Patience is a key. "In your patience possess ye your souls" (Luke 21:19 KJV). Most, if not all, of the acts of the sinful nature involve a yielding to instant gratification. The Spirit-led life looks not to the immediate instant, but the longer range. Only through patience can we find peace, self-control, true love and joy, and the other aspects of the fruit of the Spirit.

We can learn patience when we consider God's great patience toward us. "God is slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness" (Psalm 86:15; see Psalm 103:8). "[God] is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance... Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation" (2 Peter 3:9,15). "But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life" (1 Timothy 1:16).

Because God first loved us, we can love both God and our fellow man. Because God has forgiven us, we should forgive our fellow man. Because God has shown extraordinary patience with us we can show patience to our fellow man. As we learn patience, we can overcome the temptation to immediate gratification.

**E. KINDNESS.**

The Greek word *chrestotes* implies goodness and moral excellence in character or behavior. It has been defined as "the grace which pervades the whole nature, mellowing all which would have been harsh or austere" and as “the divine kindness out of which God acts toward humankind.” It is what the Old Testament means when it declares that “God is good.” Christians should show kindness by behaving toward others as God has behaved toward them.” God is kind to believers (Romans 2:4, 11:22) and we should be kind. Ephesians 2:7 speaks of "The incomparable riches of God's grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus" (see also Titus 3:4).

Kindness is a command. "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32). "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience" (Colossians 3:12).

Eddie Foster (*lifehopeandtruth.com*) makes these comments about kindness:

Proverbs 20:28 describes qualities God wants in a leader: “Mercy and truth preserve the king, and by *lovingkindness* he upholds his throne.” Throughout

the Bible, two other qualities are often associated with kindness: love and mercy. Peter wrote of adding love to “brotherly kindness” (2 Peter 1:7), while Paul wrote about putting on “tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering” (Colossians 3:13).

16

Kindness is based on the mind-set described in Philippians 2:3-4: “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”

Kindness is humbly giving of ourselves in love and mercy to others who may not be able to give anything back, who sometimes don’t deserve it, and who frequently don’t thank us for it. Basically, kindness means a way of thinking that leads to doing thoughtful deeds for others.

The first section of Proverbs 19:22 states, “What is desired in a man is kindness.” Psalm 25:6 makes an interesting point about the origin of kindness: “Remember, O LORD, Your tender mercies and Your kindness, for they are from of old.” God created the world as well as humanity, and He graciously allows us to live here. He also gives us free choice to live as we please, though He deeply wants us to choose His way of life, knowing that it is the only way that will bring true happiness. This is great kindness.

Why does God want us to demonstrate kindness? It is because God wants us to become like Him. Though God’s tender mercies and kindness are often taken for granted, His servants recognize His love because of His kindness. The same will be true of us if we follow His example and are merciful and kind as He is. Biblical history shows that God’s mercy and kindness were many times shown through people He inspired. God sent prophets and raised up leaders to guide and deliver His people.

Ephesians 4:32 states: “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.” Verse 31 reveals the implied opposite: “Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking.” These are clearly traits God does not want in His chosen people. Instead, we are to reflect the light and example of His compassion, mercy and kindness. We are to become like Him so we can be in His family forever.

**F. GOODNESS.**

*Agathosune*, the Greek word for goodness, refers to virtue and uprightness of heart. It is an active fruit. It is not always mellow or gentle; it can show itself in rebuking, correcting or chastising, as when Christ drove the moneychangers out of the Temple. "We constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith" (2 Thessalonians 1:11).

We read in Psalm 33:4-5, “For the word of the Lord is right, and all His work is done in truth. He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.” God wants the earth to be full of His goodness. What He considers good is clearly spelled out in the Bible. Some godly

17