



We are on our third week of #BeKind.

If you haven't started reading the #BeKind Bible reading plan – get started today. And read it for the next 30 days. Take a few minutes each day and read and reflect on the first reading.

For those of you have been reading – keep it up! You are almost done! God is speaking words of kindness and blessings into your lives.

Some of you have also been working through the 30 ways to #BeKind. I'm excited for you to share your stories tonight. If you haven't started yet...today is the best day to begin! When our series is done, keep this list in front of you as a reminder. Add to the list. Make it your own!

This session we are going to look at kindness in the Old Testament.

So once upon a time, in a land far away, there lived a little boy.

His name was Mephibosheth.

He wasn't just a normal little boy.

He was a somebody.

His dad's name was Jonathan.

His grandpa's name was Saul.

He was a prince.

A child of a king.

He played in a palace.

He had fun toys.

People took care of him.
For a youngster, life was as good as it gets.

He looked out from his bedroom over the valley. He didn't know it yet, but it was a beautiful land he would rule someday.

And then one day things changed.

His dad was fighting a battle at Mt. Gilboa and he lost.
Jonathan was killed.
A new army gained power and their ruler would be the new king.

Mephibosheth had to run for his life.
When a ruler was overthrown his entire family
including women and children,
would be killed to prevent a future uprising.

He was probably still in preschool, so Mephibosheth could only run so far and so fast, so his people carried him.

Maybe it happened when they escaped the palace.
Maybe it happened as they fled the city.
Somebody dropped him.
Both his ankles broke.
No time to stop and make him feel better.
They had to keep running.

Mephibosheth ended up in a distant city named Lo-Debar.
You probably haven't heard of it before.
No reason to.
It's a city of nobodies.
In the Hebrew Lodebar means "barren land."

No orthopedic surgeons existed in Lo-Debar.
Those feet he broke defined him for the rest of his life.
He was described as a cripple.

He used to live in a palace.
Now he lives in a shack.

He used to have people take care of him.
Now he was pretty much on his own.

It used to be his best days were in front of him.
Now his best days were behind him.

Lo-Debar is a cruel place.

You know this because you've been there before.
Maybe you passed through for a while and stayed in a temporary residence.
Of maybe you are now a permanent resident.

We have addresses in Gretna, Elkhorn, Omaha, Papillion, Springfield, and
Ashland.

But for many of us—ours is the land of Lo-Debar.

- I know a man who lives there – divorced – misses kids – guilt and regret.
- I know a high school student who lives there – crushed under the weight of her parent's expectations.
- I know a couple who lives there. She lost her job. Their struggling marriage is now even more stressful.
- The man waiting for medical results.
- The girl who was told she is fat and hates the way she looks so she self-medicates by eating.
- The person who struggles with depression.
- The man who is addicted to pills.
- The woman whose dreams aren't coming true.
- The person who feels lonely even when surrounded by people.

You see...Lo-Debar has lots of people.
Some passing through.
Some are residents.

And just when you thought things couldn't get worse for Mephibosheth, they did.

There was a new king.

His name was David.

He was trying to track down anybody from the previous regimes.

He asked a man—Ziba—Is anyone still alive from Saul’s family? If so, I want to show God’s kindness to them.

Ziba thought about it for a moment and replied that there was.

One of Jonathan’s sons. He is crippled in both feet.

He didn’t even give Mephibosheth’s name.

Son of Jonathan

Cripple

Mephibosheth was defined by another.

He joins a big club

Old

Fat

Average

Failure

Anxious

Shy

David wanted to know where this crippled kid was.

Ziba said the boy lives in Lo-debar nowadays.

So David sent for him

Mephibosheth was filled with terror.

It wasn’t an easy trip.

And he knew that fate that awaited him.

He would be executed.

The next few verses in 2 Samuel, chapter 9, are among the most beautiful in the Old Testament.

David looked at the hopeless Mephibosheth and said:

“Don’t be afraid. I intend to show kindness to you because of my promise to your father, Jonathan. I will give you all the property that once belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will eat here with me at the king’s table!” -2 Samuel 9:7

Lots of foreshadowing exists in the Hebrew Scriptures. But nothing else is even close to this. This is grace. This is kindness.

Moving from death to life.

Moving from Lo-Deabar to Jerusalem.

Moving from ramen noodles on a dirt floor to a feast at the King’s table.

Moving from hopelessness to a blessed life.

Mephibosheth – you are watching now.

Lots of Mephibosheths.

All of us have some Mephibosheth in us.

And some of us relate to the man all too well.

We are born to a King.

The King of Kings.

The Lord of Lords.

His promises were ours.

And then one day...life happened.

We made a bad choice.

Somebody else made a bad choice, and it affected us.

Bad luck happened.

And we found our self in Lo-Debar.

But regardless of our currently metaphorical zip code, the King invites us to his table.

Not because we are deserving or worthy

But because He is loving and generous.

It’s called kindness.

God's supply is endless.

For all of us who are

Old

Fat

Average

Failure

Anxious

Shy

God has a name for you:

Son

Daughter

I can't imagine there would ever be a time when my two sons, Benjamin and David, wouldn't be welcome at my table.

And God is a lot more kind than I am.

If you are passing through Lo-Debar.

Don't stop.

Don't slow down.

Keep going.

Jerusalem is your home.

If you are living there, find a real estate agent and sell your house.

Unfortunately there are plenty of buyers.

Get on Zillow and find a place in Jerusalem.

Move there as fast as you can.

Jesus says:

This is the body given for you.

Not everybody else, but you.

This is my blood given for you.

Forgiveness.

Not everybody else, but you.

I hope there are a lot of Davids watching too.

And I think there are.

He didn't have to do this.

He could have killed Mephibosheth and nobody would have thought anything of it.

He could have just left the old boy alone.

David would have lived happily ever after.
Mephibosheth would have lived miserably ever after.

David had some really bad moments.

- Just read one more chapter – chapter 11 if you don't believe me.

David had some really good moments.

He conquered a giant.
He planned the city of Jerusalem.
He won major military victories.
He was a poet.
He played his harp and people's problems went away.

But this was his great moment. All his wealth and status and power could not get him here.

Kindness to a person who could barely take care of himself.

He took initiative.
He was kind.
His kindness wasn't a one-time event.
It happened daily.

I'm guessing you, like David, have a pretty cool highlight reel.
Probably have a few moments you are not so proud of as well.

But your best moments.

Your defining moments are going to be how you treat other human beings.

So who is your Mephibosheth?

Who are you going to show kindness to?

How are you going to be kind?

Maybe you just have to love people more than they deserve. That is kindness.

Maybe you speak kindness believing that one short phrase can make somebody's day. So speak those words often and well.

Maybe you listen to somebody and make them feel like a somebody.

Maybe you give company to somebody who believes they are alone.

Maybe you are done with putting people down and you are going to start lifting them up.

Wherever there is a human being, there is an opportunity for kindness.

Do it. A small act of kindness is worth a dozen great intentions.

Maybe from this point on you are going to just be a little kinder than necessary.

When people go backpacking and sleep in tents...many of them pledge to leave no trace. The park will be in just as good of shape after they leave as when they got there. Many take it a step further. They will leave no trace plus clean up a little bit. And they take this seriously.

I was thinking something could be better.

What if we decided as people, as a church, that we were going to leave people in a better place than where we found them?

Wouldn't that be cool?

You do your absolute best to bless all the Mephibosheths and Davids of the world with some type of kindness so that your encounter with that person makes them better.

You can do it. So can I. We all can.

So let's do it.

So you all are getting ready to talk again in your small group discussion.

You all are getting to know each other better. I encourage you to listen to the stories and experiences of others.

I encourage you to share your stories and experiences.

Ask questions.

Be real and authentic.

Be kind to each other.

Have a great discussion and I'll see you next week!