



## **What does KINDNESS mean as a fruit of the Spirit – including in the context of work – and what can be done to make it actionable?**

The fruits of the Holy Spirit are the signs and actions that the Holy Spirit is alive within us and helping us live by faith in our daily lives.

“What does KINDNESS mean as a fruit of the Spirit – including in the context of work – and what can be done to make it actionable?”

Nichole Golden, Editor of The Georgia Bulletin, shared thoughts and discussed this with those present during the BELIEVES session held on Tuesday, October 11, 2022.



“Kindness was the fruit that spoke to me the most,” Golden opened by saying, “so the last few months it’s had me perk up more when I hear it more.”

She added, “Kindness is not always easy. In the newsroom, it is a hard scrabble place, and you have to have tough skin, but I’ve had kindness shown to me and hopefully I do the same.”

One scripture verse that Golden said often speaks to her about kindness is Philippians 4:5 – *“Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near.”*

In the context of Philippians 4:5, Golden believes kindness is considerateness, forbearance, and fairness.

“The Lord is near in both presence, and in the sense that he will come again. Kindness mirrors the love, mercy, and kindness God has shown us.”

Expounding on this a bit further, Golden remarked, “Kindness is a reflection of yourself. It should reflect back to Him (God) so people should want to know about your faith.”

Specifically thinking about the workplace for a bit, what is the #1 way to show kindness?

In Golden’s opinion, it is all about listening.

“It means so much,” she said. “Collaborating and giving credit to others is also key but is not always widely done.”

Another way to show kindness in the workplace is to be encouraging when offering a critique. However, unfortunately, that is not always what happens.

Golden recalled a time in her career when she witnessed something unkind in a past job, and how it changed what she was going to strive for in her professional attitude.

“I witnessed an editor of another paper once and she was known for criticizing,” recalled Golden. “I introduced a young reporter to her at an event, and within minutes, this young lady was being criticized. She didn’t need this. She knew she was the new person and didn’t need to be reminded of that.”

While a lack of kindness can be shown directly, like in the anecdote just shared, Golden also provided perspective that a lack of patience can be a contributing factor to set the stage for kindness being lacking.

“In moments of frustration, there’s a temptation to be impatient that leads to a lack of kindness,” she stated.

To combat the possibility of a lack of patience, sometimes it is important to put work aside, have lunch with someone, ask how someone’s children are or their family, or just what is going on.

“It helps you remember their humanity in moments that are pressure-filled, or when you’re tempted to be impatient or sarcastic.”

Pitfalls are also a possibility when it comes to exhibiting kindness in the workplace.

“Maybe the kind co-worker gets run over a bit, takes on too much,” Golden reflected. “How are we kind to that truly annoying person? Sometimes a co-worker really needs to hear a ‘No.’”

At work, when there is the need to confront something or someone, Golden said for her it can be challenging and something she tries to avoid.

To combat the desire to avoid conflict, Golden once again emphasized how important it can be to get to know people in advance to have the reminder that we are people behind the work.

She also said at times in these situations, she is reminded of our guardian angels.

“Maybe this is funny, but I am thinking back on the movie Pollyanna as I think about guardian angels. Maybe trying to envision our guardian angels in the room helps us to see the humanity in the other person(s) with us.”

Having shared all this, Golden took a pause before continuing to pose a question to those in attendance.

“My job is related to the church, but how do secular professionals deal with these moments? How do they practice kindness? Is kindness viewed as a weakness in the workplace?”

In particular, Golden said that while she feels she can communicate clearly about the journalism aspects of her work, sometimes she struggles with potentially “confrontational” situations like schedules, human resource situations, or the business side of things.

As those in attendance began to ponder Golden’s question to share thoughts later, she continued, by speaking about something she was editing for the Georgia Bulletin the previous day that spoke to her regarding kindness.

“I was editing ‘Notables’ yesterday for the Georgia Bulletin. St. Thomas More School in Decatur has a Girls’ Club, and we all know that life for teens and those in middle school can be tough.”

However, at St. Thomas More, in the bathrooms girls in the Girls' Club often write little notes of affirmation to one another.

"This helps the girls 'straighten each other's crowns,'" she said. "This is in the Philippians scripture as well."

She added, "Kindness is contagious when you see it in others. You want to replicate it. That is the Holy Spirit at work."

Sharing this made Golden recall the previous editor at The Georgia Bulletin, Gretchen Keiser.

"Gretchen used to offer tons of encouragement. She would always encourage prayer."

Lowrie McCown, who was in attendance for the session, then remarked, "I thought the comment about human resources was fascinating. There are things you cannot do legally when letting someone go, but that you can do personally," as he had thoughts come back to mind in response to Golden's earlier question.

Dialogue went back and forth among the participants for a bit on this topic, with some of the key points everyone agreed on being tied to how process is important when it comes to outboarding.

"Many times, less is more," someone said. "The best way is perhaps the pre-cursor to the termination. If it is a money issue only, it can be easy, but if it is a performance issue, that's tougher, and doing things prior is important."

As that topic of discussion started to end, Tim Doyle, who was moderating the session, then mentioned to Golden, "You talked about listening. We throw around active listening as a term a lot of times. Maybe you can speak to respect and dignity being tied to kindness."

She responded, "Being a reporter, you have to listen. I used to struggle with interrupting, but you have to listen."

This led Golden to think of a co-worker who used to struggle with the loss of a sibling.

"People would say, 'He doesn't like to talk about it,' but I would ask him at times," she recalled.

Interestingly, Golden went on to say that later on every once in a while, the co-worker would stop in her office and want to share a reflection he was having about his sibling.

"Now, he's shared how a neighbor's gone through the same and he's shared about the loss of his sibling with the neighbor," she told everyone. "Listening is an active way to show respect."

With this reflection, the session began to wrap up, but there was time for one more question for Golden to speak about – What is the one thing she loves most about the journalism process?

"I love the calls from people where if they learn just one thing from the paper, it's worth it."