

Kindness Revolution

Some of you will remember the classic movie, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, starring Gregory Peck as lawyer Atticus Finch. Based on Harper Lee's Pulitzer Prize winning book of 1960, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, tells the story of racially divided town in Alabama in the 1930s. Atticus Finch agrees to defend a young black man who is accused of raping a white woman. Many of the townspeople try to get Atticus to pull out of the trial, but he decides to go ahead and defend this young man whose opportunity for a fair trial is questionable at best.

The story is told through the eyes of "Scout," Atticus Finch's daughter, a feisty six-year-old tomboy. In one scene Scout, along with two friends, Jem and Dill, are coming home from playing. They draw near the home of a Miss Dubose, known for her ill temper. Jem startles the other two when she says, "Miss Dubose is on her porch. Listen, no matter what she says to you, don't answer her back. There's a Confederate pistol in her lap under her shawl, and she'll kill you quick as look at you."

Jem leads the other two children past the house, but Scout cannot resist calling out, "Hey, Miss. Dubose!" Irritated, Miss Dubose yells, "Don't you say 'hey' to me, you ugly girl! You say, 'Good afternoon, Miss Dubose!' You come over here when I'm talkin' to you! You come over here, I said." But Scout just keeps on walking. She sees her father, Atticus Finch, down the sidewalk, and all three children run up to him. Plainly he has heard the exchange. In fact, Miss Dubose has not stopped screaming at Scout since she passed. He shepherds the children up to Miss Dubose's porch for a lesson in diplomacy.

Atticus says, "Good Afternoon, Miss Dubose! My, you look like a picture this afternoon." From behind his back, Scout whispers to the other children, "He don't say a picture of what." Atticus gently smacks her to keep her quiet, and continues, "My goodness gracious, look at your flowers. Have you ever seen anything more beautiful? Miss Dubose, the gardens at Bellingrath have nothing to compare with your flowers."

Completely disarmed, Miss Dubose shyly says, "I don't think they're as nice as last year."

Jem whispers, "He gets her to talk about something nice so she forgets to be mean." Atticus slaps at Jem with his hat, "I think that your yard is going to be the showplace of this town. Well, grand seeing you Miss Dubose!"

Atticus wants to teach Scout a lesson about kindness.

Ephesians 4:17-5:2

- Does anyone really need to be convinced that the old life is inferior to the new life in Christ? A sin-dominated life leads to heartache and emptiness.
- Christian virtues are the answer to the God-kind-of-life. We are reflecting the image of Christ in the world until Christ returns.
- "Virtue, in this strict sense, is what happens when someone has made a thousand small choices, requiring effort and concentration, to do something which is good and right but which doesn't "come naturally"—and then, on the thousand and first time, when it really matters, they find that they do what's required "automatically," as we say."
– **N.T. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters***
- So, we "put off" the old man and "put on" the new man.
- We put away lying, stealing, foul and abusive language, bitterness, anger and sexually immoral behavior.
- Yielding to these sinful behaviors allows the devil to bring ruin into our lives and those closest to us.

- At the same time, the Holy Spirit is grieved. We should be yielding to the Holy Spirit. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to us to help us in this life.
- “The church is often called a killjoy for protesting against sexual license. But the real killing of joy comes with the grabbing of pleasure. As with credit card usage, the price tag is hidden at the start, but the physical and emotional debt incurred will take a long time to pay off.” – **N.T. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters***
- “The old idea that the goal of Christian existence is simply ‘going to heaven’ doesn’t, in fact, do very much to stimulate the fully fledged virtue we find advocated in the New Testament. To begin with, you have to grasp the fact that Christian virtue isn’t about you—your happiness, your fulfillment, your self-realization. It’s about God and God’s kingdom, and your discovery of a genuine human existence by the paradoxical route—the route God himself took in Jesus Christ!—of giving yourself away, of generous love which constantly refuses to take center stage.” – **N.T. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters***
- Answer: “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another...be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love like Christ.”

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