

## 10 Contagions for a Pandemic of Kindness

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:22–23)*

Christian friends, time to saint up. We're bringing an outbreak of kindness.

When all the world is fear, we need to lean on the perfect love that casts it out.

When all the world is anxiety, we need to be the hands and feet of the Prince of Peace.

When all the world thinks illness and death is the end, we need to embody hope for the journey to the other side of this.

And when people are fighting over toilet paper, *we need to incarnate kindness*. The only way to spiritually win this time of Covid-19 is to blast the world with the kindness we can only draw from the Holy Spirit.

Kindness is the antidote to every person wound and trapped in their anxiety. Let's be honest, there is not a lot we as individuals can do about a pandemic — our influence is too small, too local. And there is a lot we do not know. But we can be kind. We can forgive sharpness, be gentle with ignorance. We can listen and let people grieve. We can speak the truth with charity. But then we can be kind and offer help and hope.

Kindness is a nod to human dignity that the best public policy cannot quite match. We can make sure people are fed, have childcare, get unemployment, and get healthcare. And we should. But at the same time: we need to lead with kindness. We do this because individuals matter to God and to us. They are our brothers and sisters. If we can't do anything else, we can be kind.

After all, as the psalm sings, the Lord is kind and merciful. If he has been so kind to us, it should be natural to return the favor by offering kindness to our neighbors.

So what can we do in a brave new world of social distancing? Some of us are low-risk, others high-risk. What small, deliberate contagions of kindness can we do?

1. We can sidewalk chalk walkways where people are taking a walk for fresh air amid quarantine. "Hang in there, we'll get through this!" would make someone smile. So would jokes (like day counts).
2. We can call a cease fire on social media arguments of any sort. If it isn't encouraging, don't say it.
3. We can call neighbors and make sure they are OK, offer to do a grocery run if you are able. If you aren't, let people know you are available to talk.
4. If you have funds, you can donate to your local food shelf. You can also buy gift certificates from small businesses, which are taking a hit.
5. Offer to go on a sanity walk with someone. 6 feet apart.
6. Step into providing meals in your community. Brown bag breakfasts or lunches may be very welcome. Others are handing out frozen dinners from their door. Others are putting boxes in

their front yard marked “free pantry: take if you need, donate non-perishables if you wish” stocked with cans of essentials.

7. Tell your family and social network if they need prayers, you have a lot more time to pray and want to do that for them. If they are open to it, pray WITH them.
8. If you are the troubleshooting type, ask your church “who needs help here?” and invite yourself into helping that person find a solution.
9. Call nursing homes and hospitals and ask if you can send letters of friendship and hope there. Many have been closed to visitors and may welcome this. Ask if there is anything else to do.
10. Give blood if you can. Many places are running short.

(Yes, #11, why stop? Kindness is great!) Personally thank the health care workers and grocery store workers. They are putting in enormous hours and people are dumping their frustrations on them. A kind word can save the day for them.

You don't need to be a Christian to do these things. But living according to the fruits of the Holy Spirit is part of our birthright as baptized children of God. We are temples of the Holy Spirit. Let the Holy Spirit breathe in us and through us and bring God's kindness into the world today.

Colossians 3:12 is sounding pretty much like a recipe for life in our breakout month of COVID-19: *“Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”*

We put our clothes on every morning, one leg, one arm at a time. Suit up in kindness, Christian friends. It is the only path through this present darkness.

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