

## **The Importance of Attitude**

### **Philippians 2:3-8**

**Jim Smith went to church on Sunday morning. He heard the organist miss a note during the prelude and he winced. He saw a teenager talking when everyone was supposed to bow in prayer. He felt like the usher was watching him to see what he put in the offering plate and it made him boil. He kept count of the preacher's sermon blunders and made it to five. As Jim Smith slipped out through the side door during the closing hymn, he muttered to himself, "Never again! What of bunch of idiots and hypocrites!"**

**Ron Jones went to church on Sunday morning. He heard the organist play an arrangement of "A Mighty Fortress" and he was thrilled by the majesty of it. He heard a young girl take a moment in the service to speak her simple moving message of the difference her faith makes in her life. He was glad to see that his church was taking a special offering for the hungry children of Nigeria. He especially appreciated the sermon that Sunday – it answered a question that had bothered him for a long time. As Ron Jones walked out of the doors of the church he thought, "How can a man come here and NOT feel the presence of God."**

**Both Jim Smith and Ron Jones went to the same church on the same Sunday morning, and each man found what he was looking for. The difference between Jim Smith and Ron Jones was attitude.**

**In his book, Strengthening Your Grip, Chuck Swindoll says this about attitude. "Words can never adequately convey the incredible impact of our attitude toward**

**life. The longer I live the more convinced I become that life is 10 percent what happens to us and 90 percent how we respond to it. I believe the single most significant decision I can make on a day-to-day basis is my choice of attitude. It is more important than my past, my education, my bankroll, my successes or failures, fame or pain, what other people think of me or say about me, my circumstances, or my position. Attitude keeps me going or cripples my progress ... It alone fuels my fire or assaults my hope. When my attitude is right, there's no barrier too high, no valley too deep, no dream too extreme, and no challenge too great for me."**

**This morning we're going to begin a five part series on attitude. First we'll talk about the importance of attitude. Then we'll discuss attitude development. The third message will deal with attitude busters – things that can cause our attitude to go downhill. And then I'll share two messages that will help us to change our attitude.**

**If you're totally happy with your current attitude (if you don't think you can improve on the attitude you have right now), you can take the next five weeks off. Stay home and I'll send you five messages on Romans 12:3. Romans 12:3 says, "For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment."**

**If you don't think you can have a better attitude, you need to think again. The truth is we can all have better attitudes. And this five part series will help us to have better attitudes. So make it a point to be here. And if for some GOOD reason you can't be here, listen to the messages on our website. Live is always better than Memorex, but Memorex works when live doesn't.**

**That said let's talk about the importance of attitude.**

**Let's begin by defining attitude. What is attitude? Your attitude is formed by your thoughts and feelings and is expressed by your words and actions. Your attitude is what's in your heart, and sooner or later what's in your heart will come out. In Luke 6:45, Jesus says, "The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks."**

**Attitude can be contagious. Have you noticed what happens to a group of people when one person expresses a negative attitude? Have you noticed the lift you get when a friend expresses a positive attitude – an attitude of love, acceptance, encouragement, etc.?**

**A negative attitude is a dreaded disease. It results in a closed mind and a dark future. But when the attitude is positive and conducive to growth, the mind expands and the progress begins!**

**This morning I'd like to share seven statements that highlight the importance of attitude. He who has ears let him hear.**

**First, attitude is important because it determines our approach to life.**

**Whenever grandma and grandpa visited their grandchildren, grandpa would at some point sit down and take a nap. One day, as a practical joke, the kids decided to put limburger cheese on grandpa's moustache – they waited for grandpa to doze off and carefully smeared some cheese under his nose. Eventually grandpa woke up and began sniffing. He said, "Man, this room stinks." He got up, went out to the kitchen, took a good whiff, and said, "The kitchen stinks, too!" Hoping to get a**

**breath of fresh air, grandpa went outside. He took a deep breath and exclaimed, “My goodness, the whole world stinks!”**

**Some people have a “limburger cheese” attitude. They think the whole world stinks.**

**A good way to test your attitude is to ask yourself the question, “How do I feel about the way life is treating me?” If your attitude toward life is good, you’ll have a good life. If your attitude toward life is so-so, you’ll have a so-so life. If your attitude toward life is bad, you’ll have a bad life.**

**If you analyze the conversations of people who lead unhappy, unfulfilled lives, you’ll discover that they believe the whole world is out to get them.**

**Adopting a good, healthy attitude about your life may not affect society, but it WILL affect you. We are individually responsible for our view of life. Nothing and/or no one can affect our attitude without our permission. The Bible tells us that we reap what we sow (see Gal. 6:7). The attitude we sow will have a great affect on the life we reap.**

**Second, attitude is important because it determines our relationships with people.**

**People are funny (Art Linkletter had it right). Tell a man that there are 3 billion stars and he’ll believe you. But tell a man that a bench has just been painted and he’ll touch it to make sure.**

**Yes, people are funny, and at times they are frustrating. They’ll show up at the wrong place at the wrong time for the wrong reason. People are always interesting, but not always charming. You can’t get along WITH people and you can’t get along WITHOUT people. That’s why it’s important to build proper relationships with**

people. Teddy Roosevelt once said, “The most important single ingredient to the formula of success is knowing how to get along with people.”

The best way to get along with people is to follow Matthew 7:12 ... what we call the “Golden Rule.” In Matthew 7:12, Jesus says, “In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.” If we have the attitude that people are important and treat people like they’re important, our relationships with people will be fantastic.

I want to challenge and encourage you to take the “Golden Rule Challenge.” For one week treat every person that you meet like the most important person on earth. Do you know what’ll happen if you do this? People will begin treating you the same way. What goes around comes around!

Third, attitude is important because often times it’s the only difference between success and failure. This truth is illustrated in the story of a young bride from the East who went to live with her husband at an U.S. Army base on the edge of a desert in California.

The young woman’s husband, who was stationed at this desert camp, told her about the poor living conditions at the camp and encouraged her to remain in the East. But they were young and in love (you know how it is) and after some discussion decided that they should be together. So the young woman went to be with her husband.

The only house they could find was a rundown shack near an Indian village. The heat was unbearable in the daytime – 115 degrees in the shade. The wind blew constantly, spreading dust and sand all over the place. The days were long and

boring for the young wife, but her sweetheart was with her at night and she was able to hang in there.

When the young woman's husband was ordered to go into the desert for two weeks of maneuvers, her loneliness and poor living conditions finally got to her. She wrote to her mother back East, saying she couldn't take it any longer – she was coming home.

The young woman's mother wrote back immediately. In her letter were these two lines: "Two men looked through prison bars. One saw mud, the other saw stars."

The young woman read those two lines over and over again, and finally realized that she had spent most of her time looking at the mud. She said to herself, "From now on I'm going to look for the stars!"

The next day she set out to make friends with the Indians. At first the Indians were reluctant to befriend her, but as soon as they sensed her genuine interest, they returned her friendship. She became familiar with their language, their culture, their history, with everything about them. She also began to study the desert. In time the desert changed from a desolate place to a place of beauty. After a while the young woman became such an expert on the area that she wrote a book about it.

What changed? Not the desert. Not the Indians. The young woman changed. She changed her attitude. And by changing her attitude the young woman transformed a seemingly miserable situation into a highly rewarding experience. Do you understand the importance of attitude?

**Let me give you a fourth statement that highlights the importance of attitude. Here it is: Our attitude at the beginning of a task will affect its outcome more than anything else.**

**Coaches understand how important it is for their team to have the right attitude before facing a tough opponent. Surgeons want their patients to be mentally prepared before they go into surgery. Why? Because the right attitude at the beginning leads to success in the end. The old saying goes, “All’s well that ends well.” It can also be said that, “All’s well that begins well.”**

**Many projects fail or succeed before they begin. The difference is attitude.**

**A salesman went to an island in the South Pacific to sell shoes. When he arrived he was shocked to see that no one wore shoes. Discouraged, he called his home office and said, “There’s no reason for me to stay here. Nobody wears shoes.”**

**A month later another shoe salesman from a different company went to the same island in the South Pacific. When he saw that no one wore shoes he got excited. He called his home office and said, “Send me ten thousand pairs of shoes. Everyone here needs them.”**

**Two salesmen saw the same thing, but looked at it differently. One got discouraged. The other got excited. Attitude made the difference.**

**Let me give you a fifth statement that highlights the importance of attitude: The right attitude can turn our problems into blessings.**

**Do you know the difference between an obstacle and an opportunity? Your attitude toward it. Every opportunity has a difficulty and every difficulty has an**

**opportunity. When a person with a good attitude is faced with a difficult situation, he makes the best of it while he gets the worst of it.**

**How many of you have seen the movie “Forrest Gump”? According to Forrest, “Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you’re gonna get.” Here’s another life simile. Life is like a grindstone. Depending on what you’re made of, it can grind you down or polish you.**

**Let me tell you a story about a small business man whose clothing store was threatened with extinction. A national chain store had moved in and acquired all the properties on the block, except for the small business man’s property. The chain store tried several times to buy his property but he refused to sell. Finally, the president of the chain store said, “We’ll build around you and put you out of business!”**

**In time the small merchant was hemmed in on both sides by this huge department store. The day came for the new store to open. Large banners reading “Grand Opening” were placed on the huge building. The small merchant countered with a banner of his own. Stretching across the width of his building, the small merchant hung a huge banner reading “Main Entrance.”**

**This small business man turned his problem into a blessing. If our attitude is right, we can do the same.**

**Sixth, the right attitude can give us a positive perspective and enable us to accomplish great things.**

**Most of us are familiar with the story of David and Goliath. When Goliath the giant came up against the Israelites, the soldiers exclaimed, “He’s so big ...we’ll**

never be able to kill him!” A shepherd boy named David looked at the same giant and declared, “He so big I can’t miss!”

David had the right attitude. You say, “I always thought it was David’s faith that enabled him to kill the giant.” It was. But faith is a component of a good attitude.

There was a Scottish foreman who worked hard and expected the same from his men. His men would tease him, saying, “Scotty, don’t you know that Rome wasn’t built in a day?” “Yes,” Scotty would reply. “I know that. But I wasn’t the foreman on that job!”

Scotty had the right attitude. He expected great things. And Scotty and his crew accomplished great things.

Let me give you one more statement that highlights the importance of attitude. Here it is: Our attitude is NOT automatically good just because we’re Christians.

There are a lot of Christians running around who have a bad attitude. You might know some of them. Perhaps you’re one of them. Listen carefully. Having a bad attitude will prevent us from experiencing the full life Jesus talks about in John 10:10. In John 10:10 Jesus says, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. But I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

Jesus wants all of his followers to have a full life. But in order for us to experience this full life, we need to have the right attitude. Our attitude needs to be the same as that of Christ Jesus.

The Apostle Paul talks about the Christ-like attitude in Philippians 2:3-8. This is what he says. “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your

own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking on the form of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross.”

I could spend another thirty minutes or more talking about this passage. But I know it’s late and I need to wrap things up. So I’ll just give you the “Cliff Notes.”

In this passage we find at least five qualities or characteristics of a Christ-like attitude. Here they are. The person with a Christ-like attitude:

1. Does things for the right reasons – for the Lord ...not for selfish ambition ... not for vain conceit.
2. Is humble – he knows who he is and whose he is.
3. Recognizes the importance of others – he understands Jesus died for all mankind.
4. Is willing to serve others – he understands that this is the way to become great in God’s kingdom.
5. Demonstrates obedience to God – he obeys God to please God because he loves God.

Folks, this is what a Christ-like attitude is all about. This is the attitude Jesus wants us to have.

The Army has an ad that encourages people to be all that they can be. I say, Amen!” to that. We ought to be all that we can be. And we can BE all that we can be, IF we have the right attitude!