

Why are you kind?

By [L. Gail Irwin](#)

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We played “Stump the Pastor” at my church recently. Everyone wrote down a question about the bible, the church or theology, and I drew them out of two baskets—one for kids and one for adults—and tried to answer them on the spot.

Of course, we only got a few answered in the 15-minute sermon slot. The rest of the questions were left on my desk to rummage through on Tuesday morning.

Some were designed to trick me (*How many animals did Moses take on the ark?*); some were skeptical (*How many mistakes has God made?*) and some were sad (*If we are spirits in heaven, how will I recognize my loved ones?*). And then, one question made my heart skip a beat:

*“Why are you so kind?”*

It was written by a child who, I imagine, has seen her share of unkindness. I was touched, at first, that she experienced me as “kind”, but I also recognized that this was not a compliment. It was a question. It was asked from her world, where kindness is not a given.

Entering the Church, that child has found kindness, and not just from me. And this makes her wonder why. What makes us Christians kind?

I consider the family I was lucky to be born into. I think of the many people who taught me kindness as I grew up in the Church. I watched and emulated these people, but I have also experienced a lot of worldly unkindness, some of it in the Church, and sometimes I have absorbed it, so that, if you don’t happen to catch me on Sunday morning, you may find me in a not-so-kind state.

Finally, I remember Christ, who embodied kindness in the face of all sorts of evil. If I am sometimes kind, it’s because I have been drenched in the stories of his rough kindness, a kindness that embraced filthy children, shook evil spirits out of the sick, and shouted a dead man out of his tomb.

It is not really my nature to be kind. I think, without the Church, I would be a lonely curmudgeon, actually. The Church turns out *not* to be a place where kind people gather, but a snare for sinners who get sucked into the claws of kindness- and transformed.

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