

Grace Notes

Gods grace for everyday living

Don't knock the flock

By: [Debora M. Coty](#)

Have you ever been sitting in church, trying to concentrate on the words of the shepherd, when distractions from fellow sheep drive a worm up your nose? (I heard a sheep sermon once and it seems sheep frequently have that worm-up-the-ole-snoz problem.)

Do you recognize any of these?

- Old Man River – the (usually elderly) gentleman who enthusiastically belts out his deep, bass voice 50 decibels LOUDer than everyone else.
- The Uzi Laugher – the lady who responds to every pastoral joke with a piercing, machine gun laugh: HA-A-A-A-A-A-A-A!
- Jolly Green Giant – the only 6'8" string bean in the church and he inevitably sits right in front of *you*. The only way to see the pulpit is to peek through Jolly's armpits.
- The Hoarse Whisperer – a converser behind you using highly audible stage whispers; often occurs during praise songs like they're merely the opening act and deserve no respect whatsoever.
- Madame Butterfly - the peratic-voiced woman who adds an unwritten ultra-soaring soprano to every song.
- Amener - this overly-agreeable person is compelled to agree with the pastor every five seconds with a resounding, AMEN!
- Crinkle Chorus – loud candy wrappers usually heard in the silence immediately preceding the sermon. Why doesn't somebody invent cloth wrappers for church?
- The Wheezer/Sneezer - you're already seated and settled when the first juicy blast of droplet-laden air from behind blows your hair over your eyes. As one "God bless you" follows another, you can just feel the infectious bacteria swimming around your drenched neck toward your facial orifices. Your only defense is to hike your collar like a Catholic priest and use your bulletin as a fan to deflect heat-guided germ missiles.
- Au Natural Man – the fellow (usually elderly) who somehow forgot to bathe this week. He enters late, sits as close to you as possible, and smells like he stopped to roll in a dead possum on the way to church.
- Bird Nest Lady – still wearing her teased 70's do, this short, stocky lady thinks big hair makes her look tall and thin. The only way to see around her is to shift from side to side like a pendulum.
- Sermon Interactors - these folks tend to grow in bunches like grapes; they like to nod a lot, point their fingers, and talk back to the pastor in short, clipped sentences: "Oh, yeah!", "You said it!", "That's right!" You feel like you're at a Go God pep rally.
- Pyrotechnic Man – a product of the electronic era, this businessman is so important, he can't remove his cell phone for a one hour church service, so he leaves it clipped to his belt where it distracts the entire row of people behind him by flashing vivid fireworks with each (constant) incoming call; as annoying as this is, it's less so than the fellow who neglects to turn his ringer off.
- Goat-Lady Singer - this woman warbles with a choppy vibrato that sounds amazing like a goat bleating



barnyard praise. Just *try* to keep a straight face if you're sitting directly in front of her. Resist the temptation to cluck.

- Peanut Gallery – kids old enough to know better who spend the entire service chatting to each other or their parents. Fight the impulse to remove your socks and plug their little mouths.

Okay, having said all those wicked things, I shall now beg forgiveness and respectfully ask *not* to be removed forcibly from the next church service.

As is His habit, God wastes no time in speaking to my poor attitude: "**Our Father is kind; you be kind. Don't pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults - unless, of course, you want the same treatment. Don't condemn those who are down; that hardness can boomerang. Be easy on people; you'll find life a lot easier**" (Luke 6: 35-37, The Message).

God never said His ewes, rams, and lambs should be clones. It would be a pretty boring flock if they were. It's up to me to chill out and learn *not* to pick, jump, and criticize. After all, you never know which sheep may be dealing with a nose worm.

Debbie's articles have appeared in dozens of magazines including [Discipleship Journal](#), [MomSense](#) and [Today's Christian Woman](#) and she has completed her first book. Contact her at GraceNotes@deboracoty.com for comments, commiserations or speaking engagement requests. She is a member of the [Christian Writer's Guild](#).