

**GREAT ATTITUDES HOW TO MAKE THEM**  
**Attitudes and Emotions**  
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Last time we looked at attitudes and emotions we looked at the Grate attitudes – the Grate attitudes and how to break them. We at that time looked at 7 attitudes which appeared to have grated the Lord. Attitudes like the closed mind “My mind’s made up; don’t confuse me with the facts.” Put downs “You’ll never amount to anything.” Judgmental attitudes “There’s something wrong with you.” Holier than thou – “I’m right, you’re wrong. I’m better than you.” Misplaced priorities – “But I’ve got to do this first.” Negative orientation – “The answer is no.” And indecision or apathy – “I can’t or I won’t make up my mind. I don’t care or I give up.”

There are more grate attitudes than these – grate. But I’m sure that if you will faithfully practice those 7 grate attitudes you will be nasty all over.

Tonight we want to look at the great attitudes and how to make them. I was instinctively led to one of my very favorite passages in all the Bible that I’ve preached a number of times. I went back and put some new things to it. Remembering that every scribe that is trained for the kingdom of God according to Jesus is like a householder that brings out of his treasures something that is old and something that is new. As far as I’m concerned one of the ways in looking at scripture one of the ways to keep it fresh if it’s a well known passage is to look at it through the lens of the present moment.

The greatest attitudes ever given are the Beatitudes. Matthew 5. The beginning of the Sermon on the Mount.

A phrase that has stuck in my mind is that these are the Beautiful Attitudes. If you’ll live consciously with the eight attitudes which characterize the beatitudes life will be profoundly different. When you study the Sermon on the Mount you know that that is Jesus’ inaugural address. Just as a president makes an inaugural address when he begins anew term of service. So when Jesus institutes his term of service as king of kings and Lord of lords he institutes that address with an inauguration speech about life in his kingdom. The very front end of that address is the kind of people that he will make out of his citizens.

If we will catch the spirit of what Jesus is saying in these first 8 great attitudes of life all of life will be different. There are many more great attitudes than the 8 of the beatitudes. But it’s the kind of thing that if you have these working in your life everything else will fall in place. Just like if you have the 7 Grate attitudes you’ll be a thoroughly nasty person. If you have these 8 great attitudes it’ll spillover and affects every single attitude that you have.

What are these beautiful and great attitudes?

The first great attitude stated by Jesus is “Blessed is the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of God.” I’m going to put a different phraseology to that. We today don’t use that kind of language. I want to use language we might be familiar with that express in a true sense what Jesus was getting across. To me the first great attitude he is communicating can be summarized in three words: I need help. The Greek language which Matthew writes in the word for “poor” can be translated one of two ways. Matthew employs the word for poor that means the destitute

## **GREAT ATTITUDES HOW TO MAKE THEM**

### **Attitudes and Emotions**

poor, the person who truly has nothing. The person who is utterly dependent upon somebody else and comes to their recognition of need for help.

Jesus therefore in giving us this teaching “I need help” is stating to us the way to get into the kingdom of God is to admit our need for God’s help and whoever would be in his kingdom must begin with an honest confession of need. I cannot save myself. I cannot forgive myself. I cannot gain salvation on my own. I cannot work my way, buy my way, maneuver my way, manipulate my way into the kingdom of God. I come as a person in total dependence upon God.

I would suggest that that spirit of dependency is needed throughout our entire Christian life. There’s never point in our life where we no longer need either God’s help or one another’s help. There’s no such thing as a self-sufficient person. Then we really begin to get into emotional and spiritual and psychological trouble it seems to me is when we begin to try to do it all on our own and say to ourselves, “I can do this without any assistance.” We know people who have alcohol or chemical dependency have to come to a point in their experience where they admit they have a need and begin to reach out for help. It’s extremely frustrating when you want to do everything you can to help such a person but the person themselves will not come to the point of frank and honest admission “I need help and I will do anything to get it. I cannot do this on my own.”

I’d suggest if you are not making progress on breaking out of a problem you’re struggling with that you should consider getting help. I know the importance of help. When we’re going through physical needs it’s no time to play around.

I think that’s true on the emotional and spiritual level as well. There are marriages, which are in cardiac arrest. Just like there are bodies in cardiac arrest. The husband and wife are saying, We’re not going to go to any marriage counselor, marriage seminar. That’s for other people who are in trouble. All the time what we need to do is reach out and say, I need help. A spirit of dependency – I need help. Marriage is a something you’ve got to keep working on. You keep needing other people to help you with it.

The Bible tells us to bear one another’s burdens. Therefore we need to share our needs with one another. We can choose in life to be independent, dependent, or interdependent. The third – interdependent – where we are strong enough to say we’re weak and we need other people. Yet we’re not a doormat either. That kind of saying “I need help” is what the Lord is commending to us.

Jesus from a theological point of view, the divine Son of God probably didn’t need anybody. But he chose to come and express this great attitude himself and gather people around him to whom he basically said, “I need help. I’m going to use you. I’m going to reach the world through you. I’m not going to do it by myself. Will you join in my cause?” In the Lord’s greatest hour of human need when he was in the Garden of Gethsemane he sat his disciples down and he didn’t say, “I’m going to handle this matter all by myself. I’m strong enough. I’m the Son of God. I believe I can handle this one on my own.” He said to his disciples. “I’m very depressed. Will you pray with me?” That’s my translation: “My soul is girded about with sorrow,” I am wrapped around with troubles. Pray with me. I need help.

## **GREAT ATTITUDES HOW TO MAKE THEM**

### **Attitudes and Emotions**

If that offends your idea of the divinity of God that he would say that, remember that Jesus was also human. He was the God-man. If he could say I need help, in the hour of his sorrow and need, then we have permission to say it when we're going through something. It's a great attitude to say when we need to say it: I need help!

The second great attitude that comes out of the Beautiful Attitudes is I am sorry.

“Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted.” What is a person who is mourning? It's a person who is expressing regrets for things. Or in some cases may be expressing empathy for others. The attitude of I am sorry is a vital attitude if we're to become truly righteous people. Honesty is the key to every successful relationship. Starting with our honesty to God. Jesus asks us to enter that relationship with him by not only admitting we have need about admitting that we have been wrong and saying to him as we begin that relationship, I am sorry.

I find it easier to confess to God than to admit I'm wrong to another human being. God is perfect. Therefore I know that he can't ever be in the wrong. If I say I'm in the wrong, I'm safe in confessing it to God because I know whatever responsibility for error is in the relationship I bear it. But if I say to another person, I'm sorry, I am generally saying that to someone who bears some responsibility for the problem as well. And I don't want to be just unilateral about this. There's a risk we take when we say “I'm sorry” that we'll not always be understood.

I think these attitudes which Jesus stresses for us are meant to be not just something we do once but kind of a permanent quality in our life. It's not just something we just begin the Christian life with. It's something that's used for maintenance in our life. Our life is like my car that sits out in the street – it must be washed regularly.

How regularly do you admit to someone else that you are sorry? Love is not never having to say you're sorry. Love is saying you're sorry lots and lots of times over and over again. If you look at your life and it's been a long time since you've told anyone you're sorry about anything then you're living very much alone or you have become perfect or you have gotten terribly self righteous. It would be helpful for us to find a way to tell someone, I am sorry. If we're not saying I am sorry what we're doing is building defensive arguments to justify why we are not at fault.

Jesus never had to tell anyone he was sorry. Therefore this phrase when used of him “Blessed are those who mourn,” – would have to be translated a different way. It is obvious that Jesus did feel for people and wept over them and grieved for them. In that sense he truly mourned.

In saying I'm sorry, I'm not advocating the doormat kind of life where we're always taking the blame for things and running with a guilt trip in our lives saying I'm responsible for every situation and every mess in relationship. It's all my fault. I'm saying in this wonderful beautiful attitude that we must have a sensitive spirit to him and to other people. It is the key to successful living.

I need help. I am sorry.

The third great attitude is one that is exceedingly difficult to translate from the Greek into the English. “Blessed are the meek.”

## **GREAT ATTITUDES HOW TO MAKE THEM**

### **Attitudes and Emotions**

That word in no sense does the Greek word justice because in our language “meek” has come to represent somebody that is limp-wristed, mild, milk-toast. It actually represents something very strong and gentle.

I have come to say that the third great attitude is an attitude of life that says, “I’m strong but I’m easy to live with.” Meek in the Greek language has three ways in which it is employed. It is first used as a concept to describe something that is wild, that has been domesticated or broken. Such as a wild stallion that has been of no prophet when it has been wild. But it is now been broken to accommodate a saddle and rider and his energies used in a positive direction. That’s one of the meanings of this word.

Another meaning is to describe person who is balanced. Who is in between two extremes? The person, for example, is not always sad and not always happy. Not always pinching pennies but not always throwing away money. But balanced and disciplined and in between.

A third way to use this word is to describe someone who is gentle. Therefore a number of times in the New Testament it is translated directly as “gentle.”

But none of these three definitions of the one word accurately alone describe the word. It takes all three concepts together to make up the word. That’s why it’s so difficult to translate. We can’t put it over into one word in the English language.

The thesaurus has caught well the thrust of the principle underlying the word “gentle.” The synonyms are tamed, domesticated, housebroken, disciplined, educated, trained, civilized, tractable, pliable, taught, cultivated. All bound up in this “I’m strong but I’m easy to live with.”

I think of additional words like “I’m tough and tender... strong but flexible...” This word describes a person who has a great driving inner core of life. Who has a life lit in their bosom? Some people live without any light in their eyes. But the meek person is person is a person who lives with an inner fire. But they managed to stay balanced and centered and radiate joy and they’re fun to be with. Such a person is not given to erratic behavior or mood swings. They even use anger effectively. Jesus for example, was a meek person yet he cleansed the temple. There’s a great phrase in Mark 3 when on one occasion Jesus looked around the synagogue and the word suggested that he eyeballed everyone in the synagogue till he absolutely stared the place down in defiant silence. He was so angry with an attitude he saw expressed.

The meek person uses anger effectively because they use it to bring creative and good change rather than employing it as a punitive measure. They use anger redemptively so that it may serve some good purpose and not anger just to lash out in punishment at people. The meek person is balanced. The meek person is not all work but not all play. There is time to laugh and a time to weep. This person is disciplined. They do not live their life in chaos and upset but bring order and purpose, clarity and priority to life. The meek person is gentle. Look at how easy Jesus is to approach. John is leaning on his breast – he’s tough but he’s tender. Strong but easy to live with. That’s a great attitude.

Fourth great attitude is I want to keep growing.

## **GREAT ATTITUDES HOW TO MAKE THEM**

### **Attitudes and Emotions**

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be satisfied. I think the Christian life is a balance between being content and not having attained. Paul admonished us for example to be content and then he'll turn around and say "Forgetting the past and pressing on, I have not yet attained the goal." If we just settle down in a lax and casual place in our own lives and say I've arrived we're in danger. But if we're all the time striving and striving and saying I've never accomplished anything and never been anywhere, never done anything, never who I wanted to be. That's not healthy either. The attitude of hungry in spirit suggests an individual who says although I have had Christ's righteousness in my life I yet do not know all that I need to know. I have not experienced all I need to experience. Either in him or in life. I want to keep growing in my relationship with God and with other people.

One of the greatest examples of this in the Bible to me is Paul's fantastic second letter to Timothy, which is the last letter of the 13 that he writes. He has a marvelous phrase near the end of that letter when he's doing a check list to Timothy of the things that he wants. In addition to wanting Timothy, which is to suggest that he wants friendship and fellowship, he tells Timothy to bring some things with him. Among the things were the books and the parchments. The parchments were the scriptures, the Torah, the scrolls. But the books were the things he enjoyed reading. The commentaries on the scriptures or who knows. I gather from reading Paul that he read some pagan authors because he quoted pagan poets when he was on Mars hill. He was a reader.

As I read 2 Timothy I say, Wait, what are you asking for books for? I can understand parchments. You want to read the Bible. But what about books. Paul you say that your point of departure is already at hand. There's no more sermons to preach. There's nothing to do. You're already in your late 60s. It's time to shut up the intellectual well, shut off learning. Quit growing at a certain time. What do you need to keep reading for? You've got at the best a few days or a few months to live. You know enough.

But he has this attitude "I want to keep on growing." So he's saying get me the books. I want to keep reading.

This is the greatest statements for the liberal arts and for education for education's sake I've ever heard in my life. A person who is not studying in order to get a degree. A person who is not studying in order to qualify with a credit of some kind in order to get a job. A person who is not studying in order to get the grade. But a person who is reading and studying for the joy of learning itself. I think that's great. It's never too old to learn. I want to keep learning. Jesus locates it as growing in righteousness. And righteousness to me is the kind of brush that's put over all of life. It doesn't simply mean to be pious and act religious. But it means to be in right standing with God and with other people and live life in God to the full extent of your potential and capability.

There's never an age in life where we should say, I have arrived. I know it all. Nor can we say ever in life, I have become totally like Christ. To grow in righteousness means to become more like him.

I thought this week of the five greatest lists that could be called growth lists in the New Testament. There are 8 great attitudes in the beatitudes. There are 22 life responses in Romans 12:9-21 that really describes how to live a power packed life. There are 15 qualities of love in 1

## **GREAT ATTITUDES HOW TO MAKE THEM**

### **Attitudes and Emotions**

Corinthians 13:4-6. There are 9 fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 9:22-23. There are 7 “add ons” to faith in 2 Peter 1:5-9. If you take those 5 lists you’ll have a list you’ll never get done working on no matter what age you get to. Never quit growing. That’s a great attitude.

The fifth great attitude is I care.

It is from the beatitude, “Blessed are the merciful.” The merciful person is there to help therefore is unlike the person who lives life with neglect of others of blaming others. The quality of mercy keeps us away from the deadly qualities of spirit that involve harshness, coldness, judgmentalness and criticalness. A merciful person chooses to move out of their own hurt to help heal the hurt in another person. The good Samaritan being a classic example when he sees the man by the side of the road he doesn’t say, “You hurt me by always making me an outcast, I can’t get past my own hurt to help you in yours.” But the caring person will move out of their own hurt to help with the hurt of another.

I need to take the great themes of scripture and reduce them to practical daily living. How can I be a more merciful person?

A sixth great attitude is “My conscious is clear.” Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.”

David has the great psalm 32. Which says that when he lived with unconfessed sin in his life he had no rest. He tossed and turned on his bed. It was only when he brought to God the level of his sin that he received his cleaning and he was able to approach God. When we find a phrase like this – “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God,” we want to ask “Is there any command or teaching of God that I am disobedient to.” We want to ask the Lord to help us with that and to forgive it.

Paul makes a great statement that he lives before God with a clear conscious. The conscious or the heart only becomes clear through repentance. Repentance is to the heart what the tear duct is to the eye. When there is an impurity that gets in the eye there is an involuntary muscle in most all of us that triggers release of fluid that washes away the impurity. The tear duct is absolutely necessary to have purity of sight.

Jesus says if you are to have purity of heart there must be another involuntary spiritual muscle that is triggered. That must be the muscle of repentance that brings us a clear conscious that is devoid of offense toward man or toward God. Rather than living with unconfessed and repeated sin in our life the Lord calls us to a high plain of living that says, “I want to live with the attitude of before God I have a clear conscious.”

A seventh great attitude is “Let me be your friends.” “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God.”

The peacemaker is the person who comes alongside another and is a friend. A friend who tries to break up enmity between two parties or someone who tries to break through the logjam of relationship that they have of enmity with another person.

## **GREAT ATTITUDES HOW TO MAKE THEM**

### **Attitudes and Emotions**

It's been said, "He who cannot forgive others destroys the bridge over which he himself must pass." So we say Let me be your friend. Romans 12:17-21 has an excellent description of the steps we take for being a friend and a person who makes peace. Three steps that help us be friends with people that we may find friendship difficult with.

The first is a desire or an attitude that says, Let me be your friend. Let's live at peace. "If it is possible and as far as it depends upon you [the scripture has factual and frank recognition that there are some people you can't live at peace. Even if you're at peace within yourself they're determined not to live at peace so Paul wisely says, as far as it depends upon you] live at peace with everyone." So the disposition of your heart first of all is to be a friend and to be at peace.

The second advice Paul gives toward being a friend with difficult people is withhold vengeance. "Do not take revenge my friends but leave room for God's wrath for it is written 'It is mine to avenge. I will repay,' says the Lord." Don't retaliate.

The third thing Paul says is look for an opportunity always to show love. "On the contrary, if your enemy is hungry feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this you will heap burning coals on his head."

The eighth great attitude is "I will rejoice even in my down times." "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad."

When we live the first 7 attitudes we would expect to be well liked and secure. But living these attitudes may generate as Jesus predicts people who have opposition to us because our loyalty to Jesus Christ will stand out. What we do as a Christian is we take responsibility for our actions and the reactions we get against us because we are trying to follow Christ and we say even in the down times of my life I choose to rejoice.

For our 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the church we were given a beautiful frame with a favorite phrase I have used. "What happens in you is more important than what happens to you." Then in a different color and smaller letters were phrases I had not heard before: "The same wind that uproots a tree lifts a bird." I think that's part of "I will rejoice even in my downtimes." What will cause another to topple will cause me instead with Christ's help to soar. The second phrase there was "The opposing force becomes a lifting force if faced at the right angle." That's what Jesus is saying about pressure and opposition in our life. That it can make us instead of breaking us. That it can lift us rather than blow us over. I will rejoice even in my down times.

Jesus asks us to live with an attitude, which allows our reverses to become our successes. Great attitudes. So I need help. I am sorry. I am strong but I'm easy to live with. I want to grow. I care. My conscious is clear. Let me be your friend. I will rejoice even in the down times.

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