

Twelve Simple Pieces for Brightening the World

Welcome. The fact that you're here says something about you, says something very, very positive . . . that you have a heart, and that God is alive in you, and that you want to grow, and become, and develop. So the fact that you're here, already says a volume about you, and because of that, I love you. I love you for being here! No exaggeration.

Okay, would you raise your hands above your head as high as you can? Okay. A little higher. All right, you can put them down now. You see what just happened? I asked you to raise them as high as you could, and you could still raise them higher. You thought you'd raised them . . . you know, I thought you obeyed me, but there was more that you could do. That's how it is with Care and Kindness. Definitely, you are all already kind, caring, wonderful people; but definitely, we can all do better. 10%, 20% . . . we can all ratchet it up. Somebody in my family I said, "*You come to our conference.*" She said, "Well, I'm all right; I'm a kind person. I do all that." Then I gave her that lecture—you can do it—we can all do more.

We want you to change. You're good people, loving people, but we want you to change. So, plan on that. We really believe in this. This is not a conference just to do something. This is not a meeting just to teach some people. This is a campaign—a crusade to change the world. And we seriously, definitely believe that every one of us is enlisted into this campaign and that we can, and the world has never needed more the message that God is love, than it does now.

I want to give you a couple of examples of how you must change. You can change. I go to the UCI, that's a university over here, Medical Center, about once a month, and I always park in the parking garage, get my ticket stamped at the doctor's office, and park there free. And when I exit, the same woman is always there to take my ticket and push the button that lets me out. Now, that is her job, but I have a job also. I'm driving my car down the ramp; I have a job, I'm going to see her and I have to brighten her life. I'm not just da – da – duh – da—I have an assignment in life. And in that case, I have to leave her with something that will make her life brighter. She knows me by now, cause I always say — and I'm not hitting on her, she's a middle-aged woman — but I always tell her, "*You're beautiful.*" And she always, "*Oh, oh, wow.*" I believe that I have made her life better, at least for that day. And it is so easy, but it's not just something I'm doing for fun—it is my job in life . . . to see people, and find people, and leave people in that way.

I'll give you another example how I have changed. This one might be disputable, but I would be thrilled if you would change in this way. It was about a week ago. The doorbell rang at our house, and I went to the door, and there were two women standing there . . . two middle-aged women. Rather tall women. Pleasant, nicely dressed. Two black women. Instantaneously, I knew they were Jehovah Witnesses. Now traditionally, I saw it as my job to be a discourager of them, a debater to them, a push-away of them, a maybe go argue with them to prove they're wrong. Okay. My greeting to them was, "Ah, two beautiful women," and then they made their little pitch. They handed me an invitation and even at their Kingdom Hall. We chit-chatted a little about the date and location, and I said to them, "*Thank you for the invitation. Thank you for stopping him.*" They said, "*We hope you will come.*" I smiled and said, with warmth, "*You're beautiful. Thank you.*" And they were gone. That is a change, and I believe it is the right one. I believe that I was a witness to Jesus Christ to them . . . far more than when I got a little burst and said, "*What about this verse?*" I think I was witnessing to them the love of Jesus Christ. I gave them love, appreciation, even encouragement. I'd like you to change like that.

Okay. I have about 15 minutes to give you my 12 Secrets Points. By the way, the text book is **The Miracle of Kindness**. It's for sale at the back. I hope, if this is new to you, that you will get a copy, because we need to spread the word and it is there.

This will insult you even further. My 12 Secret Behaviors, because you know them all, nothing sacred about them, and there's 14 of them. These are behaviors that you can do. These are behaviors that everybody can do and I want to start with the most obvious one that Bev has already sung about—smiling!

We want you to **smile** more. Do you know that they have found, with some botox, (you don't have to do this part) that if they botox away your frown, you actually end up feeling better, because your mouth can't frown anymore. Right? It's a fact. It makes a chemical difference in your body if you can't frown, and the smiling has found, it raises your immunity level. This is to say nothing about what it does for the persons to whom you give it. You will feel better and others feel better when you give them that smile. Now that takes a decision. Some people are born with it, some people are genetically equipped to be easy smilers, and so don't give too much credit to some people and too little to yourself, if you genetically aren't a natural smiler, but you can do it, and we must see this as an assignment in life, not just something nice to do now and then. This is your task. Like my going through that parking garage, it was my job as a Christian to brighten that parking lady's life. That's our job and everybody can do it. Everybody can do it. Smile. Mother Teresa said a smile is the beginning of peace. That's how big a smile is.

Okay? But I want to sit and mention a few others, and they are so obvious. And when I was making this list, working on this, I was thinking a lot of one of the targets that we really want to work on (haven't been too successful yet). We want to get people who work in doctors' offices, and dentists' offices, in grocery stores, people who meet the public . . . wouldn't it be wonderful if everybody who met the public actually believed that they could brighten another person's life? Actually believed that that was part of their job. So I was thinking of that. What if you went into a store, into a doctor's office, in a dentist's office, and when you left, the woman behind the glass would say, *"Thank you for coming here. It is so good to have you as one of our patients."* Wouldn't that be amazing? Wouldn't that be easy? Well, this is where we want . . . we are hoping to go with this project, and if you have any ideas, any connections, any resources, that's where we want to go. This is bringing Jesus Christ into the community, even though you don't name it. Love is God and God is Jesus Christ, and every act of love you do is giving them Jesus Christ. It is Jesus Christ flowing through you. It is God in Jesus flowing through you, and if you happen to be an atheist and wandered in here, and you do it, it's Christ going through you, even if you don't know it, even if you don't name it. That's how big the presence of Christ is in this world. That's the biggest thing that ever happened to this world is Jesus Christ. It's far bigger than the fall. The fall screwed everything up, but it is monumental what the incarnation of Jesus Christ has done to this world, and it's just starting.

Say thank you whenever, wherever you go, every time you do anything, anything with anybody, they do anything for you. Make sure you say, *"Thank you, I appreciate your help."* Pour it on anybody. I even thanked my dentist nowadays (where is the dental group here? There are some,) I do! He's a great . . . they are really helping us with our lives. We must thank people for what they do, and it's gotta be just pouring out of us.

I got to hurry. **Show interest**, show interest in people. People are always looking different, wearing different things, different hairdos, different buttons, different pens, different directions they're going . . . show interest in people. Ask about the things they're doing, when time allows, always ask about people's kids or grandchildren and vacation trips, because everybody is full of those kinds of things to talk about.

Name and mentioned feelings. This is a little trickier. When a person is sad, it helps them far more if you say, *"You look kind of sad today,"* than if you say, *"Cheer up. Have a better day. Look at the great weather."* You help people far more by naming their feelings. They go through a tough time, you say, *"Hey, that was tough."* That's much more healing than if you say, *"Have a positive attitude. Buck up."*

Think of it this way: other people have it worse," Naming their feelings. It almost is a healing contact to name a person's feelings. Then they drain away. If you say, 'He shouldn't feel that way' or, 'Think of it this way,' the feeling stays there, and they wait for another time.

Okay. Naming and noticing and showing interest. Using names. **Use people's names.** I'm talking to myself here—to use names and remember names—and let yourself be embarrassed by asking a person their name again . . . asking him again, We have to take some risks in this life, and one of them is looking dumb, looking forgetful, admitting that you forgot it. It's okay. You don't have to pretend or make people think that you're a genius. What was your name again? Do work on that and write it down if you have to.

You know, **returning phone calls.** This really impressed me. I don't know, quite a few years ago, I read about an MD whose son was gravely ill, and he was looking for the proper, or the best medical team, medical person actually, to treat his son. And he called a dozen people who had come up on his recommended list. And, of course, they are, most of them, busy. He ended up selecting the one who promptly returned his call. That to him was a measure of a quality person. He wanted that person. Now that isn't foolproof, but that is . . . you send such a message to people when you return their calls promptly. And, we're in a different world in that now, because everything is answering machines, and so forth, so, it's a little different. But still, with a little effort, we send a message back: it matters to me that you call; I value you. Now emails are a little different, too. That's our new world—emails. But I think even the things people forward to you—all these wonderful, inspirational, incredible, fantastic, humorous things that you get all the time (and they are wonderful.) I try . . . not very well . . . but I try to say at least thank you to people for sending me those things. There's just so much more that we can do to let people know that what they're doing, it matters, and give them a message back.

Okay. **Make eye contact.** Eye contact can be overdone, but mostly it is under-done. Look at the person, look at the person in the face. See, see people, greet people warmly. Everywhere you go. Be on the greeting warpath (warm path.) Greet people who don't look at you, who don't make eye contact even. "*Good morning!*" We have friends, Linda and I, who walk . . . we walk a path, a 30 minute area . . . we have some of our best friends in the world who've never even looked at us for about six months before, and now they're our best friends. Oh, we're hard up for friends! Yeah.

How about acting friendly? Is that part of this? **Act friendly to everybody.** Act friendly. You don't have to feel friendly. Just act friendly and you will end up feeling friendly. You know, I saw a man last night when I picked up Dr. Mark Spee at the airport. His job was traveler's aid? Traveler's aid. I watched him for about 15 minutes, and he was helpful to a lot of people. Never smiled once. Now, see, I think he considered his job giving information. Now we, as followers of Jesus, never have that job anymore. That is never all we are called to do. We would never (now he may well have been a follower of Jesus) but he didn't get the word that your job is not just being a machine that transfers information. Our job is to touch people's lives, to make a difference, to brighten their lives. Certainly you better give them the right information. But in the process, these are human beings whose lives need to be touched, encouraged, brightened, by just a smile, if nothing else. Your job is never just performing a function—it is people.

I remember in seminary, this is a long time ago, and we had this one very distinguished theologian, and we were talking about. 'Shouldn't you be thinking about God all the time?' That is the ideal: that you're thinking about God all the time. And if you're really a high level spiritual person, you'd be thinking about God all the time. And he said, "*If you're my brain surgeon, I don't want you to thinking about God when you're going inside my brain.*" Before . . . after . . . Yes! And I think that's important. There is a job to be done, and the main thing is, in those cases, to do it well, but we always have more than just a job to do. We have people whose lives need to be touched, and we are the light of the world. We must never forget that we are the light of the world.

Okay, well, I guess my time is about up. I'll just run over them fast again. Greet warmly; make eye contact; act friendly; offer compliments; say thank you; show interest; smile generously; notice and mention feelings; use names . . . remember names, give a well wishing farewell; return phone calls; and touch.

Touch. Oh yes, I didn't say that . . . touch, Now, that's a delicate one. Some people don't like to be touched. Some people you shouldn't touch, but almost always, a little touch makes a big difference. Find a way to touch. I found in being a hospital chaplain for many years, and still do. Even guys, even these big tough guys who don't like to touch anybody, when I'm standing there and I say, "*Well, let's have a prayer,*" they always reach out their hand. The biggest, toughest, gruffest, motorcycle-driving Harley Davidson-lovin' guys—they always reach out their hand. There's something about touch, where, I think God gives us a special touch.

Okay, we want you to change. We're all changing. This is what it means to witness for Jesus Christ. This is letting God flow through you. You're touching, you're giving people a taste of God every time you do any of this. And Wow, if we could just keep on building the program, building the core, building the team that's doing that. The world needs it so desperately. You know, in the Muslim world, I was told, that they have 99 names for God and none of them is father. Well, if you don't have the father word in your context of God, it means there is a lack that the personal-ness . . . loving God is not a part of it. And I believe desperately the world needs a loving God.