



Be a Light at the Supermarket

A SAMPLE "GO FORTH" INITIATIVE

Ever get discouraged with the lack of civility at supermarkets? On a recent excursion I nearly got run down twice, broke up a fist fight, got a sticky wad of gum stuck to my shoe, was treated to the second hand smoke of a store employee, was barked at by a dog riding in a cart... and that was all in the parking lot before even entering the store.

It's easy to notice and lament the ongoing breakdown in basic civility and courtesy in public places; quite another matter to avoid the habit of playing the victim to any degree in favor of actually doing something positive to start turning it around. Here, then, is my simple Supermarket project for folks tempted to curse the darkness instead of simply 'lighting a candle.'

1. **Have peace.** If you believe in God and want Him in your life, He's living in you. This fact alone should be enough to give you peace. And trust me, you're going to need all the peace you can get in public places. Thank Him, and praise Him. After all, if you're visiting the supermarket, He's seeing to your needs and the needs of those around you.
2. **Put your smart phone away.** If you're going to focus on being charitable, best to eliminate all the distractions.
3. **Make friendly eye contact when appropriate.** If you're going to spread a little love and engage with people, you're going to have to make a little eye contact when appropriate.
4. **Smile**, or at the very least, stop looking so grave, and unapproachable. Get out of your own head and make yourself available.
5. **Be courteous.** No sense expecting or demanding that your fellow shoppers be courteous if you're not going to lead by example.
6. **Get to know the help.** Learn their names and strike up a conversation. Not only does this have the added benefit of generally getting better service, there's no better place to start than with the very people anchored to the store who will come into contact with so many other customers throughout the day. Give a store worker a small boost and watch the ripple effect.

Be a Light at the Supermarket *(continued)*

7. **Be patient.** If you're in the habit of being a light in public, then this goes without saying. But if the wheels of charity are a bit rusty on your cart, then cut folks some slack and continue to forge good habits. Society didn't suddenly get unfriendly and discourteous all at once. It happened by degrees, so expect that it will move in the other positive direction by degrees as well. Stay with it.
8. **Be aware of opportunities to pitch in and be helpful.** If you're trusting in God, chances are that opportunities will present themselves without you having to concoct stuff and force it. Maybe someone will ask for help retrieving an item from a high shelf. Maybe someone is frustrated trying to find a can of Cheez Whiz and you happen to know exactly where it's stocked because it's a staple on your homemade Philly's. Did someone leave their cart in the handicapped spot? No problem, simply take it to the return rack. Give way in the aisle. Hold a door. Don't be stingy with a compliment. Smile again... chuckle, laugh.
9. **Slow down.** The break neck pace we try to keep is one of the many things that's literally killing us, so try to slow down a bit and smell the roses. Jesus was never too busy or too rushed to be charitable. In fact, He left us the greatest example of what it means to be charitable in all the small, ordinary things that make up daily life.
10. **Rinse and repeat.** The most important part of building better habits is staying consistent. It doesn't matter how well you perform on any individual outing to the supermarket. Sustained effort is what's going to make the real difference. That's why when you start new habits it's best to make them so easy that it's almost laughable how easy it is. For example:
 - **Want to build an exercise habit?** Set a goal to exercise for 1 minute a day.
 - **Want to start a good writing habit?** Establish a goal to write 3 sentences a day.
 - **Want to eat better?** Start out by aiming to eat 1 healthy meal a week.

At the start of this thing, your performance is almost irrelevant. Setting out to change the world is never going to matter if you never stick with it for the long-run. Make your new habit of renewing common courtesy (a charity) so easy that you simply can't say no to it.

