

# Lovingkindness: All Around Us

Exodus 2:1-10  
College Hill Presbyterian Church, Tulsa

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- **Receive and openly share the love of God.**

If that phrase sounds familiar, it's because it's the second of three bullet points of our congregation's Mission Statement, printed almost every week in the bulletin insert. Receive and share God's love. **Another way to express what that entails is expressed in the concept encapsulated in the word lovingkindness.** Lovingkindness is not a commonly used word, either in print or in speech. However, it is used often in the scriptures and it is one of the most important of all biblical concepts, along with grace and forgiveness.

In the Hebrew language of the Old Testament, the word translated as lovingkindness (as well as steadfast love) is *hesed*. It is used primarily in reference to the nature and character of God. **Hesed, lovingkindness, is God's unwavering, unconditional love and loyalty to God's people. It also highlights God's faithfulness and compassion.** It is used 246 times in the Book of Psalms alone.

**By grace, we are recipients of God's lovingkindness. Yet, lovingkindness is also something that we are called to express and share.** It is exhibited in the countless ways we put into practice caring compassion, empathy, and faithfulness towards others. And biblically, it is most often extended to those in need. The same holds true for us. Hence, as part of our mission and ministry here at College Hill, **we are guided by the call to receive and openly share the love of God.** Simple in theory, not always easy to live out on a daily basis.

This understanding of lovingkindness is the theme for this year's **Vacation Church School**. The curriculum, from Illustrated Ministry, is entitled, "**Compassion Camp: Changing the World with Lovingkindness.**" I invite all of you to attend this intergenerational event on Tuesday through Thursday evenings of this week, starting with dinner at 5:30 pm. There will be times when we are all together, like for the dinner, gathering, and Bible story, then the kids and adults will participate in separate activities, ending at 7:30 pm. The kids will enjoy a time to create and of recreation, and the adults will have time to fellowship and listen to special speakers from our community partners. We are fortunate to have today Machele Dill, who is not only our musical soloist, but in her role as the Interim Director of Kendall-Whittier, Inc. (KWI), led a very meaningful adult church school class this morning.

Like last year's event, our services of worship on the Sunday before and after our mid-week gatherings will tie into the theme and even the specific lessons. The first lesson, being presented today, is that lovingkindness is all around us and that our empathy and compassion towards others must jump into action. The Bible story chosen to get us into this topic is **the Old Testament story of Miriam and the lovingkindness she and others in the story express toward each other, especially the infant who will be named Moses.** I don't usually do this, but I want to briefly recap the entire story from

Exodus 2. As I do, **listen for all the ways empathy and compassion are felt, shared, and experienced all around them.**

Amram and Jochebed (we don't learn their names until Exodus 6), from the tribe of Levi, got married and had children. Jochebed gave birth to a baby boy; she knew he was special the moment she saw him. But she worried for him. The most powerful man around—the Pharaoh of Egypt—had threatened all the Hebrew baby boys. She wanted to protect her son, so she kept him hidden for three months. When she couldn't hide him anymore, she made a basket for him from the grasses nearby. She sealed the holes so water wouldn't seep in, and she cradled the baby boy inside of it and placed the basket at the edge of the river. His older sister, Miriam, watched all this from a little ways off, wondering what would happen to him, keeping an eye out. Then Pharaoh's daughter came to the river to take a bath. The women who came with her—women who worked in her service—walked around nearby. Pharaoh's daughter saw the basket nestled into the reeds at the edge of the river, and she asked one of the women to bring it to her. Pharaoh's daughter opened the basket and saw the little boy, who had tears running down his cheeks. Her heart opened up for him. She told the women with her, "He must belong to a Hebrew family." Miriam popped in then, asking Pharaoh's daughter, "Do you want me to find a Hebrew woman to nurse him?" Pharaoh's daughter agreed, and the boy's sister went and brought their mother to Pharaoh's daughter. She passed the baby into his mother's care, saying, "Nurse this child for me; I'll pay you for your work." Jochebed received her son back for a time. When he'd grown, she brought him back to Pharaoh's daughter, who took him as her own. Pharaoh's daughter named the boy Moses—meaning "drawn out"—and about his name, she told the story: "I drew him out of the water."

**Did you notice all the ways the baby Moses is cared for and protected – by his mother, his sister Miriam, and the Pharaoh's daughter? Lovingkindness was all around.** Imagine how Jochebed felt when she placed her baby in the basket. Imagine what Miriam felt as she saw the basket being pulled out of the water. Imagine what Pharaoh's daughter felt when she opened the basket and found a crying baby. **These feelings of empathy and compassion are God-given emotions prompting us to care for and about one another.**

Lovingkindness is all around us. Think for a moment about the times throughout your life when you have received empathy and compassion from others. Reflect upon the times throughout your life when you have extended and shared empathy and compassion with others. Compassion and empathy, however, sometimes seem to be in short supply these days when it comes to certain others not like ourselves. This may help. **We need to stop assigning meaning and value as a yardstick to judge and evaluate others. Only then are we free to be empathetic and compassionate to all people.** Spiritual author **Henri Nouwen** writes:

**Compassion can never coexist with judgment because judgment creates the distance, the distinction, that prevents us from really being with the other.**

Throughout this Vacation Church School week and beyond, take a serious look and inventory of the ways God has blessed you with God's lovingkindness. Think about the times lovingkindness has been extended and shared with you by others, and by you to others. **May our lovingkindness jump into action when others need it most.** If need

be, start small with those closest to you, including yourself, then expand your circle of compassion.

Know deep inside that lovingkindness is all around us. It is a powerful force that can transform lives and relationships. It's a part of the nature and character of God, may that be true of ourselves, as well.

**Let us receive and openly share the love of God – God's lovingkindness.**

Amen.

Resources:  
Compassion Camp curriculum, Illustrated Ministry, 2021.