

KIDS of
INTEGRITY

Kindness



Spread some “kindness germs,” play Charades, take the “random acts of kindness” challenge, and reward kids with light sticks for being a shining example of kindness.

Make growing in kindness a fun-filled adventure! Read on for more ideas that help kids:

- be more considerate of others
- put others first
- respond politely to insults, compliments and offers they wish to decline.

This lesson also helps address teasing, bullying, making fun of others and tattling.

Lesson contents

Parents’ prayer	2
Kids talk with God	3
Speak a blessing	4
Memory verses	4
Kick-off craft	5
Bible stories	6
Creative discipline	9
Hands-on options	9
Recommended resources	14

Parents’ prayer

Although we can try to develop character in our children through various methods and programs, only God can bring about permanent change in a child’s heart. Before you begin leading your child through this study on kindness, spend time alone with God interceding for His help. Ask Him to help you grow in the area of kindness, and to release His power in your child.

Use the sample prayer below to guide you in praying for your child’s character development. If you prefer to personalize your prayers even further, read through the additional verses provided under “Scripture-guided prayer” for direction and inspiration.

Sample prayer

Gracious Saviour, when I reflect on kindness, I think of You. You exercise kindness, righteousness and justice. These are the things you delight in (Jeremiah 9:24). In Your abundant love and mercy, You gave us Your Son, Jesus, to personify Your love. Your desire is to show us the incomparable richness of Your grace, expressed in Your kindness to us in Jesus Christ. It is by Your grace we are saved (Ephesians 2:4-8). It comforts me to know that You have such far-reaching, kind-hearted, Fatherly love for us.

Your word says that whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did (1 John 2:6). That is a challenging statement! Please forgive me for the times that I get irritable and impatient, and fail to demonstrate kindness to the people whom I love most. I pray that I would be rooted and established in Your love so that I can grasp how wide, long, high and deep your love for me is! How much I need to be filled with the fullness of Your love, God (Ephesians 3:17-19)! Only with Your power at work in me is it possible for me to offer others the kindness, consideration and grace that You take pleasure in.

Lord, for my child, I pray _____ would be known as a boy/girl who is loving and kind. Please pour out Your wisdom from heaven on _____ so he/she may be pure, peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere (James 3:17). As _____ is hurt or feels wronged by

another, I pray he/she would not pay back wrong for wrong, but that _____ would recognize that he/she needs to wait on You instead (Proverbs 20:22). Self-centeredness is often the root of unkindness. Please give _____ the wisdom to ask for Your Spirit to pour love into his/her heart so he/she can pass Your love along to others in the kind things he/she does. Enable _____ to be considerate, doing to others as he/she would want done do himself/herself (Luke 6:31). In speech, I pray the words that come out of _____'s mouth would benefit those who listen. May _____ excel in encouraging others. As he/she sees another feeling down and anxious, I pray he/she would be quick to offer kind words to lift them up (Proverbs 12:25, Ephesians 4:29).

God, You are there at the playground when push comes to shove and You are familiar with the weekly grind of getting the laundry and dishes done. You know that it is often easier to be kind to a neighbour than a family member. My prayer is that we would be a family who practices kindness even when we are late, busy, tired or simply worn out. Please allow our love for You to be obvious in the way our family members interact with each other. I pray that we would be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave us (Ephesians 4:32). If the qualities of goodness, brotherly kindness and love are evident in our family life, we will be effective and productive for You, Lord Jesus (2 Peter 1:3-8). This is our desire. Please send Your Holy Spirit to fill our home and our hearts with kindness. Thank you God, that when we pray according to Your will, You hear us (1 John 5:14). Amen.

Scripture-guided prayer for parents

Pray through one or more of the selected Scriptures under each heading. Focus on listening to God and allowing His Spirit to direct you as you pray.

Character focus

Begin by letting God know how much you appreciate His love and kindness.

Psalms 36:5-9 | Jeremiah 9:23-24 | Jeremiah 31:3 | Joel 2:13 | 1 John 4:7-10

Heart search

Acknowledge when and how you are unkind.
Romans 2:1-4 | Philippians 2:3-4 | James 3:14-16 | 1 Peter 3:8-9 | 1 John 3:17-18

Gratitude

Thank God for ways you have seen kindness exhibited in your family.

Family requests

Ask God to help you and your family members practice kindness.
Psalm 19:14 | 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 | Colossians 3:12-14 | 1 Thessalonians 5:11-15 | James 3:17

Kids talk with God

Use this section to help your child learn to reach out to God in all things. The sample prayers all begin with "Dear God," however, you may use any other names for God your children are comfortable with (i.e. Jesus, Father God, Lord Jesus, Heavenly Father, Abba Father, Lord). If your son or daughter is ready to learn how to formulate their own prayers, use the verses under "Scripture-guided prayer for children" for inspiration.

Sample prayers

Dear God, I want to be kind. Help me to be kind even when I don't feel like it or when I don't think the other person deserves it. Amen.

Dear God, please show me if one of my family members (or friends) need me to be extra kind to them today. Thank you. Amen.

Dear God, You tell us not to pay back wrong for wrong, but to always try to be kind to each other (1 Thessalonians 5:15). Even when I feel someone has done something wrong, please help me to be kind. Amen.

Dear God, You are so kind to us. Thank you. Please put Your love in my heart so I can be kind to others. Amen.

Dear God, please help me to treat others as I want to be treated. Amen.

Dear God, I have been unkind _____ (with my words/with my hands, etc.). Please forgive me and help me to have _____ (kind words/kind hands, etc.) Thank you. Amen.

Scripture-guided prayer for children

Read through one of the selected Scriptures under each heading and help your children pray based on the verse you read. Encourage them to listen to God and allow His Spirit to guide them as they pray.

Character focus

Begin by letting God know how much you appreciate His love and kindness.

Psalms 34:8 | Psalms 107:1,8-9 | Jeremiah 9:24

Heart search

Acknowledge when and how you are unkind.

Philippians 2:3-4 | 1 Thessalonians 5:15 | James 3:16

Gratitude

Thank God for ways you have seen kindness exhibited in your family.

Personal requests

Ask God to help you, your siblings and parents, be kind to each other.

Psalms 19:14 | Luke 6:31 | 1 Corinthians 13:4

Speak a blessing

Your affirmation will give tremendous encouragement to your children as they strive to grow in the area of kindness. Use this section as a reminder to “speak a blessing” when you see this godly characteristic in your son or daughter.

- Good job being kind, _____.
- I see you have a lot of kindness fruit growing, _____.
- _____ is such a kind boy/girl.
- Thanks for being so kind, _____.
- You have such a kind heart, _____.

- Thank you for thinking of _____ (name the recipient of your child’s kindness), instead of yourself, _____.
- Did you know God delights when He sees kindness (Jeremiah 9:24)? I bet He is happy right now.
- _____, thank you for choosing not to pay back wrong for wrong.

Memory verses

Memorizing Scripture with your child helps God’s Spirit bring about lasting change. Choose a verse that your child can learn in a pre-determined period of time. Aim to review the verse at least once every day.

Psalms 34:8 “Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him.”

Proverbs 11:16-17 “A kindhearted woman gains respect, but ruthless men gain only wealth. A kind man benefits himself, but a cruel man brings trouble on himself.”

Proverbs 12:25 “An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up.”

Proverbs 20:22 “Do not say, ‘I’ll pay you back for this wrong!’ Wait for the Lord, and He will deliver you.”

Proverbs 21:21 “He who pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity and honor.”

Proverbs 22:11 “He who loves a pure heart and whose speech is gracious will have the King for his friend.”

Jeremiah 9:24 “... but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,” declares the Lord.”

Luke 6:31 “Do to others as you would have them do to you.”

1 Corinthians 13:4 “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.”

Galatians 5:22-23 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

Ephesians 4:32 “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

Colossians 3:12-14 “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”

1 Thessalonians 5:15 “Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.”

Titus 3:1-2 “Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men.”

James 3:17 “But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.”

2 Peter 1:5-8 “For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1 John 3:18 “Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue, but with actions and in truth.”

1 John 4:12 “No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us.”

Kick-off craft

For this kick-off craft, you will make flags for each family member to remind your family to be kind.

Kindness flags

Directions

■ Make one small flag for each person in your family. On one side of the flag, paste a family member’s picture and write their name. On the other side, write a memory verse of your choice. You will also need to make a flag pole holder. This can be done by filling a plastic vase or cup with decorative sand.

■ Over the course of the day, when a family member practices kindness, their flag gets placed in the flag pole holder. Encourage your children by reading 1 John 4:12: “No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.” To further heighten awareness that it is God’s love in us that allows us to be kind, sing the song *Castle of My Heart* (lyrics below).

*Love is a flag flown high from the castle of my heart,
From the castle of my heart,
From the castle of my heart.
Love is a flag flown high from the castle of my heart,
For the King is in residence there.*

*So let it fly, let it fly, let the whole world know,
Let the whole world know, let the whole world know,
So let it fly, let it fly, let the whole world know,
That the King is in residence here.*

(Public domain)

Each day, make it your goal to have all of the flags in the flag holder by suppertime. During the meal, review the ways family members were kind. Take time to thank God for opportunities your family members have had to share kindness with others.

Bible stories

This section provides Bible stories with the theme of kindness, along with questions you can use as a guide for family discussions. Choose one story that is appropriate for your child. Before reading aloud, take a few minutes to review the story. If the Bible passage is too complex for your child, paraphrase the story yourself or use the summary provided under “key concepts.”

Acts of kindness

Read Luke 5:17-26 and Matthew 6:1-4.

Questions for discussion

1. Who brought the paralyzed man to see Jesus?
2. Have you ever done something kind for a friend?
3. Have you ever shared something with someone who needed it more than you?
4. Why did Jesus heal the paralyzed man? To bring praise to Himself or to honour God?
5. When you do kind things, who deserves the praise for your kindness?

Key concepts

Four friends brought their paralyzed friend to see Jesus so he could be healed. Jesus healed the man to bring praise to God, not Himself. When we are kind, we should do it to honour God, not ourselves. For example, let's say you give some food to the food bank. God wouldn't want us to brag about our generosity. However, if someone did find out about it and said how kind you were, you could give honour to God by saying, “God has blessed my family with lots of food, and we wanted to share some of it with another family.”

Love your enemies

Read Luke 6:27-36 and 1 John 3:16-18.

Questions for discussion

1. Is it easy to be kind? If so, when?
2. When are you tempted to be unkind?
3. Who does Jesus say we are to be kind to?

4. Who can help us show love to those who are unkind to us?
5. How did Jesus show He loves us?
6. How can we show love to others?
7. Do you know anyone who needs something that you have?

Key concepts

Jesus talked about a common saying, “Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.” He said that He didn't agree. Instead, Jesus encouraged His followers to love their enemies and pray for those who were unkind to them. The Bible says that Jesus showed His love for us by “laying down his life” (dying on the cross for our sins). 1 John 3:16-18 also tells us that the best way to show we have God's love in our hearts is to share what we have with those who need it.

David, Abigail and Nabal

Read 1 Samuel 25:2-42 and Psalm 94:1-2.

Questions for discussion

1. Have you ever been kind to someone and they were mean in return?
2. How did that make you feel?
3. In this story, what did David do that was kind to Nabal?
4. What did Nabal do when David asked him for a favour?
5. What was David going to do?
6. What did Abigail do?
7. What did David say to Abigail?
8. When someone is unkind to us, what are we to do?
9. What did David say about God in Psalm 94:1-2?
10. Do you always make the right choices?

Key concepts

David and his men had been very kind to Nabal's men, but when David asked Nabal for a favour, he refused to return David's kindness. This made David angry, and he was going to fight Nabal. Fortunately, Nabal's wife Abigail became aware of the situation and went to ask David to forgive her husband for his unkindness. Although David knew that it was wrong to take revenge, he was still planning to do so. In the end, David thanked Abigail for preventing him from fighting Nabal.

When we are tempted to pay someone back for their unkindness to us, we need to remember David and Nabal. God eventually did repay Nabal for his wrongdoing. It is not our job to repay someone for his or her actions; it's God's. We need to focus on instructions we read in Proverbs 20:22: **“Do not say, ‘I’ll pay you back for this wrong!’ Wait for the Lord, and He will deliver you.”**

Cool kids are kind

Read Luke 10:25-37.

Note: *If your children have heard this story many times, you may want to tell a modern-day version alongside the Biblical account. For example, the story can be set in a schoolyard or playground situation where a child has been beaten up. Different kids who know the injured child ride by on their bikes and go by on the other side of the street, fearing that they may get beaten up, too. Finally, a kid comes along from another neighbourhood who doesn't even know the hurt kid. He stops to help and takes him to a house and offers to pay for the bandages. After telling the modern version, ask your children to explain how your modern-day version paralleled the Bible story of the Good Samaritan.*

Questions for discussion

1. How do you feel when you see someone else is hurt?
2. What do you do?
3. Why did the Levite or priest (or neighbourhood children, in the case of the modern-day story) not stop to help the injured person?

4. Who did stop and why do you think they decided to help?
5. What would Jesus have done?
6. Can you think of a time when you might be tempted to avoid helping someone?
7. If a mean kid got hurt, would you laugh and think, “Serves him right!” or would you offer to help?
8. Can you think of anyone in your neighbourhood who needs your help?

Key concepts

Jesus told this story to help people understand that it is important to show love to everyone. If we only show compassion to some people, we are not truly sharing God's love with others. The Samaritan in the story showed love to the injured man because he had pity on him and cared for him. The Levite and the priest, although they were considered to be spiritual leaders, did not show God's love to the injured man. Jesus ended the story by saying, “Go and do likewise.” We show true compassion and kindness when we go out of our way to help someone else. Jesus expects us to share His love and kindness with people we don't even know.

God's kindness

Read Acts 14:17, Ephesians 2:7 and Titus 3:4-7.

Questions for discussion

1. Do you think God is kind?
2. How can you know that He is?
3. How does God show us kindness?
4. When someone is kind to you, do you tell other people about their kindness?
5. How can you tell someone else about how God is kind to you?

Key concepts

God shows us kindness by caring for us. He sends us rain to help farmers grow crops to feed us. He provides food for us and fills our hearts with joy! He also showed us His love by sending His Son Jesus to die on the cross to take the punishment for our sins.

When we are kind to others, it is a good way to share God's love with them. We should also be prepared to tell others how God shows His kindness to us. For example, it may be a rainy day and you may feel like complaining. Instead of whining about the weather, we should thank God for the rain and be happy because it reminds us that God is showing us kindness.

David's kindness

Read 2 Samuel 9.

■ Prior to reading this story, give a brief history of who Jonathan was and the friendship between David and Jonathan:

Saul was the King of Israel. Unfortunately, Saul was not a king who pleased God, so God chose to give the honour of being the king to another person (1 Samuel 15). The one God chose to be the next king was David, a young man who worked for King Saul.

David spent a lot of time in the palace and became very good friends with Saul's son, Jonathan. After some time, King Saul became so jealous of David that he wanted to kill him. Even so, Jonathan remained David's best friend. Jonathan even gave up his position as the next king of Israel for David, and he risked his life to defend David. Jonathan died in battle before David was made king of Israel.

Questions for discussion

1. Who was Mephibosheth?
2. Who was David?
3. Who do you think ate at the king's table?
4. What do you think it would be like to eat at the king's house?

5. How did David show God's kindness to Mephibosheth?
6. How can you be kind to those who are less fortunate than we are?

Key concepts

David wanted to show kindness to the family members of his friend Jonathan. He did this by returning property and honour to one of Jonathan's remaining relatives. David honoured him by having him eat with him at his own table.

Jesus is kind to children

Read Mark 10:13-16.

Questions for discussion

1. What does it mean to hurt someone's feelings?
2. How do people hurt your feelings?
3. Did the disciples consider the feelings of the little children?
4. What did Jesus do for the children?
5. How can we bless other people?
6. How can we show others that we think they are valuable?

Key concepts

Ignoring others, leaving them out or telling them to go away is unkind and will likely hurt their feelings. We can be a blessing to others by treating them as though they are valuable. This is what Jesus did when the parents brought their children to Him.

Creative discipline

Few parents enjoy their God-given responsibility of disciplining their children, and even fewer children enjoy being on the receiving end. The Bible tells us to expect discipline to be uncomfortable, but also promises positive results. This section will provide you with innovative suggestions to use when correcting your children, to help them learn to practice kindness.

For problems with thoughtless unkindness

Biblical basis

Luke 6:31 “Do to others as you would have them do to you.”

Suggested disciplinary action

When you see or hear of your child doing something unkind or thoughtless, have them stop and recite Luke 6:31. Have them spend some time away from play to consider the feelings of the other person. Pray together, asking God to send His Holy Spirit to fill their heart with kindness.

Affirmation

Assure your child that the Holy Spirit is God’s gift to us and with His help, they can be kind. Galatians 5:22-23: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control . . .”

For problems with intentional unkindness

Biblical basis

Proverbs 11:17 “A kind man benefits himself, but a cruel man brings trouble on himself.”

Suggested disciplinary action

The opposite of kindness is cruelty. Although it is rare that child is truly cruel, it does happen. The difference between cruelty and thoughtlessness is that cruelty is usually premeditated. However, the recipient of our thoughtlessness can perceive what we say or do as cruel, even if the harm was unintentional.

Bring their attention to Proverbs 11:17: “A kind man benefits himself, but a cruel man brings trouble on himself.” You can select an appropriate form of

“trouble” to bring on the offending child. The trouble should be age and maturity based. Also discuss how to make amends.

If the cruelty was intentionally breaking another child’s toy, consider how they may replace it by giving them one of their own toys or purchasing a new one. If the cruelty was verbal, have your child practice saying polite words instead of hurtful words. Pray with them to ask God’s forgiveness as well as the forgiveness of the person who has been wronged.

Affirmation

Assure your child that the Holy Spirit is God’s gift to us and with His help they can be kind. Remind them of the promise in Galatians 5:22-23: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. . . .”

Note: Habitual and extreme cruelty to animals can be an indicator of serious psychological problems. If your child exhibits these behaviours, see a reputable professional counsellor.

Hands-on options

Often we are consumed by the busyness of day-to-day living and we forget to look for opportunities to teach our children God-honouring character traits. These ideas require very little preparation, making it easy for you to share some simple but memorable lessons with your child. Read over the options at the beginning of your week and choose one or two that will fit your schedule.

Random acts of kindness

servicing others

Have your own “Random Acts of Kindness” week. Begin by encouraging family members to surprise each other with small acts of kindness. Examples include clearing someone else’s dishes, doing another family member’s chores, sharing a treat, or making time to read an extra story to a child.

If you want, you can expand the scope of your kindness by targeting people in your community who you want to encourage. Take a meal to someone in need, make cookies for another family or visit a

nursing home with flowers to give out. To add an encouraging message of God's love, include a Bible verse of your children's choosing. Afterwards, talk with your children and discuss how much the people appeared to appreciate their visit.

Relevant Scripture

Proverbs 19:17 "He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will reward him for what he has done."

Emotional Charades

drama / role play

At mealtime, on a bus, or waiting in a line up, play the Emotional Charades guessing game. Emotional Charades is played like the traditional charades game, except the players act out an emotion of their choosing. Each person takes a turn acting out a feeling. Other family members guess what they are "feeling" based on what they see. Examples include mad, scared, happy, sad, angry, excited, contented, etc.

The purpose behind this game is to help children watch out for and consider the feelings and emotions of those around them. You can also practice looking out for others who look down or discouraged. If you do see someone who is anxious or sad, model kindness for your child, and say some kind words to encourage the person who is down. To follow up, you can use the questions for discussion to enhance mealtime conversation.

Questions for discussion

- Did you notice anyone feeling sad, lonely, left out, injured or upset today?
- What did you do for them?
- What could you have done?
- Did anyone else help them?

Relevant Scripture

Proverbs 12:25 "An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up."

It's cool to be kind

drama / role play

Challenge your children to be kind instead of paying back wrong for wrong, and encourage them to bless those who curse them (1 Thessalonians 5:15, Luke 6:28). Talk to them about what to do when others are unkind to them. Help them plan a response ahead of time. You can further add to their learning by doing some role-playing.

Here are some examples you can use:

- Someone takes the toy you are playing with. Instead of grabbing it back forcefully, have your children try saying, "I was playing with that. Can I have it back please?" to solve the problem.
- A friend says, "Where did you get that dress" (implying that the dress is not very nice). Although it might be tempting for your child to tell her that she doesn't like her clothes either, have your child review a different response, such as "I'm sorry you don't like my dress; I really like the colour of your outfit."

Relevant Scripture

1 Thessalonians 5:15 "Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else."

Luke 6:28 "... bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."

Serving others first is fun

servicing others

Have some fun family competition by making a game of trying to put others first. For example, whenever a treat or something fun or special is about to happen, race to see who can say, "Serve my brother/friend first." Children will get such a positive reaction from others when they do this that it will positively reinforce itself.

Parents can also play! While driving, make a point of letting your children know when you have yielded to another car in traffic, allowing them to go ahead of you. The verses listed below can be used to provide a Biblical perspective.

Relevant Scripture

Luke 13:30 “Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.”

Mathew 20:26-28 “Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave - just as the Son of Man [Jesus] did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

Kind solutions

drama / role play

As parents, we all get many reports of unkindness, otherwise known as tattling. As these reports come in, refer your children to 1 Peter 4:8.

The key message to convey is that the Bible tells us God can put His love in their hearts to help them be kind and patient with others (Galatians 5:22-23).

Emphasize that we can show love to others by being patient instead of easily angered and by letting others have their way rather than demanding what we want (1 Corinthians 13:4-7, Luke 6:31). Summarize by explaining that when your children respond with kindness in difficult situations, they are demonstrating God’s love.

Work with your children to come up with some suggestions for solving problems cooperatively, and practice the solutions in role-play situations.

Some helpful questions to ask when a child is tattling on another, are:

- Have you tried to solve the problem by talking to _____ [the other child]?
- How can you show kindness in return?
- Did _____ hurt your body or your feelings?
- Was it on purpose or by mistake?
- Could you ask them to wait until you are finished playing with the toy to have a turn?

Relevant Scripture

1 Peter 4:8 “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.”

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. Love is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”

Galatians 5:22-23 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

Luke 6:31 “Do to others as you would have them do to you.”

Receiving kindness

drama / role play

Make a point of talking with your kids about responding appropriately when someone is kind to him or her. Examples of situations that can make children uncomfortable include:

- receiving compliments about his/her clothing or abilities
- being offered food that he/she does not want to eat
- opening a gift that does not appeal to him/her
- being invited to play with another child

Help your kids come up with a plan on how to say thank you when someone compliments his or her clothes, artwork or abilities. Practice a proper response for when they are invited by another child to play. Explore ideas as to how to politely decline food and say a sincere thank you for an unwanted gift.

Using role-play will give your children the confidence to respond kindly, without hurting the feelings of those who have been kind to them. To add interest to the role-play, stage a puppet show and have

your children use their stuffed animals or dolls as the actors.

Kindness is contagious

science with a twist

At an early age, kids learn to be germ-aware. Parents regularly mention concerns about hand washing, nose blowing, nose picking, nail biting and covering mouths when coughing or sneezing. Begin by reviewing basic hygiene rules and expand your discussion to tell your children that there is one germ that they are welcome to spread all over the place: the kindness germ!

Kindness is as contagious as the common cold. Explain that when we are kind to each other, it softens our hearts and makes us want to be kind to others as well.

Discuss ways you can spread “kindness germs” everywhere! Throughout the course of your study, whenever your children wash their hands, cough, sneeze or blow their noses, it can be a reminder to ask God to wash away any unkindness and to ask Him to help you spread kindness germs instead.

Fruit faces

fun with food

At snack time, cut up fruit in various shapes that will lend themselves to making a smiley face on a plate. For example, a cantaloupe slice can make a smile, apple wedges arch like eyebrows, grapes cut in two are ideal for eyes, and halved strawberries look like funny noses.

Supply the fruit slices and allow your children to be creative in making their fruit face. As you give out the fruit, explain that when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, we are kind and loving to others.

Read Galatians 5:22-23 and ask your children which fruit they think represents certain character qualities. Help them by reviewing choices for them, including love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control. As they place fruit on their plate, ask them which fruit of the Spirit it represents, and discuss how the various fruits of the Spirit can help family members be kind to each other. Later, when you can see your children in

a situation where they are tempted to be unkind, ask them as a gentle reminder, “Are you growing kindness fruit today?”

Relevant Scripture

Galatians 5:22-23 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

The kindness of animals

getting into nature

One of the best illustrations of kindness that we see in nature is animals grooming each other. If you can, take a walk or a drive in the country. It is common to see cows, horses and cats licking each other. This is true kindness because the animal is being kind without expecting anything in return.

A way that we can show this kind of kindness is by giving back rubs to family members. To allow this activity to be enjoyed by the whole family, begin by assembling in a circle. If you have the adults sit while the children stand, it is possible for everyone rub the back of the person in front of him or her at the same time.

After a few minutes, have everyone turn around and rub the person’s back who was rubbing his or her back. If you have a child who really likes animals and nature, consider getting a book out of the library on the kindness of animals.

Shining kids

any time

Read Psalm 37:5-6 together. Provide recognition for acts of kindness by giving your children a plastic glow in-the-dark wand or bracelet when they are kind. The glow-in-the-dark item can serve as a reminder that God sees their actions and is pleased when He sees them making right choices. (*Instruct younger children never to bite or chew on their bracelet.*)

Relevant Scripture

Psalm 37:5-6 “Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him and He will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.”

Water fun

science with a twist

This illustration is based on Luke 6:45. The goal is to illustrate how actions and speech flow out of the attitude of our heart.

You will need two clear bottles with lids, some dirt or sediment, and water.

- Fill two clear bottles with water. Leave one full of clean water and put the lid on it. In the second bottle put your dirt or sand and close it. To add interest, you can draw faces on the outsides of the bottles.
- Begin by showing your children the two bottles of water. Tell them one bottle is like a child who has God's kindness in their heart, while the other one doesn't. Explain that even though they look similar, when they get shaken up they will be able to tell the difference between the two.
- Explain that when problems come up we can tell what is in someone's heart. Difficulties might be a fight over a toy, a disagreement over who gets to choose a video, who gets the best seat or the biggest piece of cake. Use an example that is applicable in your household. Tell kids these are life's "shake ups."
- Then shake the bottles of water to show that during these difficult times, what is in our heart shows. The bottle with dirt in it will become cloudy, whereas the one that is pure will still appear clear during the shaking. Talk about how someone with a kind heart will react in the different situations.

Read some of the Scripture verses to reinforce this Biblical truth. Review the discussion questions and close your time by praying and asking God for a pure heart and kind speech.

Questions for discussion

- Can you clean your own heart?
- Can Mom and Dad clean it for you?
- Who can clean it?

- Think of someone you like being around. How do they show kindness to you?

Relevant Scripture

Luke 6:45 "The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored in his heart."

1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Psalm 51:10 "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."

Proverbs 22:11 "He who loves a pure heart and whose speech is gracious will have the king for his friend."

Droopy plants

science with a twist

In Psalm 37, the wicked are described as withering plants while the righteous are described as well watered grass that is cared for by God. To illustrate this truth, here are some suggestions:

Spring / summer option

You will need two containers of dirt, grass seed and water. Plant some grass seed in two different containers. Water both containers until the grass comes up. Then stop watering one container while continuing to water the other.

Fall / winter option

You will need two houseplants, one that is well watered and the other one neglected. Find an already withered plant or let a houseplant go without water so that it begins to droop.

These plants become object lessons. Show your children the plants and explain that God will let the wicked wither, but will take care of those who are righteous.

Talk with your children, giving examples that would be applicable to his/her life. In your discussion, contrast wickedness with examples of doing what is right. For example, wickedness would be calling someone a name, teasing, leaving someone out or hurting someone. Kindness would be defending

the child who is being picked on, sharing, including all friends in playtime, and considering the feelings of others.

Use the questions provided to enhance learning. The key teaching point is that although it is tempting to be envious of those who seem to be getting away with wrongdoing, God is watching and will care for those who do what is right.

Questions for discussion

- Which plant would you like to be?
- Which plant looks like it has been cared for?
- Do you ever get upset when someone does something wrong?
- Who promises to care for you?

Relevant Scripture

Psalm 37:1-4 “Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong; for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away. Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.”

Proverbs 15:3 “The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good.”

Recommended resources

Books

Faith Begins at Home, by Mark Holmen. Gospel Light, 2005.

FaithLaunch, by John Trent, PhD, and Jane Vogel. Tyndale, 2008.

The Berenstain Bears: Faithful Friends, by Jan and Michael Berenstain. Zonderkidz, 2009. Ages 4-7.

The Berenstain Bears: Kindness Counts, by Jan and Mike Berenstain. Zonderkidz, 2010. Ages 4-7.

The Berenstain Bears Love Their Neighbors, by Jan and Michael Berenstain. Zonderkidz, 2009. Ages 4-7.

DVDs / CDs

Adventures in Odyssey #54: Clanging Cymbals and the Meaning of God’s Love (CD). Tyndale, 2011. Ages 8 and up.

Adventures in Odyssey Life Lessons #3: Compassion (CD). Tyndale, 2005. Ages 8 and up.

Adventures in Odyssey Life Lessons #11: Respect (CD). Tyndale, 2006. Ages 8-12.

Auto B Good: Fruits of the Spirit (DVD). Rising Star Studios, 2011. Ages 2-6.

Essentials of Parenting: Raising Kids With a Faith That Lasts (DVD). Focus on the Family, Tyndale, 2009.