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ROWDY KINDNESS ?

Can you think of a time when someone was unexpectedly kind to you? Showing you compassion or concern that surprised or particularly touched you? Many people think twice about helping others, due to risk, selfishness, insecurity, etc. But the Bible says kindness is a mark of a Christian - and something we should freely extend to others, as well as allow ourselves to experience.

Jesus told a powerful story about this in Luke 10:25-37. A man on a well-traveled road was beaten, robbed, and left half dead. A priest came along, saw him, and passed by on the other side. Later, a priest's assistant did the same thing. However, a Samaritan had compassion on him. Disregarding potential trouble, he cared for his wounds and took him to an inn. The next day, he gave two days wages to the innkeeper, and promised to return and pay for any additional expenses.

This story challenges our "categories" of life, and the way we tend to line up people and things into neat little boxes. Actually, the original audience for this story found it shocking. Not so much that religious people ignored the plight of the victim, but who was featured as the hero.

It wouldn't have been cool for the priest to help. He would have become temporarily "unclean" by even touching the wounded man. And it would have been beneath his TALENT as a religious bigshot. Same for the assistant. It wouldn't have been convenient for him, either, to expend the TIME, since he was also on such important religious business. And how could either of them justify giving away their TREASURE to someone who was probably a wretched, undeserving person anyway.

The story undoubtedly made people uncomfortable. It was decidedly unCOOL to hold up a Samaritan as a good example for anything. Most respectable Jews of the day considered Samaritans to be polluted genetically and perverted religiously, people to be avoided. And what he did was personally inCONVENIENT. He helped someone he did not know, who could well have been a bad person himself. Who knows how one thing could lead to another.

Plus, it was very COSTLY, in terms of time, talent, and treasure. No doubt the good Samaritan had pressing business of his own down that road. Was he a trained paramedic? Would insurance cover the risk of giving aid? How would it put him out - using up his own hard-earned resources for someone he didn't even know? Where would it end? Why promise to return and cover whatever it cost?

Wow! And then Jesus asked, **"Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"** The obvious answer came reluctantly, **"the one who showed him mercy"** - carefully avoiding even saying the word Samaritan.

You see, Jesus told the story because an expert in Jewish law had given a good answer to his own question of Jesus - **"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."** And Jesus said to him, **"You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."**

Easier said than done! So, the legal expert tried to save face by asking Jesus, **"and who is my neighbor?"** Notice the way Jesus corrected his question to "HOW" not who. The real issue is how you are being a neighbor to anyone around you who needs help, regardless how you feel. Is it cool, convenient, costly? No matter, it's commanded, to give your time, treasure, or talent.

Willie Robertson of the Duck Dynasty clan calls this "rowdy" kindness in the "Faith Commander" Bible study resource. He means "rowdy" in the sense of being loud and obvious about being kind, and going outside accepted norms. **"If you have trouble caring about other people, ask God to help you see them the way Jesus does,"** says Robertson. **"A cool head can be useful in a crisis, but a cold heart is a sign that something inside is spiritually broken. Even if you don't feel moved to do good, do good anyway. Practice doing kind things even in small ways."**

Are there needy people around you? If you're not caring for them, how can you say you're loving God? Thankfully, Jesus Himself gives His followers His own spiritual power to do both!