

## East Hill Church Sermon Discussion Guide: The Kindness of God

*Guest Speaker: Pastor Randy Remington*

*Date: March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024*

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### Introduction:

Pastor Randy Remington, the President of Foursquare, commenced the sermon by expressing his gratitude for the opportunity to speak at East Hill Church. He acknowledged the church's far-reaching impact and the significance of Pastor Keith's leadership within the Foursquare movement. Remington then delved into the sermon's central theme - the kindness of God, emphasizing its importance as a defining characteristic of a disciple and its transformative power in a world often marked by unkindness.

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### Kindness is in Short Supply in our World:

Pastor Randy shared a humorous anecdote about an incident at a Starbucks drive-thru, where a man cut in front of him, causing him to react with frustration. However, when he reached the window, the barista informed him that the man had paid for his order and wished him a good day, addressing him as "Pastor Randy." This story highlighted the scarcity of kindness in today's world, where people are often on edge and quick to anger. Remington emphasized that as believers, we must be cautious not to be drawn into this way of relating and behaving, but instead offer an alternative that reflects the transforming life of Jesus within us.

### Discussion Questions:

1. Share a moment when you witnessed or experienced an unexpected act of kindness. How did it impact your perspective on kindness in daily life?
2. How do societal pressures and cultural norms challenge our ability to consistently show kindness, especially to those we disagree with or find difficult?
3. Discuss the role of kindness in our spiritual journey. How can we cultivate a heart that responds with kindness, even under stress or provocation?

### Supporting Verses:

**Luke 6:35:** "But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked."

### Context and Reflection:

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** This verse reflects Jesus' teaching on unconditional love and kindness, even towards those who are ungrateful or wicked.
- **Theological Significance:** It challenges us to extend kindness beyond our comfort zones, embodying God's unconditional love.
- **Application:** This verse underscores the necessity of practicing kindness in a world where it is rare, prompting us to act kindly in challenging situations.

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## **Chrēstos (Kind) and Christos (Christians):**

Pastor Randy explored the Greek words "Chrēstos" (kind) and "Christos" (Christ), noting their similarity and the idea that early Christians were known as both "Christians" and "Chrestus" (the kind ones). He pointed out that in a brutal Roman Empire, the emergence of a people characterized by the kindness of God was a powerful witness. However, Remington also acknowledged that a search for "why are Christians so" often yields results like "mean," suggesting that the church today may not always embody the kindness it is called to.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Reflect on the linguistic connection between 'Chrēstos' and 'Christos'. How does this enhance your understanding of the relationship between being kind and being Christian?
2. In what ways can we, as Christians, combat the stereotype that Christians are often unkind or hypocritical?
3. How can the concept of Jesus' "easy yoke" inform our approach to living out kindness in our daily lives and relationships?

### **Supporting Verses:**

**Matthew 11:30:** "For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

#### **Context and Reflection:**

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** This statement by Jesus uses the metaphor of a yoke to describe the nature of following Him, contrasting it with the burdensome religious obligations of the time.
- **Theological Significance:** It suggests that being Christian (Christos) should naturally align with being kind (Chrēstos), as both are easy and light in the essence of love.
- **Application:** This verse encourages believers to reflect on whether their lives exhibit the ease and kindness that should come with being yoked to Christ.

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## **Kindness Gets a Bad Rap:**

Pastor Randy clarified that kindness is not merely being nice or agreeable, but rather it is love in action. He emphasized that Jesus was always kind but not always nice, and that kindness is rooted in convictions and truth. Remington encouraged the congregation to cultivate a strong center while maintaining soft edges, recognizing that kindness is a choice to put on, as described in Colossians 3:12.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Discuss why kindness might be perceived negatively in today's culture. How can we reclaim the strength and power of kindness as depicted in the Bible?
2. Share a personal experience where showing kindness resulted in a positive outcome, contrary to expectations.

3. How can we differentiate between being 'nice' and being 'kind' in a way that aligns with biblical teaching?

### **Supporting Verses:**

**1 Corinthians 13:4a:** "Love is patient, love is kind."

#### **Context and Reflection:**

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** This part of Paul's letter to the Corinthians describes love's attributes, emphasizing its enduring, kind nature.
- **Theological Significance:** It highlights that kindness is a fundamental aspect of love, not just a superficial trait.
- **Application:** This verse reminds us that kindness is an active, strong force in our lives, essential for living out our faith genuinely.

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### **Hesed and Agape Love:**

Pastor Randy explored the Old Testament concept of "hesed," often translated as steadfast love or loving kindness. He likened it to the committed love expressed in marriage vows, where the promise to love is not based on reciprocity but on the choice of the one doing the loving. This, he explained, is the nature of God's agape love for us - a love that chooses to act kindly regardless of our response or behavior.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Explore the depth of hesed and agape love as seen in God's covenant with us. How does this shape our understanding of God's kindness?
2. Discuss the significance of marriage vows as a metaphor for God's steadfast love. How does this perspective influence our relationships?
3. Share how experiencing God's loving-kindness has transformed your approach to love and kindness in your own life.

### **Supporting Verses:**

**Ephesians 2:1-9:** Describes God's great love and mercy, raising us with Christ and showing the incomparable riches of His grace through kindness.

#### **Context and Reflection:**

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** Paul's letter to the Ephesians illustrates the transformative power of God's love and grace, moving us from death to life.
- **Theological Significance:** It embodies hesed and agape, showcasing God's loving commitment and desire to uplift humanity through Christ.
- **Application:** This passage inspires us to embrace and replicate God's steadfast, proactive love in our relationships and interactions.

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### **The Manifestation of God's Kindness:**

Pastor Randy shared a personal story about his son's friend who unexpectedly stayed with their family, illustrating how they welcomed her as one of their own. He paralleled this to how Jesus, the Son of God, invites us into the Father's house, exemplifying the kindness of God. This kindness is ultimately expressed through the grace we receive in Christ.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Reflect on a time when you were shown unexpected kindness or hospitality. How did that experience mirror the biblical concept of God's kindness?
2. How can we practice showing God's spontaneous and inclusive kindness in our communities, especially to strangers or those in need?
3. In what ways does the story of welcoming someone into your home, as Randy did, challenge you to be more open and generous?

### **Supporting Verses:**

**Titus 3:3-8:** Highlights the kindness and love of God in saving us, not by our deeds, but through His mercy, washing, and renewal.

#### **Context and Reflection:**

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** Paul's letter to Titus stresses the transformative impact of God's kindness, leading to salvation and renewal.
  - **Theological Significance:** It underlines the concept that God's kindness is foundational to our spiritual rebirth and inheritance.
  - **Application:** This passage encourages us to live out the kindness we have received, extending unconditional welcome and grace to others.
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### **Kindness Leads Us to Change:**

Pastor Randy emphasized that God's kindness is not meant to leave us as we are but to lead us to repentance and transformation. He noted that kindness has a target - to point people to Jesus. When we walk in kindness, we bear witness to a fallen world and invite others to experience the life-changing grace of God.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. How has experiencing God's kindness led you to repentance or a change in your life?
2. Discuss the idea that God's kindness has a target, aiming to lead us closer to Jesus. How does this perspective influence our actions towards others?
3. Reflect on the statement "kindness is not a tactic but a reflection of God's character." How can we ensure our acts of kindness are genuine and not manipulative?

### **Supporting Verses:**

**Romans 2:4:** "Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance, and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?"

#### **Context and Reflection:**

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** Paul addresses the Roman believers, urging them to recognize and respond to God's kindness.

- **Theological Significance:** It teaches that God's kindness has a purpose—to lead people to repentance and spiritual growth.
  - **Application:** This verse challenges us to reflect God's kindness in our actions, leading others toward transformative spiritual experiences.
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### **The Practical Application:**

Pastor Randy shared insights from his 35-year marriage, recounting how a simple verse on kindness and forgiveness (Ephesians 4:32) served as the foundation for their relationship. He emphasized that kindness is a choice we make daily, putting on the "garment of kindness" as described in Colossians 3:12. Remington also highlighted the "Golden Rule" (Matthew 7:12), encouraging believers to treat others as they would want to be treated, taking the initiative to show kindness proactively.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. How can we move beyond superficial acts of kindness to embody a lifestyle of deep, Christ-like kindness?
2. Share strategies or practices that have helped you remain kind and tender-hearted in challenging relationships or situations.
3. Discuss how the principles of forgiveness and tender-heartedness can transform not only personal relationships but also broader community interactions.

### **Supporting Verses:**

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

#### **Context and Reflection:**

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** Paul's instruction to the Ephesian church to embody kindness and compassion.
  - **Theological Significance:** This verse encapsulates the essence of Christian living, rooted in kindness, compassion, and forgiveness.
  - **Application:** It calls for a proactive approach to kindness, urging believers to cultivate tender-heartedness and forgiveness in their relationships and communities.
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### **Conclusion/ Call to Action:**

Pastor Randy Remington concluded by emphasizing that kindness is not merely a surface-level action but a deep understanding of its source in God's grace and a call to embody and share that kindness with others. He encouraged the congregation to cultivate a lifestyle of kindness, looking for opportunities to see the good in others, speak words of affirmation, and engage in intentional acts of kindness. By doing so, we reflect the character of Christ and invite others to experience the transformative power of God's kindness.

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## Prayer Requests:

[Share any personal prayer requests, and pray over the week ahead]

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## References:

### Primary Sources:

- "The Kindness of God" Sermon, East Hill Church, 03/17/2024. Provided by Guest Speaker Pastor Randy Remington.
- Sermon Discussion Guide, Provided by Kelly Paxton, and East Hill Church.
- The Holy Bible, New International Version (NIV). Biblica, Inc.™, 2011.

### Secondary Sources:

- Contextual and Theological Insights: Derived from general biblical scholarship and commentaries relevant to the verses from Luke, Matthew, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Titus, and Romans.
- **General Sources on Biblical Studies:**
  - Fee, Gordon D., and Douglas Stuart. "How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth." Zondervan, 2014.
  - Keller, Timothy. "The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism." Penguin Books, 2009.

### Linguistic and Grammatical Resources:

- Strong, James. "The New Strong's Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible." Thomas Nelson, 2010.
- Mounce, William D. "Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words." Zondervan, 2006.

### Collaborative Contributions:

- LLM Contributions: Based on a mixture of licensed data, data created by AI models, and publicly available data, synthesized for the study of the provided biblical verses.

### LLM Training Data:

- LLM Training Data. Includes a diverse range of texts (books, websites, and other publications) up to April 2023.