

Children's Moment *Show We Care: Kindness part 3*

Good morning, girls and boys. We're continuing our lesson on caring for others through kindness.

I learned a new song about caring this week. It's called "Let's Be Kind."¹ We'll put the lyrics on screen. Maybe you can sing it with me.

The tune is "Frere Jacques."

"Let's be kind, let's be kind,
In our heart, and in our mind,
To our family, to our friends,
May our kindness never end."²

Our friends at Shimek Elementary School in Iowa shared a new way to encourage caring at home. It starts with household or family time once a week; maybe over dinner on a special night. Keep a basket on the table all week for members of your household to write kind acts or words sent their way or that they tried to do for someone. During the family time, read what was done and thank each other.

"The slips of paper in the basket can be simple things that show a kind spirit and might say something like:

- I washed the dishes when it wasn't my turn.
- I called my sick aunt.
- I helped a friend with their homework.
- I made a point to smile at a person who looked sad and angry.
- I opened the door for someone and let them enter first.
- I offered to carry a package for someone who was overloaded.
- Mom made my favorite dinner.
- My brother washed the car without being asked."³

That's a great way for you to encourage each other to care. Give it a try.

Let's pray ... Jesus, make me a kind person, caring, helpful and generous to everyone. Help me to be considerate and always think about how my conduct affects others. Help me care how others feel so I am giving and forgiving. As a kind person, I want do good deeds without thinking about a reward. Help be to be kind to others. In Jesus' name, amen.

¹ *Shimek Elementary, Iowa City, Iowa, December 2011*

² *Ibid*

³ *Ibid*

Message: "Ways We Care"

Lives are made better when we care for others the same way God cares for us. "We believe Jesus Christ makes our lives together better in every way." That's our why. Last week, we talked about caring as our how; the unique way God cares for us and how caring for others in our community makes everyone's life better.

You can make a difference in the world.

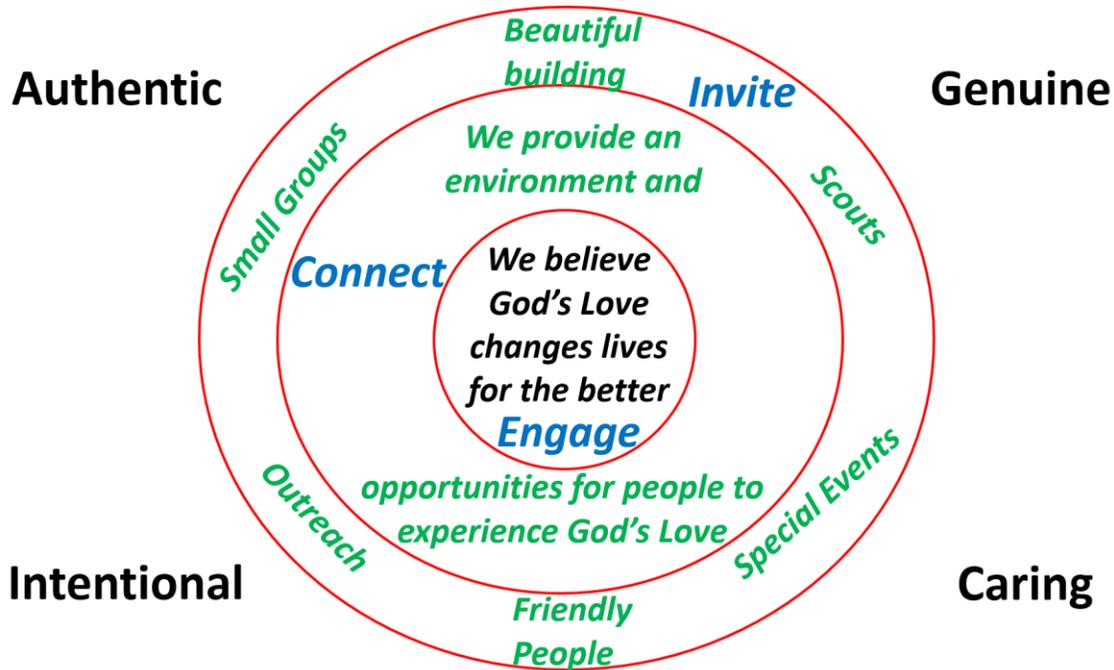
You just have to choose how you want to make a difference.

I encourage you to take up the attitude and practice of caring as a way to make a difference, to change lives and the world. Self-care will be part of it, but that's not where we start. Showing other people we care in real, tangible ways makes the greatest impact on their lives and ours.

Today, we're reflecting on our What. We started with why and then moved on to how, now we are at what. What are the specific ways we can care for people in our community? In the language of intentional discipleship, it's how we invite and connect people to God and the community of faith. It's what we do when we engage in relationship, caring and serving God and other people.

A reflection on what isn't very difficult. After all, we spend about 95% of our time focused on what we're doing or planning to do. It's true at home – anyone have a "honey do" list, a shopping list or a pile of mail, bills or materials ready for attention? It's certainly true at work. During the pandemic, we're connected all the time and learning new ways to interact, no matter whether you're at home or on the job site. And it's true at church. Even though the building is closed, the church isn't. It seems to take twice as long to get tasks done.

But that's about details. "What" is really an expression of how we're meeting the needs of our community. Brian Park, our lay leader, created a great graphic that helps us to see what it means.



We invite, connect and engage with people on purpose. Why? We change the world by love, one person at a time. How we do so is by providing environments and opportunities for people to experience God's love. What we offer is beautiful, friendly people. We don't sit back, we reach out. We gather in small groups, such as women's and men's groups, Scouts and all sorts of other ways. We offer special events.

We're an authentic, intentional, genuine and caring congregation who lives in a community of people who are just like us. They have needs. They want their life to have meaning. They want to be content and fulfilled by what they do. We have something to offer them.

Best of all, it doesn't matter what color our skin is, where we were born, what languages we speak, how old we are, what our sexual orientation is, or whether we're male, female or identify as non-binary. We love everyone! No matter what level of ability you have, what level of income you have, what level of education you have, what do you for a living or which groups you belong to.

All that matters is that you're interested and willing to know more about the God who made us and Jesus Christ, the one who saves us. And, if you aren't sure about those things, we aren't in a rush. You're welcome to come and learn about them with us.

What do we expect from you? In the past, I've said that membership comes with expectations. It does. We encourage you to treat others with dignity and respect. We ask for you to commit your prayers, presence, giving, service and witness to the Lord and to our congregation. We ask you to join us as we intentionally make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

One way we all can live out these expectations is by caring.

Everyone can do that. Want a friend? Show someone you care. Want someone to care for you? Show them that you care for them. Want to live into the dream of a community based on trust, unity and love? Become the dream by caring. There are no bounds or limits. What you do is up to you. Don't wait. Start today.

There is one thing you need to know. Solomon, supposedly the wisest person ever, wrote this: *"If you wait for perfect conditions, you'll never get anything done"* (Ecclesiastes 11:4). Don't wait! Show someone you care. Encourage others when they show they care, too. You can make a difference in the world and in someone's life!

James understood the nature and source of wisdom (3:13-18). When we're left to our own devices, our thinking becomes focused on our own interests. We become focused on the approval of others, a sign of weakness and dependency, rather than the comfort of friends who love and care for us, in spite of our flaws, fears and occasional hurt feelings.

The wisdom that comes from God is spiritual in nature. It heals, restores and builds up community. When we join in by caring for others, we too are cared for and loved. We become who we can be - together. There's a purity and genuineness to groups and places like this. They become known as places where peace can be found, where healing and reconciliation are possible, where people are fair and filled with mercy and good actions. Those who make peace sow seeds of justice by their peaceful acts. God's children are found in such places.

The seeds of peace and justice are planted through caring.

Those seeds have been planted here, among us. God sows the seeds through you. Be generous. Sow freely. And together, let's water and tend to those seeds as they sprout and grow, bearing spiritual fruit and even more seeds waiting to be planted in our households and neighborhoods. We can make a difference in the name of Jesus.

40-Day Kindness Invitation

- Do an act of kindness every day.
- Share your story on August 30th – send me your stories or send them to Cat at the office.

Let the Spirit show you the way. Amen.

Let us pray silently together ...

Luke 14:7-14 (CEB)

When Jesus noticed how the guests sought out the best seats at the table, he told them a parable. "When someone invites you to a wedding celebration, don't take your seat in the place of honor. Someone more highly regarded than you could have been invited by your host. The host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give your seat to this other person.' Embarrassed, you will take your seat in the least important place. Instead, when you receive an invitation, go and sit in the least important place. When your host approaches you, he will say, 'Friend, move up here to a better seat.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. All who lift themselves up will be brought low, and those who make themselves low will be lifted up."

Then Jesus said to the person who had invited him, "When you host a lunch or dinner, don't invite your friends, your brothers and sisters, your relatives, or rich neighbors. If you do, they will invite you in return and that will be your reward. Instead, when you give a banquet, invite the poor, crippled, lame, and blind. And you will be blessed because they can't repay you. Instead, you will be repaid when the just are resurrected."

James 3:13-18 (CEB)

Are any of you wise and understanding? Show that your actions are good with a humble lifestyle that comes from wisdom. However, if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, then stop bragging and living in ways that deny the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above. Instead, it is from the earth, natural and demonic. Wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there is disorder and everything that is evil. What of the wisdom from above? First, it is pure, and then peaceful, gentle, obedient, filled with mercy and good actions, fair, and genuine. Those who make peace sow the seeds of justice by their peaceful acts.