



PRETEEN
FEBRUARY 2024

FOR LEADERS ONLY

GOD VIEW: THE CONNECTION BETWEEN KINDNESS AND GOD'S CHARACTER, AS SHOWN THROUGH GOD'S BIG STORY

God showed kindness by sending Jesus for us—even when we didn't deserve it. Because of God's love for us, we can be kind to everyone. Kindness is a fruit of the Spirit. And when you show kindness to others, you give them a glimpse into the heart of God, and how much God loves them. Kindness should be a characteristic of people who follow Jesus. Not only did Jesus model kindness, but He also commanded it. He taught us to treat others the way we want to be treated.

CORE INSIGHT: The theological foundation for KINDNESS

Restoration through participating in God's story. I am designed to participate in God's story to restore a broken and hurting world.

Kindness can be one of those ideas that we take for granted. However, when we practice kindness toward others, we're actually living out the ultimate plan God has for the world.

KINDNESS is showing others they are valuable by how you treat them.

HEADS UP: IDEAS TO KEEP IN MIND AS YOU TALK ABOUT KINDNESS WITH KIDS

Because kindness is discussed in many different environments in a kid's world, we often assume that kids understand how to be kind to others. While that might be true, kids might not know that kindness is a virtue that starts with God and is evidence that God's Spirit is working within us.

Be aware that kindness can be one of those ideas that brings up negative emotions for kids who have not experienced kindness from others. As kids are listening to these stories and talking about them in Small Group, they may reveal that they are victims of bullying or abuse. Have a plan for when kids feel safe enough to share this with you: plan what you will say, know who you will tell, and consider how you'll need to follow up. Many of these situations can be part of mandatory reporting to the Department of Child Services. Check with your local authorities for those procedures and share them with the necessary leaders in your kids' ministry. Be sure to create a safe place this month for all kids to experience God's love.



FOR LEADERS ONLY (CONTINUED)

WEEK 1

Key Question: What does kindness look like? In some ways, kindness can feel subjective. What one person sees as an act of kindness, another might see as an obligation. That's why we start our preteens with a conversation about kindness. When you can identify what kindness can look like, you start to see all the ways you can show God's kindness to others.

We start this month in the **book of Matthew** as we look at three moments of kindness from Jesus' life. Whether Jesus was healing the sick, blessing little children, or sharing meals with people who others seemed to disregard, He was full of love and kindness. With the way He treated others, Jesus made sure that everyone knew they were valuable in God's eyes.

Bottom Line: Jesus showed us how to be kind. As we consider how we can show kindness to others, the best place to start is with Jesus. When we read about how Jesus was kind to others, we can learn how to reflect God's love with the way we treat others and show them they are valuable. Through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, God was so incredibly kind to us. In response, we can choose to be kind to the people we meet each day.

WEEK 2

Key Question: When is it hard to be kind? If kindness is something we know should be a part of our lives, why do we find it difficult to show kindness to others? Often we find it's easier to show kindness to strangers than those who are closest to us. We hope that through this question and the discussion that will follow, preteens will start to understand how they can show kindness to the people they love.

In week 2, we head to **Ruth 1 and 2**, where we find Naomi and her daughter-in-law, Ruth. Both of their husbands had died, and Ruth had the opportunity to return home to her family. Instead, she chose to show kindness to Naomi and stay with her. Ruth's kindness didn't go unnoticed. Boaz saw how Ruth had treated Naomi and offered kindness to Ruth, changing her life in a huge way.

Bottom Line: Be kind to the people closest to you. When it comes to our family and friends, we can often find ourselves taking them for granted. We hope that through the story of Ruth, kids will learn to show kindness to the people who care about them the most.



FOR LEADERS ONLY (CONTINUED)

WEEK 3

Key Question: **When have you been surprised by kindness?** We hear a lot about random acts of kindness, and it's true; often the best kindness is the kind that feels completely random. We pray that this question will help preteens discover how they feel when someone surprises them with kindness. And when that happens, we hope to guide them to figure out the unexpected, surprising ways they can show kindness to the people in their life.

For week three, we turn to **Matthew 5:41**. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught, "Suppose someone forces you to go one mile. Go two miles with them." To us, that might sound strange, but to those listening—not so much. Jesus' listeners knew that a Roman soldier could force them to carry their pack for a full mile. Jesus said to go two! And in doing so, Jesus reminded His followers about the importance of going above and beyond in the way they chose to respond to others.

Bottom Line: **Be kinder than you have to be.** Often kindness can feel like an obligation. Because of that, we tend to do the bare minimum when it comes to being kind to others. What if we helped kids look at it differently? What if we helped them see that kindness can be extravagant and unexpected? It's that sort of kindness that can change people's hearts and show them how much God loves them.

WEEK 4

Key Question: **How can you care for people who are different from you?** There are times when we face people who we feel don't deserve our kindness. Most likely, preteens could list out the people who they don't get along with or people who are different from them. They may even be able to make excuses as to why those people don't deserve their kindness. But Jesus tells us to love our enemies and show kindness to everyone. Through this question, we hope kids start to discover how they can show kindness to all sorts of people they meet.

We finish the month with a familiar parable found in **Luke 10:25-37**. A religious leader asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus answered with the parable of the Good Samaritan. Jesus used this story to completely change how people who follow Him should look at showing kindness to others. It's not just for people we know or like, but for everyone we meet.

Bottom Line: **Be kind to people who are different from you.** Everyone is deserving of our kindness, whether they're like us or not. We hope kids learn from a young age that God's love is for everyone. We can't hold back kindness from others just because they might look or act different from us. Jesus modeled a love and kindness that included everyone. We should follow His example.