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WHAT CALVIN TAUGHT ME

ABOUT KINDNESS

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Once while on a road trip, I got up in the morning to find that my car would start but would not idle – every time I stopped revving the engine, it died. As my knowledge of cars stops at checking and changing the oil, I knew there wasn't a thing I could do about it but call for help. I was at a state park in western Oklahoma at the time. As I walked to the ranger's station, I dreaded the inevitable towing and repair bill which I was sure would be astronomical given both my location and my out of state tags.

The ranger kindly let me use his phone and phonebook, but warned me, "Just don't call Calvin's. I wouldn't take a sick dog to Calvin's." This seemed like an easy enough task – there wasn't a towing company listed called "Calvin's." I called a couple of places, and the second one agreed to come and tow my car for repair.

The tow truck driver arrived, had a look at the car, and said that it would have to be towed. He told me to go ahead and get in the cab and he would hook up the car. I got into the cab, and noticed the dreaded words on his clipboard – "Tow to Calvin's." My heart began to race. As he climbed into the cab, I was just about to protest our destination when I happened to look at his shirt. He was wearing one of those sown on name tags that mechanics tend to wear. I could not believe my eyes – it was Calvin!

For the next thirty minutes, I did everything I possibly could to show Calvin that I was a likable guy who was genuinely interested in him. I listened with rapt attention to every answer he gave to my many questions about his family, life, career, inserting compliments and kind words wherever I could squeeze them in. As we pulled into Calvin's, a wrecker yard in the middle of nowhere, I said silent prayers and got out of the cab.

Before Calvin could get to my car, a man pulled up with his friend to inspect his SUV that had been towed there a couple of days ago. The man had been in an accident, and while his SUV might not have been drivable again (the front axle was broken), it was almost brand

new and no doubt had many valuable parts – the engine looked undamaged, and it had new tires. As Calvin explained the damage, he concluded by saying, “With the towing and storage fees, you’re better off just giving it to me.” I had never heard a mechanic say that before. My heart sank and I wondered if that’s how my dealings with Calvin would end.

Calvin began to have a look at my car, hooking it up to the computer to see what was going on. He stated that it was hard to tell from the readout what the problem was – it could be anything. He then said, “Hold on a sec,” and took a wrench out of his toolset. After a couple of quick taps on a small cylinder mounted above the engine, he climbed into the car and the unbelievable happened – the car started up like it had never had a problem. Apparently a piece of carbon had gotten lodged at a critical point and needed only to be shaken loose. Calvin charged me fifty dollars for the time and towing and sent me on my more than merry way. It was the happiest I’d ever been to part with fifty dollars.

While I have no way of knowing, I attribute the outcome of this situation both to the grace of God and to my attitude and actions during that ride over to Calvin’s. Had I been surly or silent, I have little doubt the outcome would have been different. Upon reflection, I’m more than a little ashamed to admit that the things I did only for Calvin’s sake are the things that I should always be doing for Christ’s sake; the way I responded out of desperation is the way commanded by Inspiration.

What if we always seasoned our speech with salt (Colossians 4:6)? What if we were always more concerned with others interests than our own (Philippians 2:4)? What if we learned to do all things (or, as is often the case, get through all things) without murmuring and complaining (Philippians 2:14)? What if we would truly “put on... kindness” as we are commanded (Colossians 3:12)? Not only might our outcomes with the Calvin’s of this world be improved, it might just open a door to save a soul. At the very least, I’m sure we would always find that kindness truly pays.