

## THANK YOU FOR ASKING

Something happened at the grocery store recently that made me pause and think. As I was loading my groceries onto the counter, the cashier asked me how I was doing. I appreciated that she asked me this, so I in turn asked her how her day was going. It seemed at first that I caught her off guard by asking. She said to me, "Thank you so much for asking. It means a lot to me that you asked!"

Usually when I respond in kind like this, the person responds, "Oh, I am good." In this case, I sensed a deeper level of gratitude and appreciation from this cashier that I took the time to ask. Seeing this response from her made me begin to wonder if any other customer had taken the time to do the same for her that day. I imagine during the course of her shift she probably had one hundred or more customers come through her lane. In talking to other cashiers at this same store I know they have found customers angrier and more impatient to deal with during this pandemic. One cashier I know of actually took four months off work because she found it too hard emotionally to keep dealing with customer's anger.

This type of response is not unique to those people who work at grocery stores. My wife Nadine was at Staples last week to pick up some items she ordered. When Nadine arrived the employee she was dealing with said the order was not ready as promised. Nadine did not get mad, and said she understood how busy it must be for them right now. This employee thanked Nadine and said, "You are the only person all day who has been this kind to me. You would not believe how horrible people have been toward me these last few hours."

I imagine this is happening more often than we realize to those who are working in retail and stores. Was this cashier at the grocery store that day having these experiences with the customers she had dealt with before me? I imagine she asked each one how their day was just like me. The fact she seemed so caught off guard that I took the time to ask how her day was going made me wonder if few or any customers prior to me did this. It is a shame if this is what occurred, but it would not surprise me either.

The reason why I say this is I have noticed this trend more and more lately when I ask others how they are doing. Just like the cashier, I always try to make the effort to ask other people this question when I see them, regardless of whether that person is a family member, close friend, acquaintance, or a complete stranger. I find most people very appreciative when I do so. I listen carefully when they tell me how things are going for them. I take note of certain things they say in order to ask further questions or put it in my memory bank to ask them the next time I might see them. Most people will thank me for asking.

What I have found however is rarely do people reciprocate in kind and ask me the same. This is not a complaint on my part but just an observation. It has become so rare for me that sometimes I am caught off guard when I am asked. I was reminded of this at a basketball practice recently. For the first five minutes at every practice, I let my players shoot at the baskets while they chat with their fellow teammates. I always go around to each of my players during this time and ask how they are doing. On this one day, after telling me how she was doing this player caught me off guard by asking me how my day was going. I was stunned when she asked, and it took me a few seconds to respond.

I do not think it is just me or the cashier at the grocery store who rarely gets asked in return how they are doing. Perhaps you have noticed the same tendency that I have. It can be frustrating at times to show care to somebody by asking, but not receive it back in turn. This frustration might lead some people to consider no longer showing kindness in this manner if nobody is going to do the same for them. What we need to remember in those moments of frustration is to **never let our feelings stop us from continuing to do this kind thing for others**. In fact, Jesus encourages us to reach out and show this kind of care. In **Matthew 25: 34-40**, Jesus talks about the final judgement that will happen when He returns one day. One of the ***criteria for entering the Kingdom of Heaven*** will not only be our love and belief in Him, but also how we show this in our care and compassion for others. Here is what Jesus says:

**For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me (Matthew 25:35-36).**

These are all acts of care and compassion toward others that Jesus describes here. They are acts of care we can do everyday regardless of our wealth, our education, our status, or whatever. Taking time to ask others how they are doing I believe would fall into this category. Jesus did not say we should only do these things if others do them for us first. Nor does He give us permission to stop doing these kind deeds if they are not reciprocated. Our love for the Lord is reflected in how we show care and compassion toward others. We might be frustrated at the time that we have been showing care toward others but receiving nothing back in return. We are receiving something back in return by the fact Jesus takes notice and is smiling when we do these things.

This should be **our incentive and motivation** to never let frustration or disappointment stop us from **showing care** even in the simplest of ways. How hard is it for us to ask a cashier or anyone else how they are doing? Those words alone may just uplift their spirit and souls in a way that reminds them of the love of God. If we have been doing this all along, let's make sure we never let a bit of disappointment stop us from doing so. If this has not been our tendency, then let's make it **a resolution this new year** to start taking the time to show care by asking others how they are doing. This simple and kind gesture will go a long way in uplifting another person's day. A cashier at the grocery store sure appreciated it. An employee at Staples appreciated a little bit of kindness. So too did this basketball coach when one of my players took the time to do the same. What a simple and kind thing we can do in order to make a difference in somebody's day.

**Keep Safe and God Bless**

**Pastor Dean**