

MISHPAT V'CHESED

MINISTRIES

Showing Chesed!

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Last week we looked at the kindness of God leading us to repentance...

So today I'd just like to talk about a basic topic - but one that I think the world still needs to hear. And that is: **US showing chesed, or mercy and kindness and love, to our fellow man.** Chesed is a Hebrew word used many times in the Hebrew portions of the Bible, and according to Strong's Concordance and Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon, can mean love, kindness, benevolence, mercy, pity, and even zeal!

So what I think exists in the world frequently is people whose hearts have grown cold, or who lack having a basic kindness and graciousness towards their fellow man. Life becomes just all business - gimme what I want, and I'll pay you - and gimme it fast -- instead of simply treating a person with charm and graciousness simply because they are another human being created in God's image.

And I want to touch on the aspect of *graciousness*. This is when we show grace - we don't immediately jump on someone's faults and cut into them for their faults. We show them a measure of kindness, despite any faults they may have! Or, for example, if a worker accidentally does something wrong, their boss could let them know in a gentle, understanding way, correcting them gently, instead of abrasively with bitterness and disgust. Or a husband with his wife - he can let her gently know that there is something she's doing that's bothering him, instead of reacting rashly with anger. The Bible says God is patient with us, and we should be patient with others. Patience is a fruit of the Spirit. However, there are times in the Bible when God's patience runs out - when He is genuinely upset. I think there *are* occasions when a spouse can communicate they are genuinely upset - if there is a valid reason for being upset.

Continuing on, let us look at some examples from the Bible of people showing chesed to others.

1. Abraham with the 3 messengers

Our first example comes from the so-called “Father of faith”, Father Abraham, the man who was specially chosen by the Almighty to be the Father of the People Israel, who believed in God’s words and was thus considered righteous, but who also obeyed God’s voice, kept His charge, His commandments, His statutes, and His laws (Gen 26:5). So we know Abraham was a good God-fearing man.

SO let’s look at an example of how this God-fearing man treats others with kindness - chesed, honoring them. This example comes from **Genesis 18** where the chapter starts out by saying that THE LORD - Yahweh God - appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre. Then it is quite interesting, as it seems to describe how this happened, via THREE men approaching the tents of Abraham and Sarah. Needless to say, it seems one of these men could have been the LORD Himself - a pre-incarnate Jesus - God in flesh, and the other 2 could’ve been angel messengers. So Abraham pleads, “My Lords, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant.” And so the 3 men abide with Abraham. But notice the kindness and honor Abraham shows - he HASTENS to his tent to his wife, and asks her to quickly prepare food, and then he RUNS to fetch a calf to cook for the men. Yes, He is hosting an important guest - GOD, and probably 2 other angels - or perhaps a manifestation of God in 3 persons, and so his zeal to care for the 3 messengers is understandable and praise-worthy, but nevertheless, he is that kind of man - showing kindness to others, especially others in high authority.

2. Joseph with his brothers

Our next example comes from a descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - Joseph. God revealed Himself to Joseph in dreams, revealing how he would be lifted up and honored later in his life. His brothers did not like this, or the fact that their father loved Joseph more than any of them. (Gen 37:3) Well, they betrayed Joseph, putting him in a pit, and then selling him to foreigners as a slave. God blessed Joseph as he served his master Potiphar, and yet then he was mistreated AGAIN by Potiphar’s wife, who tried to commit adultery, and then blamed Joseph for trying to sleep with her, when she was the one who tried to seduce him. So Joseph went to prison for Potiphar’s wife’s lies. Yet the plan of God could not be thwarted. Eventually Joseph rose to power as he was able to interpret the Pharaoh’s dreams. He was in charge of organizing a mass savings program, saving up wheat for the 7 coming years of famine. And in the end when his brothers came before him, bowing down - just like Joseph’s dreams had foretold, Joseph is not hardened or bitter, but he says that his brothers meant what they did to him for evil, but God used it for good - to bring him to leadership in Egypt to actually help preserve his brothers and Egypt when the famine came. So although Joseph faced many trials, he retained his tenderness

and kindness - recognizing that God used him to bless his brothers even when his brothers had mistreated HIM.

3. Barnabas

And for our last and final example of showing kindness in the Bible, we will look at a less than famous, yet marvelous New Testament character whose name is... Barnabas! Have you all heard of Barnabas? We first hear about him in Acts chapter 4, in the context of a discussion about the new group of Jesus-followers in Jerusalem, after Jesus had ascended back to heaven. We learn his actual name is not even Barnabus, but JOSEPH - like our last example from the Older Testament! Barnabus was a nick-name the disciples called him, meaning "Son of Encouragement or Consolation"! And we will see just why, as this man was truly deserving of such a name. He was a Jew from the tribe of Levi, who had obviously embraced the Jewish Messiah Yeshua (Jesus), and was thus assembling with the believers in Jerusalem. The group of believers were sharing their possessions and helping those in need, and Barnabus was no exception. On the contrary, out of his heart of love, consolation, and generosity, he even sold a piece of land he owned and gave the money to the apostles, so they could distribute it to those in need! That is the first evidence of his noble, loving, generous heart.

And then we see this character Barnabas (or Joseph) at work again later in the 9th chapter of Acts, showing more consolation and love and kindness! You see, this was when Paul had just had his conversion after encountering the risen Jesus. Before, mind you, he hated followers of Jesus, and was zealously opposed to them, somehow misunderstanding the legitimacy of Jesus, possibly due to his religious upbringing that rejected Jesus. But Paul met the Lord, turned to Jesus, and began boldly proclaiming Jesus. Yet the followers of Jesus in Jerusalem were still suspicious and afraid of this Paul, who had previously had Christians put in jail and possibly worse.

Yet noble-hearted, kind, Barnabas KNEW that Paul's conversion was real, with REAL evidence of Paul boldly proclaiming Jesus in Damascus, even at the risk of his position and possibly more - the other Jews were opposed to Jesus. And so **Acts 9:27** says: *"But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus."* Barnabas did not hold a grudge against Paul, but he embraced him, seeing the Lord's work in his life, and he defended Paul's legitimacy to the other believers. A Son of Encouragement indeed!

His actions exemplify the kindness I am trying to get at - reaching out to others with warmth, and in this case, believing in someone when there is evidence that they are sincere and that the Lord is working in their lives.

Conclusion:

So to conclude, we started out discussing the importance of showing kindness to our fellow man - because God has shown US kindness, and because it fulfills one of the great laws of Scripture, - love your neighbor as yourself, as Jesus preached. We saw 3 examples of men showing kindness to others from the Scriptures - Abraham, with sincerity RUNNING to prepare food for the heavenly messengers, Joseph not holding a grudge against his brothers, but acknowledging how the Lord even used their mistreatment of him to bring him to Egypt where he could save their lives by predicting the coming famine and then rising to power in Egypt, having power to save up mass amounts of food, which he would give to his brothers when they came to him in need. And lastly, we saw ANOTHER Joseph, nick-named Barnabas, who was also a Jew, but living in New Testament times, who apparently had a HUGE heart, selling his land to give money to the poor, and embracing the repentant, converted Paul, bringing him into fellowship with the believers. He would later even go on to travel with Paul on missionary journeys, as he must have formed a close friendship with Paul. Such is the way of those with kindness in their hearts, extending forgiveness, giving grace, and doing practical acts of good-will to their fellow man, loving them sincerely. May we follow suit!

Questions, Comments, Prayer Requests?

Prayer

Music

343. Amazing Grace

422. I Love You With The Love Of The Lord

429. They'll Know We Are Christians By Our Love

Special: El Shaddai by Amy Grant