

## Increase Kindness: How and Why

This is the beginning, some of you are already playing the game, but every single one of you now are officially committed to every day delivery of loving kindness wherever you go to everybody, you mean that's gonna be your agenda.

You see, this is not a conference —this is a pep rally. This is a pep rally with food supplied, not the kind you put in your mouth—the kind you put in your heart. That's what our speakers are here for: to feed you, so that you can really be built up and strengthened with insights and information to do the kindness thing even better.

And we are very, very serious. We are so desperately and enthusiastically eager to get this prairie fire ignited and flowing and going across the world. It is needed. It is good. And it's easy, it's easy. We just have to do it, we just have to think about.

And we guarantee that if you are converted to this cause, or recharged to work at it, we guarantee you that not only are you gonna be making the world better, you're gonna find greater joy yourself, guaranteed. Not only will you be healing the hurts and building the hopes of others, you'll be finding for yourself fresh solid meaning and purpose in your life till the day you die, your last sentence may be, “Nurse, you're a great nurse,” doing it right to the end, and you'll have a reason to be alive even then.

So if you take on this mission and are willing to pay the price, 'cause there is a price in terms of discomfort, feeling helpless, being short on energy, sometimes being embarrassed, sometimes uncertain if you did anything at all, if you're willing to pay the price, you will be more gratified by that, then if you won the lottery. Guaranteed. You know, the lottery is nice, it's like a hot fudge Sunday. It's terrific taste, but then it's over with, but when you're living a life committed to caring and kindness, it never goes away— the gratification lasts. And this little book, and I can do some shameless, self-promotion, because it's everything I learned from people like you, and there's about 25 people included in it who actually gave me anecdotes about their acts of care and kindness.

And so, this is the Bible (not, not really sorry. Small ‘b’) And I hope you'll get it and I'd be love to sign it for you, and I can do that shameless promotion 'cause I'm not earning any money from it, the money is all going to help the church and help support this program.

And I'd like to give you a little theological perspective on this, and I'm not... I'm a little uneasy about it, but I am... This is what I really believe.

I think Jesus came into this world just as much to bring peace on earth as to get us to heaven, we talk about heaven all the time, but I think what Jesus came for was to revolutionize the world and life down here, you know... “Hallowed be Thy name, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.”

That's what this is about. That's what we're about. Helping to make that happen. And that's eternal life, when we are captivated, and driven by the agenda of helping bring peace on Earth, and we do that through the very simplest of things.

One of the simplest little examples in the book is Jan Petereit, who's selling the books back

there. She went to visit her mother who's over 100, and she noticed another little old lady fumbling with that cracker package, you know, cellophane, she couldn't get it open, so Jan got up and went and opened it for her. For the rest of her visit, that lady was smiling at her like she was an angel. You don't get it much simpler than that, and yet that's part of it: noticing, getting up, helping, whether it's some for complex, that's opening a cracker packet or going to Iraq to fight, we are together trying to bring peace on earth through Jesus + Jesus' example. He suffered and died, and that got us heaven, but it also shows us what real life is about. It's about giving up for others to make the world better.

And that's what we're about, doing that. You know, Bev's introduction about God is working through you. We had a very interesting interview the other day, my CPE students, some of you are here. We interviewed a man who had a fight with cancer, he's still fighting it, and he spent many days in City of Hope, which is the premier, ONE of the premier cancer centers here, and we had the chance to ask him questions about that.

And he... One of the questions we asked him, and he said it was terrible. He had to have a bone marrow transplant, they gave him chemotherapy until he was almost dead, and he said it was the absolute worst thing he's ever gone through, and then one of the CPE students asked him about, Where was God in all this?

And he said, most of the time through that, I felt God had abandoned me. And then he said, it was only when someone showed up that I thought God was there. God wasn't there till you showed up. He said they had to wear masks and gowns and gloves, and sometimes he didn't even know who it was; he doesn't even remember who they were. It doesn't matter, if they had said a word, touched his hand, prayed with him—then he felt God was there.

Now, I've felt that that was the most powerful message of what we are about and what the world needs; God coming through us. And nothing did he say . . . somebody said something profound, somebody said something just wonderful, or somebody quoted something terrific. It was . . . they were there.

The most memorable medical person and all of that, and there were dozens, and often he said he felt that the medical people didn't even look at him, they were always interested in symptoms, but he was very appreciative of them, but he said the most memorable medical person was a woman, the RN who rubbed salve on his parched head. She sticks out in his memory, so that...

I'm gonna write a song about that. Bev . . . You write the music, but I got the words working in my head...God wasn't there till you showed up. That sounds like a Johnny Cash thing, doesn't it? I'm gonna work next year. Next year, we're gonna have that.

Okay, that's what this is about. That didn't take any talent to show up where the mask and gown, but he didn't feel God was there til somebody in person was there.

And that's what this is about, fighting evil, fighting loneliness, fighting hopelessness through simple acts of care and kindness, stuff that everybody, anybody can do, and it's a specific thing that no one is left out of, to make this world a better place.

And you cannot and should not, and must not discount the simple acts you do — the smile you give, the cracker packet, you open it. But it takes noticing, it takes looking around... I'll

say more of this later, it takes... It requires taking ownership of this world and everything around you.

You know the church is changing, the church is changing. A lot of us who go to church every Sunday don't realize that, but the church is not gonna be so much about going to church, that's what I've been learning. It's not gonna be so much about building the congregation in the conventional sense, the church, the Emerging Church, is about doing exactly what we are preaching: being out there, building the kingdom. And you can build the kingdom in many, many ways, driving trucks, building houses, creating systems, the electronic geniuses, they're all building the kingdom, making the world better for people. Making a better world. That's building the kingdom of God.

So there's all kinds of ways to do it, but we're talking about a simple way that everybody can do it, and that's by everyday consciousness of giving, caring, appreciating, encouraging other people, and that's what the church, we are told, is going to increasingly be...exactly what you are here for: to find a way to spread goodness wherever we go. Not being a club, but being a system, a program, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jesus, bringing a spirit-lifting material everywhere we go, making the world brighter. Making the world better.

And the interesting thing is, and Martin Seligman, he was a guest here a few weeks ago, he's the most, probably the most famous, the most outstanding psychologist in the world, Martin Seligman, and he doesn't believe in God Himself, but He says that those who do... And those who live out doing what God wants them to do, and what we're talking about is living out care and kindness intentionally, conscientiously, consistently, every day, toward everybody for God's sake, in the spirit of Christ, for Jesus sake— people who do that have the most meaningful lives possible, because they're doing it for the greatest good. Not just doing it, but they're doing it because they believe in something; they are doing it serving God, their Lord and Creator.

And that's what this is all about, finding the way to bring peace on earth, goodness on earth, and lo and behold, finding greater meaning and greater happiness yourself. It's a win-win situation.

So glad you're here. I am. This is so important and so needed. And so good, and we have to... In the past, we used the word sunami . . . we don't use that anymore, Sunami, we found out are not words to throw around. Now we're using some prairie fire. Pretty soon we'll find out that that's too harsh, too. But we want to start something and continue something and ignite something that really starts spreading, and we think it is absolutely a win-win situation. So don't just take it for yourself, take it home and spread it. Take it home and share it. But above all, take it home and do it.

And so, I thank you for being here. Now, just before I conclude, I want you to do something, and this won't be hard. Make sure you know each other around the table or behind you, would you just meet each other a little more; this time with words, this time with words, because you gotta know who's there with you?

May no one be a stranger. Make sure everybody gets loved, hugged. Welcomed. Greeted, included, surrounded. May no one be here alone. We gotta start right here.

Just another thing to say amen to. But something to thoughtfully incorporate into your life so

that you're different today, yesterday.

Okay. Along those lines, I'm going to make some appointments. You are all appointed to be the chair person of the speaker appreciation committee. Okay, and each of you, we only have part of the day left, but you are the chairperson of the speaker appreciation committee, and that means, of course, every speaker you hear. Except me, I don't count; I'm not a speaker, I'm just sort of... the stuff here. The speakers you hear, you are responsible to make sure they get appreciated. Okay?

I wanna say a little bit about the word ownership, because that's one of the things that I'm gonna say a little bit more about that later, but yesterday, you saw an example of ownership in this room, and I wanna stress that again, the kind of ownership every one of us needs to take into our lives, the ownership you saw yesterday was when Eric Evenhuis came up to me and said, Let's move that podium down... Now, there he is, sitting in the audience, like everybody else. Now, I couldn't see it, I was over there, I could see the people, but nobody could see the panel, and one person embarrassed himself, made a scene by making sure we took that podium down so everybody else could see.

Now that's taking ownership in the way that every one of us has to start living. That you don't just sit there and say, Oh, isn't that too bad? We can't see the panel, or you go home and you criticize all those stupid people, they didn't know how to set that thing up. That's taking ownership in every room, place, neighborhood we are part of. We can and must take ownership like that to improve the situation.

You don't have a right to fret and complain unless you do something about it or somebody fights back. Taking ownership.

Okay, some of you learned here earlier in the week, and I just wanna repeat for everybody's well-being, to remind you what this is about — this Kindness campaign, this Care Project that we're promoting and emphasizing and encouraging — that this is something every human being can and must be part of. And as followers of Jesus, it is exactly what He wants us to do. And it is exactly the spirit of Jesus that is living in us.

When we step up and do something that doesn't feel always comfortable, doesn't always feel just natural, but we meet a need, we perceive a need, we think there's a need, and we step forward and say something or do something to encourage, to support, to appreciate, to comfort someone else.

And if you do that, and if you make that the campaign of your life, you have meaning in life; you have a reason to live; you have a purpose in life, and that's essential to living well, and it's not something that richer people, or people in other places, or smarter people, or more educated people, or anything else, have that you don't have . . . the possibility of. It is for everybody. It is possible for everybody. Maybe you, maybe you've already raised a family that's incredibly meaningful, maybe you retired from a job or have a job where you are educating people or building devices or systems or techniques which make the world better

That's very meaningful, and it's part of building the kingdom, but there are millions of people, who are just working, their gifts don't fit the shop they're active in, they're just earning a living, their capacities don't fit their employment, but that's a job and they have to do it and they have to feed the family, but they feel (and maybe you're one of those), they feel

unfulfilled, they feel that they are just making money, they may not believe they are part of something very big at all, but they have to do it. But if you are here tonight or today, I assume that you have a spirit of kindness and care in your heart.

I think it's a safe assumption because at the heart of what God is, is compassion. There are no words that describe God more than the word compassion in the Bible. And we are created in the image of God, so that's part of us. Compassion is part of us, it is in us, and we are obligated and called to live it out, not as something necessarily just a duty or a legal thing, or to make God happy; it's to make us happy and to make the world better. And it is in us.

There's lots of that in chapter three of the new book, and to do, and to let compassion out of your heart is to make the world better. And lo and behold, it makes you better. This is a win-win situation, and it's especially good because we are doing it, modeling it on the life of God, the goodness of God that we see in Jesus Christ, when we do compassionate things, kind of acts, and we see it and understand it as part of something way beyond ourselves, God himself.

It is the key to authentic happiness. It is fantastic. And I believe in . . . that Jesus wants us to create peace on Earth and goodness on Earth, that He came for that fully as much as he's intent on getting us to Heaven in the next life. That's sort of a bonus. Peace on earth is number one, and we are the number one agents to do that.

And it isn't just doing nice little things. That's part of it. Everything you do, you do to the glory of God. If you're an artist, if you're a musician, if you're an educator, a scientist, a truck driver, this is all world-building, and if you see it as part of the bigger picture that you're doing it for God, you are a part of something that is soul satisfying.

Of course, the motivation to do good shouldn't be just to help yourself, but it is a by-product that is guaranteed. You help others — you get the benefits. Not that this is an easy thing. I believe that when we put ourselves out, when it is awkward, when it is uncomfortable, it's even better.

My granddaughter, Megan, saved her hair so that she could cut it off when it was 10 inches long to give to this foundation, Locks of Love. Barber Hopkinson's a little girl did the same thing. Now, what I liked about Megan's explanation was that I really didn't like to do that, I really hated to cut my hair off, but she did it, and that made it all the better. She was doing something that she felt good about and necessary, but it was hard for her; she was giving something up that she loved.

And so when you do the good, it isn't always just smooth and easy and natural; it's overcoming the obstacles within yourself, the comfort level that we really want.

Okay, I wanna go on to one more thing, but think of that ownership part, will you, please? And remember what you were appointed to. We've all been brought up, that it's better to give than to receive. That's almost like air. We just breathe it and it's better to give than to receive, and that's a wonderful thing. It is a wonderful thing, because of that we assist people, we help people, we are taught that it's the right thing, the good thing, and it's the better thing, and it makes us do generous things and compassionate things and useful things and obedient things. It's all good.

(There's a 'but' coming . . .) When you give to someone . . . Did you know this? You probably did from experience— that when you give and help someone, it usually makes you feel closer to them, Think about it! When you help someone, you feel closer to them — it's a law of nature, now, up to the point where you get drained, but other than that, it's a law of nature. When you give to someone, when you help someone, you feel closer to them, you feel more affectionate or loving, if you . . . You know, people who take care of their spouses in Alzheimer's or something, and they rub their feet and take care of them and they get nothing back, they nevertheless, they feel more taxed to that person.

You feel distant from someone? Here's a scantily recognized law. You feel distant from someone, go do them a favor, and it will help build a bridge to that person.

Okay, but now, here's the other side, sort of the other side, the important side. Remember how people used to go next door, maybe Mom would say, Go next door and borrow two eggs. I'll bet that never happens anymore—go next door and get a cup of sugar. You know what happened when you would do that? That person would like you more. You borrow from them, they liked you more, not less. or not. Did you ever think about that? You think you're putting someone out when you ask them for a favor — well, you are pulling them closer! It's a absolute law. (Always exceptions, of course.)

And it's time for us to act on that, to engrave that in our psyche: Go ask the neighbor guy to use his ladder, he will love you more, he won't feel put out. (Bring it back, of course.) But the real thing here is to let others to help you. Let others do kind things to you. Accept people's acts of grace and favor and helpfulness. Don't be so self-sufficient, and especially don't say, "Oh no, don't bother. Don't put yourself out,." Don't act like you are being gracious in resisting kindness towards yourself, or nudging away someone's helpfulness — they're gonna give you some time or energy or stuff, and you think they're putting themselves out . . . you are doing them a favor in accepting it.

Get this into your mind and operate on it. Let people help you; let people be kind to you; let people waste their money on you, especially that. Not only do you let them do kindness, they will feel closer to you when you let them help you. The operative word in some of this is to endure it. That's right. You have to endure some of that.

This is in the book, too. One of our staff people, and we've talked about it a lot, I don't know if she's here, probably not, but she left us a few months back and she didn't let us give her a party. She just wanted to disappear.

Now, another way, dimension, this happens with people setting up their memorial services and funerals are saying, "I don't want anything when I die." Well, the logic here gets a little strange, but when...

Go back to the example of leaving and not wanting a party; many times we have to endure people's goodness toward us. We're uncomfortable with . . . we endure it. And in the process, they feel closer to us, in the process of being allowed to help us and love us and show their affection. Talk about a win-win situation, that's it.

You get, and they get. And it's absolutely opposite. We talk all the time about doing it, giving it, being kind, being caring, put this in the book, too. Let people love you, graciously accept acts of kindness that come towards you.

Okay, that's the end of this one. Now we're gonna get on to some really good stuff, but we're supposed to...