



# FEED MY SHEEP

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## Tips on tips—and other expressions of gratitude *The fruit of gratefulness, part 3*

In this issue, we will continue by examining the last four of the eight traits which are related to gratefulness. All Christians should strive to possess the fruit of gratefulness. This is especially incumbent upon husbands and fathers as the one who is to lead by example. The fifth positive character trait which can be related to gratefulness is...Friendliness. Being grateful is part of being friendly with people. It applies to all areas of life, of course, but I want to use a couple of illustrations from the restaurant industry.

First, there was a story which ran in the *USA Today*—if I recall correctly, reporting on a study of how people treat waiters and waitresses—or “servers,” as Leftist political correctness insists they be called these days. By the way, in my view, “waiter” and “waitress” are perfectly fine terms to use, even better than “server” in many conversations because the former indicate to the listener the gender of the person waiting on the customer. Moreover, what is the difference between a “server” and a “servant?” There is virtually no difference, but using the latter term would probably send the politically-correct crowd into orbit!

The newspaper article was fascinating and revealing concerning how CEO’s and other people of high economic or social status would treat people who served them, whether it was a meal server, a doorman, a valet, a shoe shine man, whoever. For example, if they were condescending toward the server, or were harsh and demanding, it spoke megabytes about the character of the CEO. I recall one CEO saying that he would take prospective high executives for his organization out to lunch just for the purpose of testing their

character in that way. I commend him; that’s an excellent test.

Here is a personal experience regarding friendliness and gratefulness from some years ago. I had gone to lunch with one of my daughters at the local IHOP. Our server came by, introduced himself as Matt and took our orders. Suddenly, we notice a commotion going on at a nearby table. Matt had brought the manager out and she was gently trying to apologize for a hair on the plate of the man at the table.

There were four people at the table, all adults. Not wanting to be rude by staring, I didn’t get a real good look at them, but I did notice they were all—I would guess—in their late-30s to late 40s, and all four of them appeared to weigh in at about three tons. The odd thing was that by the time they complained about the hair on the plate, they were all 2/3 done with their meals. How many of you have seen *that* scam pulled before? Young Matt was a bit naïve, apparently not realizing it was a scam.

The scammers (i.e., thieves) were boorish and obnoxious and got up and left in a huff. When Matt delivered our food, he was visibly upset and told us that it wasn’t his fault that one of the cooks must have accidentally let a hair get on the plate. He said that the manager told them that there would be no charge for any of their four meals. Matt continued by saying they had cussed at him and, of course, left no tip for him, which really upset him. Both Emily and I tried to console him, saying that some people were just like that. The world *is* full of people like that, isn’t it? People

who would rather be surly and sour, and aggressive and obnoxious instead of friendly and grateful for the waiter's service. As a teenager I worked summers as a busboy. Although I didn't wait tables, I did see how the waitresses were treated—both generously and often very poorly by the patrons.

My daughter Emily herself had worked as a waitress in several upscale restaurants from which she has her own portfolio of stories of how mean people can be, especially from her experiences in Palm Beach County, Florida.

At the upscale restaurant there, I think the wages were something like \$2.20 an hour and they expect the rest will be made up by tips. That is fairly typical for restaurants. Servers are paid very low wages. Several times, Emily told me, she experienced cases like this...where a couple came in and had a nice dinner. Everything was perfect; she was friendly, but not gushy friendly. She brought their dinners to the table in a timely manner. There was nothing that any one should complain about in terms of the food or her service, and these patrons had no complaints. The bill came to \$32 and they left her a measly two dollar tip.

Emily and I feel the same way about dining out: Whenever we go to a restaurant, we simply need to understand that the tip is part of the cost of the meal. We usually give generous tips. Not extravagant, but generous; because we know how hard the work is and that many times, people are rude and unkind and very ungrateful.

So with our IHOP waiter, Matt, we told him to not let those obnoxious people ruin his day. But you know, words are nice, but then I was reminded of the words of James in his epistle.

**James 2:15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,**

**16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?**

So when Matt brought the bill, it came to close to 20 bucks and the customary tip of 15-17% (That was some years ago; now 20% is customary.), would suggest that one should leave at least a \$3 tip. Well, I put a 20-dollar bill between the covers of that little folder in which the servers bring you the bill. After discuss-

ing it, Emily and I added a \$6 tip... which I would ordinarily consider extravagant on that size of a meal; but we felt it might help Matt have a better day. I tell this story not to boast—it was a mere three dollars extra—but the point is this.

As Emily and I were going out the door, I looked back and noticed that Matt had just finished opening the folder and counting the money. He looked up toward the door and when our eyes met, he just beamed us the biggest smile you ever saw. To see that was a real blessing because it told Emily and me that our tiny little act of kindness and gratefulness for his service had totally erased the very nasty experience of the other patrons.

But consider this: Even if a server makes a mistake with your meal in one way or another: it's not what you ordered; the food is cold; it took 45 minutes to get to the table; whatever it is; then it becomes a test of *our* character, doesn't it? Because if we use the occasion to blow up and scold the server, what is that saying about us? Where is compassion? Where is friendliness? Where is kindness? Must we be surly and sour? Am I saying that if all those things happened that we should just ignore them? No, not at all. But we can choose our words carefully in expressing our disappointment. And if the mistakes were not the fault of the server, then my practice is to tip the server on the full value anyhow.

According the Christian Men's Seminar material by Bill Gothard, some of the negative traits which indicate a misuse of the gift of friendliness are when a person is gullible, status-seeking, spineless or socially preoccupied.

We all know what gullibility is. It is the capacity of a person to be easily deceived, cheated or duped. This is not directly related to gratitude, but how many of you have heard of the scam going around which originates in Nigeria? It's an internet scam. A person gets an email purportedly from some high-sounding, government minister in Nigeria who tells the recipient that someone has left them an enormous sum of money in a Nigerian bank, and that all they need to do is to wire them \$200, \$700, \$2,000, whatever, for various processing fees and...well, you get the picture.

The late Paul Harvey reported on this particular scam some years ago that about \$350 thousand dollars had been scammed out of gullible Christians in one

city in New Jersey.

But how does being gullible become a negative trait related to friendliness? Well, look at it this way: you could say that gullibility is being friendly to a fault. A person becomes so desperate to make a friend that he or she will swallow anything that their supposed friend tells them.

Next, consider status-seeking; how does that relate? Here again a person is seeking to establish a friendship out of a wrong motive. In this case, it is trying to become known as a friend of so-and-so, who has some kind of status. Name-dropping would be an indicator of this. Example: "Yeah, I was in New York the other day and I called up my old buddy, Donald Trump. Then I drove up to Hyannis Port and stopped in and saw the Kennedy clan."

Then there is spineless and socially-preoccupied. Spineless, of course, can refer to lack of courage in many circumstances, but here it would mean that a person is so *inordinately shy* that they are terrified of saying hello to a person. In reality, such a condition is probably related to excessive pride because the person is actually afraid of being found out to be less than their own picture of themselves.

Socially-preoccupied is related to spineless because it is a person who always has an excuse why he or she cannot participate in activities with potential friends. They get invited, but they always "have other plans," when actually, they would rather stay home and watch TV, surf the web, get on Facebook or other "social media" sites rather than to risk exposing their personality, their real self, to other people.

I have a serious concern what Facebook and the other "social media" sites are doing to our society. A friend told me last week she had seen a photo which had "gone viral" which showed a picture of a large family all gathered around a very large table for what was obviously a Thanksgiving dinner. Grandma is at one end and she is staring at her family in astonishment, disbelief and probably sadness as every single one of them had their heads down—not to pray but because they were texting or otherwise on their cell phones! Great God in heaven, please cause us to return to our senses! Years ago, the examples above would have been considered extreme. Sadly, these are becoming typical.

The sixth positive trait on the list is... Generosity ...Which we have already discussed, not only in terms of money, but in terms of time, energy and other resources. Remember from last issue the whole idea of setting and maintaining boundaries? We'll move on to the next item.

Number seven is ... Hospitality. We can see the overlap between some of these traits. Hospitality could include the idea of service and generosity, and certainly friendliness. Being in my position as a Bible teacher, I have been the recipient of hospitality from people in every part of the country. I have stayed in the homes of people who knew me only from this *Feed My Sheep* teaching letter. In some cases, I have had the hospitality of an overnight stay with people who didn't even have that much acquaintance with me. Initially, I admit that I was awkward and I did not know how to respond properly in some instances, but I have found that usually just expressing one's *sincere* and *heartfelt* gratitude goes a long way.

But I do not mean that simply saying the words "thank you" is adequate. That can be done so easily that it is hard to believe it is truly heartfelt. It takes no thought. Whereas when a person adds to those words expressing *why* you are grateful and/or how you feel/felt about being the recipient of whatever kindness it was, *that* comes across as sincere and heartfelt.

The abuse or downside of hospitality is when you observe an individual who is ingratiating, social-climbing, or cliquish. In the negative sense, ingratiating refers to someone whose actions or words are deliberately devised for the purpose of gaining favor or acceptance. One thinks of a person at a party who sidles up to somebody for the hidden purpose of getting something for themselves. Of course, there are common and vulgar expressions used to describe people like that, but a non-vulgar term for it is that it is, in reality, a con artist at work.

A social-climber is someone who is misusing friendliness for his or her own self-aggrandizement. The idea of pretending to befriend people just so you can use them and step on them on your way to the top. Many are the testimonies of people who have made it to the top and then found out there was no real joy in it after all. They discovered that they had made enemies out of nearly everyone. As many of those types have sadly written, it is very lonely at the top!

Speaking of joy, that brings us to...Joyfulness, the last item on our list. It seems logical to understand that a person with that inner joy of a Christian is a person who has a *grateful* heart, a person who expresses his gratitude to God and who also expresses his sincere appreciation to others.

A negative trait which might indicate a false picture of a joyful person is a person who is constantly giddy or silly, or an individual who is simply unable to ever be serious. I knew a man like that over three decades ago. I would see him on a daily basis and he was always joking around—never serious. In contrast, take a man like Ron Oja. (Many readers have heard him teach at our Bible conferences.) He has a highly developed sense of humor and has an innate talent to make people laugh. But he also knows when to turn it off and he speaks and teaches with utmost seriousness—albeit, sprinkled with humor that can make you slide off your chair laughing!

Whereas this other fellow I knew—he was really not that funny. He was not a natural-born comedian, but simply made wisecracks, mostly cynical and sarcastic comments about people—really biting comments, hurtful comments which he thought were funny. He could not be serious for a moment—which was probably why his business never seemed to grow.

I won't mention his real name, but I remember his wife frequently pleading with him "George, can't you be serious for one minute?!" And he would say something like, "Yeah sure, time me, starting...now." And then he would emit this nervous little laugh. He was not a really bad or evil person, but he simply could not be serious—which indicates a somewhat serious personality problem. Eventually, his wife divorced him and I lost touch with them when we moved to North Carolina.

So giddiness is fine and appropriate in a moment of hilarity and general laughter and merrymaking in the right situation, but to be constantly giddy and silly indicates that a person needs to stop, take a deep breath... and consider why he or she cannot ever be serious. Is it because they are afraid of introspection, of looking within and seeing their flaws? Well, for heaven sake, we're all flawed! But praise Jesus! He came to save us from our weaknesses and to give us grace and His Holy Spirit whereby we can be joyful without being forever giddy. We can be grateful for *all* things.

Years ago an over-crowded riverboat edged its way toward the city dock. Hundreds of people had lined the shore to greet the passengers who had made the trip upriver. Their friends and relatives on the boat crowded to one side to wave to them. Suddenly, the boat began to tilt dangerously. The weight of all those people was too much to keep the boat in balance. The passengers shrieked in panic and their friends watched in horror as the large boat capsized. A terrific explosion from the boiler shattered the boat and sent flames through the sinking structure. While many stood watching, one man leaped into the water and began helping many to safety.

Over and over again he went back to the burning ship to rescue more victims. As a result of that day, he was badly burned and partially disabled. Unable to work as he did before, he soon became a homeless victim of poverty and subsisted on whatever he could manage to find. Near the end of the man's life, a reporter found an old newspaper clipping telling of his heroic deed and the many lives he had saved. The reporter decided to interview him. After finding him he asked how many people had come back to thank him for saving their lives. The scarred old gentleman thought back and then said, "I don't remember anyone coming back to thank me."

Now remember what gratitude is. Gratitude or gratefulness is learning to recognize the blessings and the benefits which God *and others* have provided. But that is only half of it. So that when we do recognize those benefits and blessings, we should look for appropriate ways to express our genuine appreciation. Simply smiling and saying "thank you" is often not sufficient. "Looking for" implies thought, plus following through to express it. It is a true statement that my gratefulness is only as sincere as the efforts I make to express it. You can feel in your heart that you are really grateful to someone for something, but the real measure of our gratitude is found in actually thanking the person. *(To be continued.)*

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