

47

THE BEARDED BIKER

Halloween night in Myrtle Beach, SC will always be a favorite memory of mine. That was the night I was completely caught off-guard by a biker. A biker who was standing in the customer service line at a Walmart.

At first, I thought he was mad. He looked angry and his eyes were glossy.

He walked up to my youngest daughter and said something that thoroughly confused me.

She didn't know what to do as this was not something we'd ever gone over.

Let me back up five minutes to add some context.

My two eldest daughters had just purchased black nail polish for their costumes as tonight is Halloween.

My youngest then chose to spend her money on fake black nails to go with hers, but we had separate transactions as they were all using their own money.

Everyone's happy at this point.

We all then went to the restroom to wash our hands after shopping. As my son and I are leaving the men's room we hear an argument and we know exactly who it is.

No, it's not the biker guy. He comes into play shortly.

It's the girls and the argument is over nails. And money. And being wasteful. And wants. And needs.

So I inquire and quickly get to what the actual problem is. It's about the fact that we now had black nail polish and a little someone now wants to spend nearly ten dollars on fake nails because hers aren't long enough.

Oy. When the emotional parts fly it gets tough.

"I don't care that they have black nail polish, I want longer nails!" she says.

"She doesn't need fake nails, we'll just paint them for her so she can save her money," one said.

"No one's going to even see your nails so it doesn't matter," I hear from another.

"You can't go spending your money on things you don't need," my son adds in.

"I do NEED these! You shut up!" she fires back at him.

This whole exchange takes what, like, twenty seconds? Okay, enough is enough. I ask my youngest to step aside and I tell her we can return them if she'd like.

Fortunately for us the Customer Service area was right next door.

I walk over with just her and we got in line and we stood for probably four to five minutes.

During that time I did what I always do In that I spoke with her about her choices. I spoke about consequences, about trade-offs in life, and about spending money wisely. Then, I let her choose without pressure and I told her I'd support her decision either way.

So, with tears in her eyes, she softly decided to proceed. She said that she really wanted the nails but that she'd probably be better off saving her money.

“Excuse me... but, I want her to have the nails and I’m buying them!” I hear as I had a small wad of cash quickly pushed up into my face.

In all my near 45 years, I’d never met Rick Taylor before this moment.

Rick, the well-spoken and articulate bearded biker, was not going to let this end the way it was about to.

Rick, also now with glossy eyes (maybe he was returning onions?), said he had overheard our entire conversation and he was moved.

He said he was so impressed by the way I spoke to her and for how I was using this as a teachable moment that he just had to get involved. He said it was just not something you see or hear anymore and that he thought I should be recognized and that she should know his thoughts.

Well, Rick, you won me over. What you did today will go down as one of my all-time favorite memories, and here’s why:

- *You reinforced a lesson at a critical time.*
- *You appreciated me, publicly, in front of my kids.*
- *You made a little girl’s day a whole lot better.*
- *You showed true compassion and empathy.*
- *You got down and spoke at my daughter’s level and treated her with as much respect as you treated me.*
- *You appreciated me for being me and just doing what I regularly do.*
- *And last, you thanked me personally, and shared what my words meant to you.*

Today was a win-win my new friend. You’re a true gentleman and I thank you.

Oh wait, it gets better.

Just as I ask Rick for his full name, contact info, and if I could share the story, my youngest daughter walks off and speaks to the lady at the Customer Service counter.

We parted ways shortly thereafter and walked out into the parking lot.

I'm finishing the story up for the other three who couldn't hear all of what just happened (they heard bits and pieces), when my youngest says, "Wait, what? He bought the nails for me?"

"Yes, honey, and that was one of the coolest things to ever happen to us," I say.

"But I returned them," she says.

"Returned what?" I ask.

"The nails!" she answers. "I returned them when you were talking to that guy."

My eyes bulging at this point, I said, "What? Let's go back in and get them."

"Really?? Yay!!!" she squeals... and that's when it all connected for her.

Again I say, if we look outside of what's being forced to us via major media networks it's easy to find the good.

That particular day, both Rick and I found some.

If you ever meet Rick Taylor, thank him for being a great example of someone who was willing to step outside his own comfort zone and do something for a complete stranger while wanting nothing in return. Lessons like these will never be forgotten.

