

This is Lieutenant Roger McCort from The Salvation Army in Eureka with today's Community Comment.

Grace and peace to you today! People sometimes wonder why I say that so often, and today's a good day to talk about it, because it's about kindness.

We need more kindness in our community. Kindness matters. Kindness is different than just being nice. It's a choice made to act in a friendly, generous, and considerate manner. Being "nice" is more about a putting on a show. It's surface deep, with no lasting impact. Kindness can reach from one soul to another and leave attitudes changed, even where opinions might differ. Niceness can just be the front you put on to avoid conflict. You can be nice by talking to someone, but you can only be kind if you listen to them. You might stop being nice when someone does something rude or insensitive. You can be kind to someone even if they are pushing your buttons.

Kindness is what I think we should all be striving for, and it is in hopes of sharing and sparking kindness that I try to make a point of offering grace and peace to people whenever I communicate with them. By the way, it's not about trying to force people to respond to me kindly! I think of it more as a reminder and a promise.

First, it reminds me of who I want to be. I don't care if you're a pillar of the community or an addict in an alley trying to fix. In my worldview, all people are created by God, worthy of care, and I need to remember that by offering them all the same grace and peace I would like offered to me. Sometimes the people I work with, no matter where they fall on the spectrum, can act in ways that make it hard not to respond poorly, but this reminder helps me keep on track.

Second, when I offer someone grace and peace, that is my promise to them that I will be kind. You can't say, "Grace and peace to you," and then call them bad names and hit them with a crowbar. That would be wrong.

There is a little bit of a mental game going on here too. Research has shown that people tend to reflect or mimic the emotion and attitude you put out. So, if I can both verbalize and exhibit kindness, the people I interact with will probably begin to show the same to me. As a

result, our community becomes just a little bit kinder. And if every person I do this with turns around and offers kindness to another, we all become happier, healthier, and more empathetic.

That last bit has been proven out over thousands of years, including some pretty deep psychological studies done in the last decade. Kind connections – even doing something for a stranger – has positive effects on our mental and physical health. Dramatic effects, like being several points ahead of the rest on the happiness scale, having a significantly greater immunity to major diseases, and even sometimes getting a “helper’s high.” That’s when you get all warm and fuzzy from the lift of helping someone else out.

Sadly, some people have become so miserable and individualistic, that they can’t even receive kindness from others without trying to burst their balloon. When offered assistance or a word of encouragement or even a cup of coffee, they turn suspicious and mean. They might turn away, reject a compliment, or get angry instead of drinking the coffee. They almost seem to refuse to allow kindness out of fear that they might accidentally start being kind themselves.

Don’t you worry about that, though! If enough of us do this, we’ll change the world until they come around. Not sure about that? Well, why not come and talk to me about it? I promise, I’ll listen.

Grace and peace to you. This has been Lt. Roger McCort with today’s KINS Community Comment.