

Sunday 7/04/04

“Lord, Change My Attitude (Before It’s Too Late)” – Week 3

Saved as mdutton\adult bible fellowship\Lord, Change My Attitude\03 Lesson Chp 2 Thankfulness

Introduction:

1. We’re continuing our series: **Lord, Change My Attitude** – by James MacDonald – the book is available in the MRC – I want to thank Titus for teaching for me last week – I’ve heard some very encouraging comments
2. The subject last week was about a Complaining Attitude – griping, murmuring (see definition)
 - ⇒ **complaining = expressing resentment over circumstances that are beyond our control and about which are doing nothing**
3. One of the major problems with attitude of complaining is that **complaining questions God’s sovereignty**
4. This sin flows out of an attitude (definition)
 - ⇒ **Attitudes = patterns of thinking formed over a long period of time**
 - > AND . . . you have to choose to change it – it won’t just happen!
5. Remember the key statement at the beginning of the chapter last week:
 - >
6. In order to change that attitude, you can’t just STOP complaining – you have to replace it with something:

Replace Complaining With A Thankful Attitude

“Thankfulness is the attitude that perfectly displaces my sinful tendency to complain and thereby release joy and blessing into my life.” - p. 45

I. General Observations About Thankfulness

Q: Do you know the story of Christ and the ten lepers—the time that Christ miraculously healed them – demonstrating His deity and therefore the need to worship Him

- **READ Luke 17:12-16** – note v. 15 ‘one of them’ [there were 10!!] and ‘he was a Samaritan’ (explain the issue of being a Samaritan – the Samaritan were the ‘scum of the earth to a Jew because they were ½ breed Jews – those Jews who chose to intermarry with the people around them – this was not a good thing and cut to the heart of the self-righteous Pharisees standing around Him, and it was probably a bit shocking to the disciples!

A. Not many people are good at being thankful!

Q: *What’s the point of this situation?* – one out of 10 – that’s terrible

- but while we are quick to criticize, what about us?

- when is the last time you consciously expressed your thankfulness to God // your spouse // your boss // your fellow church member // . . . your Pastor (i.e. Pastor Viars) // . . . your Deacons and their families

B. Christ notices those who are grateful and those who are not.

- **Luke 17:17-19** And Jesus answered and said, “**Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine—where are they?**¹⁸ “**Was no one found who turned back to give glory to God, except this foreigner?**”¹⁹ And He said to him, “**Rise, and go your way; your faith has made you well.**”
- This was not just referring to his physical body – that issue had already been handled (i.e. he was healed instantaneously)
 - > Christ was saying in effect: *“Because of your gratefulness—because of your thankfulness—you have been made well in a much deeper way than those who refused to be thankful.”*
- I think Jesus was referring to his change of heart – i.e. salvation

Input: What has God done for us/you that we/you should give thanks Him?

[various answers – this may go awhile, but that’s OK!]

C. A thankful heart can give glory to God.

- **Luke 17:17-19** And Jesus answered and said, “**Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine—where are they?**¹⁸ “**Was no one found who turned back to give glory to God, except this foreigner?**”¹⁹ And He said to him, “**Rise, and go your way; your faith has made you well.**”
- Gratitude give the right opinion of God – gives Him credit for what He has done!
- * Note the warning in Romans 1 for NOT doing this:
 - **Romans 1:19** because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. 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.

D. Thankfulness is far more than saying the right words.

- **Matthew 12:34** “**You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.**”
 - that’s the point of this whole series – our attitudes flow out of our hearts – a problem with complaining, coveting, other topics we’ll study, is a problem of the heart!
- **Matthew 15:19** “**For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.**”

E. Thankfulness is very powerful!

- Even in the often-godless corporate world – read the following quote:

“Recent studies have shown repeatedly that if employees don’t feel genuine gratitude from the people they work for, bonuses are useless. Insincere gratitude doesn’t upgrade employee loyalty or productivity. If we are unmoved by perfunctory expressions of gratitude, just imagine how unmoved God is.”
- The benefits of being thankful can have effects on the physical body -- regarding stress / Blood Pressure / recovery from surgery and a host of other

II. The Definition of Gratitude

Gratitude = to show that a kindness received is valued.

“Genuine gratitude requires that we get past obligation and somehow show that we deeply appreciate what we’ve received.”

ILL: Teaching our kids to say ‘thank you’ – you can only remind so many times to say, “thank you,” and then it becomes an issue of the heart!

III. Consider Three Levels of Gratitude (Note: MacDonald’s idea – not distinguished biblically, but is a good way to think about this issue)

Level 1: Elementary Thankfulness

- teaches us to be thankful in the most basic sense (thankfulness in general)
- **Hebrews 13:15 Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.**

Level 2: High School thankfulness.

- teaches us to be thankful in a variety of specific situations
- **1 Thessalonians 5:18 In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.**

Level 3: Graduate School thankfulness.

- teaches us to be thankful for ALL things in a variety of specific situations
- **Ephesians 5:18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, 1. . . 20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;**
 - this kind of thankfulness searches to find a good aspect in a challenging circumstance.
 - it’s a thankfulness that trusts God and is even grateful for the bad things
 - this is like the “Mt. Everest of thankfulness”

Q: Which level are you most of the time? What do you need to do to change?

IV. What Do We Need to Learn and Do?

- Three specific points of victory.

Point One: Thankfulness Is A Decision

- **Psalm 107:8 Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord . . . for His wonderful works to the children of men!** [repeated in v. 15, 21, and -- 4 times in one chp.! -- i.e. he’s making a point!!]
- Notice the verse says *would* give thanks
 - > If it said *could* —“Oh, that men *could* give thanks to the Lord” —then the ball would be in God’s court – i.e. it would imply that we were not made with that capacity

- but we are in the image and likeness of God, and He has made us communicative beings, and we have the ability to be thankful, the issue is ARE we thankful and to what degree and are we GROWING?

Point Two: Thankfulness Is A Decision Based in Reality.

ILL: *Robinson Crusoe*, described a man who was shipwrecked. He spent twenty-seven years all alone on a tropical island. His story illustrates perfectly that thankfulness is a decision based on reality.

Robinson Crusoe's Complaining and Thankful List – read some of the examples

Complaint	Thanks
I am singled out and separate as it were from all the world to be miserable	But I am singled out, too, from all of the ship's crew to be spared from death. God, who miraculously saved me from death, can deliver me from this condition also.
(other examples)	

Point Three: Thankfulness Is A Life-Changing Decision.

- being thankful for what God has allowed to come into your life changes everything

Input: What does being a grateful person put you into a position to do?

- ⇒ **glorify God**
- ⇒ **grow in Christ**
- ⇒ **impact on the lives of others** who may be facing similar circumstances (i.e. your thankfulness has a discipleship element!)

*** Gratitude is the attitude that sets the altitude for living!***

Ask some honest questions:

1. Am I a thankful person?

Illustration: Matthew Henry, the famous Bible scholar. More than 250 years ago, he wrote these words in his diary after he was robbed of all the money he had in the world. "Let me be thankful first, because I was never robbed before; second, because although they took my purse, they did not take my life; third, let me be thankful that although they took my all, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed and not I who robbed."

2. Am I seeing the blessings of thankfulness in my life?

How often do I go out of my way to recognize with gratitude a person that God has used to bless me [a parent, neighbor, friend, or a small group leader]?

3. Am I choosing thankfulness over complaining moment by moment?

***Gratitude is one decision at a time, one moment at a time, one day at a time!**

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Introduction:

*** Replace Complaining With A Thankful Attitude**

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I. General Observations About Thankfulness

A. _____ are good at being thankful!

B. Christ _____ those who are grateful and those who are not.

Input: What has God done for us/you that we/you should give Him thanks?

C. A thankful heart can give _____.

D. Thankfulness is far more than saying the _____.

E. Thankfulness is very _____!

“Recent studies have shown repeatedly that if employees don’t feel genuine gratitude from the people they work for, bonuses are useless. Insincere gratitude doesn’t upgrade employee loyalty or productivity. If we are unmoved by perfunctory expressions of gratitude, just imagine how unmoved God is.”

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Point One: Thankfulness Is A _____.

Point Two: Thankfulness Is A Decision Based in _____.

Point Three: Thankfulness Is A _____-_____ Decision.

Input: What does being a grateful person put you into a position to do?

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1. *Am I a thankful person?*
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- Complaining questions God’s sovereignty

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- **Romans 1:19-21**

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- **Matthew 15:19**

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- 3. Am I choosing thankfulness over complaining moment by moment?**

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