

**At-Home Sunday School
For Sunday, January 28, 2024**

In Defense of Kindness, by Bruce Reyes-Chow: Week 22

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 And Resistance – Part A

In 2018 Bruce was arrested at the US-Mexico border as part of an action to bring visibility to the militarization of the border and the cruelty of the US immigration system. Neither the Border Patrol nor Homeland Security agents acknowledged that he and the others arrested were beautifully and divinely created humans. Sitting in the back of the police van, cuffed, and crowded together with friends old and new, humanity reigned. Bruce was struck by the kindness that was present. Newbies to civil disobedience and veterans to troublemaking laughed and commiserated together. They all got to genuinely know one another as people, individually created beautiful human beings.

Bruce's family and religious roots have taught him to show up, speak up, and shine light upon unjust systems. He believes that active, persistent, and public resistance is crucial to the success of all movements for change. Because we often think of the fight for social justice as aggressive, even sometimes violent, he knows that this may be one of the more difficult places to see the power of kindness. Without the voices from the edges publicly demanding, wailing, and protesting, institutions and systems that engage in exclusionary, oppressive, or marginalizing practices continue to operate with apathy or impunity.

Anger and rage are justified reactions in response to acts of injustice and oppressive systems. Yet anger and rage are not sustainable or life-giving over the long haul. Not only do we run the risk of escalating a culture of violence and retribution, but repeatedly Bruce has seen how anger can change the way people interact with those closest to them. Anger and rage have their place. We also must find ways to channel that rage and anger into actions that advance movements for equality and justice.

In the journey toward justice, no matter what issue is being confronted – it takes multiple tactics and perspectives to achieve just results. We must embrace actions and responses that recognize the humanity and dignity of the other, no matter how heinous the act that we are addressing. Public protest, political resistance, and the fight for social justice are not just about confrontation.

Next week we will look at some ways that Bruce views kindness as a part of the work in public protest, political resistance, and the fight for social justice.

For Reflection: When have you seen individual kindness embodied in the context of public protest? How might organizers ensure that their actions do not reinforce or encourage acts that dehumanize, demean, or dismiss the humanity of those who are the target of the action?

Try This: If you have never been to a protest, go. At your next public action, take a moment to get to know someone else's story.