



KINDNESS TOWARD OURSELVES.

Why is practicing kindness towards our own soul so unfamiliar that it seems to be easy to ignore something precious in our life, that we really need to take the time to deal with?

Read: Ephesians 1:6-8

God is rich in kindness and He has showered kindness on us. This is so lovely and life-giving, we need to pause and reflect on it, kindness. Such a simple virtue, it often takes a back seat to more dramatic qualities like bravery, holiness or love. And yet kindness is such a wonderful thing to receive.

Don't you love it when people are kind to you?

I sure do? In a world growing increasingly angry and hostile, a little bit of kindness can make your day. You're trying your merge into busy traffic and, instead of cutting you off, the driver ahead pauses and waves you in. You're returning some item to the store and, after waiting your turn behind several customers, you get to the counter only to realise you forgot the receipt.

"No worries," the clerk says. "We can take care of this."

Such simple gestures can totally change your day.

Kindness is simply wonderful.

Making room for beauty is kind. Unplugging from the constant barrage of media coming at us is kind. I do these things because they bring me life; they bring me more of God; they heal and strengthen my soul. Because the results are wonderful.

What did Jesus teach in Mark 12:28-34

The qualifier “as yourself” is lost on most people; it almost sounds like pop psychology, something you’d see on the cover of the magazines at the checkout stand, right next to the articles on “brain superfoods” and “how to talk to your pet.”

Yet Jesus is pretty matter-of-fact about the comparison: treat people like you treat yourself.

How would it be for you if you treated your neighbour the way you typically treated yourself?

Read: Proverbs 3:3-6

Jesus drives home healthy self-care as tied to loving others. The difficult truth we don’t want to admit is this: the way you treat your own heart is the way you’ll end up treating everyone else’s.

Have you ever heard: I am much more patient with my family/friends than I am with myself.

But over time our little frustrations begin to show up – we can pick up the signals.

God is gentle: kindness is gentle. It flows both into us and through us in gentle whispers.

Read: Jeremiah 20:15-18

We have so many unspoken expectations in our hearts that, unless your life is You Tube-worthy, your life is stupid, it's boring.

Why else would anxiety and depression, and envy, rise in direct proportion to one's consumption of social media? Because we're comparing our lives to what's online. Creeping in is the message that if your life is going to measure up and be wonderful, it has to be fantastic.

This is shaping Christianity and our spiritual expectations.

Think about how modern worship services are expected to be...extraordinarily talented musicians and singers.

It is like – if you are going to find God, if you are going to have more of God, it is going to come through some amazing experience, something totally wild and over the top.

Or you think that once you have God, the proof will be an over-the-top life.

We do need more of God – in our bodies, our souls, our relationships, our work, everywhere in our lives. But when you live in a culture of the incessant upgrade of everything, the sensational, it gives the impression that if you're going to have a deeper, richer, amazing experience of God, it is going to have to come in some sensational way.

Life is built on the daily things – love, friendship, community.

This is how life with God works. God has amazing things for us.

Let's return to kindness for a moment – we pursue these practices in a spirit of kindness.

What does extending kindness toward yourself look like right now?

How do you talk to yourself?

What is your “way” with yourself? Is it harsh and unforgiving?

What about the expectations you currently have for getting things done?

What is the pace you're currently demanding of yourself?

Would you ask the same pace of someone you love?

Kindness means not expecting perfection in these practices, not requiring yourself to feel anything, being gracious about your heart's slow journey toward God.

Meditation: Inner healing.