

## Sympathy

The bottom line of this chapter: everybody has an innate, uncontrollable desire for sympathy. That's why they whine and moan. They're looking for sympathy. Give it to them. They will love you for it.

Dale says there's a magic phrase you can use to defuse a tense situation, stop arguments, and build good will. He puts it like this, "I don't blame you one iota for feeling as you do. If I were you I would undoubtedly feel just as you do." That's how you give them sympathy. These days we use the feel, felt, found formula: "I know how you feel. I felt the same way. What I found was..."

Dale points out that people are mostly born the way they are. Between their gene pool and their life experience, they can't help acting the way they do. They can't take credit for it and they can't be blamed for it. So I don't need to gain a permanent frown trying to figure out why they do or say what they do. They're just naturally going to come at me with a certain level of animosity, or an acid-filled response to what I did or said, or forgot to do or say. I just thank God I'm not in their shoes ("There but for the grace of God...").

Whoa! Wait a minute. Didn't he tell me yesterday to walk a mile in their shoes? And are rapists and murderers to be excused for their behavior on account of their gene pool and life experience? To listen to some liberal psychologists you'd think so, but that's not what Dale is saying at all.

Remember. This section of the book is about how to win people to my way of thinking. The first thing I need to do is de-fuse the situation and put them in a positive mental state. If I don't, they won't hear another word I say. One of the keys is sympathizing with them. Dale is saying that if I want to avoid losing energy and sleep over one of these obnoxious people, then I should take human nature into account. I tell them they're right. I agree with them that if I were them, I'd have the same complaint. That's true enough, right? - luckily I'm *not* them. Now I can let go of it emotionally. I've smoothed their ruffled feathers, sent them on their way with a smile on their face, and I walked away from it a winner. Sympathizing is easy and it's effective.

What do I do when I wind up the target for every negative experience this person has ever encountered in their life? They suspect I'm after something from them. They say I'm using people and asking them to do the same. Why in the world would they want to stoop to doing this?

So I sympathize with them. "Boy! I know just how you feel. I felt the same way when I got approached. But you know what I found? ..." They may just be testing me to see how strong my conviction level is. They don't want to associate with a wimp. They're looking for a leader in me, just like I'm looking for a leader in them.

The beauty of this is that the call is by invitation only. I don't have to share it with everyone. I don't have to cast pearls before swine. In fact, I'm instructed not to do that. I'm free to offer it to everyone, and I'm also free to walk away if someone becomes hostile or rude. What I don't want to happen is to lose the chance to win someone to Christ who is merely suspicious and looking for reassurance.

Ain't it great.