

## Chapter Ten

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### ***Loving Through the Wounds***

I hate you.”

Those words don't sting as they once did. However, the first time I heard that phrase from someone that I loved deeply, it was a dagger, despite the mask that I wore for their benefit. I knew they didn't mean it. It had been a bad two weeks for them, and their emotional turmoil was affecting a few of their relationships, including ours. I'd permitted this person to be honest, and this was their answer. It would have been hypocritical for me to say, "Please, be honest about how you are feeling right now. I want you to be able to say anything at this moment," and then exhibit shock and anger when they took me up on my invitation. So I wore a mask for them. Later, I let Jesus tend to my heart and the incidents that may have led up to them feeling that way toward me. About a month later, they recanted, as I knew they would. The Scripture that I held on to was:

*“Do the riches of his extraordinary kindness make you take him for granted and despise him? Haven't you experienced how kind and understanding he has been to you? Don't mistake his tolerance for acceptance. Do you realize that all the wealth of his extravagant kindness is meant to melt your heart and lead you into repentance?”*

*Romans 2:4 TPT*

To mirror our heavenly Father to this loved one, I had to put on my big-girl pants, acknowledge the season of emotional disarray that they were in, and extend kindness to them.

While this demonstration of kindness can be difficult to display, it is a form of beneficence and altruism. Kindness, from the Hebrew word, *cheched or hesed*, is sometimes translated as lovingkindness. This word involves extending warmth toward everyone around us. It has the power to uplift and makes someone feel wanted. Kindness considers someone regardless of circumstance and extends benefits whether they deserve it or not. Therefore, this virtue involves mercy—part of the nature of God that humbles us. We don't deserve God's kindness, but we get it. The ultimate extension of His kindness was His Son, who took our sins and gave us His righteousness. I call this the great exchange. Once we understood what He was offering: grace, redemption, and unconditional love, our only natural response was to change our mindsets, surrender our will, change direction, and follow His ways.

### **Pushing Through Pain**

I recall too many incidents when someone intentionally or unintentionally cut me down with their words or the tone of their words. You may also remember an experience when your child spoke to you rudely, or your spouse made a snide remark. Don't you remember how, as soon as their words hit your ears, your blood began to run cold? Or you felt like you'd been punched in the gut? Words have weight. The Scripture teaches us that our words have both the power to

burn relationships and the power to bring forth a sense of worth. Harmful words light a flame of destruction both between people and within people's souls. I've prayed with so many people that have struggled as adults because of the verbal wounds they suffered when they were young. Scripture says that the tongue is a source of destruction.

*And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity...sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.*

*James 3: 6*

*Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.*

*Proverbs 18:21*

Sometimes we incorrectly believe that we need to point out someone's faults to show them how much they have wronged us. Certainly, there are times when we must go to an offender, not to make them feel our pain, but to bring the understanding needed to restore the harmony of the relationship. The manner makes all the difference. Kindness does not allow a negative incident to skew or change our interaction with someone else. I am often convicted of my reaction when one of my children back talks or speaks rudely to me. It is my duty to help them understand the effects of their words, but in doing so, I cannot blow up at them. If I am to reflect Jesus, then the intent of my heart must be to let them know that I love them anyway. My kindness towards them or anyone cannot be condition-based.

God gives us all the right to feel, to emote, and to process. Romans 12:15 says to weep with those who weep. Jesus did. There was mourning in the air when he arrived at the tomb of Lazarus. To be emotionally healthy, we must be emotionally present. If someone hurts me, on purpose or by mistake, as soon as I can, I get alone with Jesus. Jesus acknowledges our sadness; our hurt. He weeps with us. The willful decision to forgive does not always cancel hurt emotions in the soul. While our will and our emotions are interconnected, they are also two different components.

There are times in parenting, marriage, or just friendship when our love seems to dissipate, or we just don't "like" that son, spouse, or friend at the moment. Our emotions are numb. It is easy to give a cold shoulder when someone hurts our feelings. Sometimes, in our hurt, we wear our negative emotions like a cross that we must bear for a time. What do we do when we feel so cold inside because someone has brutally wrecked our confidence in them? Kindness in these times is a sacrifice. We acknowledge our emotionally cold inner world, but we make an effort to be amicable with that person. While doing this, we keep our hearts open to the supernatural touch of the Holy Spirit. These verses offer a very inhuman result of the power of kindness. Kindness promotes change in the offender and makes our hearts feel warm again.

*...do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?*

*Romans 2:3-4*

Kindness doesn't erase the offense, but it acknowledges the offender as a fellow human being made in the image of God, worthy of acceptance despite their infraction. Over time, God

heals our wound, comforts our sorrow, and strengthens our ability to be like Him and extend kindness no matter what. Kindness is kin to forgiveness. It gives what the offender does not deserve. Forgiveness does not erase the memory—doesn't even end emotional pain—but it relieves the person from our desire to avenge ourselves. The process of healing requires us to embrace our anger and sadness but choose to put our offense on the cross of Christ, who bore their sin as He did our own.

Once we forgive, the power of kindness operates in full tilt. If the offender continues in their negative behaviors, no matter what protective boundaries are given, continue to be kind but involve others to bring support and insight.

### **Kindness Makes a Difference**

Modeling spontaneous moments of kindness is a great way to impart this virtue to our kids. I began by keeping packs of granola bars and water bottles in my van. If I stopped at a traffic light and a homeless person was there with a sign, we'd have something to offer. I do give dollar bills when I have cash on hand. My younger kids are so used to this random act of kindness that when we slow down at a light, and they see someone with a sign, they ask, "Mom, do you have a couple of dollars?"

Once Doug and our older kids were leaving the movie theatre when they saw a man fall on an icy sidewalk. Doug turned his SUV around and pulled to the side of the road. The man was older and ended up being fine. Since they were heading in one direction down a usually busy street, it would have been easy to keep driving and just say a prayer. But Doug modeled kindness to our kids. I'm sure there are many opportunities that we've missed or ignored. Kindness often involves inconvenience. We can dig to discover why we don't like to be inconvenienced. Often, it's because of self-centeredness, which is sin.

Kindness extends care and courtesy. Volunteering without being asked, smiling at a stranger, or thanking the janitor at your child's school are significant gestures of kindness. They extend warmth to the recipients and even make us feel good inside. After all, it's nice to be a blessing. At the same time, God teaches us selflessness. To put others before ourselves, no matter what. It's not always easy. On my website, I feature stories of people who are impacting the culture around them in very deliberate and Christlike ways. My August 2019 story was a scene that I had observed that displayed the power of kindness. Both a Black woman and a White man had a mind to be kind, despite a racial climate that could have produced a different decision.

I was in the Chick-Fil-A drive-thru in Charlottesville, Virginia. A young Black woman walked in front of an elderly White man. She opened the door, but instead of entering first and holding the door open behind her, she paused to let him walk around her and enter first. Whether deferring to his age or because he was White, I'll never know. But he shook his head, reached for the door, and nodded for her to enter first. It impressed me. Unknowingly, his action could have contradicted some of her personal experiences. His response was "counter-culture" to what many believe about this place.

([tinawebb.net/in-the-news/](http://tinawebb.net/in-the-news/))

Today in America, we are experiencing increased relational dissonance. The disconnect between the generations, races, genders, and political parties is a dilemma that our unseen enemy is using to try to block the power of kindness. This division lies at our doorstep and tries to breed itself in our homes. At the root is sin. But this enemy, unseen and often ignored, steals, kills, and destroys wherever he can, from city street to dining room table. As believers, the extenders of the Kingdom of God, we are called to be on guard and to live in an opposite spirit, where loving-kindness defeats animosity.

As parents, we have to dissect our opinions and emotions to find anything that God is highlighting. Prejudice can be subtle for many of us. God can uncover seeds that we inherited from our ancestors or were imparted by our circles of influence. We can use current events to cultivate the souls of our children. When we explain a news report about sexism in the workplace to our kids, we can ask them their thoughts and what emotions come up. When accessing ourselves, we can learn from our manner—the words we speak and how we speak them. What do we say to our kids when they hear or use a racial slur, or have a different political point of view than someone they know? How we explain these issues to them is as important. Body language and tone reveal a lot about the seedbed of our souls. Every day, His Spirit is searching out any belief or opinion that would be a barrier to kindness.

### **Kind Discipline**

My desire is not to write a how-to book for parents. However, when it comes to establishing forms of discipline that glorify God, it's essential to consider the state of our hearts and minds when discipline needs to happen.

To do this, let's consider the heart and mind of our heavenly Father towards us when we need discipline.

*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.  
Romans 5:8*

Jesus Christ only did what he saw his Father do. While the work was missional, the reason was relational. All of us have sinned. We teased our younger siblings or talked rudely to the school bus driver. We shunned the new kid at school or prostituted ourselves with an ungodly lifestyle. Jesus revealed His lovingkindness by paying the cost for our misdeeds. That's how much He cares about His relationship with us. He does not send us to our rooms, but He says, "Son or Daughter, come to My lap and let Me love you into change." Wow. How beautiful and wonderful is the Savior of our souls! His mercy is new every morning!

As we discipline our children, we want to model the Father. It's helpful to first pray to God for His grace and mercy to reign in our hearts. Regularly, I have to remind myself not to rush discipline by announcing the consequence. The better way is to first go to our kids and say, "I love you in spite of what you have done." Then boundaries and disciplinary measures can be assigned and explained. It's not easy. When two kids are yelling at each other, sometimes we do

need to say, “You go sit here, and you go over there and calm down for a moment!” My point is that we must remember that we do not discipline to feel a sense of vengeance or to release anger. That would be unkind. We discipline to teach consequences and to protect.

Kindness means being considerate and warm-hearted. It is a platform of mercy. Our words and our hands are meant to reflect God. As we affirm and as we serve, we can build up those around us. Saying and showing “I love you” and “I am interested in you” to our kids regularly, cultivates emotional connection that can be disrupted when they do need discipline. Those words also help us to develop a healthy family culture.

### **How Kind Are We to Ourselves?**

Once at a church prayer meeting, a pastor shared that God had him thinking about what people think about themselves. Their self-talk and self-concept. We can be so unkind to ourselves. Hopefully, as you’ve read through the book, you’ve learned that God is very patient with you. Maybe you’ve been able to take time and think about what grace really means and how it is shown to you daily. We are on a journey of becoming whole. Not only is it unfair, but it is unhealthy to entertain self-condemnation, shame, guilt, and so many other life-stealing thoughts.

What words come to your mind when you think of yourself? The way we think of ourselves and treat ourselves often breaks the Father’s heart. He who took our sin and our sorrow, because He loves us, wants us to love ourselves. We cannot fully love one another until we love ourselves. But how do we love ourselves when we sometimes don’t like ourselves?

First, it means we have to forgive ourselves. It’s fine, even healthy, to feel bad for something we’ve done wrong or an attitude that we’d adopted, but as we experience remorse, we must remember that God is full of mercy, compassion, and help. Maybe you don’t like your personality or what you look like. You’ve probably compared yourself with someone else, who has qualities that you have subconsciously elevated. The truth is, each of us has distinctions according to God’s design and intent. While sin, inherited weaknesses, and our environment can cause distortions to His design for us, God, our Potter is continuously working on us—mending and cultivating our souls. As far as feeling bad for what we’ve done wrong, despite natural consequences that we may have to deal with, our identity—the words that we use to describe ourselves—must be in alignment with the work of the Cross. Our identity can never be based on our behavior or feelings.

We need to let God be our Judge, not ourselves. The amazing fact is that as our Judge, once we, as believers, acknowledge our sin, our mistakes, and our hurts, they are automatically assigned to Jesus Christ. We are released.

My favorite Bible verse is Jeremiah 31:3. It makes my heart glad. Here are a few verses from this chapter that reveal that God has endless vision and hope for you and me. We are His children and while He sees our present state, He knows our end.

***The Lord appeared to him from afar, saying,  
“I have loved you with an everlasting love;  
therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness.  
Again I will build you and you will be rebuilt,***

*O virgin of Israel!  
Again you will take up your tambourines,  
and go forth to the dances of the merrymakers.  
Again you will plant vineyards  
on the hills of Samaria;  
the planters will plant and will enjoy them.”  
Jeremiah 31:2-5*

This passage is rich with God’s intent for good in spite of Israel’s imperfections. Being kind to ourselves means receiving His lovingkindness. This can be hard when we feel so unworthy. The truth is, we are unworthy. But He’s kind anyway and in this realization, we can rejoice. He is love.

I encourage you to think back through your life and remember any demeaning names or negative phrases that you were called, or people’s opinions of you that stuck to you. These need to be brought to the Cross. Jesus looked out among the crowd and cried to God, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Often people don’t understand the power of their words, the not-so-funny nicknames, or casual remarks that wound our self-concept. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you forgive these people and even forgive you if you’ve called yourself something that Jesus never would.

Lovingkindness centers on the Cross. This is the place where the vertical relationship between us and God, and the horizontal relationships between each us meet at the intersection of Jesus’ sacrifice. He showed His love for us so that we can love ourselves and therefore love one another. This was a kind act. One that put the other—us, before Himself. Jesus pushed through the pain, to gain the prize set before Him, which was us.

We will have to do this repeatedly as parents, that is, extend kindness despite how we feel. Our kids will say things out of brokenness or immaturity that will hurt us. And we will do the same for them. Lovingkindness can be hard and inconvenient, but it blesses someone else and it repels the evil one. The devil wants to destroy our relationships. Division is an evil tactic. But walking in lovingness protects our relationships and matures us as people of God.

### **Prayer**

*Great and gracious Father, sometimes it's hard to find the words to express my gratitude for what You do for me. The words, "Thank You" seems insufficient. When I push pause on my daily agenda and take the time to consider Your kindness, I'm undone. I'm humbled. I'm eternally grateful. God, You are so wonderful. You are so other-focused. Help me and my family to be like this. Help us be kind when it hurts. When we experience a deep wound or transgression against us, help us know that You were with us the very moment we got hurt. Tend to every subconscious memory and part of us that still retains sorrow and trauma from the incident. Help us process old hurts with You and find refuge in You. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

### **Quiet Time**

*Write down or think about how God has shown you kindness.*

*Recollect how you felt when someone did something kind for you.*

*Ask God to heal any part of you that struggles to be kind because of a deep wound or traumatic event. The Holy Spirit may bring forgiveness to your mind. Forgiveness doesn't instantly remove the hurt—the emotional pain. It's a decision of the will to release the person from their offense.*