

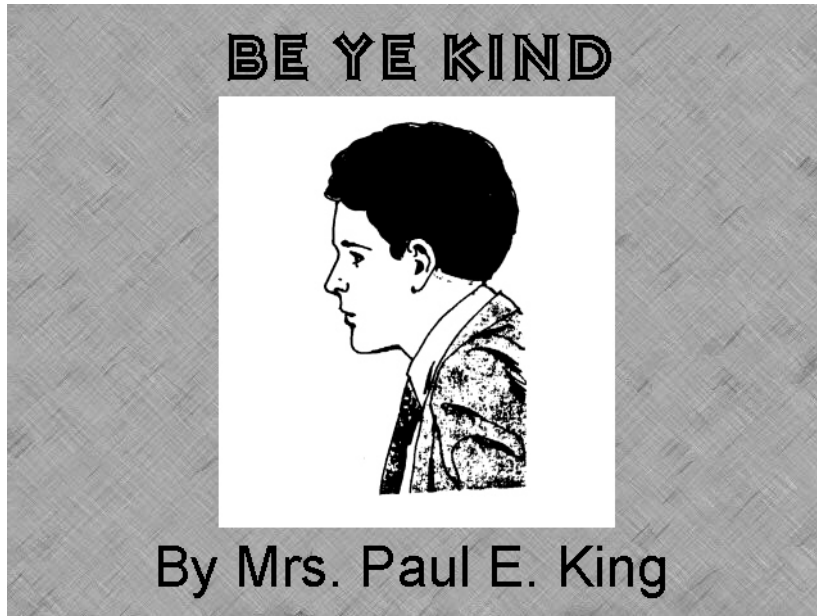
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BE YE KIND
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Scott could scarcely believe his ears. But he knew he had not been imagining things: Trista was actually berating the tired, bedraggled looking woman going through the check-out lane of The Super-Super Grocery store.

"You need to keep your coupons together," she scolded the now frightened looking woman.

"I . . . I know I put them right here," the woman answered softly as she pointed to a corner inside her much worn black purse. "One of the little ones must have gotten into my purse."

"I can't wait all day," Trista snapped. "Next time you come in with coupons, organize them. Get your act together!"

"I'm sorry," the frustrated woman said apologetically, as she rummaged nervously through the old purse. "Oh," she remarked brightly, "here some of them are."

Quickly, she placed them on the check-out counter and began searching frantically for the others which she needed for her order.

Trista "tsked, tsked, tsked" loudly and shook her head angrily.

Scott looked over from his check out counter and, seeing tears start in the woman's eyes, he waited until she lifted her eyes toward his counter then he smiled broadly and genuinely at her, saying kindly, "Take your time, Ma'am. I'm sure you'll find them. Things like this can happen to each of us."

Trista turned and glared at Scott. The woman thanked him and relaxed considerably. She soon had the missing coupons and Trista finished checking her out.

Scott felt sick at heart. How could Trista be so unfeeling; so unkind? he wondered. Her tongue could be razor-sharp when things weren't going her way, nor to her liking and satisfaction. This bothered Scott no end. For one thing, Trista declared she was a Christian and Scott knew, from what had happened in his own heart when he was so gloriously converted and then sanctified wholly later on, that the "cutting edge" was totally and completely removed from his heart and his tongue. He was given a new heart; a tender and compassionate and kind heart. Christ living in him and possessing him had changed him gloriously, radically, and wonderfully. The sharpness was gone. He was free from his once violent and highly explosive temper and the unkind words which he was once so guilty of.

Too, Trista's attitude and her terseness and sharpness would hurt Mr. Mortenson's business: The new supermarket was just getting established in the town.

A brief lull in business and Trista was over at Scott's check-out counter. "You run your counter the way you want to run it," she declared angrily, "but let me take care of mine. There was no need for that woman to not know where her coupons were. She should have had them organized in an envelope."

"How do you know she didn't?" Scott asked kindly. "You heard her say the little ones must have gotten into her purse."

"She needs to keep her purse away from them," Trista replied curtly.

"Did you never get into your mother's purse when you were little?" Scott asked with a mischievous smile on his face.

Trista mumbled something under her breath then walked away.

"One of the rules in here," Scott reminded her, "is that we are to be courteous and kind to our customers and to each other. Remember what Mr. Mortenson said?"

Trista acted like she hadn't heard.

Three days later, on a busy, late Friday afternoon, Scott saw old Mr. Woodley, leaning heavily on his cane for support, totter toward Trista's check-out counter.

"Oh no!" Trista groaned to Hal Cope, who was sacking groceries for her. "There comes that old, deaf man again. Why doesn't he use a basket?" she asked, as one of his numerous items dropped to the floor.

Hal and Trista laughed loudly as they watched Mr. Woodley stoop over and try to retrieve the dropped item.

"I don't have much patience with old people," Trista told Hal. "They ought to stay home where they belong instead of becoming a menace to society."

"Sh-h!" Hal exclaimed. "Not so loud, Trista. He'll hear you."

"He's deaf," Trista remarked. "Or nearly so. And he can't see the prices good either. He'll very likely argue with me over the price of some of his items, see if he doesn't."

Seeing Mr. Woodley's predicament and how hard it was for him to bend over, Scott hurried to help the aged man, remarking kindly, "Here, I'll get that for you."

Quickly, he picked the can of salmon up from the floor, also the box of crackers which had fallen from the man's arms, smiling into Mr. Woodley's confused looking face and patting him gently on the shoulder before hurrying back to his own cash register and check out counter.

"You are most kind!" the voice of Scott's next customer exclaimed as he began to check out her groceries. "I'm sure your parents are extremely proud of you: I know I would be if you were my son."

"Thank you, ma'am. Thank you." Scott beamed. "You know, the Bible tells us that as we would have men do to us, so we are to do to them. And what a different world this would be if every one practiced this beautiful and practical Golden Rule, as many people call it."

The woman smiled, saying, "How right you are! Do unto others as you would have them do unto you, huh? My grandparents quoted this many times to us as we were growing up. What's even better is that they practiced this lovely principle all through their lives. If they had an enemy, nobody ever knew about it."

"Christians, huh?" Scott asked with shining eyes and a smiling face.

"Through and through," the woman answered with tears in her eyes. "Devout Christians."

"It's the most wonderful thing in the world. Being a Christian, I mean," Scott stated with a shine on his manly young face. "Christ means everything to me."

The woman was silent for a while. Then she said, brokenly, "Thanks young man; your courage to speak out for Jesus has ignited the flickering, nearly-dead spark in my heart. Today, when I get home, I'm going to take care of a long-neglected matter: I'm going to make my way back to the Good Shepherd's fold and get the fire burning brightly in my soul once again. If God can keep a young man like you, He can surely keep a middle ager like me."

"He promised that His grace would be sufficient for each of us," Scott emphasized as he tallied her groceries on the cash register.

He was surprised, when he had checked out three more customers, to see Mr. Woodley come through his check-out lane.

"Did you find everything you need?" Scott asked with a smile.

"Almost," came the feeble reply.

"Which means that you need something you were unable to find, right?" Scott asked brightly. "What is it, Mr. Woodley? Ken's fast on his feet; he'll get the things you didn't find and have them here ever so quickly. He's my grocery sacker today and he'll be your errand boy. Right, Ken?"

"Right on, Mr. Woodley! What's more, it will be service with a smile," Ken said brightly.

"Thank you," Mr. Woodley answered. "I need a can of pumpkin and two cans of evaporated milk. That's it."

"It's as good as here," Ken stated, hurrying away after the items.

Scott came around the counter and helped the aged man with his armload of grocery items, saying, "You had quite a heavy load, Mr. Woodley. There, that's better!" he added, as he placed the last item on the checkout counter.

Mr. Woodley heaved a sigh of relief. "I hadn't intended to get so many things," he admitted. "I should have taken a cart. But it's hard for me to get things out of there anymore."

"Don't you worry," Scott consoled, "so long as I'm here, I'll help you. It's a joy and a pleasure to help our customers. Someday, if the Lord spares me, I'm going to be old too. I'll appreciate a helping hand then."

Mr. Woodley took a deep breath, like he was very tired. Then he said, "You're a fine young man. So many of the young people have no respect -- or concern -- for the old among them. Take her, for instance," and he motioned over to Trista. "She's rude, uncaring and downright cruel. She thinks I'm deaf: she said so. But I'm not. I heard everything she said. Thinks I should have a basket, too. Well, she'll learn a thing or two one of these days -- if she lives to be as old as I am. But, you know, it hurts to be treated with such disdain and . . . and mockery . . . and with such total disrespect and carelessness."

"We were once able-bodied people, working hard and making an honest living. Yes, time was when we left our mark on the world -- for good. We were taught to be respectful, honest, courteous and polite, and to live lives of righteousness and uprightness. We went to the old for counsel and advice and always sought out the hoary head when in doubt of a thing. We had respect for our elders, heeding their words and abiding by their decisions. We honored them; their wisdom was better to us than gold. They instilled undying faith in God in us. We were not only their sons and daughters but we became children of their God, as well."

Scott felt tears warm his eyes. "That's wonderful, Mr. Woodley!" he exclaimed hoarsely. "That's how I've been brought up too."

"I know, my boy. I know. You're one of the few rare ones left in today's world. Most of the younger set has little or no time for those of us who are old and feeble. And even less time for God. Oh, there you are," he cried, as Ken placed the pumpkin and canned milk on the counter top. "I really do appreciate your kindness. Thank you. Thank you."

As Scott checked Mr. Woodley's things out, his heart rejoiced. Being kind and compassionate and tender-hearted was natural for a Christian; as natural and as easy as breathing in and out was. Yes, the love of God in one's heart made it easy to be kind.