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## I Want to Know What Love Is Part 3 – Love is Kind

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Today we're continuing in our series *I Want to Know What Love Is* out of 1 Corinthians 13. A couple of weeks ago, Ted introduced the series. Last week, Adam talked about *Love is Patient*, which was picked up in 1 Corinthians 13: 4. Today, we are moving onto *Love is Kind*.

I think it's important of us to clarify something first though, as we talk about Love is Kind. Sometimes, we can confuse the two words, love and kind. As a matter of fact, Ted and I were talking as he was putting the series together. He said, "I think sometimes people substitute the word kindness for the word love." In other words, when they mean to say kindness, they say love, but they really mean kindness.

So, I think it's important for us to clarify what we are talking about so we're going to define these two words and how they are distinct from one another but related.

**Love** – An attribute of our perfect and holy God who is personified in Christ whom we are to emulate. An attribute of God, personified in Christ, that should permeate everything that we do, and we are to modify our lives after.

Now, this doesn't nullify other attributes of God. There are other attributes besides his love. For instance, his justice and his wrath. Here's the thing about his other attributes like that. We are not commanded to emulate the justice and wrath of God. We are commanded to emulate the love of God, personified in Christ.

**Kindness** – Mild and gentle benevolence desiring to do good to others.

This is kindness which is an aspect of love. Love is kind. The thing about that is there are a lot of different aspects of love. That's why this is a long series that we're going through, talking about knowing what love is. There are a lot of different things that love is and one of them is kindness.

So, the way we think about that is that we've got this overarching attribute of God, love, which is kind. As we understand there are a lot of different aspects of love, we understand that they don't contradict one another. As a matter of fact, they complement one another.

One in particular I want to mention is the truth. Love rejoices in the truth. Here in a few weeks, we're going to have a sermon specifically on this. But just because love is kind, it doesn't conflict with the fact

that love rejoices in the truth. Love does both. Sometimes we can shy away from the truth, thinking it's going to hurt someone's feelings. We feel like that's not love and love is kind and those two don't go together. But the fact is, they complement one another. Love is kind and love rejoices in the truth. So, love is kind. Love, an attribute of our perfect and holy God, personified in Christ, whom we are to emulate, is kind, expressing mild and gentle benevolence, desiring to do good to one another.

As we look at this, we're going to look at four different objects of our kindness, four different categories of people that we express kindness to in love. The first one is those you like, then those who are different from you, those who offend you, and those who attack you.

### **1. Those you like.**

It seems almost silly to say it's important for you to be kind to those you like. Love is kind; be kind to those you like. It comes naturally, right? It's like saying, "Travis, enjoy your dessert." It comes naturally; I like dessert. It's easy.

However, there are a few different relationships in this category of those you like. The first one would be these casual acquaintances where you kind of know someone because you encounter them maybe at your favorite restaurant where they work. Or, at work, there is someone you encounter from time to time. You know their name and you share pleasantries and that's about it. So, it's easy to be kind to those people that you like for you have small interactions with them, but there's no deep relationship there.

Then there are those you like that are your friends. You have deeper relationships, you have experiences with them, so there's a little bit more of a commitment to them in this friendship. The fact is you like them, otherwise they probably wouldn't be your friends, right? That comes pretty naturally as well.

Then there is a relationship that's different from any others and that's with your spouse. Love is kind to those you like. Here's the thing. We all started out liking each other when we first got married, didn't we? Last week, Adam talked about that eros love, the romantic love, that courtship love where the chemicals in our brains seem to reduce all of the negative and we like one another, we like being around one another.

The sad thing is, as we grow in our love for one another, something that seems to happen sometimes is we fall out of like with one another. We've observed couples that have been married a long time and truly love one another but don't seem to like one another.

So, with that, a few years ago, Kari and I noticed that it seemed more profound for us to say to one another, "I like you" than it did to say, "I love you." We love one another. We've been married 20 years. But it seemed more profound to say, "I like you." That got us to thinking because we've seen the couples that don't. Why do we still like one another? It's our opinion, in looking back, that it's because early on in our marriage we made a decision that we're going to be kind to one another. In our kindness to one another, we've been able to preserve our like for one another.

Not to long after we had that discussion, Kari found this print. She put this up in our bathroom to remind us to be kind to one another. It says, "I like you AND I love you." Love is kind to those you like, and in our marriage, we are kind to one another so that we preserve our like for one another. That's part of what helps us avoid what Ted talks about in that drift that can happen over time. We decided to be kind to one another so as to avoid the drift that can happen in our marriage.

## 2. Love is kind to those who are different from you.

We have differences from a lot of people in different ways and there are certain categories that we could put our differences in. In those categories, we can have certain preconceived prejudices about how people are in that type of difference from us. For instance, age. A senior adult may see a young person and think they are lazy and entitled sometimes. Young people may see a senior adult and think they are irrelevant and out of touch. That can be a natural thing that you think about people who are different from you in age.

People can be different from you in socioeconomic status. We are in a small community in the Branson area and it's interesting. I don't know if you know this, but most small communities are pretty poor communities and it's pretty level socioeconomically. But, because of our industry and the money that comes in, we have this wide range of socioeconomic status and we're in this melting pot in the Branson area. So, there are people that are very different from you socioeconomically.

Race is another one. This is one, unfortunately, I believe is going to be around, with its tension, until the Lord returns. If you missed Adam Doyes' message *Understanding Racial Tension* in our *Conversation* series, I would suggest you look back at that and listen to it. It's from late 2017. Adam did a great job of addressing that.

We have differences from one another politically. Really, there aren't many differences, right? We all pretty much agree on everything, politically. There are so many easy jokes and ways to poke fun at the ways that we are unkind to one another in our political differences, I said I was just going to leave it at that. Love is kind to those who are different from you politically.

Then there are people who are different from us within our church, within our faith. And these are people that we're really close to because there are essential beliefs that bind us, things that we hold very close in our beliefs about God and man and sin and salvation and heaven and hell, our essential beliefs.

Even within a body of believers, there are differences about our non-essential beliefs. Love is kind to those who are different from you in your non-essential beliefs. Paul had this to say about it when he wrote in 2 Timothy 2, **23 Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels.** What he's saying here is that you shouldn't have these non-essential beliefs that you go at each other about. That's because they breed quarrels.

You can tag this verse with any number of things. A couple of weeks ago, Ted mentioned yoga. There was a big controversy over yoga, something that is non-essential, a foolish, ignorant controversy that

will breed quarrels. You could tag it with which Bible translation to use. You could tag it with different worship types, worship styles. You could tag it with what type of sermons we should be giving, such as exegetical or expository or topical. What's the right way?

There are so many things that we could have foolish, ignorant controversies with, but we shouldn't. Why? Because they breed quarrels. And those quarrels don't do anybody any good inside of the church or outside of the church. Here's what I mean by that. Inside of the church, we have these controversies about non-essential things, and these controversies breed quarrels or fights, and these fights create dissention among the body of believers, and this dissention eventually can lead to division. I'm convinced that most church splits occur because it started with someone not expressing kindness by not participating in foolish and ignorant controversy that led to a quarrel, that led to dissention, that led to division.

There are people who are different from you in some beliefs that can be very uncomfortable as well. For instance, your beliefs about the definition of marriage and gender and sexuality can be very uncomfortable, but love is kind to those who are different from you.

Something that is very important is that kindness is not affirmation. I think sometimes we can feel like that. "If I'm kind to someone who believes different from me in this way and has a lifestyle different from me in this way, that's affirmation." It's not. Love is kind to those who are different from you, but love is kind and love rejoices in the truth as well. These are complementary; remember? So, when we're faced with questions about what we believe to be true about these things, we don't waver on it. We don't fall from what we know to be true. Love is kind but love rejoices in the truth as well.

Love is kind to those who are different from you in regard to all of your beliefs about God and the universe, all of your theology. It's like they are on a completely different theological map than you. What I'm talking about is for the Christian: the atheist, the agnostics, Muslim, Hindu, new age, and the list goes on and on. Love is kind to those who are different from you in that way.

This really is the essence of what our missionaries do, right? Have you ever met a mean missionary? A missionary who wasn't kind? No, you haven't. They know that kindness draws strangers in. We've got missionaries all over the world in Tanzania and at Rutgers University with foreign exchange students and in other countries I can't mention for their safety. There are people all over who are kind to people who are different from them theologically because they know that kindness draws strangers in. And as their kindness draws strangers in, they have the opportunity to share with them The Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Love is kind to those who are different from you.

Now, as we start to talk about these other two categories of people that we express kindness to, I want to talk about something else first and that's our enemies. That's because I believe these other two, those who offend you and those who attack you, could fall under the category of our enemies.

So, to understand that, I want to look at what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5. ***43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be children of your Father in***

*heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. **46** If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Remember? Love is kind to those you like and that's what he's addressing here. What good is it that you are kind to those you like? **Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47** And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? If you greet only those who are like you, not those who are different from you. **Do not even pagans do that? 48** Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

We are to be kind to our enemies. I think our enemies can be classified in two ways: those who offend you and those who attack you. I think those two enemies are different. I think they are different in this way. I think those who offend you we could really call our perceived enemies. And those who attack you are our true enemies.

### **3. Love is kind to those offend you.**

Is it just me or are we all a little easily offended these days? Everyone seems to be offended a little bit easier than we were years ago, and offending someone is a far greater offense than it used to be. It's a far greater crime to offend someone these days. I get this idea that we're all racing to be the victim in our offendedness. Everyone wants to be the victim. It's like if I can declare that you have offended me greater, I am the victim and therefore I have the upper hand.

I think it was a couple of years ago that Kathy Griffin and Donald Trump went back and forth about this. Kathy Griffin pulled a stunt to express her dislike for Donald Trump and it was something that crossed the line and Donald Trump called foul. He pulled his family into the mix and said, "You've scarred my family. I can't believe you have offended us so. Shame on you." And he shamed her hard publicly. She knew she was wrong, and everybody came down on her in part because of the way he was shaming her. He shamed her so hard that then she took offense and called foul and said, "I'm offended that you're so offended," therefore she's the victim now. They went back and forth about who was the victim and who had the greater offense.

I grew up in Branson and was raised in a home where I was taught to follow the Lord. I received Christ at a young age. This was long before Branson was the Christian Las Vegas that it is now. So, quite conservative and fairly sheltered from things that might offend Christians.

As I grew into that age where you start to notice things... You start to notice things that are kind of offensive. I would come home and say, "Mom, you won't believe what so and so said." Or I would see something and say, "You won't believe what I saw on television or what they did over here." Mom, in her eloquence and her remnant Arkansas accent would say, "Son, the world ain't Christian." What's she was saying in that is in this life, people are going to do and say things that are going to be offensive. Don't make yourself the victim.

Here's the thing and this is why I say perceived enemies. You don't have as many enemies as you think you do. You have an enemy who is trying to pit you against the people around you. When you are offended and you become the victim, that hinders you from expressing kindness and love to those around you, even those that offend you.

Have you ever heard the phrase “You can catch more flies with honey than you can with vinegar”? This applies. It makes me think of Proverbs 16 that says, **24 Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.** You can catch more flies with honey than you can with vinegar. Love is kind to those who offend you. Jesus never acted offended. He never played the role of a victim. And he was under offense all the time. The Pharisees and the scribes were constantly coming after him with accusation of blasphemy and telling him he was demon possessed and saying he was inadequate and all of these other things.

#### **4. Love is kind to those who attack you.**

As we get into this one, I want to point out that as we’ve gone along, it’s has gotten harder and harder to express kindness to these groups of people. Those we like comes easy. Those that we’re different from. We can get over our differences. Those who offend you. Wait a minute, this is a little tough. Now we’re talking about those who attack you. I’m talking about people who single you out and come at you, a true attack at you. Jesus said regardless of that, when they single you out... They don’t do something that’s just offensive in general; they single you out and they come after you. He said we are to be kind to those attack us.

Jesus tells us that in Matthew 5, a little bit earlier in the Sermon on the Mount. **38 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ 39 But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.** I want to talk about a couple of points here in this passage.

The first is a slap to the right cheek. What that means is most people are right handed. A slap to the right cheek would be a back-handed slap, an insult. It’s not literally a slap like a physical slap, but an insult, a direct attack on you, directly at you.

The other thing is this eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. He said “You have heard it said...” because they had heard it said. This was a saying of the time, a principle that they lived by. This principle came into practice years before that, even centuries, because there were people who were exercising justice over others with consequences far greater than their offense. You’ve heard it said “the punishment should fit the crime” would be another way that they were trying to correct this. So, what they said to the people who were exercising these higher consequences was, “No, no, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. The punishment should fit the crime.”

That was put in place long before Jesus said these words and he said these words because he was addressing people that had used this to justify their vengeance and their retaliation. “You did this to me, it’s an eye for an eye, I’m coming back at you with the same.” Remember what we said earlier that we are not to emulate the justice and wrath of God? We are to emulate his love and love is kind even to those who attack you. That’s what Jesus was talking about, the vengeance and retaliation that we are not to exercise. Love is kind even to those who attack you.

Let’s look at Titus 3. This is Paul writing to Titus about the church and interactions that take place. He said, **10 As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing**

**more to do with him...** Here's what this looks like. The person serves up division and he slaps you in the right cheek. You turn to him the other cheek and warn him once. If he slaps you in the other cheek, then you warn him twice and then you have nothing to do with him. Which is a good thing because I only have two cheeks that I'm willing to offer up.

The warnings that you give are not warnings of retaliation. We're not to emulate that. The warnings are "Look, if you keep coming at me, I'm going to have nothing to do with you because I'm not going to participate in foolish, ignorant controversies." So, warn him once, warn him twice, and then have nothing to do with him.

The other thing is if someone that you have had nothing to do with because of this returns to you with a true heart of remorse and reconciliation, you offer them forgiveness, you offer them grace because remember love is forgiving as well. Love is kind. Sometimes, the kindest thing you can do is remove yourself, to stop the email conversations, to stop the social posts, to stop the text or hang up the phone. Remove yourself. Sometimes the kindest thing you can do is remove yourself.

I think the greatest expression ever of love, being kind to those who attack you, was Jesus on the cross. He had been beaten and ridiculed and teased and mocked and insulted. Hanging on the cross, breathing his last breath, speaking his last words, he said this about those who were doing that to him: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Even in that moment, in that attack directly at him, he was petitioning to his Father on their behalf. Love is kind even to those who attack you.

So, we remember that love is kind and that love is an attribute of our perfect and holy God, personified in Christ whom we are to emulate. Kindness is mild and gentle benevolence, seeking to do good to others. Love is kind to those you like, to those who are different from you, to those who offend you, and those who attack you.

I want to close with this. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul, in Verse 4, starts in with love is patient, love is kind, and on and on about these aspects of love, but before he does that, in the first three verses, he talks about what it is like to not have love and the things that we do outside of love. In Chapter 12, we studied about the spiritual gifts and serving one another as a body of Christ, and now we're talking about all the things that love is.

In these first few verses of Chapter 13, he repeats himself three times basically. He says this is what it's like to do things outside of love. He says, ***1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.*** You know where I'm going with this don't you? Have you ever heard a clanging cymbal? I don't know about you, but that's not very pleasant to me. A clanging cymbal. But you'll notice that back in this drum set, there is a very similar, if not the exact same kind of cymbal. That cymbal, when played with the larger drum set and played to music in concert with the rest of the instruments and the voices on our worship team, produces a beautiful sound that's pleasing to the Lord and everyone around.

The point is we can be kind, we can make ourselves be kind, we can fake it. But if we don't have love, that's all that it is, a clanging cymbal. But when produced out of love and complementary to the other

things that love is, this attribute of God, with one another, with love is patient, love is kind, and on and on, it becomes a beautiful thing that is pleasing to God and pleasing to those around us.

Father, we love you and we're grateful for Woodland Hills. We're grateful for our church family, Lord, and those that you have brought together.

Lord, we're thankful for the love attribute that you have given us, that you have showed us in your Son Christ. Lord, I pray that as we leave here today that we can emulate him in our expressions of kindness. More important than that, that it genuinely flows from a heart of love.

Father, show us the right thing to do, give us the courage to do it, and keep us safe as we leave. We pray these things in Christ's name... Amen.