

At-Home Sunday School For Sunday, January 7, 2024

In Defense of Kindness, by Bruce Reyes-Chow: Week 19

We have come to the halfway point for this series of lessons. In defense of Kindness by Bruce Reyes-Chin is the book these lessons are coming from. The chapters have been condensed into lessons for you to reflect on and to address how we choose to be kind in our everyday lives. You can use these lessons or purchase the book for the full text. Please feel free to discuss the topics with friends or to journal your own thoughts as you continue your own journey on your faith path.

Kindness Week 19

Kindness And The Everyday

Bruce begins this chapter with his reflections on the school drop-off line and how much we can be jerks in it. He was tempted to title this chapter “We are all in a rush. You are not special. We are all going to the same place. You are an idiot.” But that would not be kind, would it? Funny and true, but not kind. Two lanes merge into one near his children’s school and it can be a place of unkindness.

As the years passed and his children grew tired of his complaints regarding other drivers, Bruce began to change his mindset. Now as he approaches the merge zone, he calmly and soothingly reminds himself, *Bruce, be kind and let them merge across the forbidden solid white line. You do not need to teach them a lesson. You do not own the land upon which your vehicle is traveling. Most importantly, you do not know what kind of a morning they are having. They might be in great need of a kind act. You are in a position to offer one.*

He is not joking. This is a continuing conversation in his daily life when he is in a merging position. And yes, it’s exhausting.

Kindness is exhausting because most of us are not practiced or disciplined at living it. We must choose to live kindly. Every day. Kindness in our everyday life does not just happen. It requires a deep commitment and practiced discipline of acting against so many of our natural reactions. We must choose if we will see the dignity of all people as we encounter them. Especially when it comes to the routine, everyday, monotonous acts of our lives. You know, like school drop-off.

Here are five of Bruce’s suggestions for ways to be kind during those routine moments, like school drop-off, in our lives.

- 1.) *Let people merge.* Let them merge. It will be fine.
- 2.) *Make legal U-turns.* Only do U-turns where they are allowed so that you avoid the awkward back and forth move in front of everyone.

- 3.) *Park and walk.* Not only does this give your body a moment to rest and exhale, but there is now one less car in the line. When you find yourself back in your car, take ten minutes to gift yourself time to nap, play a game, read. You will avoid the traffic altogether.
- 4.) *Restrain your honker.* Bruce's straightforward rule when dropping off kids at school is "When within two miles of the school, do not honk at anyone." You might see them later at a program or something.
- 5.) *Wave.* While he doesn't believe a cute smile and a fluttering wave of the hand excuses bad drop-off behavior, a thank you wave to the person who has shown you some vehicular kindness is much appreciated.

Imagine a kindness list for taking public transportation, going to a movie, traveling on an airplane- you get the drift. These are small moments in our days, but such gestures of kindness spill over to our whole lives.

For Reflection: Where do you find yourself struggling to be kind on a regular basis? How might a group or community normalize and communicate everyday kindness?

Try This: Unless you are in a situation of physical danger, do not honk today.