

INTRO: Let's Light the World (The Bonner family)

Guess what I decided. I decided I have exactly enough time to record a podcast this week. And I want to begin by thanking YOU for listening. I've missed this and YOU.

[Speak Pipe message] Kalie Otten

Last week I left home for an appointment. I left a few minutes late, so as I drove out of my neighborhood I contemplated the 3 different routes that I could take to arrive at my destination. This was early in the morning so I intentionally thought through traffic flow and the number of stop lights, etc.. I wanted to take the route that would most likely be less traveled and therefore experience less congestion or unexpected problems. I chose the backroad route, where there is a new road and very few stops. All was well ... until I just after the Y in the road that fully committed me to this route I noticed a large, slower-moving vehicle about 4 cars ahead. One by the one the 4 other cars turned off the road until I was directly behind this BIG rig with the broad and bright gold "Oversize Load" banner. Ugh. Now, I was winding up and over the hill between my house and my destination behind this beast and the it was moving slower and slower.

You know the feeling right?

I felt the frustration rise in my chest and almost said out loud, "really, this has to be happening right now? I have 7 minutes to get where I'm going and I am driving 22 miles an hour!" So I just took several deep breaths and succumbed, but then, I had this thought.

What if people had signs (that we could read) that indicated the nature of a load there were silently carrying? That would be crazy right? I believe we all carry loads—from time to time—and certainly some more and heavier than others. Life is pretty good at piling on STUFF. But what IF all of a sudden we could truly see from day to day which of our friends, co-workers, neighbors—even family members were carrying loads. Picture one of those big ribbon sashes that a pageant winner might wear, that says maybe, "Miss Washington" or maybe "Homecoming King" in big gold letters diagonally across the body? What IF ... you could all of a sudden see a sash on every person you encounter—noting their personal struggles or mental/emotional state. How many of those sashes, due to urgency would be bright gold and would say, **Oversize Load**. Would we greet or interact differently these people? Would we see through a forced smile or disingenuous "I'm fine" in response to our fly by, "How are you?"

I bet we would be shocked at how many people are moving through life with an oversized load. Especially this time of year. If you are listening to this episode on

the day it's published, then it's Thanksgiving in the US ... Happy Thanksgiving (by the way!) A couple of weeks ago I was asked to participate with an etiquette class for girls at church. Such a FUN idea—and honestly, I relished the chance to review the purposes and expectations for Thanksgiving—for people with manners. We talked about putting your napkin in your lap, about cutting your food with the fork and the knife, about keeping the salt and pepper together (when you pass them). Perhaps you know, when passing the butter to not put it directly on your roll, but did you know you ought to butter your roll one bite at a time—it's true. Of course your phone should be on silent, but you can take a picture of your food—IF—you ask everyone at the table first.

I found one source that was written with teens in mind and I loved this last bit of advice ...

Introduce yourself to everyone you don't know. Start conversations by sharing how you know the host. Offer to refill drinks, ask to help in the kitchen while the hostess is cooking and after dinner while she's cleaning up. Entertain the kids. Find a quiet/shy person in the room and try striking up a conversation. Pay attention to the oldest folks and make them feel like the treasures they are.

**Be nice. Be helpful. Be interested.**

That's great advice, don't you think? **Be nice. Be helpful. Be interested.**

I also just finished a 10-week small group class through church focused on emotional resilience and gaining strength in The Lord. I've been meeting with 8 other people each Sunday evening—to learn and discuss together. Near the end, one of our lessons was on learning how to strengthen others, even when and while we might be struggling—I think this was my favorite session and discussion.

During the last week of class, we were asked if anyone knew someone that could benefit from some service. One of the men in the group works at local urgent care centers and he reminded us about the stress that fellow employees are under during this time of pandemic. So, we collected items for baskets and delivered them on Monday to these three urgent care locations. We wrote notes of course, but we also recorded a short video message and linked it to a QR code so that employees could watch! I'll put that code in the show notes.

I have a friend who has always been an example to me of incredible kindness and generosity. She is in the midst of a pretty big trial and guess what she just did? She reached out via text to me—and to a few others—asking if we'd like to join her in creating a kindness chain--out of paper—and to add a new strip of

paper each day as we look for and do a RAK each day. That's amazing. Here she is with a big (hidden) Oversize Load sign and she is focused outward, looking for ways to brighten someone's day.

A week or so ago I traveled to California and was with my friend, Diane who is a therapist. We walked along the beach and I knew she had just come from a full morning of counseling, so I asked, *"Tell me--in general terms—about one of your clients this morning and how you helped them. Walk me through one of your sessions."* Diane thoughtfully replied, I don't help my clients. I listen to my clients and invite them get curious about their circumstances so that they can help themselves. I validate their pain, creating space for them to reveal and discover their own answers and solutions. Wow!!

I loved this quote from Reyna Aburto "Even if we do not know how to relate to what others are going through, validating that their pain is real can be an important first step in finding understanding and healing. We can shift into a lower gear—away from problem solving and into simple validation with statements like, "You feel disrespected—or anxious, hopeless, worthless, angry (fill in the blank). It is HARD to feel that way!" We can express care and concern simply by validating. **I LOVE that.**

**This past week, one of the Brian Andreas quotes that landed in my inbox was this one ...**

"There is this: Getting up each day and going towards love & kindness & other things that take the hurt away & and if it's not always easier to go that that, that's never been enough of a reason for me to stop."

I love this time of year. It's busy for sure—but it's also FUN and full of opportunity for loving and lifting. Back in 2016, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints initiated a December kindness campaign called **Light the World**. It's my FAVORITE. It's a global effort to encourage people to serve others during the Christmas season—materials are available in 33 languages. So cool.

David A Bednar explained, "The whole purpose of this initiative is to celebrate and share the Light of Christ. What we hope people will do is not simply think about the Savior during this Christmas season, or even just learn more about Him. **What we hope is that they will come to know Him by doing what He did.**"

I'm going to do Light the World again this year AND I'm going to do it with two other people—but for now those people are a secret. I can't tell you just yet, but

I will. You're probably gonna want to follow along on instagram, because it's going to be LOTS of light-filled and light hearted FUN.

AND, I hope you'll consider doing Light the World with me. All the details and links and a calendar are in the show notes for this episode. AND here's why ... our world really needs more intentional LIGHT right now. Don't you think?

I was thinking about the new STAR that first appeared when Christ was born, and then I was thinking about stars in general and that made me think of how magnificent the night sky is. I think one reason the night sky is so amazing is because of how vast it is—ALL those stars—billions of them. And that made me wonder about constellations ... I looked up the definition of constellation.

*An easily recognized group of stars that appear to be located close together in the sky and that form a picture if lines connecting them are imagined.*

Ok, so stay with me, because this probably a half-baked analogy, but what if during December we can be like a star (just a tiny one) in the vast sky and what if with other tiny stars we form a constellation—what if we become the dots that can be connected to create more kindness in our sphere of influence— If we each do our part in small and simple ways, we can be an easily recognized group of stars (get it?) to help others imagine a better world—we can form a kindness constellation—where fewer people will experience loads that are oversized.