

## Practice Kindness to Change Lives



Christopher News Notes

**“KINDNESS” IS ONE OF THOSE IDEALS THAT WE ALL SUPPORT AND BELIEVE IN, but we can often underestimate its life-changing power. That’s right. Kindness has power! It’s more than just doing something nice for someone else; it is a true giving of oneself that can serve as a reflection of God’s love for us all. And in practicing kindness, we become more Christlike ourselves.**

## Your Hidden Superpower

*"Whoever pursues righteousness and kindness will find life and honor."*  
—Proverbs 21:21

ABC News' Adrienne Bankert earned one of her first breaks in broadcasting not just because of her talent, but due to her reputation for being kind. She has made intentional kindness a part of her life and believes that it is a natural part of all our DNA that we simply need to access more.

Bankert also notes that there is a difference between being "nice" and "kind." During a *Christopher Closeup* interview about her book *Your Hidden Superpower: The Kindness That Makes You Unbeatable at Work and Connects You with Anyone*, Bankert said, "Being nice is a hello in the hallway. It's polite...But we need to graduate to kindness, which takes into account the whole person." In other words, kindness goes deeper, allowing us to build connection and community.

She explained, "Every person on the planet... needs to feel like they belong somewhere. And when you're kind, you could open up a door to a friendship that you didn't even know was there... I'll make friends with people on planes or on the street...because I truly believe that when we're brought into certain spaces, they're one in a million opportunities. What are the chances that I meet this person at the deli or at work or walking my dog? Let's not think light of that. Maybe, just maybe, this was meant to be."

## Love One Another

*"She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue."*  
—Proverbs 31:26

Shannon K. Evans and her husband Eric adopted a son who exhibited unruly behavior because of trauma he experienced early in his life. It was difficult finding a place where they fit in and where his acting out wasn't seen as a disturbance. Then, because of their interest in social justice, the family got involved with a Catholic Worker community called Day House. It consists of a group of people living among the poor and homeless in their Iowa

A recent study shows that 81 percent of children believe parents value achievement over caring. Author and organizational psychologist Adam Grant, along with his wife Allison, have an experiment for parents to try to prioritize kindness in the home. In *The Atlantic*, the Grants reported that kids pick up on what is important to their moms and dads with "parents becoming so focused on achievement that they fail to nurture kindness." The couple realized that they too were emphasizing achievements before kindness in their home, stressing questions such as, "Did your team win?" or "How did the test go?"

The Grants tried an experiment to make kindness a core value. They started asking their children what they did to help someone that day. After some time, the kids' responses included helping a classmate with homework or sharing a snack with a friend. By making kindness more of a priority, the children began looking for ways to be kind—and acting upon them.

community, offering them meals and a place to shower.

The kindness and acceptance that Shannon and her family experienced while volunteering there gave them a feeling of a home away from home. Because some of the clientele suffered from mental issues, "nobody was phased by outlandish behavior," she explained during a *Christopher Closeup* interview about her book *Embracing Weakness*. And this kindness led to a new experience of community.

Shannon said, "Every model of that kind of volunteer work that I had been a part of was all about me giving to others' needs...[But] here, we all cooked the meal together. We all sat down and ate together, and that was very representative of the spirit of the place, of believing that every human being is created in the image of God. And no matter what their circumstances, they do have something to offer other human beings."

Jenny DePaul, the CEO and founder of Project Kind, is motivated by a similar belief. She and her husband have two biological daughters, have served as foster parents to 13 children, and have adopted a boy with severe autism. Jenny, however, felt called to do even more good with the blessings she has been given in life, so she created Project Kind as a way to help the homeless in New Jersey. Why? Because "everyone deserves to be loved," she told *NJ.com*. And, in fact, Project Kind's motto is, "Love one another."

Every day, Jenny comes to Newark's Penn Station with water, sandwiches, and other items to pass out to the homeless. Perhaps more importantly, she gets to know them personally by listening to their stories and figuring out other ways she can help them. For instance, Sam Dawson, age 60, used to be employed as a security guard until a diagnosis of blood cancer left him unable to pay expensive medical bills. With no money, he wound up on the streets. Jenny met Dawson in Penn Station and was able to raise enough money to find him housing. Dawson told *NJHerald.com*, "I call [Jenny] my guardian angel. If you have kindness in your heart, it really goes a long way."

## Kindness Aids the Lonely

*"Kindness is like a garden of blessings."*—Sirach 40:17

"Look at all the lonely people," sang The Beatles many years ago. Unfortunately, loneliness in our day and age is still a common problem. One of the biggest age groups it affects is seniors. According to the government's Health Resources and Services Administration, 43 percent of seniors feel lonely on a regular basis. But individual acts of kindness can make a big difference.

Jamario Howard, JaMychol Baker, and Tae Knight were waiting for their order at Brad's Bar-B-Que in Oxford, Alabama, when Jamario noticed an elderly woman sitting by herself. He wondered if she might be lonely, so he went over, began chatting with her, and learned her name was Eleanor Baker.

Eleanor told Jamario a little about her life, including that she was a widow and tomorrow would have been her 60th wedding anniversary.

The young man knew he couldn't leave this lady by herself, so he invited her to join him and his friends for dinner. She did, and they had a wonderful evening together. When Jamario posted a picture of them all on Facebook, the story went viral. Eleanor told *CBS News* that she considers the evening "a God thing. I think God sent me there."

Jamario added, "I used to say when I was younger, and I still say today, I want to change the world somehow, and I don't know how. I'm not rich. I'm not famous...But we can show the world it's alright to be kind. And then, before long, maybe the world will be a much better place."

The challenge of loneliness is present among young people, too. Andrew Kirby of Boiling Springs, South Carolina, was a high school sophomore who had gotten used to eating lunch alone. He was shy, didn't make friends easily, and had some medical challenges. His mother prayed that someone would befriend him. Her prayers were answered soon after. As reported by *CBS This Morning*, members of the student council decided that nobody should sit by themselves for lunch, so they started inviting anyone who was alone to join them. The gesture resulted in Andrew enjoying a new group of friends.

## When One of Us Rises...

*"As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe*

*yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience."* —Colossians 3:12

Actress Nikki DeLoach, known for her movies on the *Hallmark* channels, was hit with two major blows several years ago: her son Bennett was born with life-threatening heart defects, and her father was diagnosed with an aggressive form of dementia. The kindness of others made this troubling time a little easier to navigate. Now, DeLoach makes it a point to turn her pain into purpose and practice kindness herself. She supports Children's Hospital Los Angeles, where doctors saved her son's life, along with the Alzheimer's Association in honor of her father's struggles.

During a *Christopher Closeup* interview about her Christopher Award-winning TV movie *Two Turtle Doves*, DeLoach explained, "In the news, we are inundated with negativity and stories of things that people did wrong...[But] we also have people who are making such a difference in the world and in people's lives. I had girlfriends drop food off for us three weeks straight when we were at the hospital [with Bennett] and beyond...With my dad, at the church, everyone is aware of his situation, so they all help him. I received cards from churches all over the South that I didn't even know. They would send me cards with all of their signatures saying, 'We've been praying for your son and for your family.'

"We have to go to those in need," DeLoach continued, "because when one of us rises, we take the rest with us. Together, we are the ones who can make this world a better place. A lot of times, we sit around and wait for some big person [to fix things]. I call it the Jesus syndrome, where people are waiting around for someone to come in and save everyone from the woes of the world. That's not the way it is. We are the ones that [God] sent here to make a difference."

  
**"It's better to light one candle than to curse the darkness."**

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*"Constant kindness can accomplish much. As the sun makes ice melt, kindness causes misunderstanding, mistrust, and hostility to evaporate."*

—Albert Schweitzer