

## Introduction

In 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, Paul mentions 15 ways that agape love manifests itself in our everyday lives. I preached about the first of those last week, in verse 4. It's patient. I'm going to preach about the second and third ways today, also in verse 4.

## Love Is Kind

The second way that agape love manifests itself is this. It's "kind." In his book *Winning with People*, John Maxwell claims there are two kinds of people in life – adders and subtractors. That's an oversimplification but it does help us define what it means to be kind.

It means not to subtract from people. You know what subtraction does. It takes away from. We even say it that way in mathematics, "Five take away three equals two." What we do mathematically, we can also do relationally. We can say and do things that take away value from people – that lessen the quality of their persons or lives. We call those things that do that "unkindnesses."

Some unkindnesses are uncommon, extraordinary. I read about an unfaithful husband who secretly had multiple affairs. His wife found out about it when she was diagnosed with HIV that she got from him. That's an uncommon unkindness. But most are common, ordinary. I know a Christian who's quick to honk at people when they, in his opinion, don't turn right on red when they should. That's a common unkindness. There's something we need to grasp about having the multiple affairs and honking the horn. They're on the same continuum. They both take away value from people. They lessen the quality of their persons and lives.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that those who are kind, by definition, aren't unkind. They don't subtract from people.

To be kind means a second thing – to add to people. You know what addition does. It increases. Three plus two equals five. What we do

mathematically, we can also do relationally. We can say and do things that add value to people – that increase the quality of their persons and lives. We call those things that do that “kindnesses.”

Some kindnesses are uncommon, extraordinary. Tony Campolo started a ministry called Beyond Borders that seeks to end child servitude in Haiti. That’s an uncommon kindness. But most are common, ordinary. Someone in our church overheard a person comment that she needed a ride to the airport. He immediately interjected that he’d be glad to take her and did. That’s a common kindness. But whether they’re uncommon or common, all kindnesses do the same thing. They add value to people. They increase the quality of their persons and lives.

### How to Be Kind

Now, according to Galatians 5:22, kindness is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. He Himself creates, sustains, and continually perfects it in us. But in the other passage I read, Colossians 3:12-13, Paul tells us we have a part to play in that. That part is to “put on kindness.” We put on kindness by doing three things.

First, recognize the value of our kindnesses. We do that by contemplating the worth of human beings. Each one that we deal with every day is an immortal who has an eternal destiny. He or she is special and infinitely valuable to God. We also contemplate the worth of even the most common kindnesses. Think about one of the simplest of those, a smile. Then listen to what Mother Teresa said about it, **“I will never understand all that good that a smile can accomplish.”** She’s saying that a smile achieves great good, far more than most of us know. If a smile does that, then all kindnesses, no matter how simple, do so as well. Now let’s put those two things together and see what we have. Even the most common kindnesses achieve great good for people of infinite value. We need to recognize and with the Holy Spirit’s help, believe that.

We put on kindness by doing a second thing, which follows from the first. Intend to be kind. I’ve commented before on a cultural slogan that

almost everyone thoughtlessly embraces. We see and hear it everywhere, **“Practice random acts of kindness.”** That may be the culture’s slogan but it certainly isn’t the Bible’s. Do you know what the Bible’s is? It’s this, **“Practice routinely purposeful acts of kindness.”** Do you see the difference? One is random – haphazardly, sometimes. The other is routinely purposeful – intentionally, all the time.

And that’s the point. Biblical kindness is purposeful. The great 19<sup>th</sup> century evangelist Dwight L. Moody followed this motto: **“Do all the good you can, to all the people you can, in all the ways you can, as long as ever you can.”** To intend to be kind means to purpose in our mind and heart to do what Moody did. Follow that motto.

There’s a third thing we do to put on kindness. Carry out our intention. Intention is always completed by decision and so that’s what we do. We decide to be kind. We look for opportunities to add value to people and when we see them, we do. Roman Philosopher Lucius Annaeus Seneca said something 2000 years ago that’s quite helpful in that regard, **“Wherever there is a human being, there is an opportunity for kindness.”** That’s so true. We have as many opportunities for common kindness as the number of human beings we know and meet everyday. So, we look for those opportunities and when we see them, we’re kind.

A good place to start is with what I call the “terrific trio of kindness”: smiling, complimenting, and listening. One of our most basic human needs is acceptance and that trio makes people feel accepted. They also lift their spirits and instill a sense of calm. So, we make a point of smiling, complimenting, and listening as often as we can. Just this past week, for instance, I smiled at a bank teller and commented what a lovely name she has, Mary. I also smiled at a young man at Marc’s and told him how impressive I thought his proficiency was in checking people out. The value those simple little kindnesses add far outweigh the effort they take. That makes them terrific and a good place to start in carrying out our intention to be kind.

That then is the second way that agape love manifests itself. It’s

kind. It adds value to people. We “put on” kindness: recognize the value of our kindnesses, intend to be kind, and carry out our intent.

### **Love Is Not Jealous**

But love isn’t just patient and kind. According to verse 4, it’s also “not jealous.” I had a classmate in seminary years ago named Bill Hess. Bill, even at the age of 23, was a dynamic exciting speaker who caught people’s attention and kept it. One of the things I’ve always valued the most is speaking ability. I actually admire speech and debate team members who excel more than I do athletes who excel. Anyway Bill was a far better speaker than me and I was jealous of him because he was. That illustrates what Paul’s talking about in verse 4. The Greek word translated “jealous” here carries the idea of rivalry, which helps us define it. It doesn’t refer to jealousy “for” someone, like a girlfriend or spouse. It refers to jealousy “of” someone, what we typically call “envy.” Love does not envy others.

All of us know by experience, on both the giving and receiving ends, what envy is. It’s a feeling of discontent and resentment that our desire for the possessions or qualities of another arouses. Simply put, we’re upset that someone else is something we aren’t, has something we don’t, or does something we can’t. Thus, I was upset that that Bill Hess did something I couldn’t, speak well.

Few things in life are as disruptive of personal and relational peace as envy is. Just listen to how it’s been described over the centuries. William Shakespeare called it “the green sickness.” Francis Bacon declared that “it has no holidays.” Horace claimed that “tyrants never invented a greater torment.” J.M. Barrie said it “is the most corroding of the vices.” Richard Sheridan argued that “there is not a passion so strongly rooted in the human heart as this.” And finally Philip Bailey described it as “a coal that comes hissing hot from hell.” Those men aren’t exaggerating. Envy is a hideous thing.

We understand why it is when we consider its effects on others and

us. I've already explained what it does to us inwardly. It makes us discontented and resentful. That in turn expresses itself outwardly. We diminish the person we envy.

Chuck Swindoll identifies three ways that we do that. The first is what he calls the "but" approach. We point out what the one we envy isn't, doesn't have, or can't do. Sure, he's brilliant but he certainly can't teach. The second way we diminish the one we envy is the "reversal" approach. We cast a shadow over him by questioning his motive. Sure, he gave a generous gift but he's just trying to impress people. There's a third way, the "unfavorable comparison" approach. We minimize what he is, has, or does by stacking him up against someone better. Sure, my friend published some poetry he wrote but he's certainly no Robert Frost.

You get the idea. Envy is an inner condition or state that almost always expresses itself outwardly. It diminishes the one it envies.

That's what I did to Bill Hess. Since I didn't have his ability to speak well, I secretly wished that he didn't have it either, which led me to say, "**He does speak well but his content isn't very good.**" I also secretly rejoiced when he struggled with something at which I excelled, Hebrew, which led me to say, "**It's a shame that he isn't as good a student as he is a speaker.**" But it really wasn't a shame to me. I was glad he wasn't.

I eventually came to see how awful and unloving that was, which is Paul's very point in verse 4. Love is not jealous. We never envy and diminish whom we love.

What do we do then? Paul tells us in Romans 12:15. We rejoice with those who rejoice. We celebrate when others eclipse us. I came across a little tidbit that says, "**The true test of relationships is not only how loyal we are when friends fail, but how thrilled we are when they succeed.**" That's exactly it. When we have agape love, we're thrilled when others succeed. We're genuinely glad when they are, have or do better than we. We actually root for that in fact. John the Baptist is our model for this. Remember what he said to his followers

about Jesus in John 3:30, **“He must increase.”** That’s the motto of those who love. Others must increase. They root for others to eclipse them and rejoice when they do.

### **How Not to Be Jealous**

Now, if I told secularists in the world out there what I just told you, they’d wonder what planet I’ve been dropped off of. Rooting for others to eclipse us and rejoicing when they do is utterly alien to human nature. The percentage of people who do so is miniscule.

So, how do we do that? We clearly can’t in our own power. Remember. What we’re discussing now is a natural manifestation of the agape love that the Holy Spirit produces in us. So, I refer you to the first sermon I preached, which explains how to pursue that.

But I would say this in addition. To be able to root for others to eclipse us and rejoice when they do, we have to be contented with two things: who we are and what we have. There’s only one way I know of to be contented with who we are. Play to an audience of One not many, the One of course being God. There’s only one I know of to be contented with what we have. Practice simplicity. I don’t have time to explain either of those now. So, I’ve produced two handouts to help you in that regard. They’re on the table in the narthex by the hallway. So play to an audience of One and practice simplicity. The Holy Spirit will transform you if you do - into a person who roots and rejoices for others.

### **Conclusion**

Those then are the second and third ways that agape love manifests itself. It is kind and not jealous. So “be kind.” Add value to others. And be “not jealous.” Root for others to eclipse what you are, have, and do. Like the Marines, you’ll be “one of the few”, the very few, if you do.