



# “better THAN PERFECT”

## **Better Than Kind**

Text: 2 Samuel 9:1-13

Founding Pastor Ken Werlein

1. In his sermon, Dan defines the Hebrew word hesed as a “undeserved kindness that cannot be paid back.” Hesed can also be defined as “faithful love”. And this hesed doesn’t mean affection, it mean the sacrificial, laying down your life for your friends sort of love. Behavioral love; being there for each other, day in and day out, sharing our burdens. Covenantal love. Hesed love. (SEE STUDY DEEPER)
  - a. What is the difference between covenantal love and affectionate love?
  - b. How have you ever experienced God’s hesed?
  
2. As followers of Jesus, we are called to show hesed to one another. However, for love to be put into practice, for love to become a concrete and daily aspect of our lives, love needs a specific, local, and intimate sphere of action. (SEE STUDY DEEPER)
  - a. Have you ever experienced hesed from someone in your community? What did that look like?
  - b. How are you showing hesed to your community? Please take time to share ideas of specific, concrete actions that demonstrate hesed.
  
3. Read 2 Samuel 9:1-13 and Colossians 1:15-23. Dan reminded us that all of Scripture points to Jesus. (See Luke 24:27) Specifically, in this passage from the life of David, David is a picture of Christ, and Mephibosheth is a picture of us. What parallels do you see between these two passages that make this connection clear?
  - a. How does Colossians describe our state apart from grace?
  - b. What is our ability to improve our situation? How is this like Mephibosheth's state?
  - c. How does David's display of kindness (hesed) foreshadow the demonstration of God's love towards us in Christ?
  - d. What was the cost of this love and kindness?
  - e. What does this reveal about what God thinks of you and your value to him?
  - f. How do you feel God calling you to respond?

4. Read 1 John 4:7-21.

- a. What are the marks of a true believer?
- b. What is the relationship between God's love for us and our love for others?
- c. How can you extended the love of God to others?
- d. What gifts, abilities, and passions has the Lord given you? Are there certain needs that you see around you that break your heart?
- e. Do you tend to be an out front type person or prefer to work behind the scenes? Do you prefer relational activities or more physical, manual labor type activities?
- f. Research some options for serving at <http://faithbridge.org/serve-teams/> and <http://faithbridge.org/next-steps/bridging--the-road/>.
- g. Share some of your top choices with the group and ask them to hold you accountable to at least investigate these options.
- h. Don't know where to begin? Not sure of your gifts or where a good place to plug in might be? Ask your group members! Go around the circle encouraging one another and expressing specific ministry areas that might be a good fit for each other.

**Challenge:** As David exemplifies unending and intentional grace and kindness, how much more does our God extend the same to us? How can you extend the same kindness to others this week? Is there someone that you have made a promise to that hasn't been lived out or delivered yet? Can it happen this week?

**Prayer:** In a world where the rhetoric of leaders often sounds more like the taunts of a playground bully, it's easy to lose hope for kindness. We admit it feels a bit like bringing flowers to a gun fight.

Teach us, Father, how to respond in love and not in fear.

Teach us what it means to speak with conviction without using words as weapons.

Teach us to carry both strength and gentleness, to offer kindness even in our anger, to listen before lashing out.

Remind us that kindness is not a just a nice thought but a natural outcome for every image bearer who lives life in the Spirit.

You have given us a spirit of love, kindness, gentleness, and self-control. Show us what it means to offer these gifts to our neighbors, teachers, families, and leaders with confidence, conviction, and a sound mind.

May Your kindness be our steady filter and our sure companion, Amen.

## STUDY DEEPER

LOVING IN A SELF-FOCUSED WORLD: THE PURSUIT OF HESED by [Warren Mayer](#)

“Our world panics at the idea of having to remain in a relationship that is uneven.” Paul Miller

Several years ago, I entered into a harsh, protracted season of personal and relational suffering. Though I didn't see this clearly at the time, God's providence was already preparing me for it by taking me back to His Word through the faithful preaching of [John Piper](#) on the book of Ruth ([Ruth: Sweet & Bitter Providence](#)). The lesson taken to heart back then was more or less an amazing extrapolation of [Romans 8:28](#): In every season of suffering, God is working for our ultimate good, even though we very often do not see it...and complain against Him bitterly.



*Hebrew: Chesed, or Hese*

A few years later, [Paul Miller](#) forever changed my understanding of prayer with [A Praying Life](#). Miller's book is extremely popular within our church, and for good reason. Many readers walk away with a forever-changed perspective on prayer, one that acknowledges more deeply that God is actually interested in the things that trouble our heart. For me, this book freed me from feeling like my prayers had to be “right” or “theologically sound.” Miller helped liberate my heart and mind such that I could simply open up my mouth and begin speaking to God as I would to a loving Father – which, of course, He always had been.

The recent publication of [A Loving Life: In a World of Broken Relationships](#) by Miller feels as though these two theological shoelaces have finally met in the middle and been securely tied, and the implications are far deeper and wide-reaching than “merely” theology. As another Christian who struggles with close relationships in various stages of messiness, I found Miller's book eminently practical in terms of approach and on-the-ground realism.

Unsurprisingly, Miller calls us to *seek first a love that is pleasing to God*...and to stop worrying quite so much about how those around us will respond to our loving efforts, e.g. “I don't have to be shaped by how badly you receive my love.”

Miller defines [hesed](#) love as “covenant love, committed love; an act of the will to love another regardless of response.” In our culture, the actual practice of love is often quite different from this biblical definition. Most often, “loving someone” has more to do with what the other person does to meet *our* needs, to make *us* happy, and to fill those empty places *we* have. In this way, our cultural practice of love is often more a form of self-love than love-of-other.

*Hesed* love, bucking conventional wisdom, calls us to live out a reality that is truly the opposite of much of our culture's ideology:

- *Hesed* involves far more sacrifice than any of us are really comfortable with, dying to our own needs – sometimes even legitimate needs – in order to meet the needs of another.
- *Hesed* calls us to be far more vulnerable than we typically want to be as we give away our (false) sense of security for the sake of another. *Hesed* calls us to consider not which boundaries we should put up, but rather “How many can we tear down?” While the very-real need for boundaries in this broken world is acknowledged, *hesed* reminds us that we are to enter into boundary-building only with regret...and with an eye toward one day demolishing them if/when circumstances change.
- *Hesed* calls us to far more humility than many of us are used to, particularly in the midst of a culture that is constantly fostering pride, self-exaltation, independence and the idea that individual self-esteem is the highest of all values. *Hesed* counters this self-interested cultural fog by maintaining that only through humility can we set aside any sense that relationships should be “balanced” or “fair.”
- *Hesed* calls us to more of a commitment than most of us are willing to make. *Hesed* is a lifelong vow to keep sacrificing, stay vulnerable, and continue to respond in humility, no matter what. In the dark times, *hesed* does not run away. In the hard times, *hesed* does not change tactics. *Hesed* plods along, faithfully staying present...even when the people you are loving don't.
- *Hesed* love takes into account not just one other individual, but sometimes calls us to die to our needs for the good of the community around us. Often that “community” is our own families. What is best for a family to thrive is very often not what seems best for one individual in the family – particularly in light of current-day values.

### “A Loving Life”

We are all very good at loving ourselves. No one needs to read another book calling us to improve our love of self. What we need instead is to simply believe that Jesus was being truthful when He told us that He would take care of our needs if we would seek first His Kingdom and righteousness ([Matthew 6:33](#)). Jesus, ever the radical, calls us to love others as well as we love ourselves ([Matthew 22:39](#)). To do that, we actually have to love others “better” than we love ourselves. We cannot prefer ourselves and those we love at the same time. Someone must sacrifice. A practical living out of *hesed* love is making the choice to sacrifice your own agenda and joyfully applying your life toward the agenda of caring for others.

Extending that kind of committed love in a world that relentlessly seeks to inquire “What's in it for you?” is extremely difficult. Indeed, Miller says that is *impossible* to sustain this kind of self-forgetful love apart from the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit in the heart of the Christian. It does not “make sense” to offer unconditional love in a world that always seeks to achieve and maintain parity, but neither does it make sense for God to leave His throne in Heaven because He wants to seek and save you; *hesed* love is precisely the type of love that enabled Jesus to endure the torture and separation from God that took place at His crucifixion. Jesus led the way, and simply beckons us, “Follow me.” Committing to walk in *hesed* love is not optional.