

## **Benevolence**

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The term benevolence is somewhat unfamiliar in today's vocabulary. The word has been replaced instead with such terms as generosity, unselfishness, or kindness. The word itself has as its roots the word "bene" meaning well and "volens" defined as wishing. And so, in its most confined sense, it means wishing well to someone.

To develop the character trait of benevolence in this restricted sense is commendable, for it is encouraging and refreshing to have another wish you well when you are engaging in a difficult activity, participating in some sport or musical event and certainly when you are in ill health or undergoing surgery.

Although some of today's media releases might lead you to believe that persons in today's society are so individualistic that they fail to practice the art of well-wishing, the number and variety of greeting cards, balloons and the like with such sentiments are numerous and their purchasers plentiful.

Benevolence goes beyond the limitation of "wishing," however, and is inclusive of doing good for others, of serving others. I believe that within recent years people have become more sensitive to the needs of others and have responded altruistically to a greater extent.

Examples of this benevolence are manifold, and I will cite a few for reflection upon which you, the reader, can expand. Many high school and college programs require service projects prior to graduation or as part of a degree program. And...what an example of benevolence was the Lenten project of six- and nine-year-old siblings whose recycled pop can money bought clothing for a needy family! How frequently do we see flyers inviting people to participate in a fundraiser for a person whose healthcare costs are beyond the person's means! Where would we be without our volunteer firemen/women and those who deliver Meals on Wheels to the elderly? And certainly the number of persons who responded by heading to the islands or gulf coast areas devastated by hurricanes are worthy of note.

Indeed there are many caring people in our midst who are benevolent: who speak words of support, send a note of encouragement, contribute to a fund for the needy or reach out a hand where help is required. You needn't go far; for after some time of thoughtful consideration, you will find yourselves and your neighbors among them.