

Kindness
God's Kindness
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Or do you show contempt for the riches of His kindness, tolerance, and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?

Romans 2:4

I've been grappling with God's kindness lately. Not the "let me massage your feet" variety—dinner with friends, an encouraging email, an answered prayer—the blessings that I immediately recognize and embrace. No. I've been wrestling with the "looks like I'll have to amputate" kindness. The kind that pierces my spirit—the loss of a job, a doctor's brain-numbing diagnosis, an emphatic "no" to a prayer request—a wound that disables me and sends me scurrying for shelter.

God's definition of kindness is so different than mine that I often don't recognize it. In my dictionary, kindness generates smiles, laughter, and relaxation. Kindness prompts me to say, "Wow! I'm so glad to be God's child. He's so good to me."

But God's kindness is much more complex than that. His kindness is always focused on eternity—preparing me for heaven, purifying me so that I'll look just like Jesus when I walk through heaven's gates. That's the reason His kindness looks like cruelty sometimes.

Think of a surgeon's relationship to a patient. If the patient's foot is so infected that it cannot be healed, the surgeon's brand of kindness requires amputation—pain, loss, excruciating therapy, and a new normal.

God's kindness mandates that for us sometimes—cutting out prideful actions, judgmental attitudes, and ungodly philosophies that threaten our spiritual wellbeing. Spiritual surgery is painful, but necessary.

Paul told the Romans that showing contempt for, or despising, God's kindness was indicative of a hardened, rebellious heart. To despise something is to scorn it, to trample it underfoot, to consider it worthless. How do I respond when God says to me, "Looks like we'll have to amputate?" Do I trust Him, confident that He's doing what's best for me? Or do I scorn His diagnosis and refuse to let Him operate?

One of the clearest indications that my relationship with God is healthy is my response to His kindness. Both varieties. Foot massages and amputations. What does God's kindness look like in your life today? How are you responding to it?

Dig Deeper

- **Psalm 18:50** says that God "shows unfailing kindness to his anointed, to David and his descendants forever." Can you think of some events in David's life that seemed more like cruelty than kindness? (Consider the events of **1 Samuel 20:24-42** or **10:1-31**) How did God use those events to bring about good in David's life?
- Read **Jeremiah 9:24**. What delights God according to this verse? How are justice and righteousness related to kindness?
- Read **Romans 5:1-5**. Suffering is one of the "kind" surgical instruments God's uses to bring about good in our lives. What benefits of suffering does Paul list?