

**1 Corinthians 13:4 –
"Who deserves bragging rights?"**

(1 Corinthians 13:1-4a NIV) "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind."

The word *love* suggests a broad range of desires and actions.

You could more easily wrap your arms around King Kong and kiss him than understand all that *love* entails.

At times *love* provides fodder for humor.

You've probably read Alfred Tennyson's famous lines, "'Tis' better to have loved and lost Than never to have loved at all."

Some wag wrote this parody,

"Better to have married a short girl than never to have loved a tall."

Last week we noted some unusual qualities of biblical patience.

Biblical *kindness* has surprising traits, too.

In all the words available to us in English, not one of them conveys all that kindness involves.

You'll find this interesting: first century Greek-speaking Christians "loved" the term kindness.

Why did they so favor kindness?

As you'll see, the difference between the Greek word for Christ and the Greek word for kindness is merely one vowel.

Χριστός = Christós = Christ

Χρηστός = Chrastós = kind, loving, good

The Greek letter eta (η) is pronounced with a long "a" sound as in *late*.

The similarity made it easy for Greek speaking Christians to remember kindness. **The NIV does not follow the original word order.** The Greek reads love–patient, kind–love, which says to me: **"It's Christ-like to act kindly."**

We get abundant advice on being kind.

Parents, preachers, peers, politicians, teachers, corporations, sports idols, and the media tell us how to feel kindly.

Parents even hear it from their kids.

Despite all the "guidance," kindness isn't making gains in our society, is it?

(1) Before we can decide what to do, we need specifics, not opinions about real kindness.

Remember the old football cliché that 3rd down and ten is a passing situation?

A quarterback might not think the choice of whether to pass or run is simple.

He'd agree that chances of gaining ten yards are better by passing than by running.

He wants to know what kind of pass.

Does coach want a flat pass, screen pass, post pattern, sideline pass, run-pass option, buttonhook, or "Hail Mary?"

What receivers will be available on this play?

"How many guys will block for me?"

"Will I roll right, left, or stay in the pocket?"

What type of defense will the opponents use?

The answer whether to "pass" requires details; *kindness* needs particulars, too.

A) Consider this kindness specific:

A French novelist told a story about a wealthy woman he called *The Woman of the Pharisees*.

In a way this rich lady was committed to the poor people in her village.



She visited them regularly.

She always left behind a gift--along with a suggestion that with a little more ambition and a little more thrift they could improve their situation.

She never left a poor family's house without making them feel worse for her having been there.

Disdain and condescension sometimes accompany *kind* acts—

"I'm helping you because I'm superior."

B) For another reason, some look upon kindness with suspicion.

Definitions of kindness often include words like, soft, yielding to the touch, gentle, tractable, easily governed.

To many people, kindness intimates weakness.

"He was so benevolent, so merciful a man that, in his mistaken passion, he would have held an umbrella over a duck in a shower of rain."¹

So what is Christian kindness?

Bible passages such as **Galatians 5:22** include kindness, but don't help us much to define it.

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness," (NIV).

¹ Douglas William Jerrold (1803-1857) British Playwright and humorist. *The Ultimate Reference Book*, p 229

Ephesians 4:32 tells us kindness includes forgiveness, yet we still lack a full definition: **"Be kind and compassionate, forgiving one another, just as in Christ God forgave you," (NIV)**

"Chrastos"- kindness appears in a passage that might amaze some; yet even though Jesus said it, teetotalers won't like it:

"No one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, 'The old is better,'" (Luke 5:39 NIV).

The word **"better"** here is our term

"Chrastos"—kindness.

Do you wonder where I'm going with this?

Wine drinkers surely understand this better than we teetotalers do. Here's how I understand what Jesus meant:

They tell me that aging and fermentation give wine depth, quality, and richness.

You wouldn't serve a wine connoisseur something you bottled last night.

It wouldn't matter to me; none of it tastes good.

It's not true in every substance, but with wine, aging makes it fitting and appropriate.

Kindness acts appropriately.

The term *Chrastos* also appears in another popular passage:

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light," (Matthew 11:29, 30 NIV)

You didn't hear or see the word **"kindness"** this passage either, did you?

"Chrastos" is here translated as "easy."

Jesus gives everyone a burden to carry, but he doesn't overload us.

God equips us to carry the appropriate load.

When I hiked in the California Sierras, I rented a backpack.

In the sack I could carry food for several

days, a sleeping bag, a small Bible, mosquito repellent and other necessary items.

The backpack made the load far more bearable than if I tried to carry my necessities in a potato sack slung over my shoulder.



This is a clipart photo; neither of these persons is Bob.

Scholar Konrad Weiss wrote that kindness carries the sense of: **excellent, serviceable, useful, adapted to its purpose, good of its kind.**

The word *appropriate* fits well.

Jesus gives you a special yoke adapted and appropriate for you, not for anyone else.

He didn't design it for an alligator or camel, or any other person on earth; he fixed it for you.
"Bob, you still haven't told us what kindness is."
I can't tell you precisely how it looks for anyone.

Yet I can tell you how my world view changed once I learned a few qualities of God's actions.

(2) Too few people teach and emphasize these vital truths about God:

A) God our creator desires all to be saved.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him," (John 3:16, 17 NIV).

B) God controls history and he moves it according to his plan and purpose.

"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," (2 Peter 3:9 NIV)

God deals with you and me according to his plan.

That is, He wants to bring us all to repentance so we can live with Him forever and to live in harmony with other people.

He uses what is appropriate and useful to bring us to that end.

Remember; God knows the end of history, and what true seekers need in order to get there.

He always acts accordingly.

The Lord willing, in coming weeks, we shall speak more about God's plans for us.

Let me share two examples of "kindness."

In a Los Angeles supermarket check stand, I noted a woman and her about 5-year-old daughter.

The mother was purchasing only a few items—Twinkies and soft drinks.

I hoped it was a special occasion, but I had a feeling it wasn't.

By some definitions, by giving her sugar-filled treats, she was treating her daughter kindly.

In terms of her daughter's health, would you question whether she was being *good* to her?

If the mother thought about her daughter's teeth, bones, and body mass, was she kind if she regularly gave her treats of that type?

Kindness isn't always easy-going, agreeable, or pliant.



Kindness requires courageous, tough decisions.

When I was about 17, I had bought my first car; paying for it myself as well as the insurance on it. I lived at home, but didn't pay room and board, yet I felt pretty independent.

My parents struggled most of their lives. My dad worked swing shift for the railroad; my mother took care of an elderly woman to earn a little extra; she was often working in the afternoons.

The living room floor needed sanding; the parents rented a sander and had much of the furniture moved to finish the work. I had the day off and my mother asked me to finish the sanding.

"Sure, mom," I responded as she went to work. My friend Richard and I spent the afternoon, probably calling girls, talking about the girl situations in our lives and whatever matters were important to us that day. I did not touch the sander.

My mother got home about dark and as she came in, I said, **"Good bye mom, we're on our way out."** She saw the floor and the untouched sander, and said, **"Bob you are not going anywhere until the sanding is finished."** We didn't talk further in front of Richard. Instead, she and I went into my bedroom, which hadn't been touched either.

You know that sometimes there's a correlation between seriousness of the conversation and the

distance between the conversers. There was no social distancing that evening between my mom and me. She was about three inches shorter, not nearly as strong, but I can still see her jaw, barely six inches from my eyes quavering with emotion.

"Bob, you are not going anywhere until the sanding is finished."

I saw love there, perhaps mixed with a little fear, but godly determination that her ungrateful son would do the right thing. She acted kindly-appropriately.

In that moment my respect for her grew mightily. I regard it as very courageous, kind, loving acts. Thank God, my wife has also acted toward me at times with that same admirable kindness.

Kindness toward others relates to actions and behavior appropriate for bringing others to the day they give an account to God.

In God's kindness, He sometimes stops us to get our attention.



In coming weeks, God willing, we'll speak more of God's kindness, which should lead us to repentance.

We pray that you'll join us when you can.

God wants you to enjoy His eternity.

Will you do what is appropriate to join and help others find and enter that joy-filled place, where all present honor God, not money, or pleasure, or selves, and where all humbly praise God, our Creator?

In God's heaven, you will hear or see no bragging or boasting or bitterness.

No one gets to heaven except by God's kind mercy in Christ.

Bob Blair
PO Box 176
Cleghorn, IA 51014
www.robertblairbooks.com



Happy moments,
Praise God.
Difficult moments,
Seek God.
Quiet moments,
Worship God.
Painful moments,
Trust God.
Every moment,
Thank God.