

At-Home Sunday School For Sunday, January 21, 2024

In Defense of Kindness, by Bruce Reyes-Chow: Week 21

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 21

Kindness And Institutional Change - Part B

At the end of the day, kindness in a meeting environment is about valuing the human before us: their time, their perspectives, and their personalities. Here is an abbreviated version of Bruce's kindness agenda for meetings.

Respect Time. Set expectations for the time and honor the time committed. This is for the start and end times. Be flexible to events outside of the meeting but honor the time that people have committed to give to the tasks at hand.

Create Space. Ask yourself, *What does the room layout communicate to those who will be part of the meeting?* Make sure the space makes sense for the kind of meeting you are going to hold. Make sure that the space is easy to find and is neat and tidy, a comfortable temperature, the necessary equipment for the technology being used, etcetera.

Be Prepared. An unprepared leader is frustrating to those who have made time to participate. Even the most well-laid plans will be disrupted. A little grace and flexibility will suffice but do not be in the habit of winging it through meetings.

Honor Personalities. Be intentional about honoring how people receive information and share opinions. Require a pause for thought before responses are shared. Make sure that introverts get a chance along with extroverts. Call on several different people throughout the meeting to get varying thoughts and views.

Focus On Strengths. Meetings that focus on abundance and the gifts that people bring to the space are so much more motivating than meetings that are filled with a focus on scarcity and what cannot be done.

Maintain Focus. Maintaining focus is not about silencing voices, but about honoring the energy and focus people are directing toward a particular topic. When gently directing people back to the topic at hand, be sure to create space for the other topic to be taken up in the future.

Avoid Surprises. When it comes to meetings, unexpected crises are one thing, but surprises that are the result of a lack of preparation or that are a deliberate tactic to rush to a decision without meaningful conversation are quite another. Postponing a decision until the next meeting gives a chance for input and honors the voice of everyone involved.

Read The Room. Being unable or unwilling to read the room is usually due to an overcommitment to the agenda and an unwillingness or inability to be flexible. The facilitator needs to be firm in moving things along or encouraging more conversation when decisions need to be made. Both allow for a more productive meeting and confidence in the person running the meeting. Also a necessary room-reading skill – bathroom breaks.

Invite Feedback. Asking for feedback is always helpful. Bruce tries to end meetings with a few questions.

“What went well during our meeting? What was helpful? What would have been more helpful? How could I have been more helpful in facilitating the meeting?”

Have Fun. Even the most difficult meeting, when done well, can be meaningful and life-giving. When run well, meetings can give us a positive, collective purpose; an energy about movements for change; and a sense of fulfillment that we are using our time, energy, and skills in meaningful ways.

For Reflection: Think of the last “good” meeting you attended. What made it good? What is the next meeting you will lead, and how might you adjust your meeting practices having read this information?

Try This: To alleviate surprises and mitigate anxiety-producing urgency, encourage all decisions to be given a first read well ahead of decision time.