

Just Look in the Mirror

There have been numerous news reports recently about the Russian interference with US politics. Russia has been accused of posting negative content about people and social issues in an attempt to erode public confidence, destroy reputations and divide Americans against each other. Whether or not it is true, we have become so polarized that we often join in on the discussion, without regard for others.



This devotion is not intended as a political statement but is a caution on how we interact with *each other*. Instead of blaming others, look at the face you see in the mirror. Do you react to social media posts with searing comments of your own? It is God's role to judge people, and not ours. He knows the truth. We sometimes forget that a post made in the privacy of our own home will instantly be out in the world for all to see, and for a very long time. Malicious social media posts have led to grave consequences, even teen suicides. The question is: do you communicate with kindness and compassion? Or, are you quick to jump on the band wagon and lash out against policies and people, especially if their point of view is different than ours? Unfortunately, we don't think about the ramifications of our own statements. They can cause great harm and cost us friendships. The current trend has certainly escalated a divided country.

I applaud a nationwide movement called the "Kindness Revolution." It encourages people to do unsolicited acts of kindness, in hopes that kindness will become viral, as people help others because someone did something nice for them. Kindness goes beyond just good deeds. It also involves compassion and forgiveness because of love. The Bible says: *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you (Ephesians 4:32)*. It also involves mercy and understanding. There will be a time when you need mercy and understanding from others. *Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy (Matthew 5:7)*.

Occasionally there is reason for us to be angry about a situation. We may even want to lash out in anger, thinking that doing so will relieve our stress. Statements made in anger actually become a catalyst to evoke comments from others. Instead of relieving stress it creates more as a war on words begins. The expanded verse from Ephesians says, *Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God (Ephesians 4:31-5:2)*. Kindness can replace both bitterness and malice. Christian kindness is not just a good deed but a change of heart. It is a character quality that reflects the strength of our faith. I pray that people of faith will lead the way for others to follow, by acting in ways that will make a positive difference in the world. We love because He loved us first.

But what if we feel that the other person doesn't deserve being treated respectfully? Remember that Christ's love for us is undeserved, and so we shouldn't insist that people earn our love and our kindness either. The Bible says: *Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing (1 Peter 3:9)*. In Paul's letter to the church in Galatia he talks about the personal characteristics that reflect our faith. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23)*. Each of these characteristics substitutes a positive interaction for one of vengeance. I hope you can look in the mirror and see a person who is trying to share kindness with others. We can only control the person in the mirror. I hope you like what you see, as God created you to love others.

A foundation of our country is that we are "one nation under God." Note that there isn't a comma after nation. "One nation under God" is one contiguous statement. Don't take the bait when tempted to ring in on a politically charged issue or personal attack. It may be another country behind the temptation but it may also be Satan seeking to inhibit you from acting as a child of God. Instead of listening to angry and opinionated people, listen to God.

Question: In what ways do you try to build up people of the Kingdom and avoid the trap of negative comments?

Prayer: Gracious, forgiving Heavenly Father. We thank you for your forgiveness. Let us forgive others when they fall short and let us avoid tearing others down. Amen.

Additional verses:

- *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience (Colossians 3:12).*
- *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers (Galatians 6:10).*
- *Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble (1 Peter 3:8).*
- *May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had (Romans 15:5).*