



TELL THE WORLD: IN THE COMMUNITY

May 9, 2015

Children's Story/Parable: How to "Open" a Turtle*

Read aloud: "He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness" (Joel 2:13, NKJV).

This is the way God deals with us. If we would only deal with others as graciously, showing the same love and kindness.

As he was going through the pasture, Mark learned how kindness brings results. In the grass he found a creature that carried his house with him wherever he went. Fascinated, he watched this well-protected turtle crawl through the grass and stones.

Grandfather had explained that the top part of the shell is really the turtle's backbone and ribs joined together in a solid mass by many bony plates. The bottom part is built around the breastbone and protects its belly. The shells are joined so there are openings for the turtle's head, legs, and tail.

Thinking he'd make a good pet, Mark decided to pick up this slow, clumsy land turtle. Immediately it drew in its head, legs, and tail, and shut itself very tightly. Mark took a stick and tried to pry open the shell. He wanted to play with his newfound friend. The more he tried the tighter the turtle shut itself.

Grandfather noticed what he was doing. "No, Mark, that's not the way."

Taking the turtle inside the house, he explained that it was a cold-blooded animal. Therefore, it can't live in cold climates unless it hibernates through the winter.

"Let's warm him up near the fire and see what happens."

As soon as the turtle began to get warm, it opened its shell, stuck out its head and feet, and started crawling toward Mark.

"People are like turtles in one way," Grandpa added. "When you try to make them do something, force them or put on pressure, they won't cooperate. But if you warm them up with a little kindness they will respond more openly. Kindness and love accomplish wonders."

Many apparently hopeless hearts are melted by love. Acts of tender kindness do much to relieve the burdens and sorrows of others. Often the kindest act is to just listen to your friends who need someone who understands and cares. Then you can suggest that they listen to Jesus.

* Adapted, with permission from Eileen and Jay Lantry, *Stop Look and Listen* (Takoma Park, Md.: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1976), p. 315.