

Reprinted from the Christian Science Sentinel, October 20, 1997.
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Dealing with rude people By Elise L. Moore

The restaurant was particularly busy. People were bunched at the door, waiting to be seated. The waiters were working quickly and efficiently, giving each patron a smile or pleasant word. As I started toward the register to pay my bill, a waiter friend intercepted me. “What do you do when people are rude?” he asked.

Apparently one group of people had been most unpleasant. He explained that he would never accept such treatment without comment in his personal life, but in his professional capacity he felt he shouldn't react. Yet the injustice and verbal abuse rankled.

Unfortunately, aggressive, self-centered behavior is not uncommon. For almost two decades self-help books have been touting militant self-promotion as the way to success. Self-assertion is equated with strength of character and victory. Humility is associated with passivity and failure.

When someone is confronted by obnoxious behavior, how can he or she maintain a Christlike attitude without forfeiting personal integrity? One way is through clarifying his or her view of God.

The Bible says that “God is love” (I John 4:8). Not that He is simply loving, but rather Love itself. God is also divine Principle, the source and essence of infinite power and authority. As the Scriptures say, “For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord; and there is none else” (Isa. 45:18). God is the infinite creative power and the ultimate authority, and that authority is Love. So then, Love, not aggression, is the way to success.

Divine Love is the powerful presence of God. Human assertiveness is a pale substitute, attempting to simulate divine power without God's support of it.

Divine Love is expressed by individuals through unselfed love in daily deeds. The Scriptures instruct, “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us” (I John 4:12). What a beautiful idea, that as we express kindness and mercy, we are perfecting our expression of God. Every moment that we are able to feel compassion, to be patient, gentle, understanding, able not to react, is a moment in which we are perfecting our love. In one sense this is the essence of the Christian experience. Utilizing the spiritual qualities that God gives us brings the divine power to bear in daily life.

Divine Love is not limited. Expressing compassion and patience toward others does not use up love. It's not like a sandwich-once eaten, gone! Manifesting mercy and kindness causes them to develop in our lives until we feel increasingly full of love. Like the example of the loaves and fish, the blessings of love *multiply* through use until all are fed, with plenty left over.

Divine Love does not intend for us to be a target for persecution or a victim of abuse. Love manifests the strength of divine Principle. Principle is expressed through divine order, law, and righteous government. No illegitimate, immoral, or harmful activity is experienced by divine Principle. Therefore, standing, firm against persecution and immorality is actually manifesting Love. It brings the peace that is rooted in Principle rather than a superficial peace based on capitulation.

Divine Love and Principle are one in action and expression. Just as God is Father-Mother, so He is Principle, Love. Man, as the expression of God, manifests this blending of mercy and might. *Science and Health* explains the unity of Principle and Love in this way: “The starting-point of divine Science is that God, Spirit, is All-in-all, and that there is no other might nor Mind,-that God is Love, and therefore He is divine Principle” (p. 275).

So how does one handle rudeness? By turning first to God as the governing Principle, Love. Acknowledging divine Love as the supreme power, we can refuse to respond to the hot air of rudeness, which has no more ability to move us than wind can move a sailboat that does not put up a sail.

The next step is to realize each individual's actual, spiritual identity. God's man is inherently unselfish, loving, merciful, just. Maintaining in our thought the Christlike qualities of man as the truth concerning each individual helps us see through the facade of rudeness to that real identity. I've found it very helpful to know that all anyone can truly hear or see of me is my expression of the Christ. And all I can truly hear or know of others is their expression of the Christ. This has erased much pain and anguish from misunderstandings, mistakes, or confrontational situations, and has enabled me to remain undisturbed in the face of rude behavior.