

“Empowered by Forgiveness”

Apparently, the use of guilt to inspire generosity isn't working too well these days - at least when it comes to the practice of “guilt tipping.” Guilt tipping is the latest social pressure or discomfort customers feel when asked to tip, especially on digital payment screens for services where tipping was not traditionally expected. This can include picking up take out, picking up a drycleaning order, buying a coffee, or other self-service situations, and it leads customers to tip out of a feeling of obligation rather than genuine appreciation.

Judging from the substantial push-back by customers, many are not impressed by the clever attempt to use guilt to secure tips. In fact, instead of generously offering tips, customers are increasingly withholding tips!

Has anyone ever attempted to motivate or control you through guilt? A common practice is to exploit guilt; after all, the ends justify the means, don't they? Psychologists explain that the clever use of guilt can give a person a sense of control, power, and superiority. And by nature, who wouldn't like a little more of those goodies?

Thankfully, God handles our guilt in another way and with an entirely different motive. God's approach to our guilt is to forgive, not exploit. With the psalmist we must honestly acknowledge, “My guilt has overwhelmed me.” (Psalm 38), and with John we most humbly recognize, “If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” (1 John 1) However, John's summation of our state of guilt doesn't end there. Here's the punchline: “But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just, will forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1)

Although the ways of the world, the devil, and even our own sinful nature lead us to believe that true power can be found in guilt and exploiting guilt to achieve self-serving ends, God's Word teaches of another power, true power: “I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God unto salvation...in the Gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith...” (Romans 1)

The power of God's forgiveness (the gift of righteousness purchased for us by Jesus) transforms our relationship with God in wondrous ways. This Gospel-powered transformation endows us with trust in His promises, true joy, a peace beyond all human understanding, and eternal life with Him and all believers. This Gospel-powered forgiveness also makes us eager in our relationships with one another, “forgiving as the Lord forgives us.” (Colossians 1)

This was the promise God made and kept through the Christ Child who brought us the ultimate knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of our sins. (Luke 1) Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing!

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