

The Fruits of the Spirit Lesson 6 1Q 2010

The Fruit of the Spirit is Kindness

SABBATH

Read first paragraph, “When Paul illustrated...” thoughts?

What is kindness? What does it look like, sound like? What does it mean to be kind?

1. of a good or benevolent nature or disposition, as a person: *a kind and loving person.*
2. having, showing, or proceeding from benevolence: *kind words.*
3. indulgent, considerate, or helpful; humane (often fol. by *to*): *to be kind to animals.*
4. mild; gentle; clement: *kind weather.*

How does kindness look in action?

Read second paragraph “Patience,,..” thoughts? If we speak with a loud, intense, angry tone, even a commanding tone would that be kind? Do circumstances matter? Does the heart attitude matter? Does the goal one is trying to achieve matter? Or is it only our behavior? Can our behavior appear hostile, yet our action be kind?

When God thundered at Sinai was He being kind? Is God ever unkind? Why did God thunder at Sinai? What was He trying to accomplish? Was it God’s preferred method of interacting with His intelligent creatures? Then why do it?

Parents, have you ever had a child who was rebellious? Into self destructive behaviors? Have you ever “thundered” at them, to put the “fear of God” into them? Did you really want and desire your child to be afraid and live in fear of you? Then why did you do it? Were you willing to allow your child to live in fear of you for awhile? Why? What was your goal? What were you trying to accomplish? Was this kind? Was it kind for God to intervene the way He did?

Is God ever unkind? What about in the treatment of the wicked in the end?

SUNDAY

Have you ever heard, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect”? When you have heard this what ideas come to your mind?

- Perfect behavior?
- Perfect performance?
- Perfect Sabbath keeping?
- Perfect speech, dress, housekeeping?

Read Matthew 5:43-48:

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 sons 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? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

What does it mean to be perfect as our Father is perfect? Does it mean something different when we shift the focus of perfection from our behavior primarily, to our heart attitude? We are to love others more than ourselves, does this shift the focus?

When we think of perfection as performance where is our focus? On ourselves, how we are doing, how we are performing, how we can be better, whether we measure up. And what does such a focus lead to? More fear, anxiety, insecurity, uncertainty or more elitism, arrogance, pride, judgmentalism. Is this God’s goal for us?

- So when we see a neighbor struggling to carry a fallen tree branch out of their yard on Sabbath – wanting to be perfect like our Father in heaven in this understanding what do we do?

What if we focus on perfection in love, where is our focus? On others, how we can uplift, bless, encourage, minister, serve. And what does such a focus lead to? Peace, joy, quiet confidence, wellbeing, health!

- Now, with such a focus what do we do when we see a neighbor struggling?
- What did Christ do when He saw the sick on Sabbath?
- What did the Pharisees do?

What does it take to live a life of love?

None who have a sense of their accountability to God will allow the animal propensities to control reason. Those who do this are not Christians, whoever they may be and however exalted their profession. The injunction of Christ is, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Matthew 5:48. He here shows us that we may be as perfect in our sphere as God is in His sphere.-- Testimonies for the Church, vol. 4, pp. 454, 455 (1880).

Thoughts? Can we love well without being reasonable? Can we love well when we let our animal propensities control reason? What are the animal propensities? Survival of the fittest, which is fear, watching out for self. Our reason must rise above our instincts, our fears, our insecurities and choose to love, to give, to do what is best for the other person even when we don't feel like it.

From the time I realized that fear is part of the infection of sin, whenever I experience fear, insecurity, anxiety I pray, "Lord, fear is part of the infection of sin. I was born with this infection, but I don't want to be controlled by it. Please fill my heart with your love. Enlighten me with truth and empower me to choose to do what is right in spite of feelings of fear."

One other thought on being perfect as our Father in heaven in perfect:

God's ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." This command is a promise. The plan of redemption contemplates our complete recovery from the power of Satan. **Christ always separates the contrite soul from sin.** He came to destroy the works of the devil, and He has made provision that the Holy Spirit shall be imparted to every repentant soul, to keep him from sinning. {DA 311.2}

Thoughts? What is the devil's work? To destroy the image of God in man and put Satan's image in its place. God wants to remove all fear, insecurity, selfishness and restore perfect Godlike love into our hearts – here and now!

Genuine love, perfection in love means to love our enemies. Let's look at Monday's lesson.

MONDAY

2Samuel 9 recounts the story of King David's kindness to the son of Jonathan, Mephibosheth.

The lesson asks, "How did he, by this act, reveal the character of God?"

Read first paragraph, "Through reports..."

What lessons do we see regarding the great controversy? Why did Mephibosheth become prejudiced against David? Because of rumors, gossip, reports of enemies. Has God had lies, rumors, distortions spread about Him? How has God responded? With patience, love and truth.

How did King David treat Mephibosheth? With patience and love which demonstrated the truth of David's character and eventually resulted in Mephibosheth being won to trust David.

But what if Mephibosheth never had any personal encounters with David? What if he managed to avoid ever talking with David and just continued to harbor the stories he heard?

What about those who only hear the lies, falsehoods, and distorted theologies taught about God, but never hear the truth or encounter God for themselves?

When I moved to Dalton I met Christie and very shortly thereafter began asking her out. She began telling me no. She actually turned me down 6 times over 8 months before she went out with me. Later I found out why. She had been dating someone else who had been telling her lies about me. It took 8 months of going by, talking to her, interacting with her before she had enough personal experience to say, "I am not seeing what I was told." And then decided to go out to get more evidence.

When someone misrepresents us, lies about us, our reputations can be hurt and the only remedy is evidence over time.

When we present the truth about God Satan hates it and stirs up all his forces to attack and obstruct. Read about Jeremiah and how he was bitterly opposed and mistreated. Look at Christ who was the light to lighten all men, how did they treat Him?

It has been my experience that when anyone is presenting the truth about God, Satan will marshal his forces to attack them, to tell lies about them, to start rumors and controversy to divert the attention away from God onto other issues.

Watch for this Satanic strategy of diversion, the message we teach is about God. Satan cannot defeat this message so if the message itself cannot be defeated divert the attention away from the truth about God onto some rumor.

But we have the opportunity to be like David, who even though Mephibosheth thought wrongly about him, David still reached out in love and kindness.

We want to pray, “Father fill our hearts with love for those who would attack us.” Let’s as a class resolve, as we go forward presenting the truth about God, that the more vicious the attacks upon us, the more kind, patient and loving we will be. When we find out who is behind an attack let’s pray for them.

- Father, fill our hearts with love, love for you and love for our enemies. Let your love flow through us to them. We pray for our enemies now. We know they are our enemies only because they don’t know you. They don’t have an experience with your love, your kindness, they haven’t seen the beauty of your face or been held in your tender arms. Or there is some lie at work, some falsehood, some misunderstanding and we pray for truth, the truth that heals, the truth that sets free so you’re your family on earth may be united in love. Father, reach those who would do us harm with your kindness, grace and love. Empower our hearts to love them, that all our actions will be in harmony with your character and we may all become one with you. Amen

If we know them personally should we, like David, seek to bless them?

How can we today, love our enemies? We need to recognize it is at such times we have the opportunity to enter into union with God, to participate with Him in living His love! What practical things can we do here and now to love those who lie about us?

- As far as possible protect them and their reputations?
 - Jesus protected the reputations of those seeking to trap Him when they brought the woman caught in adultery before Him
- Avoid retaliation against them
 - Why do we not have to retaliate? What does sin do to the sinner?

- Seek to reconcile, reach out to present the truth in love, to forgive
 - God seeks after us, presents the truth in love and forgives

What if we do all of this and they remain our enemy and continue to spread lies about us and stir up opposition to us?

TUESDAY

The lesson suggests three different needs that call for three types of kindness. The first is kindness to spiritual babies. How can you tell the spiritual babes from the spiritually mature? What do spiritually mature look like? What do spiritual babes look like?

- Were the Pharisees and Sadducees spiritually mature or spiritual babes or not even babes because they weren't converted?
- How did they present themselves?
- Were there many people who thought the Pharisees were spiritually mature?
- In our church today do we have Pharisees, those who aren't even truly converted going around the church purporting to be the spiritually mature? How can you tell?

The last paragraph talks about kindness in our homes and the importance of kind speech in our homes. Excellent point – thoughts about this?

Who gets damaged by unkind speech? Everyone – the children are especially vulnerable because the younger they are the less capable of understanding the truth. Children personalize harsh speech and internalize criticism and harsh words as part of their forming sense of self.

But what happens to the person who speaks harsh words? I have never met someone yet, who after losing their temper and saying ugly words, once they cooled down, was proud of themselves, had

better self worth or esteem. No, such behavior always damages the one who engages in it!

What about kind hearing? Is it also important to hear things in the kindest way possible? Any examples?

- When someone is angry, says unkind or critical or mean words how can you hear it in a kind way?
 - From the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks –
 - This is my spouse, who loves me, something must be terrible amiss for them to speak such harsh words to me. What is going on with my spouse? “sweetheart, I don’t know what is going on with you right now, but if you need to shout, it’s okay. I love you anyway. Go ahead, get it off your chest and then let’s talk.”
- What are you wearing? That is the ugliest dress ever.
 - How would you hear this? What would be an example of “kind hearing”?
 - Thank you for letting me know this isn’t one of your favorites. What is it you don’t like about it?
- Why are you buying an SUV, they are gas guzzlers.
 - How would you hear this?
 - “Thank you for thinking about me, for wanting to protect me from financial hardship with escalating gas prices. It means a lot knowing you are willing to share your insights with me. You’ve raised a good point and I will think carefully about it before I make my final decision.”

Other examples?

THURSDAY

Read last paragraph – “When we teach...” well said, thoughts?

Do you think we waste a lot of time in our church arguing over doctrines? What is the final message of mercy to go to the world?

“It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His

character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy and truth...The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is the revelation of His character of love." Christ's Object Lessons, p.415

How much energy is utilized in trying to argue this doctrine versus that doctrine rather than presenting the truth about God's character of love?

What are some of the roots to theological error and mistakes? How can we take a truth and create obstruction to truth, with the truth?

Imagine a 1000 piece puzzle, each piece is part of a larger whole, which when assembled reveals a beautiful picture.

The Bible and inspired record is like this, more than a 1000 pieces, all of which need to be assembled into a beautiful picture. And what is the picture the Bible is to reveal? The true picture of God.

But historically we take a single piece of the puzzle and study it in detail, its shape, the colors on it, its thickness and we pull it out of the whole and make it a point of study on its own. We do this with doctrines. Pull out the Sabbath, study it, prove it with proof texts, review the history of Sabbath throughout human civilization, but we fail to take that piece of the puzzle and put it back into the whole. And what happens, we take a truth – the Sabbath, and create error, like God is arbitrary and the Sabbath is an arbitrary test of obedience. We miss the big picture and actually make it harder to see God. Just imagine trying to understand the picture of a 1000 piece puzzle with 1 piece.

This is what the Jews did in Christ's day – they had the Sabbath doctrine, but they couldn't see God!

Or we take multiple pieces and assemble them together, 4 or 5, 50 or 60, creating distorted pictures of the true reality of God.

How can we avoid doing this today? When you start putting a puzzle together where do you start? Isn't always with the straight edges putting together the border? Why do you start with this? Because the straight edges are a standard, easily recognized and measured. Likewise, when we study God's word we start with measurable, reliable, and testable truths like God's law of love and liberty – the design template for life. And the place we see God's law most clearly revealed is.....? Jesus, the life of Jesus He was God's law in living flesh – the Word became flesh and dwelt among us! He was the fulfillment of the law!

One other major error in theology is taking the testimony statements, declarations, proclamations and building a picture on these divorced from the facts or evidence of what actually happened.

Imagine going to an Aborigine who has never heard anything about the Bible or God and taking one scripture verse away from the rest of scripture and tell him, "God is love." While true, this text, wrested, away from the rest of scripture is meaningless. We need the evidence of God dealing with humanity, culminating in the life of Christ. This is what gives the statement "God is love" power!

Likewise, some of the worst theology is built of the "proof texts" of scripture disconnected from the comprehensive history of the actions of God, what He actually did.

When we think about this process should we conclude that all the beliefs in the 28 fundamentals are 100% accurate or correct to their fullest degree? If truth is unfolding, if God is infinite and we are finite, wouldn't it stand to reason that we don't know it all, that there is more to learn and unlearn? Couldn't we figure this out just on the evidence itself? But many need permission from an authority other than the truth itself to accept such an idea:

There is **no excuse** for anyone in taking the position that **there is no more truth to be revealed**, and that **all our expositions of Scripture are without an error**. The fact that **certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not a proof that our ideas are infallible**. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation. {CW 35.2}

We are living in perilous times, and it does not become us to accept everything claimed to be truth without examining it thoroughly; neither can we afford to reject anything that bears the fruits of the Spirit of God; but **we should be teachable**, meek and lowly of heart. There are those who oppose everything that is not in accordance with their own ideas, and by so doing they endanger their eternal interest as verily as did the Jewish nation in their rejection of Christ. {CW 35.3}

The Lord designs that our opinions shall be put to the test, that we may see the necessity of closely examining the living oracles to see whether or not we are in the faith. Many who claim to believe the truth have settled down at their ease, saying, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." --Review and Herald, December 20, 1892. {CW 36.1}

We have many lessons to learn, **and many, many to unlearn**. God and heaven alone are infallible. Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed. As long as we hold to our own ideas and opinions with determined persistency, we cannot have the unity for which Christ prayed. {RH, July 26, 1892 par. 7}

Thoughts? Are we in error for questioning, studying, challenging long held beliefs pressing ever forward to a closer unity and knowledge of God?

One of the beauties of the SDA church is that it has never had a creed, a required set of beliefs that one must adhere to.

When God's Word is studied, comprehended, and obeyed, a bright light will be reflected to the world; **new truths, received and acted upon**, will bind us in strong bonds to Jesus. **The Bible, and the Bible alone, is to be our creed, the sole bond of union**; all who bow to this Holy Word will be in harmony. Our own views and ideas must not control our efforts. **Man is fallible, but God's Word is infallible.** Instead of wrangling with one another, let men exalt the Lord. Let us meet all opposition as did our Master, saying, "It is written." Let us lift up the banner on which is inscribed, The Bible our rule of faith and discipline.-- The Review and Herald, Dec. 15, 1885.
 {1SM 416.2}

Why is the Bible to be the sole bond of union? What is the central message of the Bible? What is the purpose of the Bible? What is the point of studying the Bible? It is all about the true knowledge of God! We are to be united in our understanding of and love for God!

WEDNESDAY

Read top dark section, "Give..." thoughts? Is this not describing the law of love?

Read bottom green section – thoughts? If we have awareness of the law of love and realize how it works and that blessings will accompany loving others, does that mean all our love for others is selfish?

I had a student once put the proposition to me that selfishness is the way to true happiness, that understanding God's laws we should keep them so that we will benefit from them and that healthy self-centeredness is God's goal for us. Thoughts?

FRIDAY

Read second paragraph, "There are many..." thoughts?

Read and discuss questions 1,2 and 4