

“Espresso Yourself—Rude is the Mood”

I made some espresso here. Espresso is strong and stout. It packs a caffeine kick. Last week we started this sermon series talking about how God wants our lives to be powerful, strong, concentrated, and how we really want the same thing. But too often we settle for decaffeinated, watered down, weak faith lives. So it's time to espresso ourselves. It's time to really caffeinate our faith.

Today we're going to talk about something that can truly decaffeinate our faith and that is rudeness. We're also going to talk about how we combat that in ourselves and diffuse it in others. You might not think that this is as important as it is, but don't be fooled. This stuff is central to walking with Jesus. What we're talking about today has everything to do with espressoing your life.

Everywhere we look, we see rudeness on the rampage. Rude is the mood. One recent study on rudeness says that six out of ten Americans believe that rudeness is on the rise. It also says that 79% of us feel like rudeness is a serious problem. 73% of the people who responded said that we had more respect in the past than we do today. But listen, today's talk is much deeper than just forgetting to say, "Thank you, no ma'am, yes ma'am, yes sir, or excuse me." It's deeper than opening a door for someone. It's much deeper than that. The roots of rudeness run very deep. It's profound. It's a serious problem. It's messing up many people's lives. It's decaffeinating our faith.

So when I say the word "rude," what comes to mind? I took an informal poll and collected a list of rude things that people do. Here are the top 10

[SLIDE, add each] 10. Taking 40 items to the 20 items or less lane. 9. Cell phone stuff (talking while driving, during a movie, during a sermon). 8. Interrupting someone while they're still talking. 7. Passing gas in a closed car. 6. Going slow in the fast lane. 5. Bathroom stuff (not putting the seat up/down, not flushing, not washing hands, not replacing the empty toilet paper roll). 4. Pen clicking. 3. Mouth stuff (Gum popping, ice crunching, food smacking). 2. Being chronically late. 1. Asking a woman when she is due...when she's not.

To be rude means to deliberately disrespect yourself, others and God. It's a deliberate "dis" of yourself, others and God. And that's just a tip of the rudeness iceberg, isn't it? But what's the rationale for rudeness? It's pretty fascinating, actually. In my little informal poll I asked why rudeness is so prevalent these days. They told me things like this. They said, "People are rude just because the pace of life. We hydroplane through life. Everything is so busy. We don't have time to be polite."

Another rationale of rudeness is parents. People say it is the parent's problem. "They don't teach manners. They don't teach respect so people are rude."

Some said that rudeness is just entertainment. It's art form! Isn't it funny how we'll pay people like Jerry Springer, Howard Stern, or Eminem squillions of dollars ... to be rude and entertain us?

Some say we are rude because we live in a casual culture--everything is casual. People are dressing down. It's relaxed. Who makes up manners anyway? Your manners are your manners, and my manners are mine. What's the big deal?

Another rationale for rudeness is success. Some people say, "You've got to be rude to be successful. The squeaky wheel gets the grease."

One more reason that a lot of us are rude is that it just feels good, sometimes. We don't want to admit it, but just to go rude on someone makes us feel good. If they are rude to us, then we are going to be rude right back.

These are rationales for rudeness but rudeness is an even deeper issue than these. I was once flying out of an international airport, and I and several others got put on standby—we all had tickets but the flight was overbooked and a few of us got bumped—none of us were happy. But one man, with his wife and two kids right there, just went ballistic on the poor ticket agent. This guy swore at her, threatened her with law suits, got in her face, pounded on the counter. His wife and kids tried to wilt away into the woodwork. You could sense that they'd seen this many times before. The ticket agent somehow kept her cool, but this guy went on for 10 or 15 minutes berating her. You could see the spit flying out of his mouth. He'd take a break, and then get back at it. This went on for maybe an hour and half. It made everybody there churn out a little extra bile. Everybody was either embarrassed for the guy, or ticked off at having to listen to his pointless rude ranting, and/or feeling pity for the ticket agent.

So why do people get so rude? Part of it is simply ignorance. Ignorance is a major cause of rudeness. It happens when people are ignorant of the fact that they are loved by God. They are ignorant of the fact that they are forgiven and cleansed by God. They are ignorant of the Gospel and ignorant of the fact that God sent Christ to pay the price on the cross for their sins. I'd say that that man had no understanding of God's love for him and for that ticket agent—ignorance. Whenever you see someone being rude, just remember that they don't realize how much they are loved. Because, if they did, they wouldn't treat you, or others, the way they do.

But not only is ignorance a cause of rudeness, but so is arrogance. **[SLIDE...] Ignorance + arrogance = rudeness.** The combination of ignorance and arrogance causes people to put themselves above other people. It makes them believe that they are better than some people and it can even lead them to believe that some people are essentially worthless and in the way. And here's the thing, if other people don't matter, then ultimately God doesn't matter. You can always tell a person's relationship to God by how they treat other people. When you are arrogant, you have a warped view of God, you have a warped view of people, and you have a warped view of yourself.

Ignorance + arrogance = rudeness. But it's time that we throw out that formula and put in a new formula. Here it is. This is the new math. **[SLIDE...] Knowledge + humility = respect.** That's what we need. Knowledge + humility = respect. Instead of ignorance, we need knowledge. We need to know that we are loved by God. We need to know that we matter to God. We need to know that all people matter to God. We need to know that God, through Christ, did the work on the cross to secure our salvation.

Once we have that knowledge, once we are dialed into that, what happens? We are hammered by humility. We realize that Christ humbled himself. He voluntarily gave his life for our sins. He treated us more importantly than himself. This is what it says about Jesus in the Bible, that **[SLIDE...] "being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!" (Philippians 2:8, NIV).**

So, we, instead of being arrogant, me-istic and self-centered, we humble ourselves before Christ. Because of that, we, in turn, humble ourselves before others, and we treat others more importantly than we treat ourselves. So, we have this formula that's operating in our lives by the grace and the mercy of God. We have this knowledge that leads to humility and, from humility, we have respect. We respect God. We respect ourselves and we respect others.

1 Corinthians 13:5 says simply and directly, **[SLIDE...] "Love is not rude."** In the Phillips translation, it says that **[SLIDE, add to previous] "love has good manners."** In Barclay's translation it says, **[SLIDE, add to previous] "Love does not behave gracelessly."**

With that in mind let's talk about some practical matters. How do we do a "rude reversal?" That's the issue that is hanging in the balance. I think it's time that we wake up and smell the espresso, don't you? I think it's time that we have this java jolt and get caffeinated by the power of God.

I'm going to talk to you about the rugged plains of reality, as far as the rude reversal. Here is how we morph rudeness into respect. First, when you speak to people, make sure you speak with **[SLIDE: "Speak with honesty, not hostility]** honesty, and not a bunch of hostility. After all, life is communication. People tell me, "Well, Aaron, I'm just a straight shooter, man. I just tell it like it is. I let the chips fall where they may. I'm going to tell you the brutal truth. And if you don't want to hear the truth then stay away from me." That's simply behaving gracelessly. Listen, if you are right and you are rude, then you are wrong (Rick Warren).

That makes me wonder how many times in my life have I been right, but I have been rude! Because at those times, I have been wrong. We can all say that — in a marital situation, in a corporate situation, in an educational situation, or in a team situation.

The Bible says, in Ephesians 4:15, **[SLIDE...]** "Speak the truth in love." In other words, if you speak the truth without love, then you dishonor that truth, you dishonor God. Proverbs 15:23 says, **[SLIDE...]** "What a joy it is to find just the right word for the right occasion." We have got to pick the right word for the right occasion. We have got to speak the truth in love. We don't go soft. We speak up. Yet, we clothe it all in love. Why? Because we are locking eyes with people who matter to God. You've never met a person that Christ did not die for. Never. Don't treat them like junk. Treat them like a gift from Jesus, because that is what they are. So, when you speak, speak with honesty and not hostility.

Another way to reverse rudeness is to **[SLIDE: "Be courteous, not condescending.]"** When you are served by the kid at Sonic, by the waiter, or by the man or woman who picks up your trash, be courteous, and not condescending. "Well, Aaron, he's just a...she's just a..." Just a what? Just a what? God didn't make any junk.

I found this interesting: the root of the word "rude" means shapeless. It's an attitude that's out of shape, or distorted, or disfigured. It implies that whenever I am rude to you and whenever you are rude to me, we are disfiguring the image of God. Rudeness decaffeinate love. All the time we have an opportunity to give people the figure of the cross. We either give them the figure of the cross or we disfigure it through being rude. That's what is hanging in the balance for your life and mine — the image of God, the image of Jesus, the image of the cross—people's understanding of God. When we are rude it disfigures that image.

Let's continue. 1 Peter 2:17 says, **[SLIDE...]** "Show proper respect to everyone." Who does that include? It includes everyone — every single person. I have failed at this quite a few times. I had a class in seminary and the professor was very intelligent, very scholarly, but he just couldn't teach. It was so boring! Part of our grade was attendance so I couldn't skip the class. So instead a friend and I would sit through class and cut up, and talk, and pick apart his lectures. And we didn't do it quietly either. The man was oblivious to us! But his graduate assistant was not—that's the guy that grades the papers. One day the graduate assistant caught my friend and me in the hallway and pulled us into a corner and called it like it was. He said, "You are being disrespectful and rude and either you get your act together or get out of the class." Whoa! That was a little lesson in respect. Be courteous, not condescending. Even when you have to endure something that's unpleasant.

Young people, particularly Middle School and High School girls, need to be careful here. There is a tendency among girls at that age to try to define themselves by putting others down, by

being condescending, exclusive, and demeaning. You don't have corner on this, but it happens way too often. Listen, building yourself up by pushing someone else down is a shallow, petty way to try to live. You don't have to like everybody, you don't have to get along with everybody, but if you choose to be a Christ-follower you have to be courteous to everybody. So, be courteous and not condescending.

By the way, the Bible says that we have entertained angels without knowing it. God will put someone in your path or my path that can't do a thing for us. He wants to see if we are going to be rude to them or give them respect, are we going to be courteous or condescending? I want to ask you a question. How do you treat people who can't do a thing for you? You know who I'm talking about: children, the mentally ill or mentally handicapped, people who are marginalized. That's a true test of character. How do you respect people who can't make any money for you or who cannot advance your career? How do you treat people? I know how you treat people who can do things for you--you treat them well. But, I mean how do you treat the people who can't do anything for you?

So when you speak, speak with honesty and not hostility. When you are served, be courteous and not condescending. Another way to reverse rudeness is when you disagree, make sure you are **[SLIDE: "Be relational not ruthless"]** relational and not ruthless. I have a friend who is always reminding me that it's all about relationships. Nurturing, caring for, cultivating, developing relationships. And he's right. The thing is that in these relationships we are going to disagree. We will have disagreements in relationships — in our marital relationship, our friendships and our business relationships. We have got to be relational and not ruthless. Why? Because our relational integrity is all about respect. It's all about respect and not rudeness.

I've got to realize something: I am going to give an account of my life before God. He is going to go through the Rolodex of my relationships and ask, "Okay, Aaron, did you show respect or rudeness? When you disagreed with people did you share my love with others by the way you acted, by the way you talked to them, and by the way you treated them? Or, did you go off on them and throw around words and attitudes in a careless fashion?"

Galatians 6:7 is the reciprocal law of love. It says, **[SLIDE...]** **"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows" (Galatians 6:7. NIV)**. So, if you want respect, then give respect. If you want love, then give love. If you want to be treated rudely, then just be rude to others. Remember last Sunday, when I took the boomerang out and I said that when you throw criticism out, it will come back. When you go rude on people, it will come back too. That's the reciprocal law of love. We must be relational. Speak the truth in love and not ruthlessness.

So, when you speak, speak with honesty and not hostility. When you are served, be courteous and not condescending. When you disagree, be relational and not ruthless.

Philippians 2 says, **[SLIDE...]"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves."** Because everything we do is an image of God. We are either giving a warped view of God, a weird cross, or we are giving a clear image of God by the way we behave. So, at every interchange, every exchange, every interaction, we have the opportunity to either preach the message of Jesus with our lives, or to give people a distorted view that message.

In our culture the standard, the typical way of thinking has become to respond to rudeness with rudeness. If you're rude to me than I'm rude back and I turn it up a notch. But you and I need to

know that if we choose to confront rudeness with rudeness then we are choosing to step away from Christ; we're choosing to stop following him.

So instead of taking a swing back, we back up, we turn the other cheek, we picture Jesus humbling himself, and instead of swinging back with more rudeness we to the reversal with honesty, courtesy and we do it in a relational way. Instead of swinging back we humble ourselves as Christ humbled himself and was obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

We have got to take this rudeness and nail it to the cross. We have got to confess it, come clean with it and realize that Jesus died for it. We have got to have the knowledge that the Gospel is good news and that God sent Jesus to pay the price on the cross for my rudeness. We have got to realize that we have been rude to God. But God didn't return rudeness with rudeness. He returned rudeness with love. And that's what we should do. But, we can't do that unless we accept the love of God. Once we are right with God vertically, then we will show respect for others horizontally. We will have respect for God and respect for ourselves.

So once again, it's time to espresso your faith. If rude is your mood, then reverse it, treat others with the respect that God has toward you and that will truly caffeinate our Christianity. And for today that is the Good News. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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