

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

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RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1	GOD'S GOODNESS IN YOU	7
CHAPTER 2	DIVINE TOLERANCE	39
CHAPTER 3	POUR ON THE MERCY!	61
CHAPTER 4	LEADING WITH A HUMBLE HEART	77
CHAPTER 5	THE POWER OF PATIENCE	111
CHAPTER 6	A KINGDOM OF KINDNESS	129

CHAPTER I

GOD'S GOODNESS IN YOU

Would you rather be known for judging others or as a person who extends mercy? Do you want the reputation of being a constant critic or to be lauded for your role as an encourager?

These are not trivial questions, but are at the core of who you are—and the destiny God intends for you.

What I am about to share will not only transform your life, but will affect every person with whom you come in contact. It's about planting and nourishing seeds of kindness deep inside that will result in a grand new you.

Let's begin by looking at some divine principles Jesus wants us to know and practice. He tells us: *“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not*

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (Luke 6:37-38).

TIME FOR A CHANGE

Being judgmental or prejudicial builds a barrier which separates people from each other. Prejudice—or pre-judging situations and individuals before we have accumulated all the facts—is dangerous and produces dire consequences.



It is one thing to realize you have a problem in this area, yet another to do something about it and make the necessary changes.

Just because a person appears to be different from us, does not mean he needs a radical makeover. We need to ask ourselves, “Why am I trying to make this

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

individual behave differently?” It could be because you are trying to make *yourself* feel more comfortable.

When I judge someone else, I am showing contempt for the riches of the Lord’s kindness, goodness, tolerance, and patience, which He shows to all people.

If there is a part of your life you need to change, do you enjoy being constantly questioned about it and lectured to? Of course, not. In many cases we become upset and do the opposite of what has been suggested.

Others react in the same way.

A NEW PERSPECTIVE

One of the most interesting facets of forming opinions of others is we find it difficult to separate our judgment of the behavior of an individual from who they really are. We should remember that if a person fails at one task it doesn’t make him a total failure. It only means he has failed at what you observed. We need to note the distinction and move ahead.

Fortunately, our heavenly Father sees the overall picture. He is not looking for one small transgression

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

with the idea of punishing us forever. Instead, He is a God of mercy and redemption who loves and cares for His children.

Jesus was sent to earth to die on the cross so we could have the life God envisioned for us from the beginning. In addition, the Lord has set moral standards and principles of love for the purpose of blessing people, causing good things to multiply on earth. Yet, there are millions who refuse to do what the Almighty commands.



*Our human nature rebels, demanding,
“I want to do it my way. I don’t need anybody
telling me what to do or how to act!”*

This is an anti-God attitude because the Lord says, *“I know the plans I have for you...plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future”* (Jeremiah 29:11).

However, to receive what God has prepared requires obedience. Jesus tells us, *“If you love me, you*

will obey what I command” (John 14:15).

The key word here is *love*. How can we expect people to keep God’s commandments if they do not truly love Him?

THE “LOVE PLAN”

Since the creation of the world, the Father’s invisible qualities, His eternal power and divine nature are clearly seen. It is displayed every time you look at the beauty of a flower, view a majestic mountain range or see the wonder of a newborn baby. It is a mystery—and we know the universe could not have just happened by mere chance. It is the Creator’s handiwork.

In addition, there is a source of heavenly love which is present and causes good things to happen to those God has placed on this earth.

This is explained in one of the most powerful verses in Scripture: *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son [Jesus], that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16 KJV).

God reaches down to us with an everlasting love

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

which never diminishes. It is what each of us is hungering for—and is only satisfied by receiving Christ as Lord and Savior.

However, if you continue reading the third chapter of John you learn what happens to those who refuse to accept God's gift. *"Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son"* (verse 18).

The Father's eternal "love plan" is for all.

GRAVEN IMAGES?

Sadly, there are people who never receive this gift. They are like those described by Paul: *"For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles"* (Romans 1:21-23).

Look around and you will see the "graven images"

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

people worship today—including their cars, homes and personal possessions. In many cases, they treat these earthly artifacts with more love and affection than God Himself.

What does the Bible say about such individuals? *“Therefore, God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this God gave them over to shameful lusts”* (verses 24-26).

This is why you see so much immoral conduct taking place.



**Those who reject the Lord open themselves
up to Satan’s advances.**

As Scripture tells us, *“Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women*

and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion” (verses 26-27).

Because it does not follow God’s plan for what is good, there are consequences for such behavior. *“Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless”* (verses 28-31).

The Lord is clearly telling us, “If you choose to disobey you’ll have to suffer the penalty.” Nothing good will happen to you spiritually, mentally, emotionally, physically, financially or in relationships. Even more, you will see God’s hand of judgment.

THE OPPOSITE OF KINDNESS

The apostle Paul writes, *“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them”* (Romans 1:18-19).

Although they know the Almighty’s righteous decree, the Bible says, *“Those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them”* (verse 32).



At the heart of the matter lies a judgmental spirit—which is just the opposite of the kindness God expects.

“You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. Now we

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment?" (Romans 2:1-3).

The Lord sees no difference between a person with unnatural relationships and an individual who is filled with strife, envy, jealousy, deceit, or disobeys his parents.

THE DANGER OF FAULTFINDING

People have a tendency to compare themselves with others. "He seems to be getting away with it, so why can't I?" They forget God is watching and He has a standard for our behavior.



One day we will all give an account to the Lord—for better or for worse—with what we have done with our lives.

What is the lesson? God desires that judgment of

others be removed from our attitude and actions.

Condemnation of unbelievers has been a problem in the Christian community from the early church until today. However, instead of judging, we should take an introspective look at ourselves. As the psalmist writes, *“If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?”* (Psalm 130:3).

In other words, if God started finding fault with humanity, every person on earth would be lost. There would be none who could stand righteous before Him.

A NEW PERSPECTIVE

Accusing others is like a boomerang—it will come back and strike you. This is why we need to let God do the judging. It is not condemnation, rather kindness, which leads people to repentance and change.

The Bible says, *“There is no one righteous, not even one”* (Romans 3:10). But we also know the just shall live by faith—and because of what Jesus has done for us we are declared not guilty.

How can I condemn another if I have received mercy and grace for doing the same thing? To be

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

specific, even if you think adultery in your mind or your heart, as far as Jesus is concerned you have already committed the act (Matthew 5:28). Thankfully, we serve a God who can forgive our very thoughts.

According to the Word, unbelievers cannot even fathom doing what is right because they only know to do wrong. It takes a born again experience to begin to see things from God's perspective.

Were you a believer before you were conceived? No. When I hear a person comment, "I have always known the Lord," I am immediately aware they don't know what the Bible says. Scripture tells us we were born in sin and naturally separated from God because of the fall of Adam—and that seed was passed down to us. This is why we need a spiritual rebirth (John 1:12; John 3:3).

HEAVENLY QUALITIES

There are three of God's qualities we need to understand which will help us relate to others. They are found in this verse: *"Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not*

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? (Romans 2:4).

- Do you have His kindness?
- Do you demonstrate His tolerance?
- Do you exhibit His patience?

Together, these attributes are what attract people to Christ. The world desperately needs good news and hope for a better tomorrow, not a message of blame, fault-finding and rebuke.



*Every individual is born with an empty place
in his or her heart that only God can fill.*

You can seek education, money or friendships, but the void will still remain. You may think, “If I can just get together with that particular person I will have fulfillment in my life.” Yet, when it happens you are still hungry and searching—because after experiencing all the world has to offer, that vacuum still remains.

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

God has a plan for us which fills this emptiness with His loving kindness and the riches of His goodness.

A SECOND CHANCE

When we are judgmental toward someone who does not know the Lord, we are showing contempt for God's kindness and compassion that reaches out to give us a second chance.

This is why Jesus declared, "*You must be born again*" (John 3:7).

When He first uttered these words, Jesus was speaking to a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. Thinking with earthly logic, he asked Jesus, "*How can a man be born when he is old?...Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!*" (verse 4).

Jesus answered, "*I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again'*" (verses 5-7).

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

How does this new birth happen? Through accepting the Lord Jesus Christ—and the love of God—into your life and believing He loves you and has a wonderful plan for your future. Have you embraced God’s plan and given up on your old self-centered objectives?” I pray you have confessed, “Lord, I turn from my old ways. Jesus, You are now my Lord and Savior. I believe You died on the cross for me and have forgiven my sins.”

A NEW WAY OF THINKING

Instead of having a “depraved” mind (Romans 1:27), we were created to have “the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16). This brand new way of thinking allows us to be a blessing to others—to give, to share, to care.



*The Lord placed each of us on earth to
love and to be loved, to forgive and to be forgiven,
not to judge or be judged.*

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

Because of Jesus we have an abundant life filled with His favor.

I'm sure you have heard it said, "You receive according to what you give," and this statement is true. The Lord's rewards or punishment are based on what we have done. The Bible states, "*But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God 'will give to each person according to what he has done.' To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger*" (Romans 2:5-8).

There will be trouble and distress for men and women who do evil, but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good. The Lord does not show favoritism.

THE BATTLE

Who is in charge of your life? God's Spirit, or the

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

spirit of this world? *“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient”* (Ephesians 2:1-2).



**You either serve God or the devil—
It is impossible to serve both.**

People who are disobedient to the commandments of the Almighty have the spirit of Satan working in their lives. They are being influenced by the devil.

BY HIS GRACE

Again and again God tells us to avoid condemning others, rather we must show them the Lord’s goodness and mercy. As Paul writes, *“All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,*

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved” (Ephesians 2:3-5)

It’s not the Father’s desire for any to perish. So by His infinite grace He makes us alive with His Son. Why does He offer this gift? *“God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus”* (Ephesians 2:6-7).

His divine design includes blessing us beyond our expectations or imaginations; expressing His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast”* (Ephesians 2:8-9).

It is the Lord’s awesome goodness and mercy that gives us the desire to change.

“GOD, HAVE MERCY!”

In Jesus’ day, many religious leaders had a serious

problem with self-righteousness—looking down their noses at everyone else. To illustrate the point, Jesus told a parable concerning two men who went to the temple to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector.

As Jesus explained, *“The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner’”* (Luke 18:11-13).

Jesus asked which one of these two men went away blessed. It was the one who bowed and cried, “Lord, help me!”



***Self-righteousness blinds you from
the truth of who you really are.***

But God’s Son says, *“...everyone who exalts himself*

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (verse 14).

Every person needs to understand how much God loves and forgives; not because we are deserving or worthy, but because the Lord loves us and longs for us to be with Him forever.

MORE THAN WORKS

God is not peering through a microscope looking for your mistakes and errors. Instead, *“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault”* (James 1:5).

Without Jesus in the equation, you are nothing more than a poor miserable sinner headed for eternal punishment. But through Christ, God has forgiven you—and He loves you with an everlasting love that does not waver or change.

As children we were told we were “good boys and girls” when we behaved, and “bad” when we disobeyed. However, in God’s view of things, His approval is not based on our works, rather on our faith in Him. This is why we need to proclaim to the world

there is Someone who loves, cares and is waiting to help them.

AN “EQUAL OPPORTUNITY” GOD

A woman once came to me and exclaimed, “Pastor, what is the sense of living right and doing good? I am destined to go to hell!”

I responded, “Where did you get such an idea?”

She replied, “I just figure that some are saved and destined to live with God, while others are predestined to go to hell.”

I explained from the Word how the Lord *“is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9).



*God shows no favoritism; He gives
every person the opportunity to receive
His love through Jesus Christ*

We serve an “equal opportunity” God, who welcomes people of all races, all economic backgrounds

and all cultures. He is waiting with open arms, beckoning, “Come to me, I love you, I want you to accept this wonderful gift for your life. Receive My love.”

This is why He sent His Son to earth. Jesus went everywhere anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power doing good and destroying the work of the devil for God was with Him (Acts 10:38).

Just as the Father had a marvelous plan for His Son, He desires for us to be saved, not separated from Him. *“Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins”* (Matthew 1:21 KJV).

“RIGHT STANDING”

If every person you knew was always finding fault, how would you ever see a demonstration of how God loves you? Unfortunately, with many parents, their children can never achieve their standard of excellence. Nothing they do seems good enough. Then later, when the grown young man or woman attends college or goes to the work place, again there is often criticism rather than encouragement.

Spiritually, when you live apart from God’s love, it

is impossible to do things right. It is His love for you which gives “right standing” with Him.

We know that as far as God is concerned, if we break one of the commandments, we have broken them all. This is why only keeping the moral law can save no one.



*It takes a total spiritual rebirth to experience
and enjoy the life God has planned.*

Only after you are born again do you have the ability to do what is right. Before that time, you did what you wanted and were not concerned with anybody or anything except yourself. Basically you only cared about others as long as you could use them for your purpose and plan.

God declares, “I have shown you mercy.” He is saying, “I do not care what you have done or have not done. Come to me and I will receive you. Believe in My Son and you will be saved. You will have new life.”

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

To the woman who came to wash His feet with her tears, Jesus said, *“Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much”* (Luke 7:47 KJV).

When we realize the depth of His forgiveness, we are so grateful and thankful we begin loving instead of judging.

A BETTER WAY

As God’s people, we need to put into practice what Jesus demonstrated to those who were about to take His life: *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing”* (Luke 23:34).



*I believe when the church decides to discard
the spirit of judgment, we will see vast numbers
of people ushered into the Kingdom.*

I’ve seen believers get a little “faith message” and all of a sudden they are looking down upon others, criticizing, “Where is your faith, brother?” They forget that only yesterday they were crying over how tough

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

life was and the trials they were going through. Now they are using their newfound faith to feel superior. I pray you will not fall into this trap.

There is a better way—and it is called mercy, God’s kindness. It is the message Jesus was trying to teach the church in His day. We need to understand that if it were not for God’s grace and love, no one would have a chance to be redeemed.

A CHANGE OF HEART

When Solomon completed the great temple in Jerusalem, the musicians played and the people sang with one voice, *“He is good; his love endures forever”* (2 Chronicles 5:13).

Even as they sang, the Bible records how *“the temple of the Lord was filled with a cloud, and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the temple of God”* (verses 14-15).

The anointing of the Spirit and the Father’s presence descended because they were acknowledging His goodness.

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN



*God overlooks the injustice of man and
transforms him from the inside out.*

You can send a man to prison for a crime committed, but this may not alter his behavior. He will likely only see it as consequences for his actions. There must be a total change of heart for the person to have a new beginning.

If God has touched your life and you are starting to live differently, praise God, because *“He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 1:6).

The Lord also desires to see the same transforming work in your friends. Even if this seems impossible, remember God can work through you to effect the change. Someone you know may have a vile, filthy mouth, but start believing he will begin speaking forth the Word of God with the same tenacity and energy that he is speaking out what is evil. Actually visualize and “hear” him speaking uplifting and positive new words.

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

God “*calls things that are not as though they were*” (Romans 4:17). By faith, believe this will take place—because you have the grace, mercy and the ability of God working in you to show loving kindness to that person. Instead of viewing him in his present sinful state, begin seeing him as the faithful believer you pray he will become.

“NOT GUILTY”

Treat your fellow man with God’s qualities and watch what the Lord will do!

At the temple courts, the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. In the society of the time they could have taken her outside the city and stoned her to death—this was the law of Moses. However, the religious leaders turned to Jesus and asked, “What do you say?”

Jesus looked at the woman and replied, “*Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more*” (John 8:11 KJV).

She knew she was worthy of death, but she believed on Christ and was saved.

Jesus was not condoning her behavior. Rather, He

was letting her know, “The power and mercy of God has come into your life today. The judgement has been lifted and you have been declared not guilty.”

At that very moment the woman knew she was forgiven.

“LEAVE HER ALONE”

Prior to the crucifixion, before Jesus was arrested and taken by the authorities, there was a dinner given in His honor in Bethany. At one point, a woman took a vial of expensive perfume and *“she poured it on Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume”* (John 12:3).

Judas—the disciple who later betrayed Jesus—was present and began complaining: *“Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages”* (verse 5).

He didn’t make this point because he cared or had compassion for the poor. On the contrary, it was because he was a thief. As a keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to the contents!

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

The woman, however, was thanking the Lord for what He had brought to her life.

Jesus replied, *“Leave her alone....It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me”* (verses 7-8).

The grateful woman was blessed for her kindness.

OBEDIENCE BRINGS BLESSINGS

Early in my Christian walk there was one passage of Scripture that troubled me. It was when Jesus said, *“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 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”* (Matthew 5:44-45).



I would think to myself, “Lord, why do you allow good things to be received by the unjust?”

God began to show me that *everyone* was unjust.

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

The only reason we are different now is because of faith in Jesus Christ, meaning we receive God's goodness on our behalf. This is what "justifies"—not obeying the rules and regulations of religious tradition.



Our disobedience is harmful because it cuts us off from God's blessings.

The Lord's laws are for our benefit and good. As an example, "*Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you*" (Exodus 20:12).

The apostle Paul talks about children being disobedient to their parents (Romans 1:32). There is no honor or blessing in such behavior.

WILL YOU RECEIVE THE REWARDS?

In addition to salvation, "*We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad*" (1 Corinthians 5:10).

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

There are rewards in tithes and offerings, for keeping the Sabbath Day holy, for loving people, doing good and being obedient to the Spirit of God.

Your goal should not be to “barely” make it into heaven, you should desire to be rewarded when you arrive and hear God announce, “Well done, good and faithful son. Enter into the pleasure I have prepared for you. Enter into My blessing.”

Just a simple act such as demonstrating the *Kindness Factor* in your daily walk is your way of expressing, “Thank You Lord, for saving my soul, for giving me a new life and a brand new beginning.”

CHAPTER 2

DIVINE TOLERANCE

When people discover the character of God they are drawn to Him. These same qualities continue to work in individuals once they have tasted of the Lord's goodness. Even those who drift away spiritually can never forget a loving God. They may have become distracted by, *"the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in"* (Mark 4:19 KJV), yet the Lord is still there.

Some people even become tired of doing what is noble and good. They feed the poor and have compassion for those in need, but spiritually, their battery has run dry. This is when we need to open God's Word and receive His encouragement. We soon learn that instead of finding fault with us, He pours out His love and mercy.

This is also how the Lord expects His children to

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

act—not in judgement, but with forgiveness and tolerance. If our heavenly Father gives us another chance, why can't we do the same for others?

“I NEED HELP!”

In the game of baseball, and often in the game of life, we live by the “three strikes and you're out” rule. However, the Lord operates by a different standard, one which allows His full plan to come to fruition. He knows our weaknesses and frailties and gives us a fresh opportunity.

At any time or place we can turn to Him with full confidence, assurance and faith, saying, “Dad, I need some help,” and He will respond, “Child, I love you and I am here for you. I will never turn you away, nor will I will ever cut you off.”

When you fully grasp this, you will come to the Lord because you know He truly loves and cares about you.

WHERE IS OUR SELF-CONTROL?

The meaning of the word *forbearance* is “to refrain

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

from, avoid or cease doing or saying—to endure, to tolerate, to keep ones self in check.” In other words, when you disagree with another person’s actions, you hold your tongue and don’t say anything. There is a measure of self-control involved.



As you study God’s Word, you will find that the Lord never reacts, He always responds.

In our world we need to practice “patient restraint.” An example would be a creditor extending the time for repayment of a debt or delaying his right to enforce legal action on what is owed.

OUR RIGHT TO CHOOSE

One definition of tolerance is “to tolerate the views, beliefs and practices of others that differ from one’s own.” Certainly, people have the right to believe whatever they want, but they are to respect another’s belief.

According to God’s principles we are not to judge

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

simply on the appearance of things, rather by truth. Even beyond what our eyes tell us, we need to take it to another dimension, to the spiritual realm where we can determine God's truth about the circumstance or situation.

The Lord declares, *"This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live"* (Deuteronomy 30:19).



*God is not anxious for any of us
to die a sinner's death, but He respects
the people's right to choose.*

As believers, we have been given the opportunity to accept or reject eternal life.

THE CHANCE FOR A NEW LIFE

Every day, God demonstrates tolerance with His children, believer and unbeliever alike. Even though

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

some have not yet turned their hearts toward Him, He loves them, knowing that one day they will have the opportunity to be saved. It may not be at this moment, but it is still His plan. As the Bible says, *“He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end”* (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

If we were going to be judged the moment we were born, we would surely die in iniquity, because, as the psalmist writes, *“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me”* (Psalm 51:5). Thank God for the amazing choice He offers to each of us—to make a personal decision to follow Christ.

Sin is a condition of separation from the Creator, missing the mark, falling short and violating His commandments. But because of the Father’s loving tolerance, goodness and patience that allowed you to be able to hear and receive the good news concerning God’s marvelous plan, you have a chance for a new life.

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

Instead of condemnation, Jesus says, “I have died for you. I have given Myself because I love you and I want to touch you right now with My Father’s love.”

If you have never accepted Him, you are free this moment to open you heart and pray, “Jesus, I am a sinner and I am asking You to forgive me of my sin. I know You died on the cross for me and I want Your precious blood to cleanse my heart. I receive You now. Jesus Christ, You are my Lord and Savior. Thank You for loving me and making me Your child.”

Amen!

THE PERFECTER OF OUR FAITH

Everybody needs “good news,” and this is exactly what the Gospel is—the message of divine redemption, health, divine provision, divine protection, divine blessing, divine favor and goodness. Jesus tells us, “*The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly*” (John 10:10 KJV).

Here is a significant point to remember. You can

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

receive the salvation of God, but still not have the abundant life He has given. It is an active choice where you are participating in the things God offers. To put it bluntly, the Lord's blessings require obedience.

Obviously, there are people all over the earth who choose not to obey, yet we are not to judge them. This is where the Christian community has really missed the mark. They lash out in denunciation, then wonder why souls do not embrace the love of God.



If God were to judge us, no one would ever be saved. But Jesus took our separation from the Father on Himself.

He took all of our weaknesses, all of our shortcomings and our lack of faith. On the cross, He justified us and gave us right standing with God. So instead of struggling with our faith, *“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its*

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:3).

“FEED MY SHEEP”

Before the crucifixion, Peter denied Christ three times. Jesus later came to him and asked the disciple the same question three different times: “Peter, do you love me?” (John 21:15-17).

Then He tells Peter, “Feed my sheep” (verse 17).

Jesus didn’t bring up the fact that Peter had denied him again and again. He didn’t confront him, questioning, “What is your problem? What is going on?” He did not even discuss the matter. Why not? Because the past was not important. What was crucial was where Peter was headed. “Feed my lambs. Feed my sheep. Let’s get going!”



Many have been raised in an environment of negativity and have been held down to such an extent they cannot rise when they are ridiculed and belittled.

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

For people to come to the Lord, we must make the good news attractive—and since we are the bearers of glad tidings, we need to take a look at how we deliver the message.

THE WRONG APPROACH

Many years ago I owned a book that meant much to me. On its cover was a small cartoon where one fellow had another guy pinned down on the ground, and was beating him over the head with his Bible. The subtitle of the book was “How Not to be a Witless Witness.”

People will recoil from such an approach. On the other hand, they will welcome those things the apostle Paul spoke of: “*Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable...excellent or praiseworthy*” (Phipippians 4:8).

This is why we must tell unbelievers of the marvelous blessings which can come their way. Yesterday is gone and we can wake up each morning

with mercy from above that is fresh and new.

A GROWING PROCESS

I pray you are beginning to see how tolerant God is with us and our personality quirks. Perhaps you find you have some areas of strong faith and others where you find it difficult to believe. This is part of your spiritual growing process, and the Lord understands. You might have faith for finances, but not for health. You might have faith for a job, but not for relationships. We have a tendency to vacillate depending on where we are on our journey as a believer.

Thank God He is patient and tolerant with us, not striking us down the first time we backslide. Have you ever thought, "Today I do not feel like going to church?" The Lord does respond with anger, but He will put the thought in your heart, "It will be good for you to go to church. There is a blessing awaiting you today."

You make the decision to enter God's House because you have an appointment with the Lord and with fellow believers. The Father loves to see His

children gather together in worship. When we do, He honors us with His presence.

THE ACT OF FORGIVING

The only time the disciples asked for more faith was when Jesus was talking about forgiveness. He told them, *“If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, ‘I repent,’ forgive him”* (Luke 17:3-4).

In response, they replied to Jesus, *“Increase our faith!”* (verse 5).

Remember our earlier definition of “forbearance”—to endure, to tolerate, to keep ones self in check. In Scripture, this is linked to forgiveness. Paul says, *“Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye”* (Colossians 3:13 KJV).



When we have tolerance for the beliefs and actions of others, the act of forgiving flows naturally.

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

If people are ever going to accept anything that the Lord has to say through you, learn to respect and honor them as God's creation. They may not even know or care anything about the Lord, but when they see you displaying kindness and love towards them, it will have a significant impact.

“LORD, SAVE HENRY!”

Many people pray, “Lord, save Henry”—then start talking about all the faults and flaws of Henry! They say to themselves, “He’ll never turn around. Look at how he acts.”

Some will vent their feelings right to Henry's face: “You are a filthy sinner. You smoke, drink, and carouse—and talk out of both sides of your mouth!”

Others just avoid Henry, having nothing to do with him, never including him in any conversation or social activity.

And we question why Henry runs away from God.

BELIEVING FOR THE BEST

An evangelist once asked me, “What have you

learned about caring for God’s people after all these years of ministry?”

I thought for a moment and replied, “The first thing is to stay with an individual no matter what, because with God nothing is impossible! I’ve learned never to give up faith in the Lord’s ability to transform lives, because they can and will change God’s way.”



*I never stop believing for the
Father’s best for people.*

Scripture tells us, “*Love...always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails*” (1 Corinthians 13:6-8).

This means even the worst sinner can change—and God’s loving kindness leads to this transformation.

LESS OF SELF

As a believer, as you mature in the Lord, I’m sure you have seen yourself growing into the image of God’s son. The more you delve into the Word you find

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

your thoughts conforming to divine principles. Then, as you spend time in fellowship with the Lord in prayer, the easier it is for you to worship and praise Him. Slowly but surely, you are not the same person you once were. You have been shaped by His goodness and formed into a vessel of service for the Kingdom.

Now you are thinking more about the Lord and others, and less of yourself. This in itself is a miracle! Just as the Lord can heal our physical body, He can deliver you of selfishness.



Far too many have a “change now, or get out of my life” attitude, In fact, most people operate their lives on what is convenient for them.

It’s amazing how many problems couples encounter when they are first married. They suddenly find out how selfish they have really been as a single. It takes a period of serious readjustment and compromise to make any marriage work.

RESPECT AND HONOR

Please grasp what I am sharing: If we are going to reach people who do not know the Lord or have different belief systems than we have, we must treat them with the same respect, honor and love the Lord has shown to us.

People who watch our television program believe a variety of different things, yet they are drawn to the message because they know the Lord has truth for their lives.

What a Gospel we have! The Lord will heal your body, heal you mind, heal your family, save your soul, and you will spend eternity with Him. No more sorrow, no more pain, no more suffering, no more sickness, no more death, no more fear, anxiety or confusion.

Praise God!

YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

It is time for believers to stop acting like chickens—always picking and poking! The Lord desires for us to change and grow. And we *can* because we now

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

have power through the Holy Spirit. He is at work to show us mercy and give us the ability to obtain grace and be formed into the vision God has for us.

You also have a part to play by exercising tolerance and forgiveness with a heart of love.



*I trust you have made the decision
to erase every record of wrong—either
seen by you or done to you.*

CANCEL THE DEBT?

Jesus told the story of a man who was forgiven a great debt, an amount he would never have been able to repay—millions of dollars in today’s economy. So, since he was unable to pay, the master ordered that everything he had be sold to compensate for what was owed.

The Bible records how the servant fell on his knees before him: *“Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything”* (Matthew 18:26).

His master took pity on him, cancelled the debt and

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

let him go free.

Obviously this servant didn't learn the lesson because when he left, *"he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened"* (verses 28-31).

The master called the servant back and shouted, *"You wicked servant...I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?"* (verses 32-33).

Scripture tells us, *"In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed"* (verse 34).

Jesus used this story to emphasize the peril in store

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

for each of us, “*unless you forgive your brother from your heart*” (verse 35).

WORK IT OUT!

Since God has your best interest at heart and He has been good to you, shouldn't you reciprocate in like manner to others?

Put aside their personality flaws and petty errors. After all, the Lord puts up with our selfish prayers and overlooks so many of our mistakes.

Start practicing tolerance and forbearance. Realize that you cannot expect a five-year-old to act like a fifteen-year-old. Do not put unreasonable demands and expectations on people. Remember, the Lord only asks you to do what you are capable of, and what He empowers you to accomplish,

The Bible tells you to “*continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose*” (Philippians 2:12-13).

He gave you salvation—now it's your responsibility to work it out! Every day you are making choices for

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

better or for worse and you are growing and learning. No, you haven't yet arrived, but you are pressing ahead to the mark of the high calling of God, which is yours in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14).



*The Lord doesn't kick us when
we are down—so we should not use
this tactic on someone else.*

Pay close attention to what the Bible says: *"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken"* (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

A HEART FOR OTHERS

I believe any minister worth his salt has his first

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

concern for the people of God, not for prestige, honor or for the glory of standing behind a pulpit. We have nothing to say if we do not have the same heart for the sinner that God has.

This is also true for any person who calls himself a believer. Without a compassion for others that will stay with them during both the good or bad, you have nothing to share.



*I thank God for help and encouragement,
but I do not need to be pressed down or to be
negatively spoken of—and neither do you.*

If you desire love, love somebody. If you want mercy, show mercy to another human being. If you seek honor, be humble, become a servant. Do good to people and they will love and care for you. They will receive the good news you have to share.

SHOW IT!

At the cross, the same people for whom Jesus had

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

done such wonderful things, were now crying, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” But with amazing compassion and a heart of mercy, Jesus responded, “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing*” (Luke 23:34).

Jesus had a peace in His heart because He knew He was in the will of His Father. He did not let the rejection of man ruin His attitude. His trust was in God.

The Lord is not finished with you yet. When you know this, you will be able to show His goodness. Let Him love the world through you.

CHAPTER 3

POUR ON THE MERCY!

Compassion and mercy involve much more than an outward act of kindness. These attributes flow from our heart and reflect our innermost feelings.

Outlook and emotions have an enormous impact on our perception and judgments. For example, you may share the same experience others are having, but they think what is taking place is incredibly wonderful, while you may feel it is the worst possible scenario ever. How is this possible? Different perceptions, different attitudes—seeing the world through unique filters.

Perhaps you look in the mirror one day and feel like a million bucks. The next morning you glance at the same mirror and feel crummy. Since you are still

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

the exact same person, what changed? Your outlook and mindset!



How you view the world allows you to either demonstrate God's mercy or to drive people away from what the Father has for them.

For this reason we need to take charge of our emotions and make a conscious determination to exhibit faith, hope, and positive expectation. As a result we will be in a position to extend care and comfort—not just occasionally, but daily.

“WHY ARE YOU ANGRY?”

Let's look at the behavior of the first two children born to Adam and Eve. Cain was a farmer and Abel was a herdsman. When it came time to give an offering to God, Cain presented some of the produce of his farm, but Abel brought choice cuts of meat from the firstborn animals of his herd.

The Bible tells us that God looked with favor on

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

Abel's offering, but not his brother's. As a result, Cain lost his temper and began to sulk.

The Lord asked him, *“Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it”* (Genesis 4:6-7).

What was the problem? It was his attitude that caused Cain to disobey rather than do what God desired. Then he became upset at his brother because he thought Abel was being shown partiality. Not so. God gives all His children equal opportunity to have equal blessings.

MAKE THE DECISION

Some people have more than others because of their outlook. They are the ones who gratefully, thankfully, believe and receive God and follow His commands. These individuals are naturally going to be more blessed of the Lord than those who willfully, knowingly do the opposite of what the Lord desires.

In Genesis 4:7 we find the key to changing our

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

disposition. God said to Cain, “You must master it!” In other words, you have to make the decision to change.

Sadly, Cain did not listen to the Lord’s advice. He went out into the field and killed his brother—then blamed God for his violent actions. As a result, the ground no longer yielded crops for him. “*Cain went out from the Lord’s presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden*”(verse 16)—it was a No Man’s Land.

THE MESSENGER

Today, you and I can create a healthy environment for people to receive God’s mercy and grace. We can emulate His goodness, which shows no partiality. He wants *all* to be saved, blessed, healed, delivered and to lead prosperous lives.

This is the good news the Lord wants us to proclaim to the nations.



*If there is any problem it
is with the messenger.*

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

God's Word says, "*How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'*" (Isaiah 52:7).

Are you this kind of witness?

WHAT SCRIPTURE DECLARES

When you open the pages of the Word, you soon learn we serve a merciful and compassionate God:

We are saved by mercy and grace.

"But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved" (Ephesians 2:4-5).

God hears our cry.

"I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy" (Psalm 116:1).

We serve a compassionate God.

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort” (2 Corinthians 1:3).

Confession brings mercy.

“He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy” (Proverbs 28:13).

Jesus was filled with compassion.

“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36).

God’s mercy is everlasting.

“His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation” (Luke 1:50).

Compassion is a divine benefit.

“Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits...who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion” (Psalm 103:2.4).

When we offer mercy, we also receive it.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” (Matthew 5:7).

God’s compassion is for all.

“The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made” (Psalm 145:9).

OUR DAY OF ACCOUNTING

Some people don’t think they need the Lord. One man told me, “God is only for people with problems.”

What he failed to realize was that *death* is a problem—and one day he would stand before Almighty God and give an account for his life. Without accepting Christ, he will never spend eternity in heaven.



*Thankfully, God shows us His mercy,
giving us the opportunity to pass from
death to life and be redeemed.*

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

The Bible says, “*Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved*” (Acts 2:21).

For a person who thinks they have everything the world has to offer, this is difficult to understand. They believe they are trouble free. But a day of reckoning is on the horizon.

Whether they know it or not, they desperately need a relationship with the Lord. This is something you cannot work for, earn, or purchase. Even your great intelligence and wisdom can not ever discern or acquire His favor. This is a free gift from God—made possible only through believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, who died on the cross so you might have life.

We need to understand that Jesus was not just a man; He was the love of God who came in the flesh.

WHAT’S THE SOLUTION?

Those who continue focusing on their faults will remain despondent and distressed. This is why we need to see God’s solution—His grace, mercy and blessings. The Lord is far more concerned about the answer to your situation than His is over the

circumstances in which you may find yourself.



***Stop relying on your own resources and
begin to tap into what God provides.***

Only He can lift you from where you are to where He envisions you to be. You must see it, believe it—then receive it!

Acknowledge His presence and allow Him to deliver divine assistance to your current situation. The Lord will protect, defend and lovingly provide, because He cares for you even more than you care for yourself. Remember, *“Your Father knows what you need before you ask him”* (Matthew 6:8).

The Lord sees our beginning from our end: *“His eyes are on the ways of men; he sees their every step”* (Job 34:21). As the psalmist writes, *“O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my*

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

tongue you know it completely” (Psalm 139:1-4).

Since the Lord knows us so intimately, it is only logical that we should turn to Him in our hour of need.

BE GRATEFUL

To allow an environment for the Holy Spirit to minister God’s goodness to and through us, we must be grateful for what He has done.

- Have you thanked Him for not judging you when you were born?
- Have you expressed your gratitude for overlooking so many of your mistakes?
- Have you thanked Him for giving you a second chance—or perhaps a third?

It is so easy to receive the eternal life God offers. Follow the instructions of the apostle Paul: *“If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).*

Then make a commitment that with God's help you will bury your old selfish, judgmental, critical life and begin to live with His kindness.

ROOTED IN LOVE

As a believer, begin to understand the *goodness* and love of God.



Totally remove from your mind that He is a vengeful judge in the heavens waiting to lash out at your misdeeds.

I've even met people who were afraid to attend church because they thought the Lord was waiting to strike them down—as if God causes heart attacks!

The Father's actions toward us are rooted in love. This does not mean His eyes are searching the earth looking for someone to rescue. Instead, He provides a way of escape called salvation—and allows us to accept or reject His plan. As a result, He lets each of us become accountable for our actions and decisions.

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

This is why the Bible says, *“The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life”* (Galatians 6:8).

ENCOURAGE AND COMFORT

I heard one person define love as “not to let a person fail.” This is not it at all, because in the process you are taking from the person the responsibility for their lives and their actions—and they become dependent or reliant on you. How can this be love?

Others judge people and cut them out of their lives. But our contribution is to love and encourage, at the same time allowing them to be accountable for their own behavior.

If somebody wants to be vengeful—let them. Your orders from above are to respond in kindness. God’s Word tells us:

- *“Love one another”* (John 13:34).
- *“Accept one another”* (Romans 15:7).
- *“Be kind and compassionate to one another”* (Ephesians 4:32).

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

- *“Encourage one another”*(1 Thessalonians 5:11).
- *“Comfort one another”* (1 Thessalonians 5:18).
- *“Pray for each other”* (James 5:16).
- *“Live in harmony with one another”* (1 Peter 3:8).
- *“Offer hospitality to one another”* (1 Peter 4:9).

What a marvelous world this would be if these verses would reflect our daily lifestyle.

THE KEY TO VISION

Here is what Jesus admonished to the religious people of His day who judged instead of loved: *“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye”* (Matthew 7:3-5).

Let the Lord transform you into His image so your

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

actions will reflect His love and mercy. In ourselves we will fail repeatedly, *“but with God all things are possible”* (Matthew 19:26).

Give Him your unbelief, negative attitude, rebellion, stubbornness and critical spirit. Turn these over to Him and allow the Lord to exchange them for the fruit of the Spirit: *“Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance”* (Galatians 5:22-23).

TIME TO CELEBRATE!

We need to mirror the actions of the father of the prodigal son. After his son left home and squandered his money, he was still waiting for him with a heart filled with love. After the young man came to his senses, he made the decision to return home and face the consequences.

As the Bible records, *“While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him”* (Luke 15:20).

The son was contrite, saying, *“Father, I have sinned*

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son” (verse 21).

This didn't bother the dad one bit. The father said to his servants, *“Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found” (verses 22-24).*

So they began to rejoice!

Is this the kind of compassion you would love to receive? Is it the mercy you are prepared to give?

It is up to you!

CHAPTER 4

LEADING WITH A HUMBLE HEART

Of the first five books of the Bible, four were written by a man who exemplifies the love, mercy, tolerance and kindness we have been discussing in this book. His name is Moses.

Scripture tells us, *“Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth”* (Numbers 12:3).

Here was an individual who was relying totally upon God, not upon himself, or his own strength, wisdom, wealth, fame or fortune. He depended on the Lord in every aspect of his life. One translation reads, “Moses was meek above all people.”

This leader demonstrated one of the primary

qualities we have been discussing, because a humble spirit refrains from judging people. It refuses to become entangled with strife and quarrels over trivial matters.

FAMILY FEUD!

Yes, Moses was humble beyond all men, but let's look at what took place before this statement.

The Bible records how Miriam and Aaron, his sister and brother, "*began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife*" (Numbers 12:1). This tells us he was married to an African (Ethiopian) woman—and it caused considerable dissension in the family.

Perhaps you know what it's like to have people talk behind your back, or you have been the victim of bigotry or prejudice.

The problem escalated to the point that Miriam and Aaron began to question, "*Has the Lord spoken only through Moses?...Hasn't he also spoken through us?*" (verse 2).

They considered their brother's marriage to be

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

wrong, but now they were carrying their personal discord into the spiritual realm.

Miriam and Aaron were bad-mouthing God for selecting Moses. In truth, however, under the Lord's direction, Moses chose his wife, but the family was interfering and meddling in his affairs—when it was none of their business.

Of course, God was listening. So He immediately said to Moses, Miriam and Aaron, *“Come out to the Tent of Meeting, all three of you”* (verse 4). They obeyed and met God there.

A HARSH LESSON

Let us review the facts. The Almighty established Moses as the leader of the children of Israel to take them to the Promised Land.



When God appoints a person for a specific task, no one can usurp their authority or take it away from them.

The Great Jehovah is not like those we find around us today. People can be coerced into forming a new opinion, but *“God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind”* (Numbers 23:19).

Thankfully, Moses didn't have to fight his own battle because God heard every negative word of Miriam and Aaron.

When the three of them came out of the Tent, the Lord descended in a pillar of cloud, stood at the entrance and summoned Aaron and Miriam. When both of them stepped forward He said, *“Listen to my words: ‘When a prophet of the Lord is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?’ The anger of the Lord burned against them, and he left them”* (Numbers 12:-6-9).

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

The moment God departed, the cloud lifted and there stood Miriam, *“leprous, like snow”* (verse 10).

Aaron turned toward her and seeing she had leprosy, said to Moses, *“Please, my lord, do not hold against us the sin we have so foolishly committed. Do not let her be like a stillborn infant coming from its mother’s womb with its flesh half eaten away”* (verses 11-12).

What a tolerant, forgiving attitude.



Moses was not concerned about the rebellion his sister had toward him and God. He just wanted to see her healed and blessed.

This is humility in its finest form.

LEARNING ABOUT GOD

Now the tables were turned. Who had the ability to forgive or to hold this affront against them? Moses did.

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

Jesus gave this same power to the church when He declared, *“If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven”* (John 20:23).

Back at the Tent of Meeting, Miriam was now considered an outcast because there was no cure for leprosy in their day. She was untouchable.



*In this story we learn something about Moses,
but even more about God’s forgiveness.*

THE HEART OF MOSES

As we read in the New Testament the disciples once wanted to call down fire on a Samaritan city because they failed to welcome God’s Son as He was passing through their town. Jesus rebuked them, saying, *“Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them”* (Luke 9:55-56).

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

This was also the heart of Moses: “Heal her Lord! Save and help her.”

The Lord replied, *“If her father had spit in her face, would she not have been in disgrace for seven days? Confine her outside the camp for seven days; after that she can be brought back”* (Numbers 12:14).

Miriam was healed, since she was allowed to return to her people and have contact with others. God did not leave her afflicted with leprosy, only just enough for her to learn the lesson.

OUTSIDE THE BLESSING

Moses did not have to chastize or argue with his sister. In fact, he didn’t scold her once, because the Lord dealt with the matter.

God allowed leprosy on Miriam so she would come to her senses. She was outside of the blessing by judging Moses, and when we are guilty of this, any manner of trouble can come upon us. However, in this case it was only for a short season, just long enough to grab her attention. In fact, you never hear of Miriam

again until she passed away much later (Numbers 20:1). She went into her quiet place in God, lived out her life, and never challenged Moses or the Lord any more.

Remember, Moses' heart was, "God, heal her." He held no grudge or animosity toward his sister for her behavior. How could he be so loving and forgiving? Because he had faith, hope and love only the Father can give.

"WHY, WHY, WHY?"

This was a vital lesson Moses needed to learn because he was about to face an uprising from the entire camp.

Following the excursion of the twelve spies into the land of Canaan—one from each of the tribes of Israel—ten of them returned with negative reports. They proclaimed, "*The people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large*" (Numbers 13:28). And they added, "*We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are.... The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people*

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

we saw there are of great size....We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them” (verses 31-33).

Only two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, brought back a positive picture—but the children of Israel chose to believe the negative. That night they raised their voices and wept aloud.

Scripture gives this account: *“All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, ‘If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert! Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn’t it be better for us to go back to Egypt?’ And they said to each other, ‘We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt’” (Numbers 14:2-4).*

CALLING ON GOD

We need to remember that Moses never chose to lead these people; he was God’s choice. So how would he respond to this hostility and rebellion?

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN



*Situations like this exist today.
Even the best people in your life may,
at some point, let you down.*

How did Moses react? He and Aaron “*fell facedown in front of the whole Israelite assembly gathered there*”(verse 6).

While the entire crowd grumbled and complained, these two leaders were prostrate before God—they were not even looking at the hostile throng. Instead they were calling on the Lord—placing their total trust in Him.

WAITING FOR REPENTANCE

A leader soon learns that individuals who have their own ideas can become unruly. In my early days of ministry I wanted to hog-tie people to save them from heading in the wrong direction and making bad decisions. I soon changed my course because they ended up cursing me, saying I was controlling and

manipulating. Yet, all I was trying to do was save them from getting into trouble.

The Lord taught me restraint and humility, warning, “Let them make their own decisions—and reap whatever they sow. Allow them to come to the end of their rope and perhaps then they will humble themselves and ask Me for forgiveness.”

In the meantime, I would be loving and praying, waiting for them to repent and return.

“LORD, HOW LONG?”

While Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before God, Joshua and Caleb encouraged the people concerning how God had given them the Promised Land—it was theirs!

They said, *“If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them”* (verses 8-9).

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN



Still, the Israelites remained extremely angry, and “the whole assembly talked about stoning them” (verse 10).

Then things changed. Suddenly, *“the glory of the Lord appeared at the Tent of Meeting to all the Israelites”* (verse 11).

God asked Moses, *“How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them? I will strike them down with a plague and destroy them, but I will make you into a nation greater and stronger than they”* (verses 11-12).

THE TEST

The Lord was telling Moses that he should forget about these grumbling, unbelieving people, “I will begin again with you—and still fulfill My promise.”

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

This was a time of great testing for Moses. He told God:

“The Egyptians will hear about it! By your power you brought these people up from among them. And they will tell the inhabitants of this land about it. They have already heard that you, O Lord, are with these people and that you, O Lord, have been seen face to face, that your cloud stays over them, and that you go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. If you put these people to death all at one time, the nations who have heard this report about you will say, ‘The Lord was not able to bring these people into the land he promised them on oath; so he slaughtered them in the desert.’ Now may the Lord’s strength be displayed, just as you have declared”(verses 13-17).

By his own words we can see how Moses was

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

concerned for both God's reputation, and for the people. This is also an important lesson for us.



*When we are not defending the
Lord's honor we will spread the wrong kind
of testimony in our witness to the world.*

It is what happens when a believer complains, "Let's get rid of everyone who is committing ungodly acts." Tragically, we have seen blaring headlines of a Christian pulling out a gun and firing at an abortion doctor "in the name of the Lord."

And it's God who gets the bad reputation!

Remember, Jesus said, "*I have not come to destroy, I have come to save*" (Luke 9:56).

Holy Crusades? I don't think so!

A BETTER WAY

Moses was reaffirming God's qualities—exactly

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

what we need to do when we are confronted with angry people, or maybe with our own discouragement. Moses continued, *“The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation. In accordance with your great love, forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now”* (verses 18-19).



In essence, Moses was thinking, “We’re all in this thing together. Lord, show Yourself mighty by Your love, and forgive these people.”

This is the heart God longs for in all His children—one of tolerance. Not condoning or permitting the sin, but loving the person and realizing the Father has a better way.

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

FACING THE CONSEQUENCES

The Lord desires to forgive us, regardless of our transgressions. He takes no pleasure in judgment and wants to move us to a place of blessing.

Still, if we continue to make the wrong choices, we will have to face the consequences. If you'll recall, this was not the first time the children of Israel rebelled. During their entire forty year journey in the wilderness, they complained about everything from their food, their safety and the living conditions. Now they were rising up over the fear of giants in Canaan.

Pay close attention to the Almighty's response to Moses' plea: *"I have forgiven them, as you asked. Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the Lord fills the whole earth, not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times—not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it. But because my servant Caleb has a*

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it” (verses 21-24).

The Israelites were forgiven—yet they paid a price for their rebellion. Only Joshua (verse 30) and Caleb, the two spies who brought back a positive report, were able to lead their families into the Promised Land.

Those who do not believe will not receive the blessing. It’s not that God doesn’t desire it for them, rather because they choose not to place their faith in the Father’s promise.

JESUS REACHED THEM

Remember, this life is not all there is. I believe God gave these people one more chance, as described by the apostle Peter in the New Testament. He writes, *“For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago” (1 Peter 3:18-20).*

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

This details how Jesus descended to the bowels of the earth and preached to those in the holding place of the dead, giving them the opportunity to be redeemed.

Again, your part is not to determine whether or not a person is saved. Rather, you have been commissioned to share the good news and to do the work of God on earth—to believe and stand in the faith.

HAD THEY FORGOTTEN?

It's amazing what happens to individuals when they hit a rough patch on their journey. It seems they would rather return to sickness, bondage, anxiety and depression than to move forward in God's promises.

They need to listen to the apostle Paul who says with total commitment, *"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 3:14 KJV).



The children of Israel were consumed with thinking about the giants and themselves.

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

They were focused on the obstacles instead of a God who was working wonders on their behalf:

- Had they forgotten about the miracle of the ten plagues back in Egypt (Exodus 7-11)?
- Didn't they remember how God parted the Red Sea so they could escape Pharaoh's armies (Exodus 14:21-31)?
- Weren't they grateful for the Lord making bitter waters sweet (Exodus 15:22-27)?
- Did they disregard being led by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Numbers 14:14)?
- Couldn't they acknowledge they had been fed with manna from heaven? (Exodus 16:1-5)?
- And what about God sending a wind that dropped a huge quantity of quail from the sea right into their camp (Numbers 11:31)?

They failed to grasp the enormity of the miracles the Lord had performed in taking care of them. God

said, *“During the forty years that I led you through the desert, your clothes did not wear out, nor did the sandals on your feet”* (Deuteronomy 29:5). But still they weren’t satisfied. Nothing was good enough.

They forgot the fact God had already given them the land, all they had to do was march in and possess it. Instead, they continued murmuring, “There’s no way we can overtake Canaan!”

In the natural, of course they couldn’t. But why weren’t they considering a miracle-working God?

They were thinking, “Let us get rid of the guys who are believing in the Lord” When you are in unbelief, you do not want someone around who is talking with faith.



When you do not want to act on your healing, or you are not happy in your marriage situation or your relationship, you mistakenly think, “I can handle this myself.”

SPREADING THE BAD NEWS

What happened to the ten spies who returned with a negative report? The Bible tells us, *“So the men Moses had sent to explore the land, who returned and made the whole community grumble against him by spreading a bad report about it—these men responsible for spreading the bad report about the land were struck down and died of a plague before the Lord”* (Numbers 14:36-37).

Who wants to be around a person who is always depressed, continually nagging, bawling and squalling, “Give me this. Give me that. I don’t like this, I don’t like that”?

We think, “What is their problem? Why are they always judging, criticizing, condemning and belittling?” Nothing ever meets their standards. The soup’s too cold, it’s too hot, it’s lukewarm. It is only by a God-given attitude of kindness we can extend true love to such individuals.

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN



*Moses had the heart of God—the desire to
forgive, restore, heal and love.*

He respected, honored, and gave people the opportunity to believe whatever they wanted, but he knew what was true and right. As a result, Moses did not compromise.

“YOU HAVE GONE TOO FAR”

As the journey continued, another uprising occurred. A person by the name of Korah and other men (Dathan and Abiram) became insolent and rose up against Moses.

Scripture tells us, *“With them were 250 Israelite men, well-known community leaders who had been appointed members of the council. They came as a group to oppose Moses and Aaron and said to them, ‘You have gone too far! The whole community is holy,*

every one of them, and the Lord is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the Lord's assembly?" (Numbers 16:2-3).

The demonic attitude which started with Miriam now permeated the leadership, and they became rebellious.

This was sad because, unfortunately, the people didn't get the message of what had happened to Miriam. Over time they forgot the lesson that God is in charge. They had grown self-righteous.

WHAT WAS THEIR AGENDA?

The Lord has taught me that students can never be greater than their teacher. They may achieve higher exploits and reach more people and create wonderful things, but they will always have the responsibility to honor the one who taught them.

When the Israelites charged that Moses and Aaron had "gone too far," this was simply a reflection of their personal opinion.



*In truth these rebellious men sought
recognition, position, honor and power. But
they were not ready to pay the price.*

Moses heard their complaint, and once more he fell on his face before God. Then he said to Korah and all his followers, *“In the morning the Lord will show who belongs to him and who is holy, and he will have that person come near him”* (verse 5). Then he ordered, *“You and all your followers are to appear before the Lord tomorrow—you and they and Aaron”*(verse 16).

When they showed up, God had one more message for Moses and Aaron. He commanded, *“Separate yourselves from this assembly so I can put an end to them at once”*(verse 21).

The Lord was telling them, “Let Me deal with this!”

Then, just as he had done in the past, Moses fell to the ground and cried out, *“O God, God of the spirits of all mankind, will you be angry with the entire assembly when only one man sins?”* (verse 22). Once

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

more, he demonstrated a heart of compassion and interceded on behalf of the people.

However, the Lord directed Moses: *“Say to the assembly, ‘Move away from the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram’”* (verse 24).

So he warned the people, *“Move back from the tents of these wicked men! Do not touch anything belonging to them, or you will be swept away because of all their sins”* (verse 26).

Then Moses gave the people the rest of the message: *“This is how you will know that the Lord has sent me to do all these things and that it was not my idea: If these men die a natural death and experience only what usually happens to men, then the Lord has not sent me. But if the Lord brings about something totally new, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them, with everything that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the grave, then you will know that these men have treated the Lord with contempt”* (verses 28-30).

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

EARTH AND FIRE!

Moses, who knew he was God’s servant, didn’t take personally what these men said. To him, they were speaking against the Lord out of envy—and to stir up trouble for their own personal power and glory.

As soon as Moses had finished speaking, the Bible says, *“the ground under them split apart and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, with their households and all Korah’s men and all their possessions. They went down alive into the grave, with everything they owned; the earth closed over them, and they perished and were gone from the community”* (verses 31-33).

Hearing their cries, all of the Israelites around them ran, shouting, *“The earth is going to swallow us, too!”* (verse 34).

The fire also consumed the 250 men who were allied with them (verse 35).

The Lord was not the problem, rather it was the evil lurking in the hearts of the people.



They refused to receive God's mercy and love, spreading an evil attitude.

AN ATONEMENT

It was amazing, but the next day the people continued to grumble. They told Moses and Aaron. *"You have killed the Lord's people."* (verse 41).

God wasn't finished. He sent a plague that began to kill thousands, but at the Tent of Meeting, at the Lord's command, Moses and Aaron offered incense and made atonement for them. Scripture tells us they *"stood between the living and the dead, and the plague stopped. But 14,700 people died from the plague, in addition to those who had died because of Korah"* (verses 48-49).

By the grace of God, this tragedy was turned into a blessing. The Lord was purging the children of Israel for what lay ahead. Eventually, only Joshua, Caleb and their tribes were able to cross over into Canaan and possess the land.

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

WHERE IS THE WATER?

Even after the plague fell on Korah and the dissenters, the people remained unhappy. *“Now there was no water for the community [even though God had miraculously supplied it in the past], and the people gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron. They quarreled with Moses and said, ‘If only we had died when our brothers fell dead before the Lord! Why did you bring the Lord’s community into this desert, that we and our livestock should die here? Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to this terrible place? It has no grain or figs, grapevines or pomegranates. And there is no water to drink!’”* (Numbers 20:2-5).



We’re talking about hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people—with no grocery stores or supermarkets around the corner!

After forty years in the wilderness, their speech

was well rehearsed—and you probably know what Moses and Aaron did. That’s right, they fell face down on the ground and talked to God about the situation. And once again, *“the glory of the Lord appeared to them”* (verse 6).

“SPEAK TO THE ROCK”

The reason Moses always reverted to prayer is because he served a God of hope and provision. The Lord instructed him, *“Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink”* (Numbers 20:8).

In His instructions, the Lord mentioned, “Take the staff,” but He specifically commanded, “Speak to the rock.” Moses knew what could happen to that staff because he had used it before Pharaoh back in Egypt. He could still visualize the scene as he threw it down and it turned into a serpent. Pharaoh’s men did that,

too. But Moses' staff ate their's up! (Exodus 7:12). God is always superior.

Later he stretched out his staff and the waters parted, allowing the children of Israel to cross on dry land.

So, Moses called for these thirsty, restless people to assemble in front of the rock and didn't mince words, saying, "*Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?*" (Numbers 20:10).

Then he raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Scripture records, "*Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank*" (verse 11).

MOSES' MISTAKE

Did God allow the water to flow out just because the people were thirsty? No, it was for His glory!

Yet, these grumbling people didn't seem to know when God Almighty was right in their presence. When Moses was up on Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments, they thought he wouldn't return. So

they turned to Aaron, asking, “Make us a golden calf so that we have a god that we can see” (Exodus 32).

Even when the whole mountain was lit up with God’s awesome presence, they did not seem to recognize the Lord was there.

In this instance, however, Moses did not follow God’s specific orders. God had instructed him to, “Speak to the rock,” but Moses *struck* it! As a result, the Lord told him, “*Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them*” (Numbers 20:12).



*The Lord dealt with Moses privately
about his transgression.*

It wasn’t a public matter—and this is the way it should be. You do not touch God’s anointed or judge His servants.

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

HIS EVENTUAL REWARD

Shortly after this event, Aaron died. And Moses later passed from this life on Mount Nebo (Deuteronomy 34:1-5)—where from a distance he could view the Promised Land.

You may consider this unjust, but God is always truthful in His commands and actions. Moses didn't whimper or complain about the Lord's decisions, but consider this. Who was standing in the Promise Land with Jesus and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration? None other than Moses (Matthew 17:3).

I've heard people comment, "Moses almost made it. He was right there and so close." Yes, but God was concerned that he make it forever. If anybody is going to get a great crown when Jesus comes back, it is going to be Moses, a great man of faith. He was tolerant, loving and showed tender mercy and kindness toward the children of Israel.

THE REMNANT

As we find in this account, the Lord always leaves a remnant who will hold onto the truth—and those

are the ones He will bless. Certainly, God desires to pour out His goodness on everyone, but only the believers who cling to His promises can receive all He has in store.

Jesus told those who believed in Him, *“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free”* (John 8:31-32).

KEEP TEACHING TRUTH

I remember the day the Lord spoke to me, saying, “Son, I am not interested in your opinion. Just continue to teach my truth.”

I realize that people are free to either receive or reject the message, yet we must continue to present it.



Just because someone says, “No” today does not mean he won’t say “Yes” tomorrow.

If you have ever been involved in sales you

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

understand a rejection isn't always permanent. Next week or month, the same customer may have a need for your goods or services, and the funds to make the purchase.

We need to present the information and plant the seed so they can make a choice.

I believe the person who rejects Christ will some day come to their senses and realize their deep need of the Savior. Through your efforts they will hear Jesus say, *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die"* (John 11:25-26).

The Lord is patient, giving us time to change.

Through your kindness, compassion and humility, you are a living testament of His mercy and love.

CHAPTER 5

THE POWER OF PATIENCE

There are three qualities of God described by the apostle Paul in Romans 2:4—“*kindness, tolerance and patience.*”

We have discussed the first two:

1. God’s *kindness*. He is always good to us, even when we don’t return His favor.
2. God’s *tolerance*. The Lord may not condone or agree with many of the things we are doing, believing, and thinking. However, He does not strike us down while we are in the process of changing since He has given us a free will to decide whether we are going to receive His blessings.

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

This brings us to the third quality—*patience*.

NO MORE DEATH!

It is essential for us to understand how patient the Lord has been with us during the process of coming to know Him, receiving His love, and growing in obedience to His Word.



When Jesus died on the cross, it was to give each of us an abundant life, filled with hope, health and prosperity.

The power of death was broken and the Lord has given life forever through faith in Him

While on this earth, no matter how much you acquire, how stellar your reputation, or what you accomplish, when you die you always leave your estate to an heir—whether a wise person or a fool. In Jesus, however, it makes no difference what you leave behind since you are moving to a home which exceeds

anything you can dream of.

The apostle Peter writes concerning *“the last days”* (1 Peter 3:3), referring to the end of the age on earth, because in Christ there is no finality—eternity is forever. As Jesus stated before He returned to heaven, *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die”* (John 11:25-26).

In the Lord’s new order there will be no more pain, sorrow, suffering, sickness, disease, death, or poverty which we have experienced in this world (Revelation 21). Only good and blessed things will be waiting in the place God is preparing for those who love Him.

This is the eternity of which the Bible speaks, yet we have countless millions who ridicule the idea. As Peter tells us, *“First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, ‘Where is this “coming” he promised?’ But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed”* (2 Peter 3:3-6).

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

THE PATH TO REDEMPTION

If you read the story of the flood, God's patience and goodness was being poured out on the people, yet they would not turn from their evil ways. They refused to receive God's provision, so He instructed Noah to build an ark in the middle of the desert, because judgment was imminent.



God's heart and desire is not to judge, but the people condemned themselves by not living according to the Creator's commands.

Today, the path to redemption is even clearer. All one has to do is accept Jesus Christ into their heart and say, "Lord, I need You in my life. Forgive me of my sin. I acknowledge Your love and provision."

According to Scripture, *"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved"* (Romans 10:9).

“COME TO ME”

In Noah’s day, the people refused to listen to God’s warning, and the hour of reckoning arrived.

Still today, millions put their lives in jeopardy by violating God’s principles and engaging in activities that bring no blessing. As a result they endure days, nights and even years of pain and problems. Stress fills their life and eventually breaks their heart.

However, the Lord continues to call, *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest”* (Matthew 11:28).

AN URGENT MESSAGE

God’s patience gives us time to change. But there will reach a point where people will have had more than enough opportunity; then the end will come. As the Bible declares, *“By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men”* (2 Peter 3:7).

This is why there is such an urgency to our message. People need to hear of God’s love and

understand His plan. *“But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance”*(verses 8-9).

God’s schedule is different than ours—and we should be grateful for His patience in giving us the chance to accept His Son. The Almighty *“has made everything beautiful in its time”* (Ecclesiastes 3:11). The Lord is giving us the opportunity to make a free will choice.

God is patient—a quality we need to personally adopt.

Let me offer this practical illustration. The reason windows are built into ovens is because we get impatient—and would keep opening the door before the right time, and the cake might fall!

When God makes a statement He means just what He says. It will all come to pass in His due season. So we need to keep our faith and trust in Him in the same manner the Lord keeps faith and trust in us.

NOW IS THE TIME

In these last days we need to exercise patience, because *“the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night”* (2 Peter 3:10).

No one knows when this great event will take place. Therefore, we can't delay making a decision: *“...now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation”* (2 Corinthians 6:2 KJV).

When you hear His voice, respond, answer and accept His call. Jesus says, *“Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done”* (Revelation 22:12).



*We must be ready to receive, accept
and anticipate this truth since it is futile to
procrastinate or defer the inevitable.*

Otherwise you will be like the man who built large barns, filled them up with all his goods and thought, “I'm going to retire now and everything is going to be wonderful.”

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

The Lord came to him and said, *“You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself? This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God”* (Luke 12:20).

WHAT LIES AHEAD

Our time here on earth is short. You need to make your decision right now and confess, “Lord, forgive me. Come into my life, order my steps, and direct my path.”

The day will dawn when you no longer will have the opportunity to make this choice. Why? Because, *“The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.*

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness” (2 Peter 3:10-13).

What should be our response? *“So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him” (verse 14).*

HE’S WORKING IT OUT

The Lord is patiently working out His plan, not just for eternity, but for today.



*With confidence, you can know
your life is in God’s hands—and He is
working out His goodness in you.*

Paul encouraged the believers at Philippi, *“being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6).*

We may look at a particular person and think, “Lord, will they ever change?”

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

Never fear. God has a good plan for their lives, so give Him time.

SHAPED AND MOLDED

When we pressure people regarding spiritual matters, our impatience is at work and it is a sign we don't have faith the Lord has begun a good work. Relax. You have prayed, now let God do what is necessary.



*Diamonds are developed through pressure,
but it is pressure spread over centuries.*

Nobody likes to be forced into action. I've heard people say, "Pastor, I did not like what you were talking about the other day."

This does not bother me because I just communicate what the Lord gives me to say. But this I know; God would not have me declare a truth if it were not necessary for somebody to hear.

The Holy Spirit keeps moving us forward; He does

not just sit back in silence.

According to God's Word, when a parent does not discipline his child, he allows his son or daughter to go to hell. Sure, discipline involves a certain amount of pressure, but a young child needs to be shaped, just as a young tree needs to be trained in the way it should grow. If you do not give it direction, it is going to become unruly and go any which way it wants—and eventually be useless. In fact, people who own orchards, regularly prune or chop down unproductive trees and start over.

In the same way, God's people are very special and He is continually molding and making us into a vessel He can use.

BY THE SPIRIT'S POWER

Many are prospering as far as the world is concerned. They are making megabucks, driving fancy cars and living in expensive homes. On the surface they seem to have it all together. But there is one thing facing all people—DEATH. There is no way around it. We can try to hide our age, but until Jesus' return, death faces everyone. And the only way to overcome

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

this scourge is through faith in Jesus Christ.

You cannot make a person accept the Lord by pushing them toward an altar, but your constant, patient kindness will eventually pay dividends.



*The day will come when the
message will penetrate their defenses
and God will touch their heart.*

Paul expressed it this way: *“My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power”* (1 Corinthians 2:4-5).

This is what makes the difference. The Lord means business: He will heal the sick, mend the broken hearted, take the person whose life has been devastated by relationships, hurts, wounds, and abuse and turn it around like nothing ever happened.

How is this possible? By the demonstration of His Spirit and power. Whoever calls on the Lord will not

leave empty handed.

HE LOST IT ALL!

When I read the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15), one part always amazes me. The young man came to his father and said, “Give me my inheritance.”

Where I come from such a request would be totally rude and unheard of—yet the father willingly gave the money to him.

In spiritual terms, the father in the story is the Lord. He gave the son his inheritance to use as he pleased. As the story continues, he went out and squandered it on all kinds of things—doing whatever his flesh enticed him to.

He spent his money on “stuff” with no return. Then, after a length of time, the funds ran out. So he had to exist by the sweat of his brow, ending up feeding the hogs, which to a Jew was the lowest of the low.

All of a sudden he came to his senses and realized that even the servants in his father’s house had it better than his life in the pig pen. So he decided to head for home, humble himself and say, “Dad, you do

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

not have to take me in, but if you desire, make me a servant.”

This is called repentance—turning from yourself and heading back to God.

TOTAL LOVE

So he went home and his father accepted him. After all, this was his son whom he always loved:

- He loved his son while he was in the house.
- He loved his son when he became rebellious.
- He loved his son when he returned.

When the boy arrived home, his brother complained, “You gave him a ring. You put it on his finger. You gave him a new set of clothes. You threw a big party for him. I have been here faithful all of this time and you never did any of that for me.”

Perhaps you have harbored the same bitter attitude, thinking, “I’m doing what God says to do. Why should the person over there get blessed when they are not living for the Lord?”

The dad looked at his questioning son and replied,

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

“Your brother is not a runaway anymore. He is restored and he has had his blessing—to be part of the family, part of the kingdom. But he has already used up his inheritance, so all the rest belongs to you.”

The father continued, “Shouldn’t we be happy and excited this boy who was lost is found? Shouldn’t we throw a party and rejoice?”

In other words, “Get your attitude straight. Let’s show a little goodness, tolerance and patience.”

THE HEART OF GOD

As I looked at the story, I concluded the other brother did not really want his sibling to come home, believing he was a shame to the family. However, this is not the heart of God.



Why would the dad give his son the inheritance? Because it was his!

The father, in his love and goodness, had prepared it for his son and it was freely given.

You may ask, “Shouldn’t the father have directed how the boy was going to use the money? No. It was

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

his sons' inheritance.

Somewhere along the line people have to grow up and become responsible for their decisions and understand the consequences of their actions.

KINDNESS DRAWS US BACK

Patience says even though someone may be heading away from things that are blessed, it is just a matter of time before they will turn around.

In the account of the prodigal son, the father was expecting his son to return. Why? Because the boy had experienced the goodness, tolerance, and patience of a loving father. He came to his senses, but had not even thought about home until he was through sowing his wild oats. Only when he came to the end of himself did he realize the good life he had left behind.

This is the love of our heavenly Father—His kindness that draws us back. Once you have tasted of the goodness of God, you will never be satisfied with anything else. Yes, you may become distracted and go out on your own, but you always remember the unlimited love the Lord has shown to you.

THE LOVE OF A PATIENT LORD

You may have foolishly squandered it all, but your Father is still waiting. And when He sees you nearing home He will say, *“Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found”* (Luke 15: 22-24).

To the prodigal, the father didn’t question, “Son, what were you doing all these years?” No. He was so happy to see him that he accepted him back without reservations. All he knew was his boy who was lost, was now found. This was all that mattered. He placed the ring of sonship on him again (the son had probably pawned his original ring) and dressed him in new clothes.

Now it was time for a celebration party.

The Lord takes pleasure in the return of the backslider. Even the angels in heaven dance and rejoice!

Aren’t you glad we serve a patient God? Shouldn’t we desire to be more like Him?

CHAPTER 6

A KINGDOM OF KINDNESS

On these pages we have given you the reasons why kindness should become your way of life, but here is one danger to avoid. Don't let your actions draw attention to yourself. Make certain you are "kind" in the name of Jesus—as His earthly representative. Never steal God's glory.

You may worry, "Well, how can I be sure I am sending the right message?"

Let me give you an example. When a person offers his or her gratitude for you showing kindness to them, you might respond, "Don't thank me; thank the Lord," or "I just do what God tells me to."

Your simple words may be the most effective

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

testimony they will hear.

We must never become a stumbling block in someone's path. Rather, as Christians, we are to demonstrate God's qualities in every way—*"in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love"* (2 Corinthians 6:6).

WILL YOU BE A CANDLE?

Wouldn't it be amazing to see acts of mercy, compassion and love begin to multiply to such an extent that our world became a Kingdom of Kindness? It won't happen overnight, but you might be the catalyst that sparks a wave of caring and love in your neighborhood.



*When an individual observes your
generosity and godly behavior, they may say,
"This is exactly how I want to be"—and
begin to mirror your lifestyle.*

Add prayer to your actions. Who knows? What

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

begins in your block or subdivision may spread to your community, then to other cities and nations. It's been stated that just one candle can light the world—but the flame must start somewhere before it can be passed on.

Ask God, “What can I do today which will help ignite and establish a Kingdom of Kindness on this earth?”

SHOW IT!

The Lord didn't just talk about His kindness and unfailing love toward us, He proved it. The Bible clearly states, “*God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8).

This is also how He expects you and I to act. It's one thing to say we love our brother, but how do we put it into practice? There's only one way—through extending mercy and forgiveness.

The Bible tells us to add to our faith “*godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love*” (2 Peter 1:6-7).

When faith, hope and love are living inside you, it

won't be a difficult task to be compassionate toward others.

A HIGHER STANDARD

Have you every shown kindness to a stranger? I'm talking about helping an elderly woman carry her groceries to her car—or anonymously picking up the tab for a family in a restaurant. Without question, it would come as a surprise, because the average person wouldn't think of such a gesture. But if you know Jesus, you are living by a different, higher standard. And your acts of goodwill represent the compassion which flows from above.

The Creator places kindness within each of us because *He* is good and kind. But how do those who come in contact with us know this is true? People aren't always drawn to open the pages of Scripture, so the first Bible they see is often you and me—we are living testaments of God's grace and mercy.

The Lord assures you, *"I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness"* (Jeremiah 31:3).

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

If we as believers do not demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit, we are literally closing a door which may lead a person to Christ. For this reason we can't afford to be intolerant, impatient, or unjust.

You may say, "I'm not sure I can be that kind of ambassador; I am still working on problems in my own life."



*Don't try to make the transformation
in your own strength—especially when you
have help beyond measure.*

Remember, *"It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose"* (Philippians 2:13).

WILL THEY COME TO THEIR SENSES?

As a follower of Christ you are to be as a shining light, set upon a hill—an example to the world. Here are some specific instructions: *"The Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who*

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will” (1 Timothy 2:24-26).



*Is this part of your mission?
Are you helping and encouraging men
and women to see the light?*

“ENDURE ALL THINGS”

No one promised the road would be easy. Whether you are serving the Lord or not, you still have to put up with human nature. For instance, a wife may have to contend with a husband who leaves his dirty socks lying wherever he takes them off. Or perhaps you have a neighbor who refuses to mow his lawn—or a co-worker who doesn’t know the word “deodorant.” There’s always something or someone interrupting your peaceful life and making it anything but pleasant.

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

This is where your Christian virtues must rise to the surface and take charge. You have to learn to flow with the Spirit of God and practice love, joy, peace, kindness, and plenty of longsuffering!

The Lord has everything under control and is using you to gently and tenderly cause those around you to change. Under His guidance they will respond to your care, counsel and concern,

Since the Bible tells us that love “*endures all things*” (1 Corinthians 13:8), we need to establish an unbreakable bond with God and with those He places by our side as we journey through life.

KEEP BELIEVING!

Continue to believe the Almighty and do what is right, no matter how you feel, what you think, regardless of what your carnal flesh is telling you—or any other person is saying.

Often it is our closest friends who give us the wrong advice. I’m sure you remember the story of Job, whom God allowed Satan to put to the ultimate test. The devil afflicted Job, “*with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head*” (Job 2:7). His

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

condition was so severe that Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it, trying to find some relief as he sat among the ashes.

When the situation dipped to the lowest ebb, and all hell had broken loose over this once-prosperous man, his own wife chided him, saying, “*Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!*” (verse 9).



In this life there will always be a person waiting to tell you to give up—and it may even be a member of your own family!

How did Job respond? He replied to his wife, “*You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?*” (verse 10).

Although he too spoke out of ignorance about God not knowing that the Lord did not cause the trouble (Job 42:3; James 1:13), Job did not judge his wife, but rather appealed to her.

NO EXCEPTIONS

As a servant of the Lord you must not look for opportunities to rebuke, “You should have listened to me,” or “See, I warned you!” Instead, your goal should be to respond with godly care and concern.

Ephesians 4:2-3 tells us, *“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”*

Remember, God’s love is the entire reason behind His immeasurable kindness, tolerance, and patience. He loves every person without exception. Concerning the Israelites, who drifted away from His command, God said, *“I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love; I lifted the yoke from their neck and bent down to feed them”* (Hosea 11:4).

You may ask, “Why does He care so much for people who are not living according to His principles?”

Please understand this truth. The Lord loves people—not the activity of the enemy which often affects their behavior. Jesus came to *destroy* the work of the devil.

As believers, we should live by Christ’s example

RANDY C. BRODHAGEN

and take authority over anything the devil throws in our way. Declare, “In the name of Jesus, I refuse to have this in my life any longer. Satan, get out of my house! Get out of my life! Get out of my thinking! Get out of my family! Get out of my business!”

I pray you can see the difference between how we deal with others and how we face the devil.

PREPARING FOR ETERNITY

The world can be harsh at times, with people giving us what we deserve. Yet, when you turned your life over to Christ, He gave you what you did *not* deserve—mercy, grace, kindness and love. In the process He holds back the punishment we should have coming to us.

This is why Paul gives this advice: “*God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience*” (Colossians 3:12).

What a marvelous garment we are to wear! And it is part of our preparation for the world to come.

Through redemption, God raises us up and sets us

THE KINDNESS FACTOR

in the heavenly realm, *“in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus”* (Ephesians 2:7).

I pray you will experience and demonstrate on earth the eternal quality God desires throughout His Kingdom —the Kindness Factor!

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