

## Cornerstone's Sermon Conversation Guide

July 18, 2010/Fred Provencher

Two Sides of the Same Fruit

Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 2:1-10

The longer you live as a follower of Christ the more God will grow fruit in your life. These are changes to your nature that allow you to become more of the person God is creating you to be for the blessing of His world. Today we explore the fruits of kindness and goodness. They can be used interchangeably.

Kindness is an inner disposition toward another. In a given situation you could be harsh or rude, but you choose not to be and offer mercy instead. Goodness is kindness with work boots on. This is a good action towards someone. It's more than an inner disposition. Could someone be kind without being good? If you're a people person and just want people to like you, then being kind without doing anything good can be easy. You want them to walk away liking you, but it's not necessary to do anything good toward another person.

Can you be good without being kind? This is the type of person that wants you to know they are doing something good. They want you to know you're not really worthy, but they're still going to be good to you. This kind of good without kindness can be manipulative at its core.

The challenge is that God wants us to be both. He wants to move us from simply being people pleasers or just doing good things with strings attached. The Apostle Paul, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Ephesians, reminds us of the grand narrative in which we all live. We are all deserving of God's wrath, but we are offered mercy and new life because of God's kindness and goodness. We were spiritually dead because we were our own god. We did things our own way through our own desires. The Apostle Paul, raised religiously, even placed himself in this grand narrative. Religion can still place self at the center. Religious and non-religious alike are deserving of God's wrath. But, the kindness and goodness of God is clearly displayed to us in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This is our example, and we are now called to offer kindness and goodness that God has already prepared for us to live into.

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*Share a time when you were at the receiving end of kindness without goodness or goodness without kindness. And, share a time when you were at the giving end of kindness without goodness or goodness without kindness. These fruit need to grow together in our lives. Why, for you, are they so difficult to grow together?*

*Where do you see the Church of Jesus Christ still needing to grow in our offering of kindness and goodness to the world around us?*

*How is it that religious people are still deserving of God's wrath? Do you have any tendency to see others as more deserving of God's wrath than yourself? What's dangerous about this mindset?*

*What else has this teaching stirred up in you that you need to work out with others?*

*What area of life is God inviting you to move forward in so he can reveal himself to you in a deeper way? What else might God be speaking to you through this story? What do you think God might be trying to affirm in you about who you are as his child through this story? What step of action is God calling you to take this week?*