... This is church.**
- *Peanut butter. Spaghetti. Baked beans. Powdered milk. Coffee. Cereal. Soup. Canned stew. Diapers. Shampoo. Toothpaste. Sue continues down the list, buying three of each item requested. The checkout clerk comments on her triplicate buying, but Sue only chuckles.*
- *On Sunday, Sue wraps the bags of groceries in black garbage bags and leaves them on the pavement behind her car while she attends church. During the service, volunteers load thousands of the black garbage bags into pickup trucks*

and transport them to the Food Pantry, which feeds hundreds of needy people each month.

- **This is kindness... This is church.**
- *The young man weeps as he reveals a story of childhood abuse so cruel that its victim, his wife, buried the memories in her subconscious mind for fifteen years. But now the surfaced memories haunt her, shatter the tranquillity of their home, and threaten the security of their marriage. Both husband and wife are leaders in the church, with visible, responsible roles, but now they feel helpless and exhausted and scared.*
- *The husband sits alone in the middle of a circle of his peers. When he finishes his story, one man reaches out and rests his hand on the young man's shoulder. Another grips his arm. A woman holds his hands in hers. Soon he is wrapped in a corporate embrace. Quietly his friends begin to pray, and for nearly an hour their words go to heaven on his behalf.*
- **This is kindness... This is church.**
- *"But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift." "You know what these words mean," the pastor says, "but are you willing to act on them? Please don't come to the communion table with unfinished business." As he speaks the rustle of movement begins to filter through the auditorium. Within minutes, hundreds of people have left their seats. Some line up at pay phones. Others meet in empty classrooms. Some go home. The work of reconciliation has begun.*
- **This is kindness... This is church.**
- *"I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." Dale and Ellen are well into the "later years" of life, yet as they rise up out of the icy water of the pond, they seem like kids. And in a sense they are. In terms of faith, they are in fact mere babes, toddlers at most.*
- *But what happy toddlers they are. And what a sensation they cause. On the grassy hill, there is applause and cheering, an out-and-out carnival of joy. Their small-group leader laughs so hard he cries. Their daughter runs to greet them with bear hugs and warm towels. Their unchurched neighbors are a bit confused but delighted to see their longtime friends so happy. It is a celebration fit for heaven.*
- **This is kindness... This is church.**
- **Will we allow the Fruit of the Spirit, this kindness from God's heart, to grow within us - and amongst us?**