

Becoming Like Christ, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 7: Kindness and Goodness in Action

Ephesians 4:32

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

The doctrine at stake in this lesson is the inseparable link between the grace we have received and the grace we are called to extend. Ephesians 4:32 does not float kindness and forgiveness in the air as general moral advice; it anchors them firmly in the gospel, in what God in Christ has actually done for sinners. Make sure the class leaves understanding that Christian kindness is not mere niceness and that Christian forgiveness is not mere tolerance. Both are the overflow of a heart that has truly grasped the immensity of its own forgiveness. The standard is not our temperament or our culture's manners; the standard is Calvary.

There is an important order to guard here, and Q9 carries it. Paul says forgive as God in Christ forgave you, not forgive so that God will forgive you. The believer's forgiveness of others is the fruit and evidence of having been forgiven, not the price that purchases it. At the same time, Scripture takes a refusal to forgive with deadly seriousness (Matthew 6:14–15; 18:35); an unforgiving heart reveals that we have never really understood or received grace, and a Christian who hardens into bitterness can fall away. Hold these together: we are saved by grace through an obedient faith, not by our own works of mercy, yet a faith that produces no mercy is not the living faith that saves. Keep the ground of our forgiveness in Christ's atoning death, and keep our forgiving of others as the necessary, Spirit-formed response of those who have been forgiven.

This lesson is also deeply pastoral, because almost everyone in the room is carrying a wound. Some are quietly bitter and do not know it; some are exhausted from trying to forgive and finding the ache still there; some are confusing forgiveness with pretending nothing happened. The aim is not to scold but to lead hearts back to the cross, where they will find both the motive and the power to be kind. Teach so that people leave not merely resolved to try harder at being nice, but melted afresh by how much they have been forgiven, and therefore freer to forgive.

Question 1

Student Question:

Paul commands us to be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, and then gives the reason: as God in Christ forgave you (Ephesians 4:32). What does it tell us about the very nature of the Christian life that our kindness toward others is meant to flow from, and to look like, God's kindness toward us in Christ?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Open by letting the structure of the verse do its work. Ephesians 4:32 is a command with a reason attached, and the reason is the gospel itself. Be kind, be tenderhearted, be forgiving, and then: as God in Christ forgave you. Paul does not motivate Christian kindness by appealing to how nice it would be, or how much smoother life goes when people get along. He motivates it by pointing back to the cross. The kindness flowing out of us is meant to be the same kindness that first flowed into us.

This tells us something profound about the nature of the Christian life. It is not, at root, a set of rules bolted onto an unchanged heart. It is a life received and then reflected. We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). We forgive because we have been forgiven. The Christian is not generating kindness from scratch by sheer effort; the Christian is passing on what has been freely received, like a vessel filled to overflowing. This is why a heart that has never been truly moved by its own forgiveness will always find genuine kindness beyond its reach.

Notice too the phrase one another. Paul is writing to a church, a body of redeemed but still imperfect people who must live shoulder to shoulder. The kindness in view is not a vague benevolence toward humanity in general but a concrete, daily kindness toward the actual brothers and sisters God has placed around us, including the ones who are hard to love. The local congregation is the primary arena where this command is tested and proved.

Help the class feel the weight of the standard. The measure of our kindness is not our mood, our culture, or even the ordinary decency of getting along. The measure is how God in Christ forgave us, fully, freely, at infinite cost, while we were still His enemies (Romans 5:8–10). To take Ephesians 4:32 seriously is to let the gospel set the bar.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Christian kindness and forgiveness grounded in the gospel, not in temperament or culture (Ephesians 4:32)
- The Christian life as grace received and then reflected (1 John 4:19)
- Kindness as the overflow of having truly grasped our own forgiveness in Christ
- The local church as the primary arena for one-another love
- The cross as the measure and standard of our kindness (Romans 5:8–10)

Discussion Prompts

- Why does Paul ground kindness in the cross rather than in good manners or social harmony?
- What is the difference between generating kindness by effort and reflecting kindness we have received?
- Why is the church the place where this command is most tested?

Question 2

Student Question:

Kindness sounds easy until we picture the particular people Paul has in mind when he says one another, the fellow believer who irritates us, the family member who has hurt us, the person who has not changed. Who is the hardest person for you to be kind to right now, and what makes it so hard? What would real kindness, not mere politeness, actually require of you toward that person?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question moves the truth from the lecture hall to the dinner table. Kindness is an easy word to admire in the abstract and a hard word to obey in particular. Paul's little phrase one another forces the issue, because the people God has bound us to are not idealized saints but real, flawed, sometimes exasperating human beings. Everyone in the room can picture a face the moment the question is asked.

Press the difference between politeness and kindness. It is entirely possible to be perfectly polite toward someone while our hearts remain cold, even hostile. We can smile, speak the right words, avoid open conflict, and still withhold the warmth and goodwill that real kindness involves. Paul is not after a managed civility; he is after a genuine disposition of the heart that seeks the other person's good, expressed in concrete action.

Be careful not to let this become abstract self-criticism that changes nothing. Encourage each person to name one actual relationship and to ask what kindness would really require there. Perhaps it is initiating a conversation we have been avoiding, refusing to retell an old grievance, doing a quiet good turn for someone who will never know, or simply choosing patience instead of the sharp word. Kindness becomes real only when it gets specific.

Tie it back to the gospel so the weight does not fall on willpower alone. The reason we can move toward the hard person is that God moved toward us when we were hard, ungrateful, and unkind toward Him (Romans 2:4; Titus 3:3–5). We are not asked to summon kindness out of nowhere, but to extend to others a fraction of what we have received in full.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Kindness as a genuine disposition of the heart, not mere outward politeness
- The 'one another' of Scripture aimed at real, flawed people around us
- Kindness made concrete in specific actions toward specific people
- God's prior kindness to us when we were unkind as the motive and power (Titus 3:3–5)

Discussion Prompts

- Who is the hardest person for you to be kind to, and what makes it hard?
- What is the difference between being polite to someone and being truly kind to them?
- What is one concrete act of kindness this person actually needs from you?

Question 3

Student Question:

Just before this verse Paul says to put away all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and slander, along with all malice (Ephesians 4:31). Why does Paul insist that these things be put away before, or alongside, putting on kindness? What does this teach us about the relationship between rooting out sin and growing in Christlike character?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Now turn the class to the verse just before, because Paul deliberately sets putting off and putting on side by side. Ephesians 4:31 is a stark list: bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and all malice, to be put away. Only then, in verse 32, comes the kindness. Paul knows that you cannot simply paint kindness over a heart full of bitterness and expect it to hold. The old must be stripped off before the new can be put on (compare Ephesians 4:22–24).

Explain why this order matters. Bitterness and kindness cannot share the same heart for long; one will crowd out the other. As long as anger and slander are being nursed and excused, kindness will be sporadic and shallow, a performance that cracks under pressure. Genuine transformation always involves both a turning from and a turning to, repentance and renewal together. We do not merely add Christ to our lives; we let Him cast out what does not belong.

This is also a quiet rebuke to a common self-deception. We can imagine ourselves to be basically kind people while harboring a settled grudge in the corner of our hearts, telling ourselves it is justified. Paul will not allow the two to coexist comfortably. He names the ugly things plainly, malice, slander, clamor, and tells us to be done with them, all of them.

Stress that this putting away is not achieved by gritting our teeth but by the renewing of the mind under the gospel (Ephesians 4:23; Romans 12:2). As we behold afresh how God in Christ has dealt with our sin, the grip of bitterness loosens. Yet this is cooperative work: God supplies the power, and we make the real decision to lay the bitterness down rather than feed it. We do not wait passively for bitterness to evaporate; we actively put it off as those whom God is at work within (Philippians 2:12–13).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The biblical pattern of putting off the old self and putting on the new (Ephesians 4:22–24, 31–32)
- Bitterness and kindness cannot coexist in the heart; the old must be stripped away
- Transformation as both repentance (turning from) and renewal (turning to)
- The renewing of the mind under the gospel as the means of change (Ephesians 4:23; Romans 12:2)
- Cooperative sanctification: God supplies the power, we make the real decision to lay sin down (Philippians 2:12–13)

Discussion Prompts

- Why must bitterness be put away before kindness can take root?
- What is the difference between adding kindness on top of an old heart and being genuinely renewed?
- How does remembering the gospel actually loosen the grip of a grudge?

Question 4

Student Question:

Bitterness rarely announces itself; it hides under the names of being hurt, being right, or simply being honest. Is there a bitterness or a grudge you have been quietly nursing, perhaps for so long it feels like part of you? What would it look like this week to begin putting it away rather than rehearsing it?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question lets the previous truth land where it hurts and heals. Bitterness is sly; it almost never calls itself bitterness. It dresses up as being hurt, as standing on principle, as simply being honest about how someone wronged us. We rehearse the offense in our minds, build the case, and call it memory when it is really a slow poison.

Help the class see the cost of a nursed grudge. Resentment harms the one who holds it far more than the one it is aimed at. It hardens the heart, sours the disposition, and quietly chokes out the very kindness Paul commands. Scripture warns that a root of bitterness springs up, causes trouble, and defiles many (Hebrews 12:15). What begins as a private grievance rarely stays private; it leaks into our words, our relationships, our worship.

Invite genuine honesty, but in safety. Some will recognize a grudge instantly; others will need the Spirit to surface what they have buried. The point is not to manufacture guilt but to bring what is hidden into the light, where it can be dealt with. A grudge confessed is already losing its power.

Then make it practical and hopeful. Putting away bitterness usually starts small: choosing not to rehearse the story one more time, refusing to bring it up, praying for the person by name rather than against them, asking God for a willingness we may not yet feel. We are not asked to feel differently on command, but to begin walking, by God's help, in a new direction. Lasting change in the heart often follows obedient steps taken before the feelings have caught up.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The hidden, self-justifying nature of bitterness and grudges
- Resentment as a root that defiles the one who holds it (Hebrews 12:15)
- Confession and bringing hidden sin into the light as the first step to freedom
- Obedient steps that precede and shape the feelings, by God's help

Discussion Prompts

- Is there a grudge you have renamed as being hurt or being right?
- How has holding onto it actually affected you, not just the other person?
- What is one small step away from rehearsing it that you could take this week?

Question 5

Student Question:

Paul uses the word tenderhearted, a picture of inward compassion, the heart moved with mercy toward another (Ephesians 4:32). Why is kindness more than outward behavior, and how does the gospel actually change the heart and not just the hands? Why can a person behave politely while remaining hard inside, and what does God want instead?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Here the focus narrows to a single, tender word. Paul does not only say be kind; he says be tenderhearted. The word pictures inward compassion, a heart that is moved, that feels the weight of another's need or sorrow. It is the opposite of a hard heart. Paul is making clear that Christ is after more than correct behavior; He is after a changed interior.

This matters because we are all capable of a kind of dutiful, external religion in which the hands do the right things while the heart stays cold. We can give, serve, and speak gently and still be, underneath, calculating, grudging, or indifferent. God is not content with that. He desires mercy from the heart (Hosea 6:6; Matthew 9:13). The gospel does not merely reform the conduct; it reaches in and softens the heart of stone (Ezekiel 36:26).

Show how this guards against two errors. On one side is the cold legalist who keeps the rules without love; on the other is the sentimentalist who has warm feelings but never acts. True tenderheartedness joins the two: a heart genuinely moved that then moves the hands to do good. Jesus was the perfect picture of this, repeatedly moved with compassion and then healing, feeding, touching, forgiving (Matthew 9:36; Mark 1:41).

Be honest that we cannot simply manufacture tender feelings on demand. But we can put ourselves where God softens hearts: near to the cross, near to the needs of others, near to the Word and to prayer. As we keep beholding the compassion of Christ toward us, His tenderness begins, slowly, to reshape our own. The hard heart is not changed by being scolded but by being loved.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Tenderheartedness as inward compassion, not merely outward behavior (Ephesians 4:32)
- God's desire for mercy from the heart, not external compliance only (Hosea 6:6; Matthew 9:13)
- The gospel softening the heart of stone (Ezekiel 36:26)
- Christ moved with compassion as the pattern of tenderheartedness (Matthew 9:36; Mark 1:41)

- The heart reshaped by beholding Christ's compassion, not by mere willpower

Discussion Prompts

- Why is God not satisfied with right behavior from a cold heart?
- How can a person be outwardly kind while remaining hard inside?
- Where could you place yourself this week so God can soften your heart?

Question 6

Student Question:

Think of someone whose situation, if you are honest, has left you cold rather than moved, someone whose troubles you have explained away or hardened yourself against. What would it mean to ask God to give you a tender heart toward that person? What is one concrete, costly act of goodness you could do for someone this week, not because they have earned it, but because God has been good to you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question presses tenderheartedness into a specific, costly act. It is one thing to feel compassion toward sympathetic people in obvious need; it is another to find our hearts moved toward those we have written off, the person whose troubles we secretly think they brought on themselves, the one whose complaints have worn us thin, the difficult relative we have learned to keep at arm's length.

Encourage the class to notice where they have grown cold and to bring that coldness honestly to God. We cannot command our own affections, but we can ask the One who changes hearts to give us tenderness where there is hardness. Often the asking itself begins to do its work, for we cannot pray sincerely for someone and keep despising them at the same time.

Then make goodness concrete. Kindness that never costs anything is suspect. Paul's letter elsewhere speaks of working with our hands so that we have something to share with the one in need (Ephesians 4:28). Real goodness shows up as a meal taken to a struggling household, a debt quietly forgiven, time given to someone who cannot repay it, a word of encouragement to someone everyone else has given up on. Push for one specific, costly act this week.

Anchor the motive firmly in grace, so this does not become a performance. We do good to the undeserving because God did good to us when we were undeserving (Luke 6:35–36; Romans 5:8). The aim is not to earn anything, not from God and not from the person, but to let the goodness we have received flow outward. That is what it means to be good in action and not merely in sentiment.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Compassion extended even toward the unsympathetic and difficult
- Prayer as a means by which God softens our hearts toward others
- Goodness made concrete and costly, not merely felt (Ephesians 4:28)
- Doing good to the undeserving because God did good to us (Luke 6:35–36; Romans 5:8)

Discussion Prompts

- Whose situation has left you cold rather than moved, and why?
- What would it mean to ask God for a tender heart toward that person?
- What is one concrete, costly act of goodness you could do this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

Paul tells us to forgive one another, and the standard he gives is the way God in Christ forgave us. What does the forgiveness God extends to us in Christ actually involve, and how is it meant to shape the way we forgive each other? How is this kind of forgiveness different from merely overlooking an offense or saying that it did not matter?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Now Paul brings forgiveness to the center, and with it the explicit measure: forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Before we can forgive like God, we must grasp how God forgave. His forgiveness was full, He removed our sins as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12). It was free, given by grace and not earned (Ephesians 1:7; 2:8–9). And it was costly, purchased at the price of the blood of His own Son. God did not wave away our sin as though it did not matter; He dealt with it.

This is exactly where forgiveness must be distinguished from mere overlooking. To forgive is not to say the wrong did not happen or did not matter. The cross declares the opposite, that sin matters so much it required the death of Christ. Forgiveness looks the wrong full in the face, names it as real, and then chooses to release the offender rather than exact the debt. It is the costly decision to bear the loss ourselves rather than demand payment from the one who wronged us.

Explain what this means in practice among Christians. Forgiving one another does not mean we pretend, deny, or instantly feel warm. It means we surrender our claimed right to revenge, refuse to nurse the offense, seek the genuine good of the one who hurt us, and leave all final justice in God's hands (Romans 12:19). Reconciliation may take time and may require the other's repentance, but the releasing of bitterness from our own heart is something we can begin to do regardless.

Hold up the staggering proportion involved. In Jesus' parable, a servant forgiven an unpayable debt then seized a fellow servant over a trivial one (Matthew 18:21–35). The point is not that others' offenses against us are nothing; some are deep wounds. The point is

that, measured against the debt God forgave us, they are small, and we of all people have no standing to refuse the mercy we have received in such abundance.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's forgiveness as full, free, and costly (Psalm 103:12; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8–9)
- Forgiveness as facing the wrong honestly, not pretending it did not matter
- Forgiveness as releasing our claimed right to revenge and leaving justice to God (Romans 12:19)
- The distinction between forgiveness of the heart and full reconciliation, which may require repentance
- The parable of the unforgiving servant: our debt forgiven dwarfs what others owe us (Matthew 18:21–35)

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that God's forgiveness was full, free, and costly?
- How is forgiving someone different from saying the wrong did not matter?
- Why does the size of the debt God forgave change how we view others' offenses?

Question 8

Student Question:

Forgiveness is often hardest not in theory but in the specific wound that still aches. Is there someone you know you need to forgive, and have not? What has held you back, the fear that forgiving means excusing, the desire to see them pay, the sheer pain of it? What would taking one step toward forgiveness look like for you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question brings forgiveness out of theory and into the specific wound that still aches. For most people the struggle is not believing forgiveness is right; it is finding themselves unable to do it toward the one person who hurt them most. The aim here is to name honestly what holds us back, so it can be brought to Christ.

Walk gently through the common obstacles. Some fear that forgiving means excusing, declaring the wrong acceptable. It does not; the previous question made that clear. Some are holding on because they want to see the offender pay, to keep the account open. Some are simply in too much pain to imagine letting go. Naming the real obstacle is itself a step, because we cannot surrender to God what we will not first admit we are clutching.

Be careful here, pastorally. Do not imply that forgiveness is quick or that the pain proves a lack of faith. Forgiveness can be a long obedience, returned to again and again as the wound reopens. Jesus told Peter to forgive seventy times seven, which is less a math problem than a picture of a forgiveness that keeps refusing to keep score (Matthew 18:21–22). The first

step is rarely the feeling of release; it is the decision, often made through tears, to begin walking that way and to keep walking.

End with the gospel and with a concrete next step. We find the strength to forgive not by looking at the size of our wound but by looking at the size of our forgiveness in Christ. Encourage one real step this week: praying for the person by name, choosing not to retell the story, writing out before God the debt we are releasing, or, where wise and possible, taking a step toward the person. The point is movement, however small, in the direction of grace.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Forgiveness as a real decision that often precedes the feeling of release
- Common obstacles: fear of excusing, desire for the offender to pay, depth of pain
- Forgiveness as a long obedience that keeps refusing to keep score (Matthew 18:21–22)
- Strength to forgive drawn from the size of our own forgiveness in Christ

Discussion Prompts

- Is there someone you know you need to forgive and have not?
- What has held you back, fear, the desire for them to pay, or the pain itself?
- What is one concrete step toward forgiveness you could take this week?

Question 9

Student Question:

Paul roots all of this in five words that carry the weight of the whole gospel: as God in Christ forgave you (Ephesians 4:32). On what basis did God forgive us, and why was the cross of Christ necessary for that forgiveness to be just and real? And how does Scripture teach us to understand the order here, that we forgive others because we have already been forgiven in Christ, rather than forgiving others in order to earn God's forgiveness?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal question of the lesson, and it turns on five words: as God in Christ forgave you. Everything Paul has commanded rests here. So slow down and ask the deepest question: on what basis did God forgive us at all? Not because our sin was small, and not because He simply decided to ignore it. God is holy and just; He will by no means clear the guilty by pretending the guilt away (Exodus 34:7; Romans 3:25–26). Forgiveness had to be both merciful and just, and that is precisely what the cross accomplished.

Lay the heart of the gospel before the class. In Christ, God Himself bore the penalty our sin deserved. Jesus, sinless, was made sin for us, dying in our place so that we might be forgiven and reconciled (Isaiah 53:5–6; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24). This is why Paul says forgiveness is in Christ; it is grounded in His atoning death and shed blood (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14). God did not lower the standard of justice; He satisfied it Himself, in His

Son, so that He could be both just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Romans 3:26). The cross was not optional; it was the costly ground on which a holy God could righteously forgive.

Now address the order carefully, for this is where many go wrong. Paul says forgive as God in Christ forgave you, not forgive in order that God may forgive you. The grammar matters. Our forgiveness of others is the response to, and the evidence of, the forgiveness we have already received in Christ; it is not the payment that purchases it. We are saved by grace through faith, not by our own works of mercy (Ephesians 2:8–9). We do not earn pardon by forgiving; we forgive because we have been pardoned. A heart that has truly tasted the grace of God cannot then turn and refuse grace to others.

And yet Scripture will not let us treat our forgiveness of others as optional. Jesus warns plainly that if we do not forgive others, neither will our Father forgive us (Matthew 6:14–15), and the unforgiving servant is handed over to judgment (Matthew 18:34–35). How does this fit with salvation by grace? Like this: a refusal to forgive exposes a heart that has never really received grace, and a Christian who hardens into unforgiveness can fall away from the grace in which he stands (Hebrews 12:15; Galatians 5:4). Faith that genuinely lays hold of Christ's forgiveness is a living faith, and living faith forgives. So we are not saved by our forgiving, but the faith that saves is never a faith that refuses to forgive.

Bring it home with marveling rather than mere argument. The driving force of Christian forgiveness is not duty but wonder, the breathtaking realization of how much we have been forgiven, and at what cost. Lead the class to look again at the cross until the hardness toward others starts to melt. People who keep their eyes on Calvary find that forgiving others, while never easy, becomes possible, even natural, as the grace they have received begins to flow through them to others.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Forgiveness grounded in the atoning death and shed blood of Christ (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14)
- God just and merciful at once: the cross satisfies justice so He can righteously forgive (Romans 3:25–26; 2 Corinthians 5:21)
- Christ bearing our sin in our place as the necessary ground of pardon (Isaiah 53:5–6; 1 Peter 2:24)
- Salvation by grace through faith, not by our works of mercy (Ephesians 2:8–9)
- The order: we forgive because we have been forgiven, not to earn forgiveness (Ephesians 4:32)
- An unforgiving heart reveals grace never truly received, and a Christian can fall from grace (Matthew 6:14–15; 18:34–35; Hebrews 12:15; Galatians 5:4)

Discussion Prompts

- Why was the cross necessary for God to forgive us justly?

- What is the difference between forgiving others to earn forgiveness and forgiving because we have been forgiven?
- How does Jesus' warning about an unforgiving heart fit with salvation by grace?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across the whole movement of this passage: putting away bitterness and malice (4:31), putting on kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness (4:32), and walking in love as imitators of God, as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us (5:1-2). Name one specific way you sense Jesus wanting to form His own kindness and forgiveness in you through this lesson, and one concrete step you will take this week to begin living it out.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone gathers the whole movement of the passage and asks for a personal response. Trace the arc once more for the class. First, putting away: bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, malice, the things that poison kindness (4:31). Then putting on: kindness, tenderheartedness, forgiveness, the new wardrobe of those in Christ (4:32). Then the summit: walk in love, as imitators of God, His beloved children, because Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us (5:1-2). The passage rises from the grime we strip off to the very character of God we are called to wear.

Press the astonishing height of the call in 5:1, be imitators of God. It would sound like arrogance if it were not commanded, and the way we imitate Him is named at once: walk in love, as Christ loved and gave Himself. Kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness are not random virtues; they are how the children of God come to resemble their Father, how the image of Christ takes visible shape in ordinary people. This is the whole study in miniature, becoming like Him.

Now make it personal and concrete, as the capstone requires. Resist letting the class settle for a general resolution to be nicer. Press for two specifics: one area where each person senses Jesus wanting to form His kindness or forgiveness in them, and one concrete step this week, a grudge to release, a person to forgive, a costly good deed to do, a bitter habit of speech to put off. Transformation happens in particular people taking particular steps.

Close with the gospel and with hope. We do not work up kindness to make ourselves acceptable; we have already been made acceptable in the Beloved, and now His kindness flows through us to others. The God who forgave us such a debt is well able to teach our clenched hands to open. Send the class out not mainly with a heavier list of duties but with a fresh sense of wonder at the grace they have received, trusting that the One who began this good work will carry it on (Philippians 1:6).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The full arc of the passage: putting off, putting on, walking in love (Ephesians 4:31-5:2)

- Imitating God by walking in love as Christ loved and gave Himself (Ephesians 5:1-2)
- Kindness and forgiveness as how God's children come to resemble their Father
- Transformation as personal and concrete, worked out in particular steps
- Confidence that God will complete the work He begins (Philippians 1:6)

Discussion Prompts

- What one area of kindness or forgiveness do you most sense Jesus wanting to form in you?
- What one concrete step will you take this week to live it out?
- How does remembering how much you have been forgiven free you to forgive others?