

KINDNESS

Heavenly Virtues: **Kindness** | Connection Group Discussion Guide | Week 6

Connect (5 to 10 minutes)

Come together to build relationships through fellowship and sharing about this week's worship.

- Take a few minutes to share your thoughts about worship this week.
 - What aspects of worship did or did not connect with you?
 - What story or illustration made an impact on you?
- Share about an unexpected gift you have received from someone and how it made you feel.

Context (30 to 40 minutes)

Dig deeper into the videos and scripture for this week through questions and discussion.

Watch the first half of the video for this session on your DVD or online.

- How do you respond to the comparison of kindness and being nice that was shared in the video? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
 - Share about a time when someone was clearly being nice to you, as the video describes it. What was it like to be on the receiving end of this?
 - Share about a time when someone was truly kind to you, or treated you as family, like the video suggests. How does this experience compare with the first one you shared?
- Do you agree with the idea that kindness will often cost the giver something? Why or why not?
 - What was the cost of the kindness you shared about earlier?
 - Share about a time when you chose to be kind to someone, even though it cost you something. Why did you make this decision?
- Take a few moments to look up different definitions for the word pity and share them with the group.
 - How do you think pity is different than kindness? Do you agree that it's easier? Why or why not?
 - Think about different individuals or groups of people in your life right now that you are tempted to pity rather than showing them kindness. Share about these with the group.
 - How is God calling you to move beyond pity and live into real kindness with one of these individuals or groups?

NOTES

Watch the second half of the video for this session on your DVD or online.

- How do you respond to the definition of cruelty shared in this video: that it is enjoyment of someone else's suffering?
 - When has someone acted this way towards you? How were you impacted by this?

- The video suggests that cruelty can come in many forms. What other, less dramatic forms of cruelty do you see in the world today?
 - What are some of the smaller acts of cruelty you are most prone to fall into?

NOTES

Read Matthew 25:31-46

“Disciples live lives of service among marginal nobodies, in opposition to the hierarchical world of exploitative and self-serving power, and in imitation of Jesus.” – Warren Carter

- Re-read verse 40. How do you think this instruction from Jesus aligns with our discussion of kindness verses being nice or pity?
 - Where do you see people fulfilling this scripture inside and outside of the church?
 - How do these acts of true kindness give you hope?
- Who would you say are the “marginal nobodies,” or the “least of these,” in our world today?
 - Why do you think they are in these categories?
 - How do you see the church or others showing them pity or cruelty instead of kindness?
 - Why do you think pity or cruelty is unhelpful in these circumstances?

“If kindness means treating someone like family, then kindness must include all the varieties of ways that family members show love for one another through the entire range of circumstances, conditions, and situations they find themselves in.” – Karen Swallow Prior

- Read the quote from Karen Swallow Prior to the group.
 - Who are you most reluctant to treat with kindness, or to treat as part of your family right now?
 - What is a simple, small act of kindness that you can share with them this week?

Call (10 minutes)

We believe that God not only shows us who God is but invites us to participate in God’s ministry by answering unique calls in our own lives. Join together in discovering how we can actively respond to scripture and God’s presence.

- Which of these two vices do you currently struggle with the most? Why?
 - How are you experiencing God’s forgiveness for this sin?
 - What is one thing you can do to avoid this temptation this week?
- We believe in our ability to live as virtuous people when we do the simple work of practicing virtues in our everyday lives. If you are participating in the “call to action” shared in our weekly worship services for this series, share with the group which action(s) you chose and why. (Please refer to the Call to Action handout for weekly calls to action.)

Closing (5 minutes)

God calls us into community by sharing our joys and concerns together in prayer and supporting one another in our walks with Christ. As we share testimony and stories of our lives, let us listen to where God is working within our community and how we can build each other up in Christian love.

- Share joys and concerns with one another.
- Close in prayer, either by inviting a group member to pray or by using the prayer provided below.

Closing Prayer

Kind and gracious God, we thank You that You have chosen to include us in Your holy family. We confess that the vices of cruelty and pity are so much easier than real kindness, and so we choose them instead of following Your will. We are sorry. Help us, every time we fall off the path of virtue, to get back up and to find our way through Your grace. Thank You for walking each step of this journey with us, even the steps we are ashamed of. Amen.