

**Kindness in Action: A One Month Devotion
for Families on Loving God and Loving People**

Welcome to Kindness in Action, compiled by Sarah Dees of Frugal Fun for Boys (<http://frugalfun4boys.com>)

My prayer is that your family will benefit from taking a month to focus on what God has to say about loving Him and loving people. Throughout the month, we will learn about God's great love for us, about the connection between love and service, and how love should affect the way we talk to others.

These devotions are designed with families in mind, meaning that a mixed age group will not be a problem. If you have younger children, your discussion times will look different than if you have mostly older children, but everyone can get something out of this!

This devotions pack consists of 28 days of devotions. 22 of the days are Bible study days, and 6 days are project days. On the project days, you and your kids can choose a project from the Acts of Kindness Project list (included at the end) or come up with your own idea for a way to serve others. The point is to learn about what God says, and then to put it into practice by getting up and doing something kind!

Seven of the Bible study days have ideas for a hands-on object lesson that will hopefully make the concept more meaningful, especially for younger family members.

Several days also have memory verse suggestions. Not all of the passages lend themselves to memory verses, and it would be too much to learn a new verse every day anyway! But I think that making the time to commit a few of the verses to memory will be a worthwhile investment.

You can use these devotions straight from the printer, or cut them apart to separate the days. If you want to add a little more spark to it, try putting each devotion inside a fun envelope to open. We're putting ours in red and white envelopes and then displaying them in a Valentine's box.

Thanks for joining us on this journey to becoming more like Christ!

Day 1: God is Love!

Bible reading: 1 John 4:7-14

What do these verses tell us about how God loved us? What action did He perform?

Do you know what the word “propitiation” means? In the Old Testament, the high priest had to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies every year on the Day of Atonement to atone (pay) for the sins of the people. Jesus became the propitiation for our sins – He became our “mercy seat” so that God could look at what Jesus did on the cross as payment for our sins.

What does verse 8 say about people who don’t love God or other people?

Memory verse: 1 John 4:7

Day 2: We love because He first loved us.

Bible reading: 1 John 4:15-21

What is it that we don’t need to fear? (vs. 17-18) We don’t need to fear God’s judgment if we have trusted in Him for salvation because He loves us and has made us His children.

How do we get the ability to love? (vs. 19)

Memory verse: 1 John 4:19

Day 3: The Greatest Commandment

Bible reading: Matthew 22:34-40

Are you familiar with the Ten Commandments? Can you remember what they are? If not, look at Exodus 20:1-17. Jesus summed up the Ten Commandments in Matthew 22:34-40. He said that there are two things that if we do them, we will be obeying all the commandments. What two things are those?

Can we love God perfectly? Can we love people perfectly? No! Not even for one day! That is why Jesus died for us. He loves us, and gives us the ability to become His children. He will help us to become more like Him!

What can you do today to love God?

What can you do today to love the people around you?

Day 4: How Do We Love God?

Bible Reading: I John 5:1-4

How do we show love to God? By obeying what He says. It doesn't make a lot of sense to say that we love God, and yet to ignore what He says! If we love God, it will be important to us to make sure we're obeying Him. It's very tempting to think that obedience doesn't sound like much fun. It's easy for us to think that we need to do things our way in order for our lives to work out the way we want them to. But God knows what will truly make us happy! His commands are not a burden to obey because they are given with our good and God's glory in mind, and He gives us His help to obey them.

Do you know what a burden is? Imagine carrying a backpack filled with heavy books. All you can think about is wanting to put down your heavy load! Obeying God's commandments is not like that. God's ways are truly the best ways, and we are so much happier when we do what is pleasing to Him.

Day 5: Project day! Choose a project from the Acts of Kindness list, or think of your own!

Day 6: Jesus' Sacrificial Love

Activity: Prepare several brown paper lunch sacks ahead of time with various items that have smells – both good and bad! Ideas: a banana, chocolate, a cookie, an orange slice, some canned tuna, pet food, a dirty sock. Let your children smell each bag without looking inside first. Discuss which smells they like and which they don't!

Bible reading: Ephesians 5:1-2

Jesus gave Himself up for us by dying on the cross, and His sacrifice was a "fragrant aroma" to God. "Aroma" means "smell." These verses are saying that Jesus' sacrifice for us was like a pleasant smell to God.

What does it mean to be an "imitator of God?"

What are you willing to sacrifice (give up) in order to love the people in your life – your brothers and sisters, your parents, your friends, people who are not kind to you, and others. These verses remind us that Christ loved us sacrificially when we did not deserve it.

Day 7: Washing Feet

Bible Reading: John 13:1-17

In this passage, Jesus set a very important example for His disciples. Jesus is God – He deserves to be worshipped! And yet He chose to take the position of a servant and to wash His disciples' dirty, dusty feet. What does Jesus explain to His disciples in verses 13-16? Was He only talking about washing feet?

Activity: Find a way for your children to do some meaningful service, such as putting together a meal for the family. It can be simple – sandwiches and fruit, for example. Young ones can help with putting napkins on the table. Or have your kids take turns serving a snack to the others in the family. Rotate days so that everyone gets a turn to do the serving.

Day 8: Out of the Overflow of the Heart...

Activity: Saturate two identical kitchen sponges – one with water, and the other with muddy water or water with a couple drops of food coloring added. It doesn't take much dirt for it to show up, and you don't want the sponge to look visibly muddy. Both sponges should appear fairly identical. Ask your child to squeeze out each sponge into a dish. What came out of the clean sponge? Clean water. And what came out of the dirty sponge? Dirty water. We'll come back to this after the Bible reading.

Bible reading: Matthew 12:33-37

In these verses, Jesus was talking to the Pharisees. The Pharisees thought that they were holy before God because they obeyed the law outwardly (in action). But their attitudes and words were not godly. Where does Jesus say our words come from?

Our words show what is really in our hearts. It's impossible to speak kind words if we are filled with bad attitudes. When we squeezed the dirty sponge, dirty water came out. There was no way to get clean water out of that sponge! In the same way, if we want to love others and speak kindly to them, we need to deal with what is in our hearts.

Memory verse: Matthew 12:34b

Day 9: The Fruit of the Spirit

Bible Reading: Galatians 5:16-24

In these verses, the “flesh” refers to our sinful nature. What does verse 16 say about what we should do if we don’t want to be controlled by our flesh?

The verses we read yesterday talked about a good tree bearing good fruit and a bad tree bearing bad fruit. We see the same idea again in these verses. When we become Christians, God gives us the Holy Spirit to help us. What character qualities does the Spirit produce in our lives when we know God?

Memory verse: Galatians 5:22-23

Day 10: Project day! Choose a project from the Acts of Kindness list, or make up one of your own.

Day 11: Rotten Words or Encouraging Words?

Activity: Prepare ahead of time to have some spoiled fruit for this day. For young children, it would also be fun to have some fresh fruit of the same type to compare. Get out the spoiled fruit and investigate it – what does it smell and feel like?

Bible Reading: Ephesians 4:29-32

What kind of words should we not say? The word “unwholesome” here means “rotten.” Did you want to eat the rotten fruit? Of course not! What effect do our rotten words have on other people?

What does it mean that our words should build others up?

How can our words give grace to those who hear them? What is the opposite of giving grace? (Tearing down, stirring up a fight, making someone else discouraged)

Day 12: Love Changes the Way We Treat Others

Bible reading: Colossians 3:12-15

What kind of heart does this passage tell us we are to put on? Which one of these character qualities do you think is the hardest to do? Why?

What does verse 14 say that love does? (It unites us) Why does love do that?

Day 13: Loving by Putting Others First

Bible Reading: Philippians 2:3-11

What command is given in verse 3? Humility does not come naturally to our sinful hearts. But God did not create us to serve ourselves and put our desires first! He wants us to reflect His character instead. He gave us the perfect example of Christ who died a terrible death for us when He really deserved to be in heaven.

Do things go better in your family when everyone focuses on serving others? Explain.

Memory verse: Philippians 2:3

Day 14: Project day! Choose a project from the Acts of Kindness list, or make up your own!

Day 15: The Love Chapter, Part 1

Bible Reading: I Corinthians 13:1-4

What do these verses say about what we are if we do not have love?

Write down the qualities of love in verse 4. Next to each quality, make a list of how you can live out that quality.

Don't forget what we learned on Days 1 and 2 about where love comes from!

Memory verse: 1 Corinthians 13:4

Day 16: The Love Chapter, Part 2

Bible Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:5

What are the qualities of love listed in this verse? Love is not rude, it does not seek its own way, it is not provoked, and does not take into account a wrong suffered (other translations say “does not keep a record of wrongs”).

Are you easily provoked? Do you get frustrated easily? Do you dwell on the ways in which people have sinned against you, or are you quick to forgive?

Add these qualities of love to your list from yesterday, and write out some ways to obey what the Bible says in this verse.

Memory verse: 1 Corinthians 13:5

Day 17: The Love Chapter, Part 3

Bible Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:6-8a

This is a short passage, but one that is great to think about! What does it mean to “rejoice in unrighteousness”? (NASB – other versions have this worded differently)

Do you think tattling is rejoicing in unrighteousness? Is it possible for it not to be? How?

Are you known to others as a person who “bears all things,” or are you quick to be bothered by the actions of others?

Memory verse: 1 Corinthians 13:6-8a

Day 18: The Mouth of the Righteous is a Fountain of Life

Activity: Before this devotion, go for a walk outside. If it's cold where you live, serve hot chocolate afterwards. If it's warm, serve glasses of ice water. Comment, "Isn't this refreshing after being outside?"

Bible Reading: Proverbs 10:11-12

Water is essential for life! Can you remember a time when you were really thirsty and didn't have anything to drink? (Or maybe you just got really thirsty if you did the activity first!) Verse 11 tells us that the words of a righteous person are like a fountain of life.

Where do you think the righteous person's wise and good words come from?

Can you think of some examples of words that would be like a fountain of life to those who hear them?

Memory verse: Proverbs 10:11

Day 19: Healing Words

Bible Reading: Proverbs 12:18

To have rash words (NASB) or reckless words (NIV) means to speak without regard to the effect our words have on other people. What does this verse say rash words are like?

What would the tongue of the wise say to a friend who seems lonely? To a brother or sister who just accidentally spilled something? To someone who borrowed your stuff without asking?

How can you replace rash words with healing words today?

Day 20: Project Day! Choose a project from the Acts of Kindness list, or make up one of your own.

Day 21: Lying Lips

Bible Reading: Proverbs 12:19-22

What is deceit? Deceit is very similar to lying. When you tell a lie, you are saying something that is not true. Deceit can involve actions as well as words. For example, if you throw all of your toys and clothes into your closet and shut the door or hide them under your bed, you are deceiving your mother into thinking that you cleaned up your room when you really just moved the mess to another place.

What does verse 22 say about how God thinks about lying? What does God ask you do to instead?

How will lying and deceit affect your relationships with other people?

Memory verse: Proverbs 12:22

Day 22: The Power to Overcome Anger

Bible Reading: Proverbs 15:1, 4

How do arguments usually go? In our house, no one plans on getting in an argument. But then someone does something that another person doesn't like, and the offended brother responds with a rude comment. That rude comment is answered with another rude comment, and so on. Anger never solves a problem – instead, it's like putting more wood on the fire!

God says that instead of believing the lie that we'll feel better if we get someone back with our words, we should speak to them in a kind and gentle way. What effect does God say a gentle response will have? The great part is that a gentle answer will not only diffuse anger in the person we're talking to – it will help us to be calm instead of angry ourselves.

Activity: Harsh words can easily become a habit. If you find that this habit has taken over your house, it might help to have a visual tool for tracking progress in a more positive direction! Proverbs 15:4 says that "a soothing tongue is a tree of life." Glue a brown construction paper tree to a piece of poster board. Tape brown leaves to the tree with masking tape. Every time you catch one of your children saying something encouraging or giving a gentle answer, let them remove one of the brown leaves and add a green leaf in its place. The whole family can watch as the tree transforms into a green tree of life!

Day 23: A Living Sacrifice

Bible Reading: Romans 12:1-2

These verses begin a chapter in which the apostle Paul teaches us how to get along with people, and the point here is absolutely key to living out the rest of the chapter!

What does verse 1 say that we are to do?

Verse 2 says that we should be **transformed** instead of **conformed**. What do these two words mean? The word transformed comes from the same Greek word that we get the word “metamorphosis” from.

What are we to be conformed to? God wants our minds to be conformed to what His word says. We “renew our minds” when we study His word.

Are there influences in your life that cause you to be conformed to the world instead of conformed to God’s word? Are you choosing to fill your mind with what God says, or are you filling it with worldly thinking?

Day 24: Project day! Choose a project from the Acts of Kindness list, or make up one of your own.

Day 25: Being Diligent to Serve

Bible Reading: Romans 12:9-16

What does it mean to “give preference to one another?” (NASB)

What other commands do you see in the verses for how we are to serve each other?

Find a way today to either be devoted to prayer, to help someone who is in need, or to show hospitality.

Day 26: Loving People Who Are Hard to Love

Bible Reading: Romans 12:17-21

What does verse 17 say about how we should respond if someone sins against us?

Whose job is it to repay sin? Verse 19 says that God will deal with sinners. When we take things into our own hands and take revenge against another person, we are not trusting that God will do what He said!

It's a popular idea that we should ignore people who are annoying or rude, but this passage says to go a step further. What does verse 20 say? It says that we are to actually be *kind* to people who have done unkind things to us! Now this passage is not saying that we should let people physically harm us, but there are many times that the unkind act is not extreme and we can respond with something kind. In our neighborhood, we have often seen that the rude kids are often bored kids. Inviting them to play baseball with us or throw the football for a while can make a big impact.

One more thought on this issue... When we respond with rude words when someone wrongs us, it ruins any chance that we might have to share the gospel with that person. On the other hand, a kind response is a powerful testimony!

Activity: If there is someone in your family's life that is difficult to love, start by praying for that person. Pray for their needs, pray that they would come to know God if they don't already, and pray that you would have opportunities to love them. Then look for those opportunities!

Day 27: When Stuff Becomes More Important than People

Bible Reading: Luke 12:13-21

In this passage, Jesus told a parable cautioning us not to be focused on gaining wealth. What question prompted the telling of this parable? A man in the crowd asked Jesus to tell his brother to share the family inheritance with him. The man was probably asking for something that was “fair.” It’s tempting to be upset when we don’t get our fair share, but unfortunately, the Bible does not give us a lot of support for fighting over petty disagreements. Rather, we are to give generously and to trust that God will meet our needs.

What does verse 15 say about the ability of possessions to make us happy?

In our house, we have talked about the fact that there are several wrong reasons for refusing to share.

- “It’s mine” is not a reason not to share. Everything we have was given to us by God, and we should use it for His glory.
- “It *might* get broken or used up” is not a reason not to share.
- “I suddenly want it now that you have it” is not a reason not to share.

The only real reason not to share our possessions is if the person is not old enough or mature enough to use whatever it is, or if the person has abused the item in the past. For example, scissors don’t need to be shared with a toddler!

Are there any possessions in your life that come between you and your relationship with others? Are there things that you struggle being generous with? How can you put people above possessions today?

Day 28: Project day! Choose a project from the Acts of Kindness list, or make up one of your own

Acts of Kindness Project Ideas

- Make a family member's bed for them or do one of their chores without being asked and without announcing what you did.
- Write and mail a letter to a friend or family member.
- Do you have any elderly neighbors who live alone? Ask an elderly neighbor if he or she has any projects that need to be done that you could help with. Possibly bringing in trash cans, raking leaves, bringing in the mail on bad weather days, providing some individual-size meals for the freezer, etc.
- Help clean up after a church activity.
- Meet Dad for lunch at work. Bring new artwork and/or photos to decorate his work space.
- Pick up trash in your neighborhood.
- Spend 30 min. playing something that your younger brother or sister wants to do, in the way that they like to play.
- Prepare (or help prepare) a meal for the family.
- Take a meal to a busy mom or to someone who is dealing with an illness or other difficulty.
- Write a thank you note to a teacher, coach, pastor, or Sunday School teacher.
- Take donations to your local food bank.
- Make or purchase Valentine's cards and deliver them to a nursing home. Nursing home residents love to have children visit.
- Host a neighborhood baseball or kickball game. Provide water bottles and snacks, and use this as an opportunity to meet kids and parents that you don't know yet.
- Write a note of appreciation to your school nurse. It's flu season, and she's probably sick of the whole thing! (pun intended)
- Make cookies or another treat and take some to your neighbors.
- Make a specific goal with how you use your words, and then follow through! For example, "I'm not going to complain about what mom serves for dinner for an entire month!" or "I'm not going to complain when my younger brother goes in my room for an entire month!" It just might spill over into longer than that!