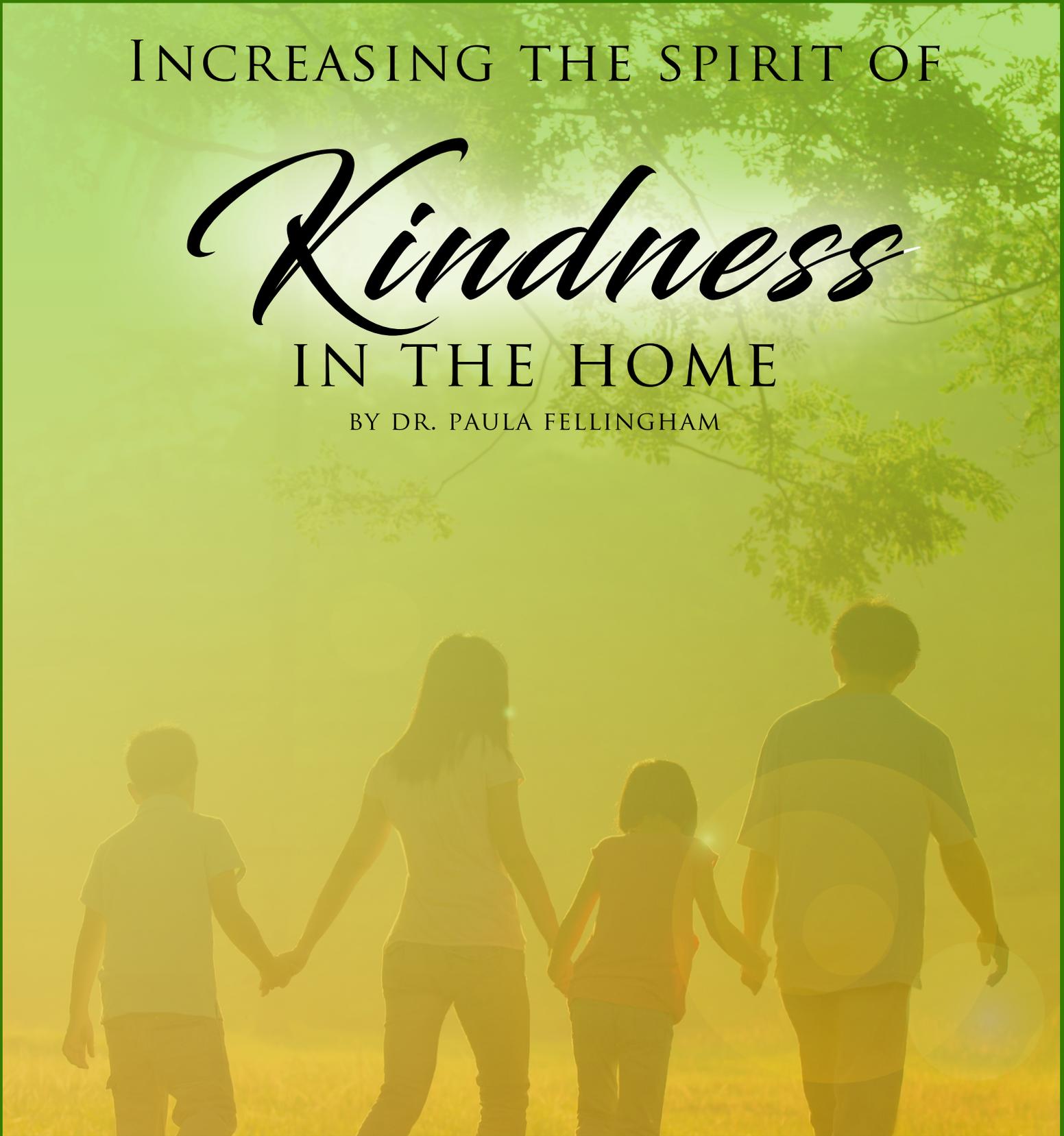


INCREASING THE SPIRIT OF

Kindness

IN THE HOME

BY DR. PAULA FELLINGHAM



OUTLINE AND LESSON PLAN FOR HOW TO
INCREASE FEELINGS OF LOVE AND RESPECT FOR
ONE ANOTHER IN THE HOME, STARTING TODAY



Kindness

INTRODUCTION FOR PARENTS

“One day my young daughter was late coming home from school. I was both annoyed and worried. When she came through the door I demanded in my upset tone that she explain why she was late.

She said, ‘Mommy, I was walking home with Julie, and halfway home Julie dropped her doll and it broke into lots of little pieces.’

‘Oh, honey,’ I replied, ‘you were late because you helped Julie pick up the pieces of her doll to put them back together.’

In her young and innocent voice my daughter said, ‘No Mommy, I didn’t know how to fix the doll. I just stayed to help Julie cry.’”

(D. Clark)

Kindness is the single most important ingredient in a happy home. This is the conclusion from a family study completed by researchers Dr. Ivan F. Beutler, Dr. Thomas R. Lee and Dr. Wesley R. Burr. Kindness has been chosen as the first and most important “family solution” because it is a key to individual happiness and family peace. Dr. Albert Schweitzer, a well-known humanitarian once said, “Kindness can accomplish much. As the sun makes ice melt, kindness causes misunderstanding, mistrust and hostility to evaporate.”

As I have met with hundreds of families, spoken to numerous groups about family issues, and critically observed families for decades, I have come to know that kindness is indeed a foundational part of every happy home. Without kindness, the money and the time we give our families is meaningless. Where there is no kindness, all attempts at family success are useless.



Kindness can be shown in many ways, every day. We have countless opportunities to show kindness in the home. I've heard it said in different ways but the message is always the same: little, frequent acts of kindness are appreciated far more than large material gifts given without affection. Simple words and deeds that show caring and concern for one another should be a part of the fabric of family life. When we treat one another as we would like to be treated, showing kindness and love, our acts of goodness will be noticed and imitated, creating *habits of kindness* and *traditions of family love*.

Some ways we can show kindness:

1. Speak gently, always being positive and lifting others.
2. Help people with no thought of reward.
3. Overlook others' mistakes; have great patience with imperfections.
4. Forgive easily and quickly.
5. Put the needs and desires of others before your own.
6. Share the good things in your life freely.
7. Be genuinely interested in the welfare of others.
8. Give of yourself--especially your time.
9. Be polite and courteous.
10. Share another's burden.
11. Listen patiently.
12. Set a good example.
13. Resist the urge to talk about others unkindly.
14. Treat others the way you'd like to be treated.
15. Be fair and honest at all times.
16. Love all people unconditionally.

In addition to showing kindness in the ways listed above, we can sometimes make a special effort to be kind by scheduling acts of kindness individually and as a family. We can set aside a little time on a regular basis--five minutes, fifteen minutes, an hour--whatever we choose, and not let anything interfere. We should treat this time for showing kindness just like any other important scheduled appointment. This time is for doing something thoughtful. For example, we can call someone who would like to hear from us, write a letter, or as a family do an act of service. Anything

we do will be showing love and making the world a better place.

Showing kindness in the home:

- demonstrates the care and concern family members feel for one another
- creates a loving atmosphere
- prevents problems

We're all happiest when we feel loved--when we know people care about our feelings and have concern for our well-being. Family members show their love to one another through kind thoughts, kind words, kind tones of voice and kind actions. Where there is kindness, there is an atmosphere of love, and problems that weaken families are often prevented.

Kindness can be thought of as a circle. The kindness circle can be broken either by the failure to show it, or by the failure to receive it. It is equally important to both *show* kindness and be able to *receive* it. Usually we parents are so concerned about teaching children how to give, that we don't help them learn how to receive. Parents need to teach children to be gracious and return kindness with words and expressions of gratitude. For example, thank you notes sent to gift-givers are always appreciated, and often result in desires to give again. Simple smiles and words of appreciation following acts of kindness help keep the "circle of kindness" intact. Russell Lynes said, "The art of acceptance is the art of making someone who has done you a small favor wish that he might have done you a greater one."

You may not believe that your family can generously show kindnesses to one another because perhaps your parents didn't show kindness in your home. This is a challenge. Although you cannot change your past, you do have the power to affect your future; to choose how you think and act. You can choose to begin new traditions of kindness in your home. It will be more difficult than if examples of kindness were part of your heritage, but you can practice kindness in your family and leave a legacy of love for your children and grandchildren.

Kindness is the single most important ingredient in a happy home. Henri Frederic Amiel reminds us of the importance of this great virtue with his words, "Life is short and we have never too much time for gladdening the hearts of those who are traveling the dark journey with us. Oh, be swift to love....make haste to be kind."



Kind Thoughts

LESSON PLAN

Concept

Kind thoughts are pleasant ideas that lift the soul. They always come *before* kind words and actions. How we think determines how we act.

If we want to become kinder people, the first step is to recognize that kindness, and unkindness, begin in our own minds. We can choose to think good thoughts, no matter what is happening around us.

If we're aware of our thoughts we can better control our words and actions. We *need* to be aware of what we're thinking, and try to catch ourselves in the act of thinking unkind thoughts. When we notice that our thoughts are unkind, we can say to ourselves, "That wasn't kind." Each time we catch ourselves thinking a negative thought, we should try to replace it with a positive one. That way we can *prevent* unkindness. Once we start paying attention to our thoughts, we'll discover that we can better control what we say and how we act. Then we'll be on the road to becoming the kind person we want to be.

If unkind thoughts about another person do occasionally creep into our minds, we can react kindly by trying to imagine, "What would it be like to *be* him (or her), with his life, his needs and desires?" We should then think about that person in the same kind way we'd want him to think about us.

We may believe that if others were kinder to us we could be more kind. Or we might think

that our problems in life keep us from being happy and as kind as we should be. Alfred D'Souza once observed, "For a long time it seemed to me that life was about to begin--real life. But there was always some obstacle in the way, something to go through first, some unfinished business, time still to be served, a debt to be paid. Then life would begin. At last it dawned on me that these obstacles *were* my life." Having kind, positive thoughts toward others, and our circumstances, is a wonderful step toward living a happy, abundant life.

Family Survey Review

Statement # 1. **Our family thinks kind thoughts about each other.**

- Give some examples of how our family can replace unkind thoughts with kind ones.
- What can we do to think more kindly? (*Look for positive things about one another.*)

Story

Jayne Fisher watched anxiously as her 17-year-old daughter Katie pulled her unruly lamb into the arena of the Madison County Junior Livestock sale. With luck, Katie wouldn't collapse, as she had during a livestock show the day before.

Katie was battling cancer. This was her first chance in months to be outdoors having fun, away from hospitals and chemotherapy treatments, and she had come with high hopes of earning some spending money. She had wavered a little on her decision to part with the lamb, but with lamb averaging two dollars a pound, Katie was looking forward to receiving some much-needed money.

So she centered the lamb for viewing, and the bidding began.

That's when Roger Wilson, the auctioneer, had a sudden inspiration that brought some unexpected results. "We sort of let folks know that Katie had a situation that wasn't too pleasant," is how he tells it. He hoped that his introduction would push the bidding up, at least a little bit.

Well, the lamb sold for \$11.50 a pound, but things didn't stop there. The buyer paid up, then decided to give the lamb back so that it could be sold again.

That started a chain reaction, with families buying the animal and giving it back, over and over again. When local businesses started buying and returning, the earnings really began to pile up. The first sale is the only one Katie's mom remembers. After that, she was crying too hard as the crowd kept shouting, "Re-sell! Re-sell!"

Katie's lamb was sold 36 times that day, and the last buyer gave it back for good. Katie ended up with more than \$16,000. for a fund to pay her medical expenses - and she still got to keep her famous lamb.

Discussion

1. Why did the crowd at the livestock sale think kind thoughts about Katie?
2. How did the thoughts of the crowd determine their actions? (*Their kind thoughts about Katie led to higher bids, to help her*)
3. What can we do when *unkind* thoughts enter our mind?

Activity

We're each going to take a turn and share one kind thought about every family member. *(Example: One person might say, "Mom is a good cook." The second person might say, "Dad listens to my problems.")* One by one, every person in our family will have a turn listening to one kind thought about themselves from each family member.

Assignment

1. During the coming week, make a real effort to have kind thoughts. If you should catch yourself with an unkind thought, recognize it as such and replace it with a pleasant thought.
2. Choose one person in the family, and try to be very sensitive to his or her feelings for one week. Make a special effort to really feel what that person is feeling, and think about him in the same way you'd like him to think about you.
3. If you wish, participate as a family in the activity which follows this lesson: Family Time Capsule.



ACTIVITY

FAMILY TIME CAPSULE

Most people have strong feelings about what it means to be a member of their family. This activity is an opportunity for family members to share those feelings of why their family is important to them.

Activity

1. Give each family member an envelope to hold any of the following:
 - Favorite keepsakes acquired during the past year (awards, letters, etc.)
 - Newspaper clippings, school report cards, original poems, etc.
 - Anything else that represents the person's hobbies or interests.
 - Photos of themselves, friends, activities.
2. Give everyone an index card or paper to write down his or her name, the date, plus any or all the following:
 - Names of friends.
 - Something they enjoyed this year.
 - Something they want to remember about the year.
 - Something they're proud of.
 - A goal they have for the next year.
 - Advice they'd like to give themselves for the next year.

Put the card in the envelope.

3. After everyone has filled their envelopes, on another piece of paper suggest they write a short note to each family member for that person to put in his envelope. Notes could include compliments, a special memory, or a wish you have for that person.
4. When all of the envelopes have been filled, seal them, put them in the box along with anything else your family would like, and seal it.
5. Write the date— in exactly one year— when you will open the box. In one year open the family box and enjoy your memories.



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WOMEN WORLDWIDE REACH
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