

## INTRODUCTION

Our country is still mourning the latest mass shootings in El Paso and Ohio. According to Dr. Jim Denison there have been 251 mass shootings in 2019. The FBI calls it a mass shooting in which four or more people are shot.

So how can we counter this darkness of violence and hatred? We should be people of kindness.

Ruben Martinez lives in El Paso. He's 11 years old. And after the shooting at the WalMart he wrote a letter to the paper issuing what he called the El Paso Challenge. Part of his letter said: I challenge each person in El Paso to do 20 good deeds to each other. Examples: Mow someone's lawn; visit a nursing home; pay for someone's lunch or dinner; hold the door for everyone, take flowers to someone in the hospital, leave a dollar on the vending machine for the next person.. and any other act of kindness ... this will show the world that people from El Paso, TX are kind and care for each other.

That's a great plan, Ruben. I agree that the best way to pushback violence is with kindness. That's why we're launching KINDNESS 25:40 today. Kindness is just love in action.

There are two verses in Ephesians 4 that reveal two different ways to think and live. There are many people in our world who are described in the first of the two verses, and we are the ones who should be known by the second verse. The Bible says, "Let all bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander be removed from you, along with all malice. (That describes many angry people who live in our nation. But here's how we should live.) And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ." (Ephesians 4:31-32 CSB)

I want to thank Andrew Francis, our Mosaic Pastor, and his team, for working up the strategy for our Connect Kindness emphasis. They came up with the name KINDNESS 25:40. In Matthew 25 Jesus is talking about how at the judgment, some people will be rewarded because they performed certain acts of kindness. They visited Jesus when He was sick and in prison. They offered Jesus food and drink. They gave Him clothes and they welcomed Him as a stranger with kindness. Then those people who are going to be rewarded are confused. They ask, "Lord when did we perform all those acts of kindness to you?" And then in Matthew 25:40 we see the amazing reach of Kindness: And the King (Jesus) will answer them, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40)

In this message I want to share three tremendous truths about the power of kindness. Then I want to share with you some of the KINDNESS 25:40 activities we are suggesting.

### **(1) KINDNESS IS OUR RESPONSE TO GOD'S GRACE.**

Why should we show kindness to others? There are at least two good reasons. First it is the command of God. You read it for yourself: "be kind and compassionate to one another." Jesus

commands us to love our neighbors. Love for others is not an emotion or a feeling, it is a choice. We choose to love others because God tells us to.

Another reason to show kindness is the character of God. God tells us to show kindness to others because that is part of His wonderful character. He is full of loving kindness toward us. God has forgiven us not because we deserved it—He forgives us for Jesus' sake.

God didn't just tell us He loves us, He proved it. Romans 5:8 says, "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." It's not enough for us to say we love others; we must show it. That's what KINDNESS 25:40 is all about. You don't perform acts of kindness to earn God's mercy and forgiveness; you perform good deeds because you have been forgiven.

When God saved you, He began to change you. You no longer want to live like those people who don't know God. When you show kindness to a stranger, they are surprised. Why? Because that's not normal behavior. Out there, it is every man for himself. It's a dog-eat-dog world. It's a hard-knock life. But for those of us who know Jesus, we live by a higher standard. We show kindness and compassion to others.

The world tends to give people what they deserve. But God is full of grace and mercy. Grace is God blessing you with that which you do not deserve. Mercy is God withholding the punishment you do deserve. The more you understand and appreciate God's grace and mercy, the more you will want to show kindness to others.

## **(2) SHOW KINDNESS TO STRANGERS WHO CAN'T REPAY YOU.**

Many of us show kindness to our friends and family—and we should. But one of the reasons we are kind to them is because we want them to be kind to us. It's like giving Christmas gifts. Sometimes we give Christmas gifts to others because they give Christmas gifts to us. It's called reciprocal giving. There's nothing wrong with showing kindness to others because they are kind to you, but Jesus speaks about a kind of love that goes further than that. When He gave the command to "love your neighbor as yourself," a man asked Him, "Who is my neighbor?" To answer that question, Jesus told the famous story we call the Good Samaritan. A man was mugged on an isolated road. The robbers left him alive but naked and bleeding in the road. A priest passed by and saw the man, but he crossed to the other side of the road. A Levite, who was like a cultured, educated law expert also saw the wounded man, but he didn't help. Then a Samaritan, who wasn't even a full-blooded Jew walked by. This hated, half-breed stopped and cleaned the wounds of the stranger and then put him on his donkey and took him to an inn and paid for his food and lodging until he was well. The wounded man was a total stranger. Jesus said that real love isn't directed just to those who are just like us or who can love in return—it's directed toward anyone who needs love—even if they are total strangers. "Jesus said, 'If all you do is love those who love you, do you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that! If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that!'" (Matthew 5: 46-47 *The Message*)

So as you go out this week and this month to perform your acts of kindness, try to focus your kindness on those who don't have a chance to repay you.

In 2000 there was a movie called "Pay it Forward." It was about a boy who was given an assignment to make a plan that would change the world. He came up with an idea of doing an act of kindness and telling the recipient that they can't pay it back. They have to pay it forward to three people who in turn do the same. At the time it led to a real life pay it forward movement. USA Today reported that at one Starbucks in St. Petersburg, Florida 386 people in a row paid for the order of the person in the car behind him or her. It was even on the radio. The guy who broke the chain heard about it and ended it by saying he thought people were doing it out of a sense of guilt instead of generosity ... wah wah wah. What a Debbie Downer! Let's get some kindness chains going this week! Don't break the chain: Start the chain!

### **(3) KINDNESS IS PLANTING SEEDS OF THE GOSPEL.**

When we think of evangelism, we think about big events like CityFest coming up in eight weeks. But that's really the harvest for the seeds of the Gospel that we get to plant.

If you want some great training CityFest is offering free friendship evangelism training on Tuesday night at Grace Community and Wednesday night at Bethel Bible Church at 7:00 p.m. I hope you'll be a part of that. Just go online to CityFest and you can register and attend.

But just performing an act of kindness is planting a seed for the Gospel. When someone is saved it is always the result of a team effort. Yesterday at the Understanding the Times Conference, Al Fadi who was born in Saudi Arabia gave his testimony. He came to do graduate studies in the U.S. as a committed Muslim. It took 12 years of Christians showing him kindness before he came to faith in Christ. But he said that every Christian who showed him love were planting seeds that finally took root.

Paul writes in I Corinthians 3:5-6, "After all, who is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only SERVANTS, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow."

So, now let's get practical. We've come up with some suggested acts of kindness each day this week.

### **SUNDAY: Get your Kindness 25:40 cards!**

I want everyone to have some cards in your hand today. So if you are seated at the end of the row, you see a zip lock bag. Pick it up. Take the one for your service and open it and take three or four cards and pass it down. I'd like to ask everyone to take three or four cards with you today. If you need more, there are more at the Welcome Center (Crosswalk too).

I'll be saying more about how to use the Kindness Card, but for now take some.

You can even use it at lunch today if you're eating at a restaurant with servers. Consider leaving a BIG tip, so big it merits kindness. Maybe like 50%. And leave the card with the tip. I've been told by servers that Christians on Sunday are the worst tippers of the week. You might recall one lady left a note that said, "God only gets 10%, so you deserve less." That is totally tacky and rude. That's the opposite of kindness!

Now here are some suggestions for each day this week. But remember we're talking about kindness that begins this week, but doesn't END this week.

### **MONDAY: Kindness for the generations (elderly).**

If you know of someone who is shut in or in an assisted living facility. Why don't you show them God's kindness by visiting them and taking them some kind of little gift or flowers? Then take some time to just sit there and talk with them and perhaps pray with them. There are lonely people everywhere and you can be the light in someone's lonely darkness.

After Ed Williams' memorial service a lady came up to me to tell me an amazing story. In June, a gentleman named Ray Shelton passed away. He and his brother used to have a hardware store here. Ray was a Christian and delivered meals to the elderly for Meals on Wheels. Ray told this lady there was a particular older gentleman in North Tyler who he delivered meals to. He had never witnessed to that man or told him that he was doing this kindness in Jesus' name. Ray had terminal cancer, so he made a special trip to visit this gentleman. He said, "I've got cancer, and I've never told you about Jesus. Before I go to Heaven, I want to make sure that you'll go Heaven too. The old man's eyes filled up with tears and he told Ray, "I'm so glad you came. I just finished watching David Dykes on television and I gave my heart to the Lord and I wanted to tell someone." Who do you know who just needs a visit in their loneliness?

### **TUESDAY: Kindness at the Laundromat.**

On Tuesday, why don't you visit a laundromat and offer the feed the washer and dryers for strangers there. You can take some quarters or many of them now have dispensers for dollar bills or credit cards to give you quarters. Would you be willing to invest 40 quarters—that's \$10—to show someone God's love? People usually have time to talk in Laundromats since they are waiting on their clothes to finish washing or drying. Just say, "This week, our church is doing acts of kindness in the community. May I please offer you the next few quarters to go in your washer/dryer?" Then smile and give them a card. If they want to talk, go ahead and just be friendly with them.

Here's a map of the laundromats around Tyler. You can google it yourself. Now is a good time to add a caveat about this and any act of kindness. Some people won't let you show them kindness. There may be somebody at the laundromat who refused to accept your quarters. Or they refuse a bottle of water. They are skeptical because they think it's some scam. Do you remember when the Moonies used to show up at airports and try to give you a paper rose? Then they wanted a donation to Sun Young Moon's church. So if someone is skeptical don't

say, "I'm going to be kind to you if I have to kill you!" Don't be discouraged, just smile and move on and keep on being kind to someone else.

### **WEDNESDAY: Kindness fast food pay4.**

We love fast food. So, this week if you are at a drive through at Chick-fila, DQ, McDonald's, Burger King, Whataburger, Jack in the Box, Taco Bell, Taco Bueno, KFC, Chicken Express, Panda Express, Pizza Hut, Wendy's or Andy's (whew!) consider paying for the car behind you. Here's what you do. When you pull up to pay for your purchase say, "I'd like to pay for the order in the car behind me, too." After you've paid give the person at the window the kindness card and say, "Please give them this card when they pull up for their order."

There's lots of other ways to practice this kindness. You could buy a gift card at a fast food place and give it to someone with the card. Or if you're at a sit-down restaurant, you can tell the server you want to pay for a stranger's meal at a nearby table. Ask the server to give them the Kindness card instead of their bill.

### **THURSDAY: Kindness: Creation seen clearly. Wash car windows.**

So, this Thursday we are hosting the TISD annual convocation here in the Worship Center. Our parking lots are going to be full of cars of those who work in public education. We are going to gather and wash every windshield on our property. I ran this idea by TISD Superintendent Marty Crawford and he said he thought it would be a fantastic way to show our love and appreciation for teachers and staff.

So, in a couple of minutes I'm going to ask you to raise your hand if you'll join Michael, Andrew, and me at 9am this Thursday outside the door of Connections Café. There will be a little tent there to meet. Bring four or five rolls of paper towels, Windex or window cleaner, and several large black trash bags. Dress comfortably. I'm going to be wearing a swimsuit, sandals, tee-shirt, a hat with a wide brim and wearing sunscreen. We will supply the Kindness cards that already say: "We washed your windows." We'll leave it on the driver's side window. If you come, park near the Student Center or the lot on Henson street.

I told one lady we would be washing car windows and she asked, "Are you going to use holy water?" I said, "No we're using holy Windex."

If it's just Michael, Andrew, and me, it will take us all day. So we need your help. Now, how many of you will meet us this Thursday at 9 to clean car windows? Raise your hands.

### **FRIDAY: Bottled water kindness.**

This is a simple one. Just buy some bottled water and fill a cooler with ice. Find a shady spot on one of the walking trails or at one of the parks and when people come by offer them a bottle of water and a kindness card. Again, don't be discouraged if anyone refused to accept your gift. Keep smiling.

### **SATURDAY: Kindness: Totally free car wash.**

Next Saturday from 10 to 1 we'll be set up in front of the One-Ten Student Center for a totally free car wash. Bring your own buckets, soap, and towels. Many organizations have "free car" washes, but then give you a chance to donate. We're not taking a penny. It's totally free. We need some of you to come and keep your hands dry to just pass out the cards. And like washing car windows, we need to make sure we do a GREAT job. I hope to see you there next Saturday.

### **ANY DAY: Pay off medical bills.**

It is estimated that Americans have \$1 trillion in unpaid medical bills. We are working with a non-profit called RIP Medical Debt to pay off medical debt for people in East Texas. This will truly be kindness to a stranger because this company chooses the accounts to pay off. In the past two years RIP Medical Debt has paid off over \$700 million in medical debt.

Our goal to pay off some of the medical bills of people living in Smith County. We will be joining about 18 other churches around American who have paid off \$34 Million in medical debt. If you want to give to this effort, it's very simple. Just make an offering of any amount and designate it to Benevolence – medical bills.

Many people are under stress because they can't pay huge medical bills. NBC News reported recently that an elderly couple in Washington state committed suicide leaving a note saying they could never pay off their staggering medical bills. We have a chance to be a huge blessing to some people in East Texas. And it will all be in the name of Jesus.

### **ANY DAY: Your kindness creativity!**

These are just some suggestions. Among our congregation, I'm sure you can come up with dozens more ways to show people God's love through acts of kindness. You don't need anyone's permission if you come up with another plan. Just do it!

### **CONCLUSION**

Jesus said, "Anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name will certainly not lose his reward." (Mark 9:41) This is important. If you simply perform an act of kindness with no explanation, you are doing it in your own name. But when you do it in Jesus' name, it changes the entire equation. Jesus said if you do your good deeds for the applause of man, that's all the reward you will receive. But if you do your good deeds in His name simply because you want to obey your Father, He is glorified and you will be rewarded!

Now there are several ways you can give the glory to God when you do your kindness. You can simply say to the person, "I'm doing this in the name of Jesus, because He has shown His kindness to me." Or you could even say, "Our church is performing acts of kindness in the community this month because we are trying to show people the Love of God."

But the easiest thing to do is to give them a Kindness card. The card says it all. On one side, it explains why you performed the act of kindness and on the other side gives them information about our church, in case they have a spiritual need. We have about 40,000 of these cards, so if you need more, you can get them at the Welcome Center, or you can copy them and make your own.

Can you think of the kindest thing anyone ever did for you? I can. One time I was a rotten, selfish sinner bound for hell because I was guilty. There was this man who was actually the Son of God. Although He was not guilty of any sin, He stepped in and took the punishment I deserved.

Jesus said, "Greater love has no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13) KINDNESS 25:40 is all about laying down your life for your friends and strangers.

KINDNESS 25:40 is not just a week. We're launching it this week, but we hope to start a movement. Remember, according to Matthew 25:40 when you are performing these acts of kindness to strangers, it's the same thing as showing kindness to Jesus!

Ruben Martinez in El Paso is right. The way to extinguish the fires of violence and hatred in our nation is by a tsunami of kindness. Surfs up! Don't be good for goodness sake. And don't be kind for kindness sake. For the love of God, let's show the world HIS KINDNESS!

## OUTLINE

“Let all bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander be removed from you, along with all malice. (That describes many angry people who live in our nation. But here’s how we should live.) And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.” *Ephesians 4:31-32 CSB*

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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes



*David O. Dykes, Pastor  
Green Acres Baptist Church  
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