

An Attitude of Gratitude

19 April 2012

God wants us to have an *attitude of gratitude*—particularly in expressing *gratitude* to Jesus Christ for his gift of salvation, the only way! Yet some act as if they've earned salvation, or are entitled to it, and others take it for granted. What is our *attitude*? Charles Swindoll says this about attitude:

“The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company, a church, or a home.... The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past; we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our *attitude*. I'm convinced that life is ten percent what happens to me and ninety percent how I react to it. And so it is with you; we are in charge of our attitudes.”

Often in today's lingo we hear “she's got an attitude” or “she's got attitude” or how about “she copped an attitude.” What is being said here? Are these trite statements meant to compliment the person, condemn her or just an attempt to be funny? I heard something years ago and it went like this: “**Many a true word is spoken in jest.**” People will joke about serious stuff, and our *attitude* **is** serious stuff! We'll see why as we look at Webster's definition of attitude: (1) posture, (2) mental position or feeling with regard to a fact or state, and (3) the position of something in relation to something else—so basically our **posture and position as it relates....**

1. Our *posture* would be the outward expression of our attitude. Think about how we might see and determine someone's gratitude or thankfulness from their posture: facial expressions, overall body language, their words and voice inflections.

2. *Mental position or feeling with regard to a fact or state* would be the inward thinking and feeling processes that go along with the outward expressions. The thoughts of the grateful person would be involvement in the situation, and feelings such as: “I care” or “I appreciate you being here.”

3. Still dealing with our attitude, the third definition is the *position of something in relation to something else*. This applies to our relationship to

God, family and others. If we are in God's family then our attitudes will reflect His.

• **God's Word on *attitude*** (abbreviated):

Ephesians 4:22-23 "*You were taught...to be made new in the **attitude** of your minds.*"

Philippians 2:5 "*Your **attitude** should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.*"

Hebrews 4:12 "*For the word of God...it judges the thoughts and **attitudes** of the heart.*"

1 Peter 4:1a "*...Since Christ suffered...arm yourselves also with the same **attitude**....*"

Interestingly, there was only one word that defined *gratitude* in Webster's: *thankfulness*! We could conclude then that an **attitude of gratitude** describes a posture or position of thankfulness! Would that be correct?

Thank You So Much!

• **God's Word on *gratitude*** (abbreviated):

1 Chronicles 16:34 "*Oh, **give thanks** to the Lord, for He is good!*"

Colossians 3:15-17 "*...and **be thankful**. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you...sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs **with gratitude in your hearts to God**. 17 And whatever you do...do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, **giving thanks to God**....*"

1 Thessalonians 5:18 "*...**give thanks** in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*"

We may never be able to name all our physical, spiritual, temporal and eternal blessings, but it's good to remember specifically God's many gifts with *gratitude*—"count your blessing name them one by one, count your blessings see what God has done!" **Jesus Christ is our example!** And in the midst of the worst circumstances, **1 Corinthians 11:23b, 24** tells us: "*The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.'*"

Whatever our many and varied needs, our greatest need is Jesus!

- Our thanks for him and to him should be **perpetually sustained**.
- Our thanks for him and to him should be **positively sincere**.
- Our thanks for him and to him should be **personally specific**.

Our thanks **for** him includes: his Word, his great love, mercy, suffering, endurance, and his faithfulness to the Father's will: his great passion, wisdom, patience, kindness, goodness and compassion; his life, his atoning blood, his death, resurrection, his reign in glory, his promises and his imminent return for us and his rule!

Our thanks to him includes: his great salvation, his life lived in us through the indwelling Holy Spirit, his plans carried out in and through us: his workings and dealings with us, his watching and keeping of us, his promptings, his intercession for us with the Father; and his blessings, nurture and admonition!

But just as God is good and benevolent to those who love and trust him, so he is terrible to those who do not! Because God is righteous, his love is juxtapositioned against his wrath. Why is this important for us to rehearse? To give us holy *gratitude* for God's immense goodness to us and to give us holy concern for those who are lost and stand to inherit his eternal wrath if they do not repent and receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord—to be reminded daily that where there is life, there is yet hope for their soul....

Thank God for others:

1 Thessalonians 3: 9 *“How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?”*

Philippians 1:3 *“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you.”*

- Imagine a disease so terrible, so contagious, that a family would send their loved one out of the city to live alone, or in camps with other diseased—strangers. Imagine further, people with whitish, ‘runny’ diseased skin with fingers, hands, toes, ankles, noses and ears dropping off of them. Imagine a disease with absolutely no cure: a death sentence. That describes leprosy!

Luke 17:11-19 *“Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he was going into a village, **ten men who had leprosy met him.** They stood at a distance 13 and called out in a loud voice, ‘Jesus, Master, have pity on us!’*

14 *“When he saw them, he said, ‘Go, show yourselves to the priests.’ **And as they went, they were cleansed.***

15 *“One of them, when he saw he was healed, **came back, praising God in a loud voice.** 16 **He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him**—and he was a Samaritan.*

17 *“Jesus asked, ‘**Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?** 18 Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner? 19 Then he said to him, ‘**Rise and go; your faith has made you well.**’”*

The NIV Study Bible Commentary says about the statement *your faith has made you well*, that this phrase may be rendered ‘your faith has saved you’ (ref: Matthew 9:22). The fact that the Samaritan returned to thank Jesus may indicate that he had received salvation in addition to the physical healing all ten had received. Can you see that returning to praise and thank Jesus meant that this Samaritan recognized the gift he’d been given and, more

importantly, he recognized the Giver of that gift? One remembered to be grateful, but nine forgot. They were ungrateful, unthankful, and unbelieving!

Romans 1:21 says about the unbelieving: “*For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.*” The nine were ingrates—*nor gave thanks to him!* An **ingrate** describes someone who is ungrateful and unthankful. What a word—*ingrate!* The thoughts of an ingrate would be indifference and the feelings might be “I got what I wanted” or “I don’t care” or “You owe me.”

What is the *posture* of a ungrateful and unthankful attitude? Without any words, they may exhibit a frown, pursed lips (Proverbs 16:30), eyes closed or looking away...tightened jaw. Their arms may be folded across their chest and they may overtly give the silent treatment—some have perfected that to an art. It may be with their mouth, their body language and/or their eyes and how they refuse to connect, because when we’re ungrateful and unthankful, we don’t *want* to connect with our benefactor’s eyes, do we?

What about us? Would we ever be ungrateful? If someone gives us a gift that we already have, that they gave us last year or something that just isn’t our style, how’s our eye contact? How’s our smile? Is it forced? What is our attitude? What is our *posture* and *position* and *relationship* to the giver?

If we want to know what we *really* believe about gratitude, we should pay attention to our attitude. It’s like a barometer. It will show us whether we’re thankful or unthankful, grateful or an ingrate. *Gracious* describes the person displaying an attitude of gratitude, and **being gracious is a testimony to our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ**. It’s in our smile, our eyes and our hug; it’s in our body language, facial expression and voice inflection. Statistics reveal that 90 percent of our communication is nonverbal. So, while we tend to focus on our words, we’re communicating all the time!

Paul says in Philippians 4:11, “*I have learned to be content.*” Some of us need to *learn* to be content. We need to get a journal and every night write down five things we’re grateful for. If we would do that for three weeks, we’d see our attitude change. We get so focused on what we don’t have and what we’re unhappy about and what isn’t working in our lives that we forget about all the blessings we have. We forget about all the good things that are going on in our lives; we overlook all that God has already done. Satan tries to focus us on what we don’t have—just as he did Eve in the Garden of Eden. Look at all she had, and yet the devil convinced her she was deprived. **An attitude of gratitude describes a posture or position of thankfulness!**

Luke 7:36-50 tells about Simon the Pharisee who invited Jesus to eat at his house. It was the Sabbath meal and it was customary to invite visiting teachers, but perhaps Simon was more than curious about Jesus—to interrogate him. We do not know his reasons for inviting Jesus to his home for a meal. From *Women of the Bible*, by Ann Spangler and Jean Syswerda, the scene is described. Can we identify the grateful? The ingrate?

- “The woman felt as though her world had unraveled in a moment’s time. Doors had opened, walls had crumbled, and thoughts of her future no longer frightened but thrilled her. She felt clean and whole, innocent as a girl still living in her father’s house. Her heart was a wild confusion of sorrow and joy as she followed the rabbi through the doorway.

“Ignoring the stares of the men, she walked over to the place where Jesus was reclining at the table. In her hands she held an alabaster jar of perfume. Her body trembled as she approached. She hardly knew what she was doing as ***she covered his feet with her kisses and then anointed them with the precious perfume, wiping his feet with her hair. How else could she express her heart to the man who had loved her so?** (A similarly grateful act was performed by Mary of Bethany just over a week before the crucifixion in John 12:3...mine.)

- “Like any good Pharisee, Simon loved the law, measuring his days by the steady rhythm of the regulations by which he lived. They were a fence safeguarding his purity, protecting his sense of settled security. How good of the holy God to provide a map for the righteous, a way of life to set him apart from ordinary Jews—like the woman who had just walked through the door, hoping to glean a few scraps from his table.

“Simon was surprised that a sinful woman, even a hungry one, would enter his house. But his surprise grew as he noticed she was not eating but weeping so profusely that her tears were spilling onto the feet of one of his guests. **Everything about the scene repelled him and offended his sense of order—a notorious harlot kissing the man’s feet, wiping them with her hair, and then pouring perfume over them. It was an astonishing performance.**” He was unthankful and unbelieving!

The grateful, but misunderstood woman, having been released from seven demons, faithfully followed Jesus on to the crowds, on to the cross, on to the tomb, and she carried the message of His resurrection to the disciples. Dear Lord Jesus, thank you that you always demonstrated an *attitude of gratitude* with Your Father. Help us remember that **You are our example!**