

Kindness – An Important Virtue

At the beginning of the semester, I did not own one textbook. I struggled to understand the material being taught in class as I was unable to do prior readings. As an accelerated student nursing, my schedule is very hectic and finding time to visit the library to read is often times difficult. A fellow classmate of mine, who happens to be from my country of origin, recognized my misfortune and the following week, she presented me with two textbooks. It is through her benevolence that I am now able to perform exceedingly well in my classes. This has led me to write about a very important virtue, kindness. This essay seeks to state my own experience in practicing kindness, the personal rewards I have gained from so doing, the importance of this virtue and the obstacles I have encountered in practicing it and how I overcame these obstacles.

Kindness by definition means “the quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate” or simply a nice act (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary). I have practiced kindness throughout my daily life. I have very little but I always seize every opportunity to help others in need. Since the start of the semester, I have been unemployed with no source of income but with two credit cards. From observation, I realized that a fellow classmate who is also in the accelerated program would go throughout the day without eating a meal. I empathized for her and made it my duty to bring her with me to the cafeteria and put both our lunches on the credit card. This is just one way I have showed generosity. Additionally, I have been lied to by persons I have encountered but again, I forgive as this is an act of kindness. Another way I have exercised kindness is by showing compassion. As a nursing student, in my clinical settings, I often encountered patients who have suffered loss or are suffering due to illnesses. I empathized with them by a touch on the shoulder and sometimes holding their hands while they cry. An empathetic response acknowledges the patient's feelings. Touching the patient on her shoulder

is a sign of caring. “The patient feels accepted and can deal with the feeling openly,” (Jarvis, pg. 2/2016). On the contrary, studies have indicate that touching can be interpreted as an expression of care or as a threat (Arnold and Boggs 2011). The patient responded positively to the touch. These are just some of the ways I have demonstrated the virtue of kindness.

By practicing kindness, I am often being referred to as the Good Samaritan. I find helping others especially those in need to be self-fulfilling and rewarding. The King James Version of the Bible in Proverbs 11 verses 17 to 19 clearly states that “kindness is rewarded...meanness gets you nowhere...” As a spiritual being, I feel very good and happy inside when I help others. I have very little but I give much. I have never received trophies for being generous and I am not being kind for recognition. I do it out of love, from the bottom of my heart to help others. This kindness sometimes takes the form of a smile which has the power to change someone’s world. Mother Teresa said it best, “I will never understand all the good that a simple smile can accomplish” (Goodreads.com). From practicing kindness, I have gained blessings from God. My love for self and others have grown and I am sowing seeds of kindness which one day I may reap. An online article entitled, “4 Reasons Why Being Kind Is Good For You” states, that those who give usually receive, there is a positive correlation between kindness and happiness, as well as wellbeing. The article made reference to a research study that proved that kindness promotes the release of dopamine in the brain that makes individuals feel good. Overall, the most noteworthy personal reward I have gained from practicing kindness is blessings from God.

Having mentioned my experiences and personal rewards gained from practicing kindness, I will now state why this virtue is an important one to practice in my life. As a child, I grew up in the poverty stricken area of rural St. Catherine in Jamaica. My mother a single of three struggled to support us financially. It was the kindness of a group called “Food for Poor”

that enabled our survival. The vision for this organization is “Food for the Poor is God's instrument to help the materially poor and to renew the poor in spirit” (<http://www.foodforthepoorja.org/about.php>). This charitable organization provided us with food and clothing. I am at this stage in life because of the kindness extended to my family and me by this charitable organization as well as through the kindness others have showed me. As such, I deemed kindness to be a very important virtue as it has the power to change lives for the better. Kindness is why I am here at Lehman College and since the kindness of others have taken me this far, I intend to continue the cycle and like the charitable group back in Jamaica, I will make it my duty to help those I encounter who are in need. It is only fair that I have chosen kindness as the most important virtue to practice in my life because my life is driven through the benevolence of others and so I mirror this kindness.

In practicing kindness, the obstacles I have encountered is that often times, I give too much or give it all and left myself in need. I strive to overcome this obstacle by not giving everything but some. Another obstacle I was faced with was taking on the assignments of my peers and then I would be rushing to complete mine in order to meet the deadline. I have learned not to take on their assignments, but to do mine first and assist my peers in any they may have requested help. Overall, my main obstacle, especially here at Lehman College is not being able to help all the students I encounter who do not have money to buy their daily lunch. I have witnessed a fellow student eating from the garbage bin. To overcome this problem I intend to arrange a meeting with the Vice President of Student Affairs to discuss the possible distribution of \$5 lunch vouchers to be used at the cafeteria. Regardless of the obstacles I am facing in being kind, these will not deter me as I will continue to provide kindness.

In concluding, of all the virtues, I deemed kindness to be very important. I am in the accelerated nursing program through the kindness I have received from others. Though I do not have much to give, I will continue to help those in need whether through a smile, money or empathy. I anticipate that this scholarship committee will be benevolent and provide me with this scholarship which will aid tremendously in offsetting my tuition balance. The remainder of the money I will donate to the Student Affairs Department towards a new initiative of giving lunch vouchers to needy students.

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