

“Lord, Change My Attitude (Before It’s Too Late)” – Week 1

Sunday 6/20/04

Saved as mdutton\adult bible fellowship\Lord, Change My Attitude\01 Lesson Introduction

Introduction:

1. We are beginning a new series today – a brief ‘summer series’ entitled: *Lord, Change My Attitude Before It’s Too Late*

- this is a book written by James MacDonald – books are available in the MRC
- but let me tell you right up front – this book will ‘smack’ you! (challenge you to change!)

2. When we talk about ‘attitude’ – what are talking about? How would you define ‘attitude’?

- Webster defines the word ‘attitude’ in a number of ways (context we’re referring to):

1 : the arrangement of the parts of a body or figure : posture

2 a : a mental position with regard to a fact or state

b : a feeling or emotion toward a fact or state

3 a : a negative or hostile state of mind

b : a cocky or arrogant manner

3. Now, let’s think about a couple of more questions:

Input: How important is our attitude in life? What impact does our attitude have on the rest of the way we live our lives?

[various answers]

Input: What biblical passages would address this subject of *attitude* or *thinking*?

- Proverbs 23:7 For as he thinks within himself, so he is.
- Jeremiah 12:3 But You know me, O LORD; You see me; And You examine my heart's **attitude** toward You. Drag them off like sheep for the slaughter And set them apart for a day of carnage!
- Philippians 2:5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus (attitude of a servant – not thinking of self, but of others!)
- Philippians 3:15 Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this **attitude**; and if in anything you have a different **attitude**, God will reveal that also to you;
- Colossians 4:2 Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with *an attitude of* thanksgiving;

Point: Your attitude – your mentality toward a given subject or issue – is very important and has a significant impact (i.e. a direct control) over the way you act/respond!

4. I want to begin our series by asking you some direct questions that you have to answer (privately of course, but you need to answer them!)

* **Five Important Questions we need to ask:**

1. Are you open to considering what the Lord has to say about changing your attitude?

- if you're not – then that would . . . *PRIDE*

Q: *How does God respond to the proud?*

> He resists (opposed to) the proud, but gives GRACE to the humble!" (James 4:6)

'opposed' = **to sets oneself in battle against something** – i.e. if you're proud, God goes to war with you – guess what? You'll never win that battle!

- Because every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:11)

- This series is a study of what God has to say in the Scriptures about our bad attitudes

* **We need to be aware of two things:**

1) The consequences of rejecting God's ways and

2) The benefits of accepting God's ways

- This would be known as "*The Law of the Harvest*" – i.e what you sow, you reap

- **Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. 9 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.**

Q: *Are you open to what God has to say about this subject – or is your mind so made up that you won't consider it?*

- I'm assuming by your presence here today (and if you come back next week) that your answer is YES!

2. Are you willing to be changed?

Bottom Line: Do you really want to change your attitude?

- Are you ready to take some steps of growth to be more like Christ?
- Are you willing to put in the work and effort in obedience to the Word of God to make this happen?

- Paul told the church at Galatia:

- **Galatians 5:16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.**

Q: *But whose responsibility was it to 'walk by the Spirit'?*

> the people of Galatia – Paul, nor the Holy Spirit could make that choice for them – they had to be willing to be changed!!

IMPORTANT: If change was easy, everyone would be doing it; but the fact is most people are just staying the same.

- Remember this: **People don't change until they see the magnitude of their sin!**

"Life change can never begin until some circumstance brings you to the unalterable conclusion that your current course is taking you somewhere you don't want to go. Sometimes it's a tragic event or a relational breakdown. Sometimes it's a profound internal emptiness or a devastating personal failure. Whatever the circumstance that produces your readiness to change, you won't make it through this book without one. In fact, if you think your attitudes are as they should be, might I suggest that you give this book to someone who is ready for it now?" – p. 15

- and yes, I'm assuming that you are not perfect and that there are areas where you do need to change your attitude so it will affect your actions and bring more glory to God!

3. Are you willing to change your attitude?

- This is not about your ACTIONS or your CIRCUMSTANCES
- It's not about your RELATIONSHIPS or your MINISTRY, or your JOB!
 - > It's about you and your pattern of thinking (Inner Man – what's going on in your heart and mind that leads to your choices!)
- Paul made this very important point when he dealt with the subject of how to change/grow – Ephesians 4:22-24 [explain the put off / put on process – the importance of v. 23]
 - Ephesians 4:23 **and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind.**
- Most honest people want to change their actions (behavior) but forget that it starts with the way you think . . . you have to change the way you THINK if you're going to change biblically!

4. Are You Willing to Focus Exclusively on Your Attitude?

- I think one of the most often violated passages in the Scripture is this:
 - **Matthew 7:1 "Do not judge so that you will not be judged. 2 "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. 3 "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 4 "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? 5 "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.**

Input: Why is it so easy to focus on the sins of others?

[pride – I don't need to change! – or they are worse than me!]

- Jesus never said, "Don't try to help others change!"
 - > He said, if you're going to help someone else change, you work on your life FIRST and then you will see clearly to . . .

5. Are you willing to go after this change of attitude with urgency?

- Psalm 95:7 **For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you would hear His voice, 8 Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness.**
- There is a warning / caution that should come with hearing the truth: Be careful not to neglect it once you've heard it!

“Just because God is working in your heart today regarding a specific matter does not guarantee that He always will be.” – P. 16

- There is a NT warning for neglecting truth about God:

- Romans 1:21 **For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. 24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.**

Point: This is a subject that gets addressed in your 5-year ministry plan – this is an issue you and I need to deal with TODAY!

Q: *Are you going to be a James 1:22-25 kind of person?*

- James 1:22 **But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 24 for *once* he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. 25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the *law* of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.**

- And lest we get the attitude of “I can always deal with it later” – let’s remember this:

- James 4:14 **Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. 15 Instead, *you ought* to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.” 16 But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. 17 Therefore, to one who knows *the* right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.**

* Attitudes Are Important to God!

Example: Israel and their attitude AFTER the Exodus from Egypt!

- Remember, this was AFTER the 10 plagues, the crossing of the Red Sea, the destruction of Pharaoh’s army and the dead bodies floating up onto the banks of the Red Sea, etc.!
- This tragic event is referred to over and over in the Psalms, Prophets, Gospels, Epistles, three times in the book of Hebrews, It’s the OT event that everyone was talking about.
 - Explain how the children of Israel left Egypt and journeyed to the very edge of the Promised Land. The journey took eighteen months and covered more than three hundred miles. Not a lot of distance except that there were more than two million people, and twelve of the eighteen months were spent at the base of Mt. Sinai getting the Ten Commandments and God’s other laws.

Point: There they were on the edge of “the land flowing with milk and honey.

Q: *Why the big deal about wilderness wanderings?*

- Open a Bible and check out Numbers 13-14

- Numbers 13 records the expedition of twelve spies sent by God and Moses into the Promised Land.
- They were to bring back a report so the people would have the faith to go up and conquer the land.
- But ten came back full of fear and started whining about the armies, the giants, and the obstacles they would face across the Jordan River
- Two of the twelve, however, submitted a minority report
- **Numbers 13:30 Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, "We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it."**
- **Numbers 14:6 Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, of those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; 7 and they spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, "The land which we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. 8 "If the LORD is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us-- a land which flows with milk and honey. 9 "Only do not rebel against the LORD; and do not fear the people of the land, for they will be our prey. Their protection has been removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them."**

Q: *How did the people respond to this faith report?*

"But all the congregation said to stone them."

- > Part of this was because they made 'idols' out of their children and said they didn't want to go into the land and fight lest their children would become captives and 'prey' (victims) for the enemy!
- God never gets angry without a good reason – and He had a good reason with an attitude like that – after all the track record of helping them, their attitude stunk!

- Remember the *Law of the Harvest!*

* **Paying the Price for Attitudes**

- That attitude cost them dearly: Price Tag: NO PROMISED LAND FOR THEM! THEY LOST THEIR OPPORTUNITY!
 - **Numbers 14:31 'Your children, however, whom you said would become a prey-- I will bring them in, and they will know the land which you have rejected.**
- At the heart of the problem was the people's murmurings (gripping / complaining attitudes)
 - > We will discover five specific stories or events that illustrate the attitudes that make up murmuring
- In the mean time, we need to remember Paul's words:
 - **Philippians 2:14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing;**
 - It's no different today
 - God hasn't changed what He does about murmuring – He judges it.
 - Those who choose murmuring as their lifestyle will spend their lifetimes in the proverbial spiritual wilderness!

Explain the Prayer Card – challenge them to use it through this series.

Study Guide
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Input: What biblical passages would address this subject of *attitude* or *thinking*?

*** Five Important Questions We Need to Ask:**

1. Are you _____ about changing your attitude?

‘opposed’ = to set oneself in battle against something

*** We need to be aware of two things:**

1) The _____ of rejecting God’s ways

2) The _____ of accepting God’s ways

2. Are you _____?

*** People don’t change until they see the magnitude of their sin!**

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3. Are you willing to change your _____?

4. Are You Willing to Focus _____ Attitude?

Input: Why is it so easy to focus on the sins of others?

5. Are you willing to go after this change of attitude with urgency?

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Q: Are you going to be a James 1:22-25 kind of person?

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Example:

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- Price Tag:

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. Galatians 6:7-9

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- Matthew 7:1-5

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- Psalm 95:7-8

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- Romans 1:21-25

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