

# RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

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June 2018

Dear Friends,

I've been enjoying something from Ephesians lately, and wanted to share it with you. Allow me to begin with a passage from the opening of the letter...

All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding. (Ephesians 1:3-8)

Now, there is SO much in this opening passage I can't possibly address it all here. Chosen. Made holy. Every spiritual blessing. Can't take it all in right now. What I *would* like to point out is the use of the word "kindness" twice in the last two verses—God is rich in kindness, and he has showered kindness on us. This is so lovely and life-giving, we need to pause and reflect on it.

Kindness is such a simple virtue, it often seems to take a back seat to more dramatic qualities like bravery or holiness or love (kindness sort of feels like the younger sibling to love). And yet, kindness is such a wonderful thing to receive.

Don't you love it when people are kind to you?

I sure do. In a world that seems increasingly angry and hostile, a little bit of kindness can make your day. You're trying to merge into busy traffic and instead of cutting you off, the driver ahead pauses and waves you in. You're returning some item to the store and after waiting your turn behind several customers, you get to the counter only to realize you forgot the receipt. "No worries," the clerk says, "we can take care of this." Such simple gestures can totally change your day. Or how about this one—you are in a hurry to get home because you promised some friends you'd take care of their dog and you get pulled over for speeding; the officer hears your story and says, "I understand. How about you take it slow the rest of the way," and doesn't give you the ticket she could have.

Kindness is simply wonderful.

Now, the place I want to take us in this reflection is actually even more overlooked than offering kindness to one another—I am struck by the power of offering kindness to ourselves.

I'm working on a deck project this week. Specifically, I am installing some deck railing. We haven't had any for years, but now Stasi and I are grandparents (2 little girls entering full-on toddlerhood, and a new little grandson), and suddenly I realize we need deck railing so that our little adventurers don't take a plunge.

Anyhow, I'm out there for hours this morning trying to get one particular rail in place. It's not going well. I'm getting frustrated. But I'm kind of a push-through-it guy, and even though the temperature on the deck is in the upper 80s, I keep at it another hour. No success. Finally, I realize what is needed—I need to walk away. I need to let it go. I need to come in and cool off and have lunch. I am learning to practice simple kindness towards myself. The fruit of it is really good on my soul; the ripple effects are good on everyone else around me.

A friend was in town last week. I felt I ought to invite them to come over. But before I sent the text, I paused and asked Jesus. *Not a good call*, he said. *You are utterly exhausted*. And it's true—I was wiped out from a week of meetings and mission and work and I was about to spend my only evening off on further giving, had Jesus not intervened. His counsel didn't come as a command; it came in the gentle spirit of kindness. *Don't do that to yourself*.

Now I have a week of vacation. (It's summer, folks! Woo hoo!) But I am keenly aware that I also have a book due in September. I begin to make plans to work on the manuscript even as my vacation begins. *I wouldn't if I were you*, my kind Lord says. *You first need sabbath; then you can think about the book*. Simple kindness.

What I wanted to put before you this month is the question, "What would practicing kindness towards yourself look like right now?" It might be in the way you talk to yourself—especially when you blow it. It might be in the pace you are currently living. It might be in expectations, or in the "to do" list you have for yourself this summer. Kindness.

Remember—the way you treat your own heart is the way you will end up treating everyone else's. That's not meant to be a shaming statement; it is another way of realizing that the practice of self-kindness will spill over into kindness towards those around you.

Okay. That's really all I wanted to say. I could keep pressing on trying to come up with witty or powerful embellishments, but the truth is that wouldn't be kind to myself. After all, I'm on vacation. God is rich in kindness, and he has showered kindness on us. I want to live more into that. I want to receive it as he offers it; I want to practice it towards myself. I want to extend it to others more generously.

Kindness.

Offered in love,

  
John

PS. Okay, I do have one last thing. The team asked if I would remind you that June is often a lean month for us in terms of income, and we would be ever so grateful if you would send a gift our way. You could do so in the envelope provided, or even easier online at [ransomedheart.com](http://ransomedheart.com). Thanks folks—that would be immensely kind.