WISE HER STILL

Servants Who Don't Actually Serve

Tiffany Buckner • April 6, 2016

It was the weekend and I'd decided to visit a popular restaurant in my area with a friend of mine. We were both very hungry and I couldn't wait to order one of my favorite menu items. After we were led to our seats, our waiter proceeded to tell us about the different alcoholic beverages that were popular at that restaurant. Of course, I don't drink alcohol and neither does my SIL (sister in the Lord), but we had to wait for the waiter to stop his long, rehearsed speech before requesting our soft drinks. "Oh," said the waiter. "I'm over here wasting my breath and telling y'all about alcohol and here it is that y'all want soft drinks." We laughed and I explained to the waiter that we were both non-drinkers. I told him that I was in ministry, and with that, he gave me an expressive look before saying, "Well, praise the Lord." After that, the waiter let us know that our food would be out shortly, and then, he walked away.

The waiter was very nice. He was very engaging and he'd even told us about a few of his life's plans before walking away. After the waiter was gone, my SIL and I started talking about ministry, life and just about everything we could think of. Before long, thirty minutes had past and it was obvious that our waiter had forgotten about us. Nevertheless, an older couple who'd sat adjacent to us and had only been seated for about ten minutes had already began receiving their appetizers. Of course, **they had a different waiter** than we did, but that was no excuse. Our waiter had obviously forgotten about us or he was simply neglecting us. I was trying to remain patient, but my friend was beginning to get agitated. Before we could voice our concerns, our waiter

finally showed up with some salsa and chips. He apologized for the long wait, explaining to us that there was a problem in the kitchen and that's why we hadn't received our food yet. He told us that the salsa and chips were "on the house" and were given to us as a courtesy because of our wait. Again, I smiled and shrugged it off, hoping that our food would be out shortly.

Another thirty minutes past and we still hadn't received our food. Nevertheless, the couple sitting a few feet from us had been reordering their appetizers, and amazingly enough, one of the appetizers that they were eating was the same appetizer my friend had ordered. How was it that the problem in the kitchen had affected our order, but somehow, had not affected the neighboring couple's order? By this time, we were both starting to get agitated, but before we could call a manager over, my friend's appetizer item had finally arrived. I hadn't ordered an appetizer, so I waited and watched, hoping that my food would come out of the kitchen soon.

Another twenty to thirty minutes past and not only had our food not arrived, but our waiter hadn't refilled our drinks or collected my friend's now empty plate. Howbeit, **anytime he'd pass us by, he'd smile and assure us that our food was on the way.** When the food finally did arrive, we'd been waiting well over an hour. To make matters worse, the young woman who'd delivered our food to us had neglected to bring out my breadsticks and I kindly brought this to her attention. She assured me that she would bring out the breadsticks shortly, and I proceeded to talk to my SIL while waiting.

Ten minutes past and still no breadsticks. My food was starting to get cold and so was my attitude. I stood to my feet, hoping to get someone's attention when I locked eyes with the manager. I gestured for him to come to our table, and when he did, I told him that we'd waited over an hour for our food, and I told him about the dilemma with my breadsticks. He was charming enough, but he didn't address the wait; instead, he addressed the missing breadsticks. "Uh uh," he said jokingly. "You're not waiting on your breadsticks because I'm about to

go and get those for you right now." I thanked him and he walked away, heading towards the kitchen. Five minutes later, he arrived with my breadsticks. By this time, my friend had finally gotten our elusive waiter's attention and asked for a refill on our soft drinks. Our outing had been ruined. We were no longer the chipper women who'd walked into the restaurant, ready to laugh it up and talk about life. We were both fighting off offense and trying to be as understanding as we could be.

Finally, we were done eating and after waiting twenty more minutes for the waiter to even acknowledge us, I finally called him over. "We don't want the dessert," I said. "Please just bring us the ticket." After this exchange, it took the waiter another ten to fifteen minutes to return to the table with our ticket. When the waiter returned, he was apologetic and continued on with his joking tone, hoping that his bigger than life personality would be enough to make up for what I later described as the worst service I'd ever received. Nevertheless, as bothered as we were, we tried our best to not let our day be ruined by the lack of customer service that we'd received.

Our waiter was kind; that was a fact. Every time he'd come to our table, he would smile at us and he was very personable with us, but this did not excuse the fact that he did not provide good service to us. He was doing something that I'd seen a lot of waiters and waitresses do; after all, I dine out every weekend and I like to dine in wherever I go. He was attempting to distract us from the bad service we were getting by simply being overly friendly. As a matter of fact, some of the worse waiters and waitresses that I've come across had been super nice... comedic even; what they lacked in customer service, they tried to make up for with smiles. Some of the best waiters and waitresses that I've come across have been nice, professional and attentive. Some were even personable, but for the most part, they were more focused on making sure that their customers were well taken care of than they were with finding out

what their customers did for a living. This made me think about how we are with God.

As believers, we are supposed to serve God; this isn't just a fact, it is our reality. **It is what God expects from us.** Nevertheless, we oftentimes go before God with many words, tears and praises, all the while, refusing to serve Him. We do to God what that waiter attempted to do with us. We offer Him lip service with no actual servitude. We don't follow through with what we say. Instead, we attempt to manipulate the Almighty, all-knowing God by showing up at the sanctuary every Sunday morning and letting our lips do what we refuse to let our limbs do, and that is serve the Lord. We even stop by to check in on Him throughout the week, hoping that our abrupt visits will make up for our extended absences. After that, we hope that God would mistake our many words, tears and praises for service and give us the blessings we've been crying out for. When He doesn't, we get frustrated with Him because we've served Him, even though we didn't serve Him the way we were supposed to.

Ninety-nine percent of the time when I visit a restaurant, I tip my server. I give him or her a minimum of twenty percent because that is standard practice, but the amount I give depends on the service I receive. If the attendant gives me standard service, I'll give him or her a standard tip. If the waiter or waitress gives me above standard service, I give him or her more than twenty percent for a tip. You see, I've come to understand that the tips are our way of thanking the waiter or waitress for the service he or she has given. Tips are designed to encourage the attendants to be friendly **and** attentive; they can't sacrifice one for the other. Additionally, tips aren't mandated expenses that the customer must pay. Paying tips is simply a courteous gesture that is encouraged or discouraged by the service given. With that being said, the waiter fell under the one percent of attendants that I do not tip. Of course, I didn't withhold the tip from him out of retaliation. **He simply did not give us even standard service so I wasn't going to validate his behavior by tipping him.** You see,

when a waiter or waitress does not give good service, their tips or lack thereof will say to them what many of their customers won't bother saying:

- You served us. *(The standard twenty percent.)*
- You served us well. *(The skies the limit.)*
- You need to work on your customer service. *(Less than twenty percent or no tip at all if the service was horrible as in our case.)*

When they come together with their colleagues and find out that their colleagues have made far more in tips than they have, they'll either learn to be better attendants, professional complainers or they'll quit altogether. If they quit, **they make room for others who may appreciate the jobs that they took for granted.**

The common misconception that many believers have is that God is going to "tip" them for their Christian words, church attendance and occasional good deeds, and what this tells us is that many believers don't truly know God. God is not a tipper who tips us for our works; He blesses us because He loves us, but at the same time, those blessings are locked up and can only be released by faith. Now, to get faith, we have to serve God, and not just with our lips. Our faith will show up in our words, works and thoughts. Faith without works is dead; we know this, but how many of us believe this? As it turns out, the average believer believes that if he or she repeatedly chants religious cliches that God will be moved by their many words... especially if they scream those words with passion. But God is a heart-checker. He checks to see if the believer's words match what's in the believer's heart. If they don't, the believer is obviously trying to manipulate God or convince themselves of something they simply do not believe. If they do, God smiles because He knows that the believer actually believes Him and is tapping into the heavenlies to pull down the blessings that He has allotted for His beloved. God doesn't have to speak a blessing into our lives; we simply need to tap into His already established

Word and provoke Heaven to release the blessings that God has stored up for us.

In this hour, we have to offer God more than lip service and occasional visits. We have to serve Him wholeheartedly. Ask yourself this: If your life was a restaurant, you were a waiter or waitress and God was your customer, would you deserve a tip? If so, would you deserve the standard twenty percent or would you provoke Heaven to release more to you? Know this: In our relationships with God, we are either servants (people who serve) or waiters (people who wait). Servants receive a servant's reward but waiters wait for God, not knowing that their blessings are locked up because God is waiting on them. It's time to stop waiting for God to serve you; instead, you need to get up and serve the Lord.

Here's a few tips to live by:

1. **Being nice to God or attending church service does not provoke Him to move on your behalf.** You have to actually serve Him with your life and not just your lips.
   Matthew 15:8 (NIV): These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

2. **You'll notice that I mentioned the couple who had a different waiter than we did. They received their food a lot faster, even though their waiter wasn't as personable.** Who would you say received better service? Additionally, it is unwise to complain to God about what someone else is receiving if you are not offering Him the same service that they are offering Him. Complaining to God hasn't gotten anyone anything but a holy rebuke.
   Luke 10:40-42 (NIV): But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”
   “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about

many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

3. **Promising to serve God and actually serving Him are not one and the same.** You either serve Him or you don't. Your heart must align itself with God's heart, or better yet, you must be in agreement with God before you can actually serve Him. Of course, to agree with Him, you need understanding, and to get understanding, you first need knowledge. How can you understand what you do not know? Knowledge comes first, and then comes understanding. Once you serve God with your heart, your body will line up with His Word.
   Romans 12:1 (KJV): I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which *is* your reasonable service.

4. **There is a standard to serving God and this standard isn't established by works, but by faith.** Your faith will show up in your works, but if you show up with works and no faith, you are as manipulative as the angel who disguises itself as an angel of light.
   James 2:17 (NIV): In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

5. **God does not withhold our blessings to retaliate against us.** He has already released the blessings, but He locked them behind His Word. To tap in, you have to first believe God and when you do, your thoughts, works and words will confirm what you believe. If you refuse to serve God, those blessings stay locked up and you stay locked out.
   Genesis 4:7 (God's rebuke to Cain after he complained about God accepting Abel's offering, but not his): If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it."

Can a person not serve God and still call themselves a servant? Sure they can, but the truth is... we are all servants... even unbelievers. The question is: Who are you serving?