

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

STUDY SIX

Courteous Twins in a Corrupt Culture

Ephesians 4:24–32

Kindness and goodness rarely make the headlines, but God thinks highly of these virtues. He put them among the fruit of the Spirit, and they are so needed in our world.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

CULTURE influences people more than they realize. It colors their outlook, shapes their values, forms their opinions, and sways their judgments. Because it is all they know, they don't even notice culture's impact.

An old Chinese proverb quips, "If you want to know what water is, don't ask a fish." Fish have no objective understanding of their own world, and neither do people . . . until the Holy Spirit opens their eyes.

Through the Scriptures, the Spirit reveals a world beyond our world: the kingdom of heaven. We get a glimpse of life in God's kingdom in Jesus, and we can see our world as it truly is—corrupt to the core and polluted by sin.

The Holy Spirit offers us fruit from God's kingdom, the heavenly virtues of love, joy, peace, and patience that this world can't manufacture, and He produces these virtues in us as we walk with Him.

He also offers "kindness" and "goodness"—two fruits of the Spirit that work in tandem (Galatians 5:22). *Goodness* is the inner quality that results from the Spirit transforming us to become more like Jesus, and *kindness* is Christ's goodness in action.

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul spelled out how goodness and kindness work together in Christians. Let's take a closer look at these twin virtues and discover ways to exhibit them in our culture.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

In this dark world, we have “light from the Lord”—the life of Christ in us (Ephesians 5:8). Pause for quiet prayer, and then invite the Holy Spirit to illumine the Scriptures in your study and shine through you “what is good and right and true” (5:9).



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Paul laid a theological foundation for our faith in the first half of Ephesians, chapters 1–3. In the second half, chapters 4–6, he applied these beliefs to our behavior, urging us to “lead a life worthy of [our] calling” (Ephesians 4:1). “Throw off your old sinful nature,” Paul wrote, and “put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy” (4:22, 24).

Holiness happens in the real world where we rub shoulders with people in our family, church, workplace, and community. Read [Ephesians 4:25–32](#), and notice Paul’s concern for our relationships. Imagine a society in which goodness and kindness characterized all relationships—what courtesy and goodwill would fill the world!



Observation: Goodness and Kindness in Action

In the observation phase of the *Searching the Scriptures* method, we pull out our detective’s magnifying glass and look for details in the text.¹ Sometimes a pattern emerges. In this passage, Paul balances negative commands with positive ones, and he provides a principle on which the commands are based. Christian virtues are always tied to spiritual principles.

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In the following chart, list the negative commands, the positive commands, and the principle found in the verses. We've filled in the first one as an example.

Scripture	Negative Command	Positive Command	Principle
<i>Ephesians 4:25</i>	“Stop telling lies.”	“Let us tell our neighbors the truth.”	“For we are all parts of the same body.”
<i>Ephesians 4:26–27</i>			
<i>Ephesians 4:28</i>			
<i>Ephesians 4:29–30</i>			
<i>Ephesians 4:31–32</i>			

Reflect a little longer on *Ephesians 4:24–32* and use the following space to record any additional observations you find. Do you see common threads linking the negative behaviors? Any points of comparison between Paul's positive commands? Can you identify a truth that is the foundation for all the principles?

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The courtesy twins of goodness and kindness are needed in our day. Courtesy in traffic as we drive. Courtesy at the market where we shop. Courtesy in the neighborhood. Courtesy in the family. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Goodness and Kindness on Display

The vices on Paul’s list are the rotten fruits of a decaying culture—lying, stealing, foul language, harsh words, rage, bitterness, and slander. We express the Spirit’s sweet fruits of goodness and kindness when we tell the truth, work for our income, give generously, use encouraging words, treat people with tenderness, and forgive.

However, what about Paul’s command, “Be angry” (Ephesians 4:26 NASB)? How can anger be an expression of goodness and kindness? Let’s take a closer look.

The Greek word Paul uses is, *orge*, which is “an abiding and settled habit of the mind that is aroused under certain conditions.”² Our Lord was rightly indignant over money changers extorting worshipers at the temple (*Matthew 21:12–13*). What conditions might provoke good and kind people to anger?

Paul, however, put a necessary restraint on *orge*: “yet do not sin” (Ephesians 4:26 NASB). What characterizes anger that slips into sin? Look further in *4:31* to find examples of anger gone to seed.

Paul offered a practical rule to keep anger in check: “Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry” (4:26). In this command, Paul used another Greek word, *parorgismos*, which “refers to anger that is accompanied by irritation, exasperation, embitterment.”³ Scripture always forbids this resentful type of anger because it sours the soul and poisons relationships.

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What was Paul teaching when he said not to let “the sun go down while you are still angry”? What did Paul’s figurative language mean?

Anger that simmers over unresolved offenses invites trouble. How might Satan leverage lingering anger to accomplish his purposes (*Ephesians 4:27*)?

Evils such as abuse, violence, or mistreatment *should* fill our sails with zeal to defend the helpless or stand up for what’s right. But we must rely on the Spirit to keep goodness and kindness always in our hearts. In the space below, formulate Paul’s teaching on anger into a timeless principle.

If you hold a grudge, you’re lingering in anger. The devil gets a foothold in our lives when we linger in anger. We start thinking like the adversary. Doing good and being kind will help you deal with anger. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: The Role of Renewal

Like all the fruit of the Spirit, goodness and kindness come through the Holy Spirit’s inner work of renewal. Spiritual renewal is a whole-person, transformational process, which Paul described in *Romans 12:1–2*. Let’s look at these verses in sections.

What part does your body play in your transformation, according to *12:1*? What does it mean “to give your body to God”?

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What part does your mind play in your transformation, according to *Romans 12:2*?

When culture squeezes us into its mold, goodness and kindness suffocate. To flourish, the fruit of the Spirit *requires* the renewal of the Spirit. Let's welcome the Spirit's work in our lives as we apply the principles we've learned.

There's no way we can measure the value of Christians who are approachable, comforting, caring, and affectionate. When people are around that kind of goodness and kindness, they want to know the secret . . . it's Jesus.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Goodness and Kindness on Display

All goodness and kindness have its source in God. When Paul commanded us to “be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another,” he pointed to God as our model—“just as God through Christ has forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32).

No one loves as God loves, cares as He cares, forgives as He forgives. Write a prayer of gratitude, receiving the tenderhearted kindness of God and thanking Him for the goodness He has shown to you through Christ.

Is it possible to receive God's kindness while you cling to bitterness, anger, and harsh words toward others? Yes. Paul wrote to believers who were doing just that. Are you clinging to a negative trait on Paul's list that you need to release? What might that be, and how can you let it go?

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You are the conduit of Christ’s goodness and kindness when you express goodness and kindness to others. You are not the source, He is. To whom might the Lord be leading you to show these virtues? How can the Holy Spirit enable you to do so?

One simple way to express these fruits of the Spirit is through common courtesy—small gestures of goodwill. A smile, a gracious response, a caring tone, an unhurried conversation, a quickness to forgive. But these gestures can’t be forced. They come from the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.

As you close your study, invite the Spirit to give you the mind of Christ. May Christ, not culture, color your outlook, shape your values, form your opinions, and sway your judgments. Then you will be living in a kingdom not of this world.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for the Spirit who is changing me from the inside out, renewing my heart, softening my spirit, and making me more like Your Son. Through Your mercy, You showed me kindness. In Your goodness, You gave me hope. In Your kingdom, I have abundant life. All praise to You! In Jesus’ name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, “*How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?*”
2. Kenneth S. Wuest, *Ephesians and Colossians in the Greek New Testament for the English Reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 113.
3. Wuest, *Ephesians and Colossians in the Greek New Testament for the English Reader*, 113.

For the 2024 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll’s messages. Copyright © 2023, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

