

Care Capsule[®]

*Capsules of motivation to dispense
care and kindness*

Faith is NOT an Army Tank

— Dr. James R. Kok

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Helen's faith has failed. Her husband, still young, once a successful physician, is now confined to a nursing home. He has Alzheimer's Disease. Over the months since his diagnosis he has grown progressively out of touch. Today, he hardly knows Helen.

She has sold their home to help cover her deepening financial crisis and is looking into selling some of her jewelry. Her friends have distanced themselves—they feel helpless and unable to handle their own dismay about her husband. Helen herself, wounded in spirit, is pulling back from social contacts.

Her lament to me today, however, is not about her troubles, but about her lack of faith through all this. Sorrow, anger, and frustration batter her soul. Depression lurks at the door and threatens to take up total and permanent residence in her spirit.

God seems to be nowhere around, she sighs. Her prayers—mere cries—feel empty and directionless. Ordinarily a spirited, vivacious woman with an

expressive faith, she appears wan and defeated. Helen is disappointed in herself that she is so crippled by, and heartsick over, what is happening. A person of faith should do better, she believes. A good Christian should, she says, find her faith giving her courage, hope, and even cheer in times like this.

No Army Tank.

I talk to Helen about her faith. I tell her that having faith is not like riding in an Army tank, protected on every side from the onslaughts of life, rolling smoothly over every pothole and obstacle in the path.

Faith is, rather, like walking with little protection into a war zone. You're hit from all sides and wounded, but you continue on with a Companion at your side who is injured every time you are, but still holds you. Like many people, Helen seems to believe that faith is separate from the person. The individual

may be bludgeoned, but faith should keep thriving, untouched.



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No Army Tank

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Reality teaches something different. When life hammers its inevitably harsh and sometimes savage blows, we are knocked down—faith and all. Staggered and bloodied, we and our faith, struggle to get up again—to go on, to endure, to recover.

Helen can't possibly expect her faith to be healthy and robust; she's been 'run over by a freight train.' She is wounded, deeply wounded. Her world has collapsed. She has lost her security, her dreams, and her husband. He is like a stranger, and years of worsening distress lie ahead for them both. How could she go through this any differently than she is? How can she expect of herself resilient, normal, wonderful faithfulness in a time like this?

No Guarantee.

Helen is suffering. Suffering brings serious pressure on a person and her faith. That is what suffering is, a painful disruption of one's whole life—physical, social, emotional, spiritual.

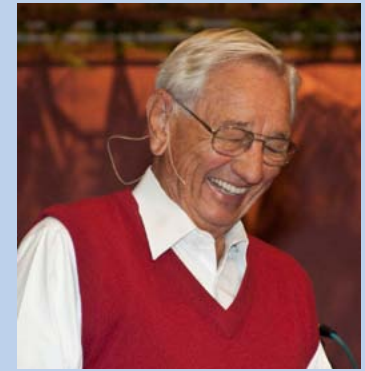
There is no easy solution to Helen's pain. The healing capacity put within her by her Creator can eventually restore her. Nevertheless, she has no guarantee she will emerge from her struggle better instead of bitter, deeper instead of more shallow. The support of the community of faith around her is her greatest hope.

Perhaps we can inoculate future Helens against the same kind of spiritual despair over faith's failure. We can do so by modifying the conventional image of faith we pass on to our children—by dismantling the Army-tank model.

This model sets everyone up for disillusionment—or it prepares them to see faith as the denial that anything hurts.

Faith, we need to see—and to teach—is not the capacity to eliminate pain. It is not a spiritual strength that makes life's heartaches hurt less. Faith is not a spiritual superiority that lifts one above the ordinary tears and grief of life. It is not immunity from disease, failure, or loss, and it is not armor against the perplexity, despair, and confusion these troubles usually bring with them.

**Faith is the
capacity to
experience life at
full strength**



Dr. James R. Kok's definitive resource book, "**The Miracle of Kindness**" (available at major bookstores, in either paperback or eBook editions.) details the key essentials in becoming a more caring person. His latest book, "**Transform Belief Into Behavior**" provides the Biblical background for these key essentials and outlines the Theology of Care and Kindness.

As the **Koach Of Kare**, Dr. Kok was pastor at the Crystal Cathedral for 29 years and headed the Care Ministry department. The author of seven books and numerous articles, and founder of the Care and Kindness Campaign, he officially retired in 2013, but continues to write, to speak nationally, and to serve as volunteer pastor at Shepherd's Grove.

Quite the opposite: faith is freedom to enter pain, to feel it for what it is. Faith is **the capacity** to experience life at full strength, to mourn personal and global threats and losses, to enter—as raw-nervedly as mere people can—into our own and

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No Army Tank?

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others' diseases and agonies. Faith, at its core, is essentially **the ability** to suffer.

Rather than a power model of faith that makes us think we can and should be super-persons, we need a weakness model. God has revealed himself to us as one who has the courage to hurt—not as a hero who shrugs blows off. God, in Jesus, entered our condition, our pain, our humanness. He did not stride valiantly above it all; he agonized.

Faith is an awareness that God is alongside us in all circumstances

Faith is an awareness that God is alongside us in all circumstances. God has been there, and God is there with us, all the way, come what may. “If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there . . . even there your hand will guide me.” (Ps. 139:8-10).

Feedback we've received

I just wanted to tell you that I am really enjoying the Care and Kindness email series. All stuff that I have tried to do, but it is really nice to have the weekly reminder.

You have no idea how much I look forward to receiving your Care and Kindness blog.

Thanks Jim! Great ministry! You do more good than you know.

Thank you for your wonderful words. The last time I got your wonderful words I was even considering suicide because of what “friends were telling me”. Keep sending me your blog.

We need to equip ourselves and our children with this more biblically realistic teaching. Otherwise we promote and practice Christian faith as another self-help technique that denies the actualities of life in this broken world.

Life is difficult.

The storms will be there. We will be knocked about. Christian faith grants no immunities. We have only the knowledge of the presence with us of He who accepted no immunity.

We may not feel His presence when earthquakes shake, tornados destroy; or when we're ripped with sorrow, anger, or fear. We will only be able to remember it. He hurts with us and weeps with us. He is taking every blow we get. He is with us, holding us.

God seems to stress far more his suffering with us, his entering into our circumstances, than he does his power over everything. “The weakness of God is stronger than man's strength,” says Paul, stressing this point (2Cor. 1:25). And God says, “My power is made perfect in weakness.” (2Cor. 12:9).

The Christian life of faith is thus an invitation to humanness, an invitation to walk accompanied by our suffering Lord, unprotected, feeling the pain that life brings. Then, and then only, do we gain the potential for abundant living.



My small group is using your book Transform Belief Into Behavior this Fall. We are enjoying it very much!

My ladies Bible Study group has decided to use your book, Transform Belief Into Behavior, for our Fall study beginning in September. I am excited that we will be able to study and follow your suggestions. It is perfect for us, because of the chapters followed by questions for discussion.

A Case for Kindness

Doing acts of kindness is not kid-stuff

— Craig Bourne

A great paradox about the Care and Kindness Campaign is that is both simple and misunderstood.

It is so simple that everyone can do it! This has been Jim Kok's message: that acts of kindness bless other people immeasurably, and they are so easy to do that every person, no matter their circumstances, can offer them. And yet, because these actions, at first blush, seem to be so obvious, they are quickly dismissed, or overlooked by many people.

One woman memorably said to me years ago, "Why should I go to a Care Conference? I don't need that. I'm the kindest person I know."

And therein lies the paradox. Because the suggestions Jim Kok gives are so obvious and so simple, why do people not do them more often?

Perhaps one answer lies in the subtitle above — these things are perceived as 'kid-stuff.'

Another answer might be that they are assumed to be things that a person does more or less automatically and naturally; therefore, why do we need to give so much focus to them?

Then there is the fact that 'random acts of kindness' is a phrase that was initiated quite some time ago, so an attitude of 'been there, done that' gets attached to what Jim is saying.

An important difference

A big distinction of the Care and Kindness Campaign is that it promotes **intentional** acts of kindness.

I recently read some remarks by Steve Sjogren, a pastor who teaches evangelism training, that "the spiritual fruit of kindness is not about doing or practicing 'random acts of kindness' as bumper



stickers and other signs and billboards have been challenging us to do for some years now! Such random acts of kindness should really be called 'random acts of niceness', not kindness. There is nothing random or accidental about kindness as a fruit of the Holy Spirit."

He defines kindness as "practical acts of mercy done by followers of Jesus who are inspired by the Holy Spirit to see others through the eyes of God." What a great perspective!—seeing others the way God must see them. When we see people from that viewpoint, it is so EASY to be kind to them.

One must have conscious thoughts and intentions to live this way. It is not natural: it is not automatic to offer practical acts of mercy. It doesn't 'just happen.' And perhaps Sjogren's expression of 'random acts of niceness' touches on why people dismiss these

ideas—most people are indeed nice. Most people do not intend to be mean, cruel, rude — they want to be seen as nice persons. But being 'nice' and intentionally doing something that uplifts, feeds, encourages other people are not the same thing.

The Bible seems to distinguish between the divine quality of kindness and the human quality of niceness. Galatians 5: 22-23 lists 'kindness' as the fifth fruit of the spirit. Kindness, then, is definitely not kid-stuff. When we exhibit kindness, it is our bearing fruit of God being in us.

Being intentional means going out of your way

Dr. Philip Kenneson states, "This fruit by its very character, therefore, is one of the most outwardly *visible* fruits of the Christian life . . .

Kindness is a divine quality

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**Empty your mind
of all the positive thoughts
stored there,
doing no one any good.**

**A daily inventory of anybody's thought bank
turns up stacks and stacks of unspoken kind words,
warm feelings held back, and grateful impulses reserved.**

People need these goods.

— Dr. James R. **Kok**

East Coast conference rescheduled

May 6, 2017

Pompton Plains/Pequannock, New Jersey

Atlantic Health System and First Reformed Church have rescheduled their conference date to the first weekend of next May. It looks to be a terrific conference: you can view details by [clicking here](#) to go to this conference website information.

First Reformed Church is located on an historic campus in Pompton Plains. **Atlantic Health System** is a leading non-profit health care delivery system in New Jersey with some of the highest ranked medical centers in the New Jersey and the New York metropolitan areas.

Atlantic Health System also provides a variety of faith-based services to empower religious congregants to lead healthier lives – physically, emotionally and spiritually.

The **Faith Community Health**

Partnership program provides training for congregational volunteers and timely notification when members are hospitalized or discharged, so that care can continue until individuals return to full health.



Not kid-stuff

Continued from page 4

. we regard people as kind because they go out of their way, often quietly and without fanfare, to engage in kind actions. Nitty-gritty, concrete, everyday kinds of actions.”

In a similar vein, Kenneson also critiques the idea of simply doing random acts of ‘kindness’ (or niceness). The main limitation of such acts, according to him, is that genuine other-directedness is lacking—we feel good about doing these random acts of ‘kindness’, regardless of what the recipients may really need. One has to ask: is the good feeling we have for having done a random act stronger than the awareness of what the other person deeply needs?

Readers of Jim Kok’s writings know well that he teaches listening as being supremely important. One must listen to another person, listen to what they are saying, listen to what they are not saying, listen for their feelings. When we truly hear the other person, then we can respond with kindness and mercy and encouragement.

Echoing these same thoughts, Kenneson suggests that one of the major ways in which true kindness can be

cultivated in our lives is ‘*listening to one another*’. In order to nurture

**When we truly
hear the other
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Light Notes

The Christian Bear Hunter

Well, there was this very devout man who annually went bear hunting. When the season rolled around, he put on his boots and jacket, picked up his gun, prayed for success, and drove off to the woods.

He was walking quietly, deep in the forest, when, before he knew what hit him, he was clobbered by a mighty Grizzly. His gun flew, and he found himself lying on the ground looking up at the Grizzly.

Weaponless, he cowered as the bear appeared ready to strike again. Helpless, the nimrod closed his eyes and prayed: *“Oh Lord, change the bear’s heart. Convert his ways. Make him into a Christian bear.”*

Suddenly, he heard a voice. He opened his terrified eyes. There was the bear, paws together, eyes closed, head bowed, praying, *“Lord, bless this food I’m about to eat.”*



Not kid-stuff

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with one another in the Spirit in the depths of our soul, we need to listen to one another carefully and attentively. This kind of listening will help us to discern and know each other’s deepest needs and to respond lovingly and appropriately to such need with Spirit-filled acts of kindness that are truly other-directed. In fact, listening itself is a kindness we can give to others in a self-obsessed world where very few people are heard deeply enough to feel understood.”

Steve Sjogren puts these ideas into a formula. He says that “servant evangelism consists of deeds of love plus words of love plus adequate time. It is kindness concretely manifested to meet specific needs of others.”

So, in summary, understanding the impact that intentional acts of kindness has on people is no small thing. Sprinkling these gifts around as you go about your daily routine takes a mature attitude — it is definitely not kid-stuff!

Kindness meets the specific needs of others

Blessings to each one of you who are acting as ambassadors in the Care and Kindness Campaign. Blessings to you for understanding these concepts. We know you feel blessed as you give of yourselves and your time to offer intentional acts of kindness.



The mission of Care and Kindness Ministries is to increase everyone’s awareness of the fact that they are surrounded by people who need our kindness, and to offer hope and encouragement to persons who are facing trials and difficulties. We have created a video clip that movingly focuses on the varied needs of persons that we meet every day.

The issues portrayed in the video are only a small slice of the burdens that people around us are facing. We cannot FIX them; and, as Kindness Ambassadors, it is not our responsibility to even try to be ‘fixers’. But we can indeed offer our love; we can offer acts of kindness; we can demonstrate our concern and support for them as they struggle.

You can view this video by [clicking here](#), and you will go directly to it in your browser.



Joey's Answers

A Sunday school teacher asked, *“Johnny, do you think Noah did a lot of fishing when he was on the Ark ?”*

“No,” replied Johnny. *“How could he, with just two worms.”*

A Sunday school teacher said to her children, *“We have been learning how powerful kings and queens were in Bible times. But, there is a Higher Power. Can anybody tell me what it is?”*

Joey blurted out, *“Aces!”*

Joey was asked by his mother what he had learned in Sunday School. *“Well, Mom, our teacher told us how God sent Moses behind enemy lines on a rescue mission to lead the Israelites out of Egypt . When he got to the Red Sea , he had his army build a pontoon bridge and all the people walked across safely. Then he radioed headquarters for reinforcements. They sent bombers to blow up the bridge and all the Israelites were saved.”*

“Now, Joey, is that really what your teacher taught you?” his Mother asked.

“Well, no, Mom. But, if I told it the way the teacher did, you’d never believe it!”

Receive a free book from Dr. Jim Kok

Receive a copy of Jim Kok’s book, **Transform Belief Into Behavior**. To receive it, share his blogs and Care Capsules with your friends.

It is Jim’s desire, and the desire of Care and Kindness Ministries, to reach as many people as possible in spreading the Care and Kindness Campaign - to help motivate more people to undertake daily, intentional acts of kindness.

Send us the email address (including their name, city and state) of seven (7) people who would like to receive his weekly postings, and we will send you a free copy of his book.

Send your list to
ShowUp@careandkindness.org

Care Capsule

A publication of Care and Kindness Ministries, as part of the Care and Kindness Campaign. Our web page is at peoplekindness.com. For a free subscription to **Care Capsule**, send an email to ShowUp@careandkindness.org

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