

## Dealing with rude customers

By Elise L. Moore, C.S.

Appearing suddenly at my side, a waiter friend said, “I have an article topic for you.” The restaurant was crowded. 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.

“What do you do when people are rude?” Apparently one table of people had been most unpleasant. He explained that he would never accept such treatment from someone in his personal life, but in his professional capacity of serving he felt the responsibility to not react. But the experience of being verbally abused rankled.

It’s wonderful when friends are warm and strangers are pleasant. It brings a smile to one’s face and comfort to the heart. Warm approval and affection nurture us, encourage us to go forward, support us when we are struggling. The atmosphere of love is the atmosphere of the Christ. It is a blessing that multiplies like the loaves and the fishes until all are fed with plenty left over.

Love is not limited. Expressing compassion, patience, and kindness with one person does not use up love. It’s not like a sandwich—once eaten, it’s gone. When we manifest mercy and kindness, they grow with us until our lives feel full of love. Not so much because we are receiving it, but because we are living it.

The Bible tells us that God is Love. (I John 4:8) Not just loving, but Love itself. God, Love is expressed by unselfed love in daily deeds. As the Scriptures say, “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 in us the expression of God as Love! Every moment that we are able to feel compassion, be patient, gentle, understanding, not react is a moment in which we are perfecting love. In

one sense, this is the essence of the Christian experience, letting out and utilizing the spiritual qualities which God has given us.

So what about the rude and obnoxious customers? If we can approach this spiritually, such situations can act like a diving board enabling us to spring even higher in our path Spiritward. When we manage to express spiritual qualities to those doing the opposite, it promotes our growth in grace. Just as competition brings out increased ability and skill in the athlete, so unpleasant situations can serve as opportunities to practice our spirituality under less than ideal circumstances. We are reaffirming our real nature as loving, merciful and good.

The goal is that no one can tempt us to be angry, upset, or cause us to act contrary to our normal good nature. Standing steadfast in our plan to perfect love, obnoxious customers can be likened to the three temptations that came to Jesus just before he embarked on his healing and saving ministry.  
(Matthew 4:1-11)

Each thought tempted him to deny that he was God's Son. Jesus saw these suggestions as tricks tempting him to deny his Christliness or God's goodness, but he was not fooled. Instead of upsetting him, the experience served to strengthen him. Later, when others scoffed or criticized, he was unfazed. Jesus was so certain of his identity as Christ, as manifesting God's love that he was unaffected by others' criticism.

In my role as a Christian Science practitioner, healing others through prayer and the power of God alone, I've had my share of rudeness and criticism. I think of two passages. One is Luke 10:9-11, "And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." The part that I especially like is ending with a blessing. Leaving in our thought a blessing toward the individual that the kingdom of God is come even to them.

Similar to this passage is a prayer which Mrs. Eddy, the founder of the Christian Science church used daily, “God bless my enemies; make them Thy friends; give them to know the joy and the peace of love.” (The First Church of Christ Scientist and Miscellany) Instead of rankling at injustice and unfair criticism, we can take the opportunity to affirm our spiritual nature and mentally bless others. This will strengthen and bless us, and cannot help but bless them.

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