

Choose Kindness - it Matters



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Where has kindness gone? With all that has been happening in the last several months, with super-charged emotions and passionate stances on so many issues, have you noticed a decline in kindness both in the world and on all forms of media?

There are facts in all matters. There are opinions in all matters. There may even be missing or false information in all matters. But where is the kindness in all matters?

Let us take the mask issue as an example here. First of all, there are facts, opinions, and false and missing information regarding the reason for the masks in the first place—the wretched virus. This is because it is new. It's uncharted territory. We don't know what we don't know. We want to know as soon as possible, but we don't know everything and when new and changing information starts to come to the surface, we may start to know—but with confusion and conflicting data, do we really know?

Because the unknown begins to instill fear, decisions need to be made. One of the most controversial has been that of the mask. Facts seem to be conflicting, opinions are varied, and there is even false or missing information. We take this all in and each of us makes a personal judgment call that makes sense to us based on the information we have—whether it be biased information or factual information coming from dependable sources or not-so-dependable sources that we have decided to listen to—it is our perceived truth.

This is how we live our lives, isn't it? We process information we have—whether true or false, to make daily decisions—whether good or bad. We make these decisions based on what we perceive. We all do it, every day, hundreds of times.

What is your perceived truth with the masked madness? I don't use "madness" based on my opinion of the mask issue, I use it because the strong opinions have created a feeling of chaos and frenzied craziness. Everyone has their opinion and many are not afraid to voice it—loudly.

As the owner of a business, I have heard both sides. For me, "do the right thing" has been a dominant thought in these last months as we have made many decisions—decisions we never dreamed we would have to make.

So, what is "the right thing"? I believe it comes back to kindness. Kindness seems to be missing from so much lately. Has the divide become so deep that we have forgotten about kindness? Was kindness removed when the virus came about and further removed when masks were put in place? Have you noticed this missing Fruit of the Spirit in those in your personal life, in all forms of media, in strangers, or even in your own heart?

Perhaps a little snippet from the Fruit of the Spirit book I am writing might help us

remember kindness and get back on track:

KINDNESS is number five,
It's being a friend to everyone.
KINDNESS is showing compassion,
When others prefer to run.

KINDNESS is doing to others,
As you want done to you.
Instead of an eye for an eye,
Or a tooth for a tooth.

KINDNESS is minding your business
And controlling what you say.
KINDNESS does not gossip,
It builds up others in big ways.

KINDNESS is showing forgiveness,
When you want to hold a grudge.
KINDNESS is giving mercy;
Only God can be the judge.

KINDNESS is offering truth
In a loving kind of way.
KINDNESS is listening well
To what others have to say.

KINDNESS is in your smile.
KINDNESS is in a wink.
KINDNESS is feeding your enemy,
Or offering them a drink.

KINDNESS is showing goodness
To everyone in your path.
Instead of showing some badness
And letting them see your wrath.

Might the world be a better place if we all donned this kind of kindness along with the mandated masks? Does this describe the kind of life you are living? It is certainly hard! And we all fail; I know I do! And I need reminders sometimes in how to "do the right thing" — or, really, "do the kind thing" — to get back on track in so many areas of my life.

Where do your reminders of kindness or other qualities of the fruit of the spirit come from? Have you been putting good things into your mind after the reminders in my mid-June article?

I have been reading, "Man's Search for Meaning" by Viktor Frankl. As a holocaust survivor, Frankl has used his experiences and insight to help many readers think about life in deep, thought-provoking ways. While reading his words and the horrors

he and others experienced, I have thought it strange how hard it is to put the book down. Why is reading about such disgusting human torture so fascinating—in a bizarre kind of way? I suppose, for me and likely others, it is because of how he has taken the worst possible circumstances and given us, his readers, a window into the depths of how he persevered and what he learned along the way.

On page 62, Frankl writes a nugget of truth that I have been mulling over, "... everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances..." Read that again. Toss it about in your mind and heart a bit. How astounding is the depth of that bit of truth?

If this man, a prisoner in several concentration camps, including Auschwitz, could choose a good attitude in the midst of such circumstances, how might we, a people suffering from very little comparatively, shine with a good attitude? Let's dive a little deeper...

The same evening I read page 62, the "verse of the day" that popped up on my phone was from Galatians 5:13. I was so tickled that parts of this verse tied Frankl's words together with the kindness that I am in the midst of writing about. "For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters ... use your freedom to serve one another in love."

So what if we, as a nation, started to use this sort of self-less freedom in place of the selfish freedom that many think we deserve? Can you imagine the change that would come about in our country? Serving one another in love ... that would wrap all of the kindness together in my poem along with so many other things, wouldn't it?

But the truth is, we are born selfish. We think our perspectives are right, our thoughts are the right, and the way we do things is right. We choose to take in and listen to things that corroborate our views. We want to feel important and sometimes in obtaining this feeling we put others down, we judge, we gossip, and we hold a grudge. We feel our reactions and maybe even our unforgiveness is justified. We do not take time to listen and learn a new perspective. We are right. Period.

But instead of a period, what if we learn to put in an ampersand—that is the "and" symbol (&) to soften our righteous thoughts by adding in loving kindness? Might the "and" be what is missing today? The "and" is non-threatening to our pride and it allows for new ideas, new perspectives, the ability to extend grace, and believing the best of others.

Let's roll with this idea for a moment. The following are things I have heard on both sides of the masking/social distancing issue. I will address each side and give the "and" of kindness. Remember, we all have different opinions, but we can all be kind, or as Viktor Frankl would say, "we can choose our attitude". So, what if we extend what we say with an "and" rather than stopping with a period:

Everyone should wear masks & maybe there is a reason someone is not, I am not the judge, I can only control myself, be kind and keep my distance.

The facts are not clear if the masks work & they might so I will choose to wear one out of kindness.

That person should be following the arrows on the grocery store aisles

& maybe they didn't see them, I could point them out kindly or not say anything and just keep my distance.

I am mandated to wear a horrible mask, taking my rights away & I will choose to have a good attitude, smile with my eyes and maybe even send a little kind wink or two!

I don't agree with what {insert name} said on social media about masks & I am going to choose to hold my tongue.

What side of the fence are you on in the mask-debate? What is your perceived truth? Has there been doubt or confusion for you in any of this? Has that doubt or confusion allowed you to see this from both perspectives? Has it also allowed you to use some kind and grace-filled ampersands in place of periods?

In business as well as in my personal life, I have been a witness to such incredible negativity and hate surrounding all of this. It seems you can find supporting documentation in writing as well as videos that validate whatever stance each of us has taken. Do you see the incredible power the world-wide-web and media have? They have the power to back us up in our opinions as well as the power to fuel our tempers against those who don't agree with us. It's a recipe for pure disaster that has exacerbated the madness.

My friends, have you wondered, as I have, if the hate-virus is becoming more powerful and more destructive than the other virus? Might there be a cure for it? Are you doing your part to combat it with love and a good attitude? Or do you find yourself pulled in and taking part, at least to a degree, in the negativity?

It's so hard not to get roped into it if you are connected to any media source. Opinions bring up strong emotions, strong emotions tap into the way we habitually react; our reactions give way to seeking agreement and also judging others. It can be such a vicious circle and difficult to get out of if we don't purposefully do a new thing.

So what new thing can we do?

First, we can be mindful of "doing the right thing"—"doing the kind thing" in every circumstance. Before we act or react, we can filter it through kindness. We can also add ampersands to offer grace and love.

Second, we can have an attitude of gratitude for all that we have, despite the heaviness of what is going on in our world. If we need help thinking of ways to be grateful, we can read or learn about others and adopt their attitudes—if Frankl could be grateful for receiving peas at the bottom of watery soup, rather than just the watery soup, in the midst of his horrific circumstances, I think this might give us all a new perspective in being thankful for our incredible blessings! Can't we try, with all our might, to live by the Frankl-ism (I just made that up!) of choosing a good attitude?

Lastly, we can choose to live in a self-less sort of freedom by serving one another in love. We can foster that love by putting good things into our minds and even disconnecting from bad things—for everything that comes out of us is an overflow of what we have put in.

Perhaps kindness + a good attitude + serving in love might lead to a vaccine for the hate-virus. Someone has to develop this vaccine; I think it would be glorious if it started here. We could call it "Minnesota Nice". Who's ready to put on a new kind of smile and start vaccinating with me?



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