The Upside with Fuel Savings and Cookie Making



JEANA BABCOCK Jeana@BabcockAutoCare.com

Cookies. Who doesn't love a good cookie? What's your favorite kind?

A couple of months ago I had a discussion with my friend, Kelly. He was telling me about how he is trying to grow and be a better person. In an example of what he is working on, he said "If there are twenty people in a room and someone brings in a plate with only ten cookies on it, I want to be the one who gets a cookie."

When he shared this with me, I considered it a moment. What would be my response? Envisioning myself in that same situation, my first thought was—I would want to go make more cookies so everyone had at least one—if not more! My second thought was that I would want to cut each cookie in half so that everyone got a taste. My third was that if I couldn't make more, or cut them all in half, I would simply not take one.

How about you? What thoughts would you have as that plate of cookies entered the room? Are you a cookie-taker or a cookie-maker?

Truthfully, I used to be a cookie-taker just like Kelly. I was self-focused. I wanted to be chosen to have the cookie. I wanted to talk about how special I was for getting one of the cookies. And I even wanted the best-looking cookie there was!

Generally speaking, I felt better when I felt important. Feeling important had everything to do with me—what I had to say, the things I did, the goodness of what I had done in the past, and so on. And I would want others to do things for me, buy things for me, or think of me first. Being a cookie-taker was all about me—me—me.

Is there an upside to being a cookie-taker? Well, I suppose there is one benefit—cookie-takers get satisfied. Or do they?

Looking back, in the years that I was a cookie-taker, I was never fulfilled—I always wanted more. My cravings for "cookies" seemed to increase and I became addicted—the more I had, the more I wanted—my appetite was never satiated.

Here's the real upside—when we transition from being a cookie-taker to a cookie-maker, that is when we become truly fulfilled. And I have more good news—we all have the ability to convert from a taker to a maker.

Before we get into the nitty-gritty of making cookies, I have another story with an upside.

A few weeks ago, after my husband came to bed and turned out his light, he said, "I saved four bucks on gas today!" Talk about a real romantic turn-on! LOL. I love it when he speaks of financial savings.

Though we have no control over the price of gas, are there things we can do to save on fuel? Yes! I'm here to reveal some great money-saving tips and tell you about how my hubs saved four bucks at the pump!

USE YOUR CRUISE

Except for hilly or mountainous driving, when you use your cruise control, your RPMs remain steady, and you are sure to increase your fuel economy. My only caution would be to refrain from pushing that cruise button in inclement weather conditions—it's safer to use your accelerator during those times.

TIMING LIGHTS

Accelerating from a stop uses more fuel—especially if you have a lead foot and accelerate quickly when a light turns green (also known as a jack-rabbit start). Work on your timing—look far ahead to the next light, and if it is red, let off the gas to start slowing down in advance. This helps come to a slower stop and you may not need to fully stop if the light turns green before you get there. Smooth transitions between slowing and accelerating assist in saving fuel.

FOLLOWING DISTANCE

Just as with traffic lights, by keeping a nice distance between you and the car in front of you, you are more able to make smoother adjustments to your speed and increase fuel mileage.

PROPER INFLATION

Driving on properly inflated tires saves on fuel economy and well as improves the life of your tires—double savings! A good rule of thumb is to check them monthly



and more often as the outdoor temps change. The recommended tire pressure for your vehicle can typically be found on a sticker inside the driver's door.

UNLOAD CARGO

The heavier the load, the more fuel you will use. So, if your vehicle is jam-packed with cargo, you can expect to spend more at the pump. Of course, if you are traveling, you probably need everything you've loaded in. But if you aren't, be sure to unload unneeded items.

APPROPRIATE TIRES

Different tire designs are built for different conditions. They all have what is called "rolling resistance"—the higher the resistance, the worse the gas mileage will be. For instance, winter tires are designed for safer driving in the snow—with them comes a higher resistance. So, make sure you change them out when the snowy season ends for better gas mileage. And when it's time to get new tires, talk to your tire advisor about the best tires for your vehicle that will keep you safe and yield the best gas mileage.

ALIGNMENT CHECKS

Misaligned tires drag and can decrease gas mileage up to 10%. This is why it's important to get your alignment checked regularly—at least yearly, if not twice per year. You will also want to get your alignment checked after getting new tires or having suspension work done. This doesn't just save the life of your tires and parts—it can increase fuel economy significantly.

FUEL ADDITIVES

There are products that can be added to your fuel system that clean and condition it to make it function at its best—some well-known brands have been shown to improve gas mileage by up to 20%. With today's prices, investing in these products will definitely yield a great return on your investment. But a word to the wise—don't just dump any old additive into your fuel system. It's best to seek help from automotive professionals who are able to guide you in what is best for your vehicle.

And now we are back to those sweet seven words my husband spoke into the dark: "I saved four bucks on gas today!"

HOW'D HE DO IT?

When our son was home for a visit in May, he introduced me to an app called "Upside". Perhaps it's named for the "upside" of savings it provides in this expensive gas season. For some reason, I was nervous to use it at first. But after a few weeks, I used his code JACE8337 (he gets a little credit if others use it) and I finally gave it a shot. Though the first time set up was a bit more entailed, now it is easy.

I simply open the app, find the gas stations in my area that have savings, choose the one I want, select "Claim Offer" and follow the steps. Since June, I have saved between fifteen and fifty cents per gallon depending on where I was. And my grand total savings thus far is \$31.36—imagine how many cookies I could make with that!

Because I referred my husband to this app with my little code, I get a whole penny for every gallon he pumps. So, the truth is, on that night that he got me all excited with his words, together we really earned \$4.16! That's what I call an upside to the Upside App!

And now, let us come full circle back to taking and making cookies. Of course, I am not really talking about cookies at all. I am talking about serving others and even putting them before ourselves. How can we transition from being takers to makers?

Let's do a little math. We are looking for an end total of 100%. Rate yourself on how often you think of or serve in

these three categories: Jesus, Others, You. In percentages are you a 0-20-80, 30-40-30, 50-50-0, or a different combo? What's the best balance of percentages?

LET'S EXPLORE THIS...

Perhaps you are suffering from an illness and your percentages are 50-0-50 because you are unable to serve others physically. Is there anything you can do to increase your "others" percentage? You can pray for people—who needs your prayers today? Do not underestimate the power of prayer and how you can make a difference by lifting others up. Could you be a mentor to someone? If you have a heart for Jesus and have gained wisdom in your walk with Him, do not underestimate the goodness of how you can be used in the lives of others. Seek God and ask Him to reveal ways for you to serve others—even if you have limitations. When we begin to take the focus off ourselves and seek to serve others in some way, our joy and fulfillment increase tremendously.

Perhaps you are in a crazy-busy season in life with work, kids, and all the things. You are serving at home and at work and maybe even in your sleep! Your numbers are 10-70-20. How could you get these numbers to be more balanced? I have learned that we have time for what we make time for. Is there screen time you can cut out and replace it with God time? Could you get a family devotional like "Keys for Kids" that we used when our kids were little and bring God into your family conversations? Could you invite God into your meal times, play times, and story times? Could you ask your children for help and involve them in serving others outside of your family? Could you set an alarm on your phone while you are working to remind you to take a moment to pray and meditate on the things you are grateful for? Could you put all the kids to bed a little early in order to soak in the tub, do a workout, or read a good book to increase the ways you are caring for yourself? Could you wake up early and read a verse, write it down, and keep it with you to read for the rest of the day? Could you listen to praise music while you are cleaning or cooking or baking cookies? There are so many ways to change your numbers, but it definitely takes intentionality and time.

Perhaps you are retired. You've done all the things and for over 60 years you've served God and others. Your numbers used to be 40-40-20. Now, it's high time you put yourself first and just take it easy for the rest of your life. Your numbers are now 5-5-90. What do you do and talk about all day? What does it feel like to put yourself in the #1 position in your life? If you are honest, are you truly fulfilled with these numbers? I'm willing to bet that you are not—you are longing for something more. What is missing? What about a purpose? The way I see it is this: if you are not dead, then God still has a purpose for your life—and it's not to play more golf or focus more on you. Pursue your purpose, change your way of thinking, balance your numbers back out, and use all of the extra time you now have to make cookies! Just think about how sweet it would be to become an awesome baker in

We all have a desire to be seen, feel validated, earn praise ... have importance. We all have selfish inclinations—a lean toward being cookie takers. But the upside is that we lean toward selflessness and learn how to be cookiemakers.

It's all about seeking JOY in this order: Jesus – Others—You. That's where the real fulfillment is.

What I have found is that the higher percentage allocated to Jesus, the more perfect the other numbers are. If we are reading God's word, active in Bible study, listening to Godly podcasts and praise music, memorizing verses, being grateful in praise to Him, attending church regularly, following and obeying Jesus, and praying in all things and for all people, then our "others" percent automatically goes up. How can it not if we have a heart for Jesus and He has a heart for serving?

Here's another upside to this Joy-filled mathematical equation: When Jesus is first and gets the highest percentage, you automatically get more too. Not in the way that you think of yourself more or you do more for yourself. But in that, you get truly fulfilled. You don't need to take cookies to fill your desire. You need to seek real nourishment—the Bread of Life.

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." John 6:35

Did you hear that? Not only do you get fed with the Bread of Life, but you also get the Living water to quench your thirst. And because you are so fulfilled by Him, you will become the best cookie-maker in how you serve others and you'll get so much fulfillment that you'll no longer even consider being a cookie-taker.



"We care for people and fix cars!"

