

I AM WISDOM ELIMINATES FEAR AND DOUBT

**“I respect people who are unpretentious yet mannerly,
considerate and honest, forthright yet kind and tactful.**

Amy Vanderbilt

Politeness

This past week has been enthralling considering all that has transpired. Social justice issues including the trial and other events continue to capture our attention and leave us in emotional mayhem. Therefore, I chose to take a look at being polite and having the wisdom to maximize the potential of communicating with grace, courtesy, and well-mannered behavior. The question is, how do we hold productive conversations with friends, family, and even strangers knowing differences in beliefs, attitudes, and values absolutely exist.

Too often in our society, people sit with someone of an opposite political, religious, or philosophical persuasion trying to avoid conversations that may lead to a conversion of belief. Individuals hold their tongue at someone who seems to be announcing a poorly thought-out plan regarding educating children, directing personal life, or setting a direction for reforming our country or our Church. They will be aware of how differently things can look through the eyes of others and will search more for what people have in common than what separates them.

That is all well and good. Conflict is avoided. Nothing changes. Maybe, just maybe, conversations guided by good manners and etiquette is worthy of further study. No way can I say I know the answers, nor can I change the direction of another's beliefs, but engaging in polite conversation with organized thought and etiquette is worth the effort.

I share the following to help us all see a potential path to peaceful resolutions.

Things have changed for me, but there was a time when I was the officiant in several weddings at Martin UMC and other appointments. I wrote a sermon soon after Deanna obtained the responsibility of coordinating weddings at Martin on my first tour with this wonderful Church. I found the sermon today while preparing to preach in the Tongan Prayer service. It got my attention and some of it seemed to fit this TEDDY TALK about politeness and manners.

The first line in the sermon immediately after my opening plea to God, “May the words of my mouth be acceptable to you...my God and my redeemer” was: “I am glad we have wedding coordinators!” Next, I wrote: (Note: Look at Deanna and say Thank you Deanna)...pretty sure I said it just as I wrote it, but the time frame stretches memories for both Deanna and me.

The meaning of the opening line was simply me saying it is so nice having someone ensure the appropriate documents and tests are completed so the marriage can proceed with confidence, to coordinate ushers and photographers, determine and direct the wedding participants where to stand in the ceremony, and do it all with courtesy and politeness.

Weddings are confusing to me because what I read in Amy Vanderbilt's etiquette book. It was required reading in an Etiquette class in Pampa Junior High School (yes, 60 years ago and still referring to it). I recall finding it and checking what it said about weddings when I first started being an officiant. Amy wrote that groomsmen must never be in the receiving line but bridesmaids may. What's up with that? If that didn't make sense, how could all the other samples of being nice and pleasant be accurate

It was nice knowing the bride and groom and respective mothers knew where to stand in receiving lines. The coordinator relieved me of the need to have patience with flower girls, ring bearers, and the people who wanted the service to have a 'few minor changes'...and the list goes on. The coordinator freed me to simply guide the Bride and Groom through their vows without worries about the issues I just mentioned. Amazingly all of it was done in a way that allowed people to change behaviors and thoughts without conflict.

Like good coordinators, communicators must be aware that people must be made to feel valued, loved, and included in the decisions that change their lives. No matter their status in life. When they are lifted up, they become self-confident and assured.

Jesus, the greatest teacher of all, left us with many lesson on etiquette and politeness. In some biblical verses, the words are directly from Jesus. Elsewhere, we find his teachings and truths through the writing of the Apostle Paul and Peter and James and John...

"So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law of the Prophets."

John 15:13

Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Philippians 1:27

Peace Always

Ted