

NORTHERN LIGHT

Digest
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Whatever Happened to Kindness?

Not so long ago I was covering an event with a co-announcer for our local DCTV Cable station back in California. She had spent her life in public relations. She helped transform Gene Autry's reputation from singing cowboy to community visionary back in the 1970's.

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She knows people. "Things are so hate-filled right now," she said, "you can't even talk to people about anything in the public arena they are so divided."

My co-host had just come through a scary battle with cancer so she had her priorities well in view.

This got me thinking how often I spent as a pastor reflecting, praying, thinking, *praying*, mediating, *praying* about how to deal with some chronic "people problems" in my congregation. It seemed that the Holy Spirit calmly and sanely spoke to me: "We're all people problems. Don't forget kindness, Neil."

It was almost like a mother's voice except it wasn't a voice but rather a calm, insistent, warmly expressed massaging of my often-frazzled ministerial psyche.

Kindness and Goodness

As Christians we should never get tired of the Fruit of the Spirit passage, Galatians 5:22-26. I read again about "love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, kindness..." There it was. Kindness. It was still there. Listen to the usually dependable William Barclay:

"Kindness and goodness are closely connected words. For kindness the word is *chrestotes*. It, too, is commonly translated goodness. The Rheims version of 2 Corinthians 6:6 translates it 'sweetness.' It is a lovely word...Old wine is called mellow (*chrestotes*, root). Christ's yoke is called *chrestos* (Matthew 11:30), that is, it does not chafe...*chrestotes* can only help. Trench says that



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Jesus... showed *chrestotes* when he was kind to the sinning woman who anointed his feet. The Christian needs that goodness



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(a different word but linked) which at one and the same time can be kind and strong.”

Thanks. Nice work, Barclay, as usual. Seems like a nice piece of orientation as we head out the door each morning.

If we stop to think about it, the essentials of good human relationships have been seen to revolve a lot around kindness—by secular as well as spiritual writers, teachers, seminar leaders. I tried to summarize some of this for a friend’s book some time back. Here are basic but powerful points of human relations. Some of them you’ll already know.

Good human relationships are characterized by an emphasis on others as much as (or more than) an emphasis on Self. This goes back to Christ’s fundamental teaching, doesn’t it? “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). The apostle Paul amplified this to define the winning dynamic in any relationship: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4).

Saint Francis put it this way: “*Make me a channel of your peace, where there is hatred let me bring your love...O Master grant that I may never seek, so much to be understood as to understand, to be consoled as to console, to be loved as to love with all my soul.*” Now there was a man who knew how to summarize. This is the core attitude to develop in meeting challenges, meeting them in

such a way that peace is maximized and friction is kept to the margins. God help us to reach those heights occasionally.

Good human relations are built upon mutual trust and respect. When people truly enjoy one another and have demonstrated trustworthiness over time, motives are rarely questioned and good morale becomes the norm. This is true both in the workplace and in the home. Jesus reflected this when he told his loyal disciples: “No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you *friends*, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you” (John 15:15). This high trust approach fosters good communications, a key ingredient to both personal relations and greater productivity in the workplace. Ask any manager.

Good relationships work even better when there is a mutual use of gifts, skills and creativity. This applies in families, on the job or in the wider community. Where there is freedom for family or team members to contribute their gifts and skills to the enterprise morale tends to soar. Jesus treated his subordinates kindly. He trained them, trusted them and sent them out on a practice mission. He gave them the “freedom to fail” (Luke 10:1-12). Then he “debriefed” them and commended them for helping build up the enterprise (Luke 10:17-24). Husbands, fathers, supervisors, pastors—we all will benefit from copying such an expansive, outgoing approach.

Good relationships have built-in feedback mechanisms. Allowing for a free flow of feedback builds team spirit, a key to developing mutually beneficial solutions. Keeping the relationship solution-oriented outflanks the tendency for personal conflicts to fester and simmer. One Christian who supervises hundreds of employees advises: "When a problem comes up I try to focus on what is wrong, not who is wrong." Feedback and problem-solving mechanisms can be as simple as a husband and wife sitting on a couch reviewing the week's events over coffee or as formal as a board meeting where everyone is encouraged to offer constructive suggestions. The accent needs to be on chrestotes, kindness.

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Good relationships are built on strong personal commitment.

Jesus had every reason to "dump" his leading man Peter. He had let him down at the crisis moment in their relationship (Luke 22:61). But Jesus patiently restored Peter because he believed in his ultimate dedication (John 21:15-19). Deep down, Jesus knew Peter was deeply committed. Commitment is proven over time, one reason it is always wise to think twice (or even three times!) before scuttling a valued relationship.

And all of these principles work better when animated by kindness, one of the ingredients of love. Water has H₂O, salt has sodium chloride, and real biblical-based love has big heaping dollops of kindness. Paul said it in the "Love" chapter: "love suffers long, and is kind" (1 Corinthians 13).

Yes, people sometimes make you suffer but biblical love is expressed not with a sense of martyred tightfistedness but kindly.

Thank you, Holy Spirit. I needed that reminder. Badly. Amen.

Compiled with the help of Myron Rush, Management: A Biblical Approach; The Royal Bank of Canada's "On Being a Mature Person," Erich Fromm, The Art of Loving and the NIV Bible.

Neil Earle

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National Pastors Conference GCI-Mozambique

355 delegates from the provinces of Tete, Manica, Sofala and Zambezia attended the Mozambique National Pastors Conference held between March 29 to April 01, 2018. The conference and pastors' training was conducted by Pastor Kalengule Kaoma, GCI- Africa Missions Director, along with Pastors Tim Maguire and Caleb Makhela from GCI-South Africa.

This Easter conference had the theme "The Suffering Servant" (Isaiah 53:4-50).

In particular, the question of What Is Leadership? was discussed. The following points were covered:

1. How can we be good leaders?
2. Who is our role model?
3. How can people see we are filled with Holy Spirit?

The conference ended with a church service, communion, and the baptism of 84 members who came from 110 different GCI congregations. In addition, Pastor Manuel João Vasco was commissioned as the new National Ministry Leader(NML) for Mozambique.

The pastors left with much enthusiasm in what they saw and learned during the three days.

The Mozambique national leadership has the honor to thank the members from Canada for the donation that assisted with the costs of the conference. As well as GCI-South Africa for accepting their request to conduct the leadership training during Easter.



We've Moved

After 57 years in the lower mainland of BC, our office has moved to a new location in Canada. Our new address and phone number are:

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