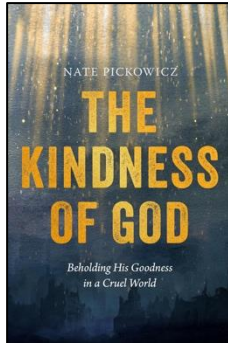


THE KINDNESS OF GOD

Beholding His Goodness in a Cruel World



Chicago, IL: We live in a world inundated with distressing news and heartbreaking situations that wear on our souls and causes us to question God's presence and purpose in our world. We forget that it was man's sin and rebellious nature that separated us from a holy God who remains loving, merciful, and just.

In *The Kindness of God: Beholding His Goodness in a Cruel World* (Moody Publishers), pastor and teacher **Nate Pickowicz** enlightens our understanding of God's divine goodness, lovingkindness, and compassion and how it can give us the freedom to live joyful and fulfilling lives.

The Kindness of God is based on several biblical premises related to God's holy nature. It is our sin that has placed us under God's righteous judgment and despite our unworthiness of His forgiveness, God offers us redemption because of His lovingkindness and for that we should be grateful.

Nate explores the character of God reflected in the Bible and demonstrated to our world. Any assessment of goodness must be compared to God who is our ultimate standard for what is morally pure, inherently right, and worthy of approval. Featured is a diverse selection of topics blended with theology, biblical examples, and practical insights to serve as reminders of God's lovingkindness that include:

- **God's Kindness in Salvation:** God's salvation is not highly valued by those who do not understand their need for salvation. It is our sin that separates us from God and places us under His righteous judgement. We do not deserve God's salvation, but despite our unworthiness it is through His boundless love and the death of Jesus that we can receive forgiveness, grace, mercy, and reconciliation with Him. (Romans 5:8)
- **God's Kindness in Repentance and Faith:** When God saves the sinner He grants them recognition of their sin, forgiveness, and the ability to turn away from their wickedness. True repentance is expressed in our mourning over our sin and requires turning away from sinful behavior. Rather than condemn us, God's benevolence works within our hearts to expose our sins and motivate us to repentance. (1 Jn 1:9)
- **God's Kindness in Relationships:** In His provision the Lord blesses us with personal relationships that can provide us with companionship, comfort, and encouragement. Our marriage, natural and spiritual families (church) and our relationship with God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit enrich our lives and draw us closer to Him. (Mark 10:30)
- **God's Kindness in Suffering:** Through our suffering God is able to purify us and we prove our commitment to God when we praise Him through our suffering. Suffering humbles us, draws us closer to God, lets us to identify with Christ who suffered for us and creates empathy and compassion to others who are afflicted with trials. (James 1:2-4)
- **God's Kindness to the Nations:** God extends His common grace or general blessings to everyone, even those who are evil or nonbelievers. God's goodness is demonstrated through His restraint of evil so our lives can be preserved. Through His kindness, He exposes our sins and need for salvation, but also judges those who reject Him. (Romans 11: 20, 22)

Other chapters featured in *The Kindness of God* explore the divine goodness of God and examples of His transformation of believers through sanctification, His continued blessings in our life that we don't always notice, and why His kindness should be reflected in our treatment of others.

“We make sense of the good and bad in the world when we remember that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him, to those who are called according to His purpose,” says Nate. “The character of God is good, righteous, loving, and kind. Even in the worst circumstances, when we consider God’s purposes, we quickly see the many-splendored ways that God demonstrates His kindness to us.”

In a culture plagued with overwhelming circumstances, strained relationships, and divisive political and religious discourse, *The Kindness of God* is a spiritual handbook for those seeking to gain a greater understanding of God’s immeasurable kindness and demonstrate their deep gratitude to God by reflecting His love and empathy to others in an often dark and lonely world.

About the Author:



Nate Pickowicz (B.A., Muhlenberg College, M.A., Trinity Theological Seminary) is the pastor of Harvest Bible Church in Gilmanton Iron Works, New Hampshire. Before becoming a pastor, Nate worked in financial services until being called into ministry in 2009.

He is the author and editor of more than a dozen books including *Why We're Protestant*, *The American Puritans*, *How to Eat Your Bible*, *Christ & Creed*, and *The Kindness of God*. He was raised in Gilmanton Iron Works, New Hampshire and resides there with his wife of twenty-one years, Jessica, and their three children.

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Suggested Interview Questions:

- 1) What compelled you to write a book on God’s kindness? Do you believe God’s kindness is misunderstood or misjudged?
- 2) How does our interpretation of God’s goodness often differ from the biblical perspective? Why is questioning God’s presence wrong when we hear about evil in the world?
- 3) In the book, you emphasize God’s kindness to salvation and repentance. How do these understandings lead to greater understanding of God?
- 4) How does understanding the kindness of God affect our lives as believers and impact our relationships with others?
- 5) How does God use suffering for His benefit and ultimately to benefit us and others?
- 6) What is the danger in believing God’s lovingkindness based on wealth or possessions? What are the dangers in following the teachings of the prosperity gospel?
- 7) Throughout the book, you refer to Psalm 63:3, how we can see God’s lovingkindness as better than life?
- 8) Does our understanding of God’s kindness influence how we see or respond to our culture or world events?
- 9) What is your encouragement for the person having a hard time sensing God’s kindness in their circumstances?
- 10) Nate, where can we find out more information about you and your ministry?

Notable Quotes from *The Kindness of God*:

Many people today would not think to regard the notion of salvation as being a particular kindness of God. The reason why God's saving action is not highly valued is because of a misunderstanding of the need for salvation at all. We tend not to regard sin as a very serious thing. We misunderstand its significance and underestimate its power. God's standard is perfection. If God were to fail to oppose and punish sin, He would be guilty of aiding and abetting sin, which would impugn His righteous character. (p. 25, 27)

Once we have been redeemed and saved by Jesus Christ, God does not leave us alone to do the rest. All of our Christian life is to be lived by the Spirit. In John 14, Jesus told His disciples that once He went away, the Father would send "another Helper" who would "be with you forever" (v. 16). He then called Him "the Spirit of truth," with whom the world will not be acquainted. However, Jesus promised not only that the Spirit would be with them, but also in them. The Spirit strives with us to conform us to the image of Christ. He convicts us of our sins (John 16:8). He helps us to root out sins and put them to death (Rom. 8:13). He gives us wisdom, understanding, and spiritual illumination of the things revealed to us in Scripture (1 Cor. 2:6–16). (p. 59-60)

Beyond meeting our basic needs, the Lord also frequently provides greater material blessings to people. He grants great wealth to some. But in moments of weakness, we can fall into the trap of doubting God's kindness because we do not have more than we do. And when we do this, we may be tempted to charge the Lord with withholding blessing from us. This leads us to consider a helpful tool that we may use to learn contentment—to be thankful for all that we do have instead of grumbling over what we don't have. The prosperity gospel teaches that God is obligated to bless, which would enslave His own will to our will. This is a blasphemous notion. Instead, we understand that God gives to His people out of the goodness and lovingkindness of His heart according to His providential purposes. He owes us nothing! And whatever He gives to us is pure kindness. (p. 87-88)

Christians are meant to manifest kindness to others in an effort to foster true unity within the body of Christ. As Paul commanded, we are to be "diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). What is groundbreaking about Christian kindness is that it defies the selfish cruelty of the world. In demonstrating Christian kindness, we reflect the kindness of God displayed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We remember that "when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us" (Titus 3:4–5). We are called to be kind to others because God has been immeasurably kind to us. God lavishes His own lovingkindness on His people that they may respond by demonstrating kindness to others. In this way, we reflect His kindness amid a cruel world. (p. 117)

We may consider God's common grace through general blessings. This is the kindness of God displayed to all people to enjoy their lives and behold the loveliness of His creation. We must see that it is an immense and necessary kindness of God that evil is restrained in the world so that societies may flourish and life can be preserved. This leads us to the conviction of sin that leads to salvation. This is not to say that God's common grace saves all people, but that through God's indiscriminate kindness many people are afforded opportunities to behold the goodness of God, feel the conviction of their sins, and have the opportunity to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. God has a specific purpose in demonstrating His goodness and reserves the divine right to exercise kindness to the world He created. However, it will not remain forever. God's common grace has an expiration date. (p. 129-130)

The greatest single act of lovingkindness toward humanity has been displayed to us in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Despite our fallenness and sinfulness against God, Jesus came to earth as a man—complete divinity wrapped in sinless humanity. He then gave up His life on the cross, satisfying the wrath of God against us, and earning forgiveness for sinners. This is the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ, in which we are called to believe and obey. Our hope is not found in social programs or community efforts or humanitarian efforts or governments or kings. Our only hope—the hope of every person and every nation—is in the finished work of Jesus Christ. And it is by Him alone that God offers grace, goodness, love, and kindness to the undeserving. (p. 138)