

## **Lessons from a long line**

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**While on vacation, a trip to get needed supplies landed me in a slow line. It seems to happen a lot – whatever line I get in seems to slow down. Ahead of me stood a rather large gentleman in jeans and a camo t-shirt and hunting cap. He leaned over the shopping cart, resting on large fore-arms, hands together, obviously growing more frustrated as the minutes marched on but the line didn't.**

**This guy spoke loudly to the man in front of him with hints to any store manager who might have been in ear-shot, "Why don't they open the other register? If I was the manager of this store, I wouldn't make my customers wait like this." The line finally moved.**

**Afterwards I went to another store, and since there were long lines at the regular registers, I decided to go to the shorter self-checkout lane. Unfortunately, the scanner froze up several times requiring the employee assigned to the self check area to coax the scanner to work. The quick checkout proved to be not so quick.**

**Behind me stood a lady in her late 60's who maintained a slight smile and sunny disposition during the slow down. After several minutes of waiting, the lady leaned my way and commented, "Isn't it wonderful that we have a store that has such a wonderful selection of groceries we can buy?"**

**I agreed as I searched the lady's face for some hint of sarcasm. I found none. She appeared to be completely sincere. She continued as the employee unfroze the scanner for the third time, "Look at how pleasantly that girl deals with a cantankerous register. And who would have ever thought that one day we could just hold up a package and something would recognize spaghetti, or soup, or paper towels? We are so blessed!"**

**Two slow lines, and two very different attitudes. One person reflected the frustration of entitlement: I deserve to be waited on – I deserve to be treated better! The other person graced all who heard her words of**

**gratitude. One saw only ineptitude; the other saw pleasant service. One waited with a sour demeanor; the other waited with a loving outlook.**

**The man's words and bearing were harsh and abrasive. The woman's comments and smile refreshed the spirit. As I thought of the two different responses to similar circumstances, something dawned on me. My attitude paralleled the man's. No one else saw my attitude. No one else heard me complain. My thoughts, however, echo my heart, and they weren't very loving. I also realized that my negative thoughts affected my day in a not so positive way. Circumstances don't make any of us who we are, they simply reveal to us what's going on inside of us. My reflection of what was going on inside of me disappointed me.**

**I found the man's attitude offensive and the woman's winsome. I quickly passed judgment in my heart on the man, but soon saw myself in the one I judged.**

**"Lord, forgive me this selfish attitude. Forgive my lack of gratitude. Change this heart! Grant me the grace to be patient and pleasant and thankful, no matter what the circumstances. May I become one whose presence renews the spirits of others instead of sapping joy and peace from their lives. Amen."**