

Please and thank you still go a long way

Written by Marcia Humphrey
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About four Sundays ago, my husband and I decided that we would take our three children to the downtown Minneapolis public library after church. After circling the block a couple times we finally found a free parking space --my husband will drive around forever to avoid paying for parking! Because it was such a blustery day, we broke into a light jog to get into the building as quickly as possible. I was the first to approach one of the four glass doors and was about to open it. Just inside of the next door, stood a man-apparently struggling just a bit-trying to get the door open for me.

Noticing his kind gesture, I released my grip on the door handle and let him hold the door open for me. While entering I looked him squarely in the eyes, and with a smile on my face, and in my voice, I said, "Thank you so much, sir!" He responded something like, "You are very welcome, Miss Lady!" In that very brief exchange, two people made each other feel valued. (Note: Cost of good manners-free)

Now, let's contrast that with what happened next. My three children come busting through the door and that same gentleman offered them the courtesy he had extended to their mama.

After the first child entered, without acknowledging his kindness, I looked at her and said, "Thank you, sir!" (my way of reminding my child to express gratitude.) She responded promptly, but somewhat dryly (not the way I trained her). Well I'll be doggone if my second daughter didn't roll through that same door, held open by the same gentleman, without uttering a word of thanks. "Thank you, sir!" I snapped at her. With an absent-minded tone, she promptly responded.

The rest gets fuzzy in my mind, but all I know is that suddenly, as I was telling my children to turn around, make eye contact, and then say "thank you" the gentleman became upset. He began, "Oh no, don't bother saying thank you, because they do that to me all the time!" When I attempted to have the children repeat themselves with eye contact and tall voices, the man refused them the opportunity. "Go ahead on, I am used to that, don't bother!" he repeated, as he used his hands to shoo us away.

Feeling ashamed of my girls' behavior and also sensing that we should probably not pursue this further, I took my kids on into the library. They immediately (and quietly) received a scolding for not properly acknowledging the man or clearly expressing gratitude for his simple kindness. You

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never know how a few words-or lack of words-can affect another human being. Not only do we need to teach our children the value of good manners and respect, we also need to remember its value.

Common courtesy goes a long way in every situation, whether resolving conflicts, interviewing, meeting new people, or just being a bright spot in another's (otherwise rough) day.

Please say, "Please (And Thank You)"

Do: Teach your child the importance of expressing appreciation when others are kind to them-whether in small ways or big ways.

Don't: Allow the kids to say, "Give me that!"

Phone Manners

Do: Train your kids to say, "Hello Ms. or Mr.____. This is____. May I please speak to____?"

Don't just say: "Is____there? Or Can I speak to____?"

Meeting New People

Do: Train your children to make eye contact, say hello by name, and shake hands when appropriate, during introductions to adults.

Don't: Allow your kids to ignore adults (or anyone) when being spoken to.

Our family highly values consideration and courteous behavior. In fact, the most consistent comment that we hear from others about all three of our babies is that they have really good manners. Their brains must have frozen that Sunday during that dash into the library! Training our children to be conscientious and caring members of society takes persistence. Of course, they will not always get it right (I know I don't).

However practice creates excellence (not perfection). There is a Bible verse that states it plainly: Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it! Don't let the looks of a person determine how you will treat him. Let your interaction with your brothers and sisters reflect the respect due them and due our Creator. Courtesy never, never goes out of style. So friend, let your inner-style-light shine and Enjoy the results!

P.S.

To the Kind Sir at the library who held the door for us on that cold Sunday: Please accept our sincerest apologies.

Marcia Humphrey is an interior decorator and home stager who specializes in achieving high style at a low cost. A native of Michigan, she and her husband, Lonnie, have three children.