

An Easy Daily Habit to Radically Improve Your Marriage

Kindness is something our spouses can use daily. They often don't know they need it or even how to ask for it. They just know when they are out of kindness.

Kindness is the oil in a relationship. Let me explain this. Most of us men know that the parts in an engine move very fast, and most of us also feel that our lives are like that as well. We are working hard, chauffeuring kids, volunteering at church, helping out friends and tending to the house.

Oil is what keeps the engine lubricated so as to reduce friction, overheating and the eventual locking up of the engine; and kindness is that oil in a marriage. It's the random and intentional acts of kindness in a marriage that ease the frictions in life. It's the help, the smile, and the kind words that make the responsibilities of life more tolerable and even significant. It's the "thanks for taking the garbage out" that makes taking the garbage down the driveway for the 1,329th time more meaningful. The fact that someone cares enough to notice and say thank you makes life just a little bit easier.

Think about this for a moment. When your spouse has been kind to you, what is your immediate reaction? Don't you feel more warm and friendly toward your spouse? Don't you feel just a little closer and more affirmed and appreciated by your spouse than just prior to these acts of kindness?

Of course you feel all those things and much more. We are all human, and we all need kindness whether we know it or not. Human beings can feel the lack of kindness in a relationship. Some feel it in measurement of a few days. For others it takes

a little longer to feel the deprivation of kindness.

Just stop and think over the last week or so. How does your spouse feel from the acts of kindness he or she received from you during this period of time? Would they feel satiated by the acts of kindness they received from you? Would they feel as though they had some but not enough? Or would they feel starved as if they didn't remember when their last meal was, and they don't know when the next one is coming either.

Kindness is a fruit of the spirit. It's a fruit we all need to eat. There is something special in the nutrients of this fruit that makes anyone feel special.

Take a minute and remember when someone was kind to you. How did you feel? Did you feel cared for, important, and special?

When you eat the fruit of kindness it is so sweet to the soul. Do you remember the last act of kindness your spouse did for you? Do you remember how it made you feel?

You have the power of kindness locked inside of you through the spirit of God. As a Christian, kindness is within you, and it wants to get out. Remember inside any act of kindness you plant a seed in the soul of your spouse. Now in time, the seed you planted will eventually grow.

What will that seed become? It will become a tree with the fruit of kindness. You get to eat the fruits of your planting. Some of you may be reaping a plentiful harvest because of your continual planting and reaping. Others of you who are honest might also be reaping the very small harvest you planted. It may even be that your spouse is less kind.

Any day is a good day for planting kindness. You see, as in the other love agreements, the love agreement of kindness does not depend on your spouse. Even the strongest will is not more powerful than the power of the seed or the biblical principle of sowing and reaping.

Kindness is something we can do intentionally. Much of what we do in life can be done intentionally. Imagine if your spouse woke up in the morning and prayed, "Lord, help me to be kind to my spouse. Give me eyes to see your opportunity to plant kindness today. I want my spouse to taste your fruit of kindness today through me."

Then they go throughout the day bringing you your favorite beverage, holding your hand, responding to you kindly and more softly than normal as if they really cared about what you were saying and doing. They offer to take the children to their events and encourage you to just relax. The dishes and kitchen are clean, so they are not leaving you home to do the housework either. Imagine a day like that.

You would feel as though you were married to Jesus. What a life! You have this power to give kindness intentionally to your spouse. I can think of one act of intentional kindness I tell the husbands I counsel all the time. Make your wife leave one night a week or every other week. She needs a time not to be a mom, a wife, a cook, the clean-up crew and bedtime-ritual leader. She needs time to relax or play. This is an intentional act of kindness.

Women can plan an intentional act of kindness for their husband based on their interest. I encourage intentional acts of kindness. Take a moment, and I'll bet you can think of at least five ways you can be intentionally kind.

You see kindness is in you. Intentional kindness is actively planning to let this kindness out on a regular basis. Some spouses are extremely gifted in areas such as cooking. I mean when they cook, the presentation is exceptional, the fragrance inviting, the textures and temperatures are varied and the sauces are exquisite.

Yet this spouse doesn't use their gift very often. In this case, to express this cooking gift, they would have to

schedule the time and make a plan to cook. Let's say they choose to cook Tuesdays and Saturdays. Now they are intentional about expressing kindness through their gift of kindness: cooking.

So it is with kindness—being intentional is not only acceptable but also very much appreciated. If I am intentional in my kindness toward Lisa, that means I am intentional in feeding her a meal of kindness. I am planning for her to have a night out, do a task for her or other ways of team-type behavior for her. {eo}

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