

## A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood

We recently learned of the passing of Joanne Rogers, who was married to Fred (“Mr.”) Rogers for more than 50 years. After Fred Roger’s passing in 2003, Joanne continued to spread her husband’s message of love, kindness, and acceptance. Kindness was the foundation of his television show, Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood. Maxwell King, a person who knew Rogers well said, “Human kindness was probably the single most important thing to Fred Rogers.”\* Rogers’ demeanor was gentle, soft-spoken, honest, and kind. When he spoke, you felt he was talking to you as a caring friend.



That is what kindness does. It is much more than a simple courtesy. Kindness is putting God’s love into action. It is a game-changer in a world in turmoil. Kindness starts with God’s love and compassion for all people and is the basis for many of the Fruits of the Spirit, listed in Galatians 5:22-23. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control...* Kindness is about being unselfish and doing things for others. The Bible says *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud (1 Corinthians 13:4).*

God, in His mercy, has shown kindness and compassion to each of us by sacrificing His Son for our salvation. There is nothing that we have done to deserve this gift from God. *But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:4-7).*

Showing kindness is what we do as a disciple of Jesus Christ. But, “If God’s people fail to practice kindness, they fail to be God’s people.”\*\* The Bible instructs us, *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:32)*

When we decide to do something kind for someone we are, in effect, accepting them for who they are. God accepts people for who they are. Now it is our turn. It might be the best thing that happened to the recipient of an act of kindness that day. Our act of kindness can create a change in their heart, just as God hopes we all change into the people He desires for us to be. Mr. Rogers is quoted as saying, "Mutual caring relationships require kindness and patience, tolerance, optimism, joy in the other's achievements, confidence in oneself, and the ability to give without undue thought of gain."

Mr. Roger’s Neighborhood was a children’s ministry on television. Rogers was an ordained Presbyterian minister and also had a degree in Early Childhood Education. Following Mr. Rogers’ example, we can also make a difference to people in our communities. Rogers said, “Imagine what our real neighborhoods would be like if each of us offered, as a matter of course, just one kind word to another person.” Let each of us make it a “beautiful day” in our neighborhood through acts of kindness.

**Question:** How can you show genuine kindness in “your neighborhood?”

**Prayer:** Dear Lord. Let us be a beacon of kindness to those around us, letting your love flow through us. Amen.

**Quotes:** \*Maxwell King is the CEO of the Pittsburgh Foundation. His quote is from a December 2018 article in Kiwanis Magazine.

\*\* Quote from Rev. Greg Nance, from on-line research.