

KINDNESS

Showing others they are valuable by how you treat them

Love Your Enemies

Matthew 5:43-48

MEMORY VERSE | Luke 6:31

Sam Tran liked everything about the building his family lived in from the tall, leafy oak tree just outside his window to the community garden on the roof.

He liked everything, that is, except for his neighbor, Mr. Angston, who didn't seem to like anything—especially not Sam's favorite hip-hop music. But instead of asking Sam to turn it down, Mr. Angston just turned his own classical music up—louder and louder and louder until Bach harpsichord notes seemed to pound through the walls.

Anytime Sam's mom cooked curry, Mr. Angston would respond by spraying a whole bottle of Febreze in the hall outside their door.

And one day, when Sam propped the hall door open so he could bring up a load of groceries for his mom, Mr. Angston shut and locked it in the two minutes it took Sam to fetch them from the car.

"Seriously?" Sam groaned. He gritted his teeth as he faced the locked door and tried to shift the heavy bags in both hands. Through the window, he saw Mr. Angston's bald head disappear back inside his door.

The bags dug into Sam's hands, but there was nowhere to place them at the top of the narrow stairs. He was just about to drop them when he heard footsteps and someone called out, "Hold your horses, I got it!"

Tia Lakely, the chipper dog walker who lived at the end of the hall, darted past him with a golden doodle on the leash and opened the door.

“Thank you!” Sam gasped. He staggered through the door and dropped the groceries in front of his own apartment.

Tia shook her head. “Weird. Hall door’s never locked . . .”

Sam scratched the dog’s head. “I had it propped open, but while I was outside, Mr. Angston . . .”

He trailed off. They both turned to stare at Mr. Angston’s door, blank except for the number 205. A dead geranium sat in a plastic pot right beside it.

Tia sighed. “Ah. Of course, he shut it.”

***“He makes me so mad,”
Sam sputtered. “I’m ready
to glue his mailbox shut.”***

“He never even says anything!” Sam exploded. “Just does mean stuff and disappears.”

“Never seen him have company,” mused Tia.

“He makes me so mad,” Sam sputtered. “I’m ready to glue his mailbox shut. Or slip a snake under his door or something.”

The golden doodle barked, and Tia pushed him down to a sit. “I get it, Sam. Mr. Angston probably does deserve a snake in his slippers. But you really think that would help?”

“It would sure make me feel better!” Sam huffed.

"Maybe," admitted Tia. "But you start with a snake and then he sneaks a skunk in your place and you fire back and we end up with a water buffalo in the hall or something."

"You got a better idea?" Sam asked.

"Than a water buffalo?"

"No! What to do about Mr. Crabby Angston."

Tia considered a moment. "Well . . . something nice, maybe," she suggested. "You gotta turn things upside down. Love your enemies and all that."

"Hold it, what?" Sam gaped at her.

"It's a Jesus thing," Tia said, "He tells people, '*Love your enemies [and] pray for those who hurt you.*'"

"And that'll make the ogre of #205 magically better, will it?" asked Sam, skeptical.

Tia shrugged. "Maybe not. But I bet it'll change you."

Sam shook his head and lugged the groceries inside, where his mom was making dinner. What Tia had suggested was crazy, but he couldn't get it out of his mind.

Finally he asked his mom, "Do we still have any of those cinnamon ginger cookies you made?"

"There's an extra dozen in the pantry," she told him, pointing. "Why?"

"I thought maybe Mr. Angston would like them," Sam said.

His mom's eyebrows both popped up, but she smiled. "I've got a tin you can put them in," she said.

A short time later, Sam left the cookies outside Mr. Angston's door.

That evening, he climbed up to the roof garden and checked out the herb bed he'd helped his dad plant and weed. Carefully, he transplanted some of the biggest, happiest basil and spearmint plants into a large terra cotta pot. Then he lugged it down three flights of stairs and replaced Mr. Angston's dead geranium with the perky herbs.

The next day at the dollar store, Sam noticed a bin full of classical music CDs. He found one featuring Bach's Brandenburg Concertos. "I bet Mr. Angston plays CDs!" he decided. So he bought the disc and snuck it into Mr. Angston's mailbox.

As Sam climbed the stairs later, he realized he wasn't as tense as usual. Instead of bracing himself for what Mr. Angston might do next, he found himself imagining more creative—and sneaky—ways to do something nice for his neighbor.



**“Hey!”
Sam exclaimed.
“He’s playing that CD!”**

When Sam opened the stair door and stepped into the hallway, he could hear classical music drifting from Mr. Angston's apartment. "Hey!" Sam exclaimed. "He's playing that CD!"

As he approached Mr. Angston's door, he noticed a few sprigs of the spearmint in the planter had been picked. Just as he passed, the door creaked open and Mr. Angston peered out. He waved a plastic CD case, glowering.

"Boy! You know anything about this?" he demanded.

Sam stepped back. "I . . . well, I could tell you like Bach."

Mr. Angston frowned. “Your mama bake those cookies?”

“Yeah . . .”

Mr. Angston disappeared for a moment and popped back out, holding the tin. He handed it to Sam.

“Here,” he barked, and turned back inside. Right before Mr. Angston shut the door, though, Sam thought he saw the hint of a smile. Shaking his head, he opened the tin. The cookies were gone— replaced by three plastic-wrapped Twinkies.

Sam grinned. Maybe it wasn’t much, but coming from Mr. Angston, three Twinkies seemed like a small miracle.



Let's
Talk!

Let's be honest—it's usually not hard to be kind to the people who are kind to you.

Someone smiles, you smile back. They get you a nice birthday present, you give one on their birthday. But it comes a lot less naturally to be kind to people who aren't kind to you in the first place. Share with each other if there is someone in your life who is often unkind (to you or to others). How do you think that person/those people might respond if you did something kind for them? Together, brainstorm some ways that you could show kindness to someone who is unkind, and pick one to do this week. Together, ask God to help you have the courage and creativity to be kind to those who aren't kind to you.