



KINDNESS

PRACTICING KINDNESS WHEN YOU ARE HURTING

“But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.”

TITUS 3:4-5A (NIV)

THE PROBLEM WITH KINDNESS WHEN YOU ARE HURTING

It's not easy to respond with kindness when we are hurting. Call it human nature, being triggered, or getting “hangry”; whatever the cause, it simply isn't an easy thing for most of us to respond in kindness when we are hurting. And what are we to do, when we find that much of our life is spent experiencing some type of hurt? As a parent or a sibling of someone with special needs or as someone with a disability, we have to deal with hurt in our life often. This could mean physical pain due to the symptoms of a disability or the daily physical demands of lifting a loved one from a wheelchair. It can also mean emotional or mental hurt displayed as anger due to an unresolved situation, or loneliness and isolation due to the circumstances of constant caregiving or your own disability. Whatever the hurt looks like, it can easily become the barrier to kindness in our lives.

PRACTICING KINDNESS WHEN YOU ARE HURTING

So how can we practice kindness when we are hurting? First of all, kindness isn't only directed outward. It can also be applied to ourselves. If we are hurting and not taking care of ourselves or being kind to ourselves - body, mind, and spirit - this can and will result in negative effects on us as caregivers. Those negative effects can come in the form of a health problem, a trauma response, or a faith crisis among other things. So, take care of yourself. Selfcare is not selfish, it is necessary.

In addition to practicing kindness toward ourselves, it truly is possible to respond with kindness toward others while amid hurt and pain. God's road map for how to do this, whether happy or hurting, is clearly laid out for us in the bible. We practice kindness toward others with the kindness that we first received from our loving savior. It is only because of him and the inner promptings and power of the Holy Spirit, that we are capable of imparting God's kindness to another, even when we don't feel like it. As special needs families, we will have many people in our lives who will not understand our child or our circumstances and who will cause us tremendous hurt, and while healthy boundaries absolutely may be called for, the kindness of the Lord is as well.

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you.”[1]

[1]Ephesians 4:32 (NIV)

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“But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.”

TITUS 3:4-5A (NIV)

When you are hurting, you may also find it helpful to P. A. U. S. E. before responding to others. If you are feeling Pain, Anger, Unseen, Sad, or Exhausted, it is a good time to pause before responding. In one way or another each of these can trip you up and make you respond in a way that you may not want.. [DS1] If we are angry, we may respond with harsh words and later regret it. If we are feeling unseen or isolated, we may respond with defensiveness and further alienate others. If we are sad and grieving, we may respond with emotional withdrawal and hurt the ones we love. And if we are exhausted, we may respond with irritability and wind up causing more problems for ourselves. Being aware that these feelings may predispose us to respond in an unkind way, can help set us up for success if we simply pause.

THE STORY OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

There is one story in the bible which stands out immediately when thinking of the attribute of kindness. That is the story of The Good Samaritan found in Luke 10:30-37. The good Samaritan is a story of pure kindness amid ethnic hatred and division. You see the Samaritan, at the time of the story's first telling, was an unexpected hero in the minds of those listening. The Samaritans were looked down on by the Jews of that time due to the historical division that had taken place after the Assyrian Invasion. Bible historians say that after the invasion there was a remnant of the northern tribes of Israel who remained in the land, and they intermarried with the Assyrians who moved into that land. The decedents of these unions were known as the Samaritans. Because of this they were seen as a sort of half breed, and there was much contention between the “pure bred” Jews and the Samaritans. This is the backdrop against which the story takes place.

The story goes like this. There was a man who, while journeying on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, was attacked by robbers and left for dead. Along came three men. The first two were Jewish men and men of position, religious leaders at that, and though they could've helped the man, sadly they did not. Instead, these religious leaders, one a priest and the other a Levite, chose to pass by on the other side of the road. Then came the third, and he was a Samaritan. The Samaritan stopped, looked at the man who was badly beaten, and the passage says, “he took pity on him” (v. 33). He poured antiseptic wine and soothing oil on the wounds and bandaged them himself. Then he lifted the man onto his own donkey and brought him to an inn and continued to care for him. When he had to leave, he paid for the man's care at the inn with two days wages and offered to pay for any extra expenses upon his return.

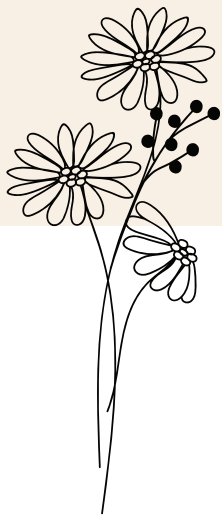


At the end of the story Jesus looked to the crowd and asked, “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?’ The expert in the law replied, ‘The one who had mercy on him.’ Jesus told him, ‘Go and do likewise.’” (v.36, 37)

In the story that Jesus tells, the Samaritan was kind despite the judgement he would’ve likely experienced. He acted with kindness despite a lifetime of hurt and division. What a beautiful picture Jesus captures for us to ponder whenever we don’t feel like practicing kindness when we are hurting.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read Luke 10:30-37. What are your thoughts as you read through the story?
2. Have you ever struggled to be kind when you are hurting? If you were able to make a positive change, how did you change your response?
3. Take a look at the acronym P. A. U. S. E. If you are feeling Pain, Anger, Unseen, Sad, or Exhausted, it may be a good time to pause before responding to others. Which of these five things, when experienced, makes it the most challenging for you to respond in kindness?



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