READY TO USE MENTORING

# The kindness experiment

Recently I was at a cafe in a busy London exhibition centre. As the person in front of me took her drink she absent-mindedly said to the barista: “Ooh, I love your nails!” She turned and walked away but, as I stood waiting, I could see clearly what had occurred. The barista stood staring into space, beaming from ear to ear. That comment had totally made her day. Have you seen the power of affirmative words? Do you know (*really* know) how massive it is to tell young people the positive, kind and encouraging truths you see in them? (Thankfully I did eventually get my coffee fix!)

This is one of those things that seems too obvious to talk about, yet it needs to be said and we need to practise doing it. Sometimes we talk about random acts of kindness, but it can often feel like an initiative or project. It needs to be honest and genuine, from the real heart of us…in kindness and truth. Can it be done as a habit rather than virtue signalling or some kind of strange chore? Can you learn to be mindful and encouraging of others, or is it just a character trait of certain people?

The Bible says all good things come from God (James 1:17). By identifying and calling out good things in the people around us, do we not only encourage those people but also recognise God in them? Potentially, this is a step towards recognising the work of the Holy Spirit in people which in turn can help us to join in with God in bringing healing, love and freedom. And how does it affect us too when we do it?

## With your mentee

Discuss the impact of kindness, forming a kindness habit or having to learn to be kind with your mentee. What might stop you? Insecurity? ‘Britishness’? Fear of rejection or embarrassment? How do other things affect your ability to do this – tiredness, stress, how happy or secure you feel yourself?

Task your mentee over the next week to purposefully tell people affirming things as much as possible. Vocalise when they see people acting, looking or speaking positively. No filter. If you think it, say it! Ask them to intentionally look out for beauty in the world and the things they aspire to and admire, and call them out – for their own good, but also to see what happens!

They should try to do it for a week (hopefully more) and record in a notebook what they do. They should then report back to you the reactions they received, how it affected them personally and anything else they noticed as a result.

Chat through what sort of things can you say that will affirm and edify people – things that they may not often hear but are true, and will solidify suspicions they may already have about what they are good at, and that they have value! What effect might these words have on people, and why? Why is it so powerful? Look out for: wisdom, listening skills, effort, talent, compassion, bravery.

Perhaps you could turn your summary conversation into a prayer list for the people you have encouraged in the week.

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