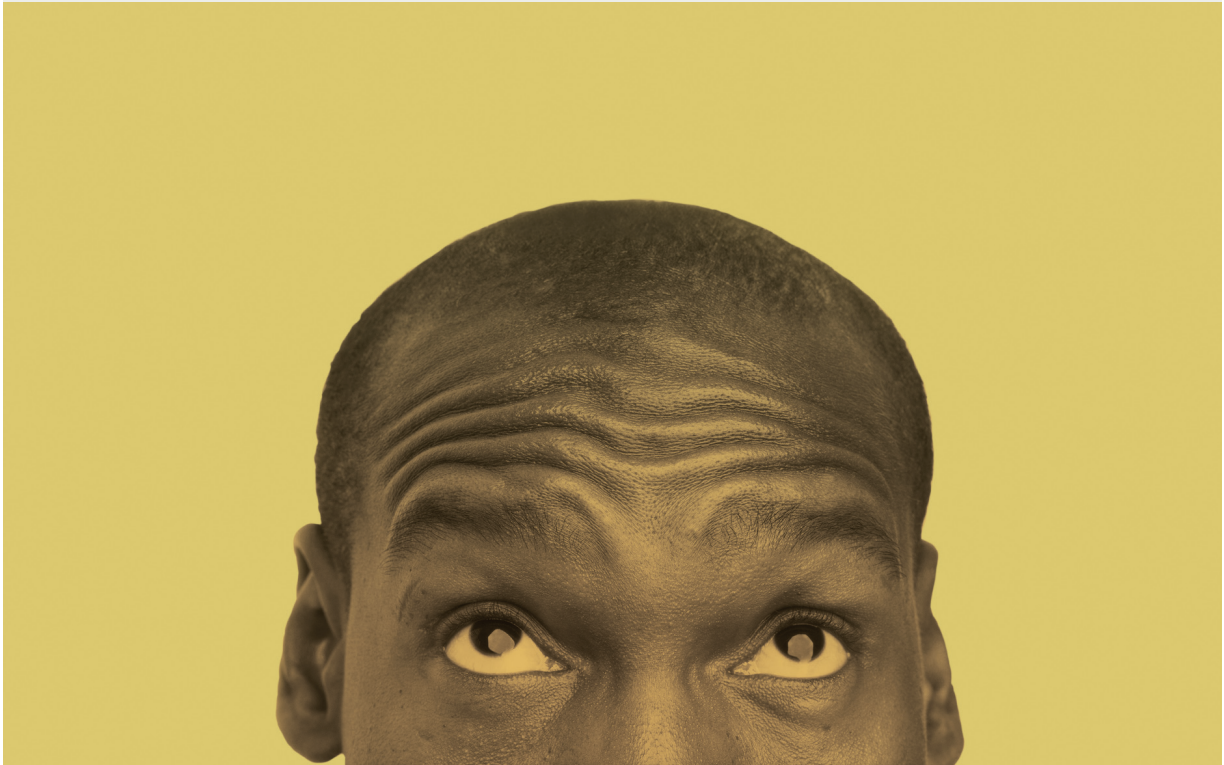




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MINISTRIES®

Attitudes of the Mind

Change Your Outlook... Change Your Life!



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ATTITUDES OF THE MIND

Change Your Outlook . . .

Change Your Life!

The Power Of Attitude

Foundation Scripture:

Philippians 2:5 – *Let this same **attitude** and purpose and [humble] mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus: [Let Him be your example in humility:] . . .*

I. The Attitude Indicator

- A. An airplane has an instrument called the “attitude indicator.” It shows the position of the plane to the horizon. When the airplane is climbing, it is said to have a “nose-high attitude” because the nose of the airplane is pointed above the horizon. When the aircraft is diving, it is said to have a “nose-down attitude” because the nose of the plane is below the horizon.
 - 1. Assuming the horizon represents “average,” we might say that if our attitude is **UP**, we can expect to have an above-average life. If our attitude is **DOWN**, we will have a below-average life.

- B. When an airplane has a nose-high attitude, it climbs; when it has a nose-down attitude, it falls. The same thing holds true with people.
 - 1. The attitude of an airplane can be changed by the pilot making an adjustment, and our attitudes can be changed if we make an adjustment.

C. **Ephesians 4:23** – *And be constantly renewed in the spirit of your mind [having a fresh mental and spiritual **attitude**] . . .*

1. A daily attitude adjustment may be needed.
2. John Maxwell said, “You are only an attitude away from success.”
3. It is your attitude, not your aptitude, that will determine your altitude.
 - a. I prefer to work with someone who is less talented and has a good attitude than someone who is very talented and has a bad attitude.
 - b. I want to work with people who have a humble attitude, thankful attitude, positive attitude, responsible attitude, etc.

D. Take an attitude inventory.

1. If you could describe your attitude toward life with one of the following four songs, which one would it be?
 - a. *Make The World Go Away*
 - b. *Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head*
 - c. *I'll Do It My Way*
 - d. *Oh, What A Beautiful Morning*
2. **Psalm 96:1; 98:1** – *O sing to the Lord a new song . . .*
 - a. Some of you may need to sing a new song.
 - b. Something besides:
Woe Is Me **or** *It's All About Me*

II. Everyone Just Wants To Be Happy.

A. In the world, happiness is based on what is happening; but in God's economy, it does not have to be that way.

1. **I Peter 3:14** – Happy are you if you suffer for righteousness' sake – you are to be envied.

Have a good attitude – do not dread or be afraid of their threats or be disturbed by their opposition.

2. **John 13:17** – Jesus said we could be happy if we served others. The world would say we can only be happy if others serve us.

B. **Matthew 5:1-12** – The Sermon on the Mount (the “Beatitudes”) is possibly the most famous of Jesus' sermons.

1. A sermon on attitudes – I call them the “BE-attitudes” or the way we should **BE**. One book I read calls them the “be-happy attitudes.”

If you want to be happy, you have to maintain a good attitude no matter what life offers.

2. The poor in spirit = a humble attitude.
3. Those who mourn and are comforted = a positive attitude.
4. The meek = a contented attitude.
5. Those hungry for righteousness = an attitude of excellence. They want to do what is right.
6. The merciful = a forgiving attitude.
7. The pure in heart = a positive attitude. They always believe the best.

8. The peacemaker = a humble and obedient attitude. They humble themselves and keep peace in obedience to God and to preserve the power of unity.
 9. Those persecuted for doing right = an attitude of excellence no matter what it costs. Some people are set on excellence until it starts to hurt, but these people do whatever it takes to maintain integrity.
- C. It is time to get out of the wilderness and live in the Promised Land.
1. **Deuteronomy 1:2** – Why has it taken forty years to make an eleven-day journey?
 2. **Deuteronomy 1:6** – You have dwelt long enough on this mountain. It is time for change.
 3. Only two men from the original almost 1.5 million Israelites who left Egypt ever entered the Promised Land. The rest of the people died in the wilderness.

Why? That is the big question; and if we find the answer, we can learn a huge lesson that will protect us from making the same mistake.
 4. They claimed their defeat was their enemies, but it really was their attitude.
 5. I have studied them in detail and their attitude was negative, irresponsible, ungrateful, impatient, selfish, rebellious, and proud. They were insecure, greedy, and at times downright pathetic.
 6. The two men who did enter the Promised Land had exactly the opposite attitude of those who failed to enter. They were positive, responsible, confident, giving, patient, obedient, humble, and grateful.
 - a. If you are tempted to think you don't have a bad attitude, just try to get through one day without murmuring or complaining about anything at all.

- b. Try getting through one complete day without displaying a proud, haughty attitude or an attitude that is rebellious toward authority.

Examples:

Even if you refuse to wear your seat belt, you are being rebellious.

OR

If you park in handicapped parking spaces and you are not handicapped

OR

You don't put your grocery cart back in the space provided for them.

OR

You break the speed limit or roll through the stop sign instead of stopping.

OR

You pass another car in a no-passing zone.

OR

You throw your banana peeling out the car window when signs say "no littering."

- c. We all have a lot to learn!

III. What Is Attitude?

- A. It is your thought life turned inside out.
- B. An inward feeling expressed by an outward behavior.
 - 1. Of all the things we wear, our "expression" is the most important.
- C. The Bible talks about our "countenance" or the facial expressions we have.
 - 1. **Genesis 4:5-6** – Cain looked sad and depressed because he was jealous of Abel.

2. **Proverbs 15:13** – A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance.
 3. **Matthew 6:16** – The Pharisees have a sour countenance.
- D. An attitude is the posture we take toward the life we have.
1. If we resist and despise it wishing for someone else’s life, we have a bad attitude that makes us miserable.
 2. If we embrace our lot in life, count our blessings, and use what we have instead of complaining about what we don’t have, we have a good attitude and we will have a good life.
- E. It is the prophet of our future.
- F. Our best friend or worst enemy
- G. It is the thing that draws people to us or repels them.
- H. It is the primary force that will determine whether we succeed or fail. It determines whether we are pleasing to God or not.

IV. Choose You This Day.

- A. Your attitude is your choice. Victor Frankl, while in a concentration camp in Germany, said: **“The last of the human freedoms and one nobody can take away is to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances.”**
1. Robert J. Hastings said, **“Places and circumstances never guarantee happiness. You must decide within yourself whether you want to be happy.”**
- B. There are two Scriptures you can stand on in any painful circumstance and become a winner in life.
1. **Romans 8:28** – All things work out for good to and for those who love God and are called according to His purposes.

2. **Genesis 50:20** – Those things the enemy means for harm, God intends for good.

C. For some people, the choice will be more difficult.

1. Some have a natural temperament that is more negative and sensitive to what is happening around them.

- a. A melancholy personality is often more easily offended – they automatically spot the negative in everything and usually give a report on it.

They are sometimes very dramatic about things that would be minor to a more “up” personality. They make mountains out of molehills. They major in the minors.

- b. A person trained to have a bad attitude (one whose parents had a bad attitude or their parents did not teach them to have a good attitude) will have to make a firmer choice.

Proverbs 22:6 – *Train up a child in the way he should go . . . and when he is old he will not depart from it.*

Sad to say, this works in the positive or negative.

2. Some people seem to have more trials in life than others.

V. **Don't Let Your Attitude Lose Altitude.**

A. **Rule number one** – Maintain the right attitude when the going gets rough. Everybody can have a good attitude when things go their way.

1. As soon as you sense your attitude losing altitude, make an adjustment.

MAINTAINING the right attitude is easier than REGAINING the right attitude.

2. **I Peter 5:8-9** – Resist the devil at his onset.
 3. **Colossians 1:11** – Paul prayed that the people would keep a good attitude in hard times.
 4. Don't pray all the time to have no trials – pray to keep a good attitude when you have trials.
 - a. **Misery is an option!**
 - b. John Maxwell said: "**Circumstances do not make you what you are; they reveal what you are!**"
- B. Rule number two** – Realize the rough weather won't last forever.
1. This too shall pass. Robert Schuller once said, "**The good news is that the bad news can be turned into good news when you change your attitude.**"
 2. You will survive – you have in the past, and you will again.
 3. If it does not affect eternity, don't be overly concerned with it.
- C. Rule number three** – Don't make major decisions during the storm if you don't have to.
1. In the storm emotions run wild.
 2. The recording that contains all the "what if's" is playing.
- D. Rule number four** – Keep in contact with the "Control Tower."
1. One thing that will help your attitude is spending good quality time with God.
 2. One word from God can lift you out of the pit and stand you on the mountaintop.

3. Sing a new song:

I'll Be Fine If I'm Connected To The Vine.

E. **Rule number five** – Try to keep things in perspective.

Consider the following letter that parents received from their daughter:

Dear Mom and Dad,

Since I left for college I have been remiss in writing, and I am sorry for my thoughtlessness in not having written before.

I'll bring you up to date now; but before you read on, please sit down. Are you sitting down? Don't read on unless you are!

I am getting along pretty well now. The skull fracture and concussion that I got when I jumped out of my dormitory window when it caught on fire (shortly after my arrival here) has pretty well healed. I only get those sick headaches once a day now.

Fortunately, the fire in my dorm and the jump was witnessed by an attendant at the gas station. He ran over, took me to the hospital, and continued to visit me there. When I got out of the hospital, I had nowhere to live because of the burnt-out-conditions of my room; so he was kind enough to invite me to share his basement bedroom flat with him. It's sort of small, but cute.

He is a very fine boy, and we have fallen deeply in love and are planning to get married. We haven't set the exact date yet, but it will be before my pregnancy begins to show. Yes, Mom and Dad, I'm pregnant! I know how much you are looking forward to being grandparents, and I know you will welcome the baby and give it the same tender care and devotion that you gave me when I was a child.

The reason for the delay in our marriage is that my boyfriend has a minor infection that I carelessly caught from him. I know, however, that you will welcome him into our family with open arms. He is kind; and although not well educated, he is ambitious. Although he is of a different race and religion than ours, I know that your often-expressed tolerance will not permit you to be bothered by that.

In conclusion, now that I have brought you up to date, I want to tell you that there was no dormitory fire. I did not have a concussion or a skull fracture. I was not in the hospital. I am not pregnant. I am not infected, and there is no boyfriend in my life.

However, I am failing history and science, and I wanted you to see this in proper perspective.

Your loving daughter

When you feel discouraged, consider these examples:

Should you find it hard to get to sleep tonight, just remember the homeless family who has no bed to lie in.

Should you find yourself stuck in traffic, don't despair; there are people in this world for whom driving an automobile is an unheard of privilege.

Should you have a bad day at work, think of the man who has been out of work for three months.

Should you despair over a relationship that is troublesome, think of the person who has never known what it's like to love and be loved in return.

Should you grieve over the fact that your boss denied your request to work four days a week and have a three-day weekend, think of the woman in dire straits, working twelve hours a day, seven days a week, for ten dollars just to feed her family in a third-world country.

Should your car break down, leaving you a mile away from assistance, think of the paraplegic who would love the opportunity to take that walk.

Should you notice a new gray hair in the mirror, think of the cancer patient in chemotherapy who wishes she had hair to examine.

Should you find yourself discouraged because you cannot decide what your life's calling is – be thankful! There are those who didn't live long enough to get the opportunity to even think about it.

Should you find yourself the victim of other people's bitterness, ignorance, smallness, or insecurities, remember: things could be worse – you could be them.

VI. Obstacle Or Opportunity

A. Attitude is the difference between an obstacle and an opportunity.

1. *Robinson Crusoe* was written in prison.
2. John Bunyan wrote *Pilgrim's Progress* while in prison.

3. Jeanne Guyon's books have profoundly affected me, and she wrote many of them while in prison.
 4. Sir Walter Raleigh wrote *The History of the World* during a thirteen-year imprisonment.
 5. Luther translated the Bible while confined in the Wartburg Castle.
 6. Beethoven wrote his greatest symphony while almost totally deaf and burdened with sorrow.
- B. Joseph's good attitude took him from the pit to the palace.

**If a man is truly great,
his greatness always emerges during crisis.**

A Positive Attitude

Foundation Scripture:

Philippians 2:5 – Let this same attitude be in you which was in Christ Jesus.

I. Negative Thinking Limits God And Our Potential.

- A. **Numbers 13:27-33** – The two men who were positive, Joshua and Caleb, were the two who entered the Promised Land.
1. The ten negative Israelites died in the wilderness.
 2. They saw that the fruit was very large and God's promise was true, **but the giants** were big.
- B. Being positive does not mean we deny the existence of difficulty. It means that we believe God is **greater** than the difficulty.
1. **Acts 7:9** – Joseph's brothers hated him and sold him into slavery in Egypt, **but God** was with him.
 2. **Psalms 37:1-11** – No matter what is going on now – in the end, we win!
- C. **Psalms 27:13-14** – Believe to see the Lord's goodness in the land of the living!
1. Expect something good to happen.
 2. Let your attitude be:
“If anything good can happen today, it will!”
- D. The Israelites who died in the wilderness had no positive vision for their future.

1. **Numbers 14:2-4; 20:3-4; 21:4-5** – They never saw beyond their circumstances.
 2. They never saw what could be. They only saw what had been and what was.
- E. **Genesis 13:14-17** – God told Abram that he could have all he could see.
1. What do you see?
- F. You will produce what you see.
1. **Genesis 30:28-43** – Jacob put spotted and speckled rods in front of the breeding animals so they would produce what they saw, and he became a rich man.
 2. Even though Laban tried to cheat him, Jacob knew that if he could see it – he could have it.

II. **Negative Thinking Hinders Others From Making A Positive Response.**

- A. One of the greatest dangers of a negative lifestyle is that it tends to control those you influence and love the most.
- B. **Numbers 14:1-11** – After the ten spies gave their negative report, all the congregation wept all night and became exceedingly discouraged.
1. The negative people wanted to stone Joshua and Caleb who were positive.
 2. The devil always wants to silence anybody who has a “can do” attitude.
- C. Even how you ask a question determines the other person’s response.
1. A soldier had the job of handing out apricots at the end of the chow line.

He decided to test the theory of positive and negative ways of asking questions: to the first 100 men he asked, “You don’t want apricots do you?” And 90 percent said no. To the next 100 he asked, “Would you like some apricots?” And 50 percent took them. Then he tried a third idea. He said to the next 100, “Would you like one or two dishes of apricots?” 40 percent took two dishes and 50 percent took one – only 10 percent totally declined.

The percentage of takers went from 10 percent to 90 percent simply based on the question being asked in a positive manner rather than negative.

2. I recently heard myself ask a clerk at a checkout counter, “You don’t have any Kleenex back there do you?” Of course she said “No.”

Maybe if I had asked in a positive manner, she would have gone somewhere to get me one.

- D. The most common type of negativism that hinders others is what we will call the “flat-world” attitude. This is a statement that is not true, but people believe it based on past education and statements they have heard.

1. Everyone “**thought**” the world was flat; so when “**scholars**” and “**experts**” examined Columbus’s plans, they said what he proposed was quite impossible.

Columbus believed the world was round. They believed it was flat, and that he would merely sail off the edge and disappear.

2. During the early 1900s, an impressive array of scientific wizards pooh-poohed the idea of the airplane. They said, “It is an opium-induced fantasy – a crackpot idea.”
3. Thomas Edison invented the telegraph; phonograph; light bulb; and a complete electrical distribution system – complete with generators and the first power plant. He held 1,300 U.S. patents.

- a. Edison said that talking pictures would never catch on and nobody would pay to listen to sounds coming from a screen.

Eventually, talking pictures were invented based on some of his previous work with synchronization.

- b. He tried to persuade Henry Ford to abandon his fledgling idea of a motorcar. He said, “Come and work for me and do something really worthwhile.”

- c. Some people are positive about their ideas and negative about other people’s ideas.

4. Benjamin Franklin was told by “**experts**” to forget all the foolishness of experimenting with lightning.

5. Madame Curie was urged by “**experts**” to forget the scientifically impossible idea of radium.

6. All of these people and thousands of others had a “flat-world” mentality. They believed certain things could not be done because they had been educated against it – even though nobody had ever tried it.

- E. When we are closed to “positive possibilities,” we see what we **expect** to see – not what we **CAN** see.

1. We only do what we think we can do – which isn’t much.

III. Negative Thinking Blows Everything Out Of Proportion.

- A. Thomas was a negative thinker – there is no book of Thomas in the Bible.

1. Could you imagine what it would have sounded like if there were a book of Thomas?

2. Thomas would have made a mountain out of every molehill.
- B. Murphy's Law states: "Nothing is as easy as it looks; everything takes longer than you expect; and if anything can go wrong, it will and at the worst possible moment."
1. Who is Murphy? Most people don't have a clue.
 2. This law was named after Captain Edward A. Murphy who made a statement while working on an Air Force project. He became angry and cursed a technician who made a mistake and said, "If anything can be done wrong, he will do it."
 3. The world may expect Murphy's Law to be in operation, but Christians should expect "God's Law" to operate.
 4. God's Law would go something like this: "If anything can go right, it will; nothing is as hard as it looks; everything is more rewarding than it looks; if anything good can happen, it will happen today; if anything good can happen to anybody, it will happen to me."
- C. Negative people magnify the little bit that is wrong, and it looks so big to them that they totally miss everything that is right.
1. I believe that in almost every situation there is always more right than wrong if we look for it.

IV. Negative Thinking Keeps Us From Enjoying Life.

- A. There is no life to enjoy. Everything turns out sour for a negative person.
1. They will blame it on circumstances, but it is their own attitude that has produced the circumstances.
- B. **Romans 12:2** – God has a **good life** for you, but you must have your mind completely renewed in order to experience it.
1. Don't be conformed to the world and its negative ways.

2. Have a new attitude.
- C. **Genesis 12:1-3; 13:14-15; 15:1, 7; 17:1-8** – God promised Abram (Abraham) a wonderful life.
1. **Galatians 3:6-7** – Abraham believed God.

V. Positive Attitudes Found In “The Sermon On The Mount”

- A. **Matthew 5:4** – Blessed (happy) are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted!
1. I am really hurting, but I am going to bounce back.
 2. Jesus suggests that we be so positive in negative situations that instead of looking at what will cause the mourning, we look at how great the comfort will be.

II Corinthians 1:3-4 – The God of all Comfort, Who comforts us in every tribulation

3. **Genesis 37:35** – All Jacob’s children tried to comfort him concerning Joseph, but **he refused to be comforted.**
 - a. God is the God of all Comfort; but negative people don’t want comfort, they want pity. They don’t even want to think about comfort because it might cheer them up.
 - b. They feel sorry for themselves and want others to do the same thing.
4. The positive man believes that something good will come from his trouble.
 - a. He looks for a deeper purpose.
 - b. **Job 23:10** – He says with Job: “When I am tried, I shall come forth as refined gold.”

B. **Matthew 5:8** – Blessed (happy) are the pure in heart, for they shall see God!

1. The pure in heart always believe the best of every person in every situation.
2. Their hearts are pure, and they can hear from God. They will have discernment in situations.
3. The pure in heart are not hindered by
 - a. Unforgiveness, bitterness, or resentment

Offense

Judgment toward others

A critical spirit
 - b. They are not angry with God because their lives have not all worked out the way they planned.
 - c. Example: The painter Leonardo da Vinci was visited by children. One child accidentally knocked his canvas over – he became very angry and ran them off. He discovered he could not paint the face of Jesus until the blockage was removed.

Only the pure in heart can see God.

A Responsible Attitude

Foundation Scripture:

Philippians 2:5 – Let this same attitude be in you which was in Christ Jesus.

I. What Is Responsibility?

- A. **Responsibility** (defined) – To be called upon to give an account of, to answer for; liable in case of fault; to answer for one's conduct; to meet obligations; to do your duty; able to choose between right and wrong; accountable.
1. We either choose to be accountable for our actions, or we are forced into being accountable by our circumstances or ultimately by God.
 2. If a person is not responsible to make their car payment, they will have forced accountability when their car is towed away.
 3. If a person is not responsible to pay their rent, they will have forced accountability when they are evicted and have no place to live.
 4. If a person is not responsible to meet their marital and family responsibilities, they will have forced accountability when their partner wants a divorce and their children don't want to be around them.
- B. **Romans 14:12** – Every man will give an account of himself to God.
- C. **Matthew 12:36** – We will give an account of every idle word we have spoken.

- D. **Hebrews 13:17** – Ministers will one day give an account of the souls left in their charge.
- E. **Matthew 20:16b** – *For many are called, but few chosen.*
1. Many are called, but few are willing to take the responsibility for the call.
 2. **Matthew 20:17-22** – Jesus explained that the call would require sacrifice and suffering.
- F. Responsibility means to respond to the ability God has placed in you or to respond to the opportunity God has given you.
- G. **With every privilege there is a corresponding responsibility.**

II. Arise And Take Your Place.

- A. **Joshua 1:1-3** – Moses is dead. Now arise, and go over this Jordan into the land I am giving you. Every place upon which your foot treads, that have I given to you.
1. Joshua knew Moses was dead – he had just completed thirty days of mourning.
 2. God was reminding him that new responsibility was ahead. Moses would no longer be doing everything for the people.

Moses did their believing, their repenting, and their praying. They got into trouble and Moses got them out. They blamed Moses for their troubles and made excuses.
 3. To have the land I have set aside for you, you must go take it. You have a responsibility!
- B. The devil won't just leave you alone because you are a Christian or have a bumper sticker – you will have to resist him.

- C. Victory is not automatic to the believer. He must study to show himself approved, and he must pray so God's will and power will be released in his life. He must give and serve others so he is sowing seed for the harvest that he desires.
- D. **Isaiah 60:1** – Arise from the depression and prostration in which circumstances have kept you – rise to a new life! The glory has come, and the Lord has arisen upon you!
- E. Arise (defined/Hebrew and Greek) – Stand up, get out of bed, and move. Change your position.
- F. **John 5:1-9** – Jesus told the crippled man to “Get up!”

III. Be Responsible.

- A. The Israelites had an attitude of irresponsibility. They wanted Moses or someone else to do everything for them.
 - 1. **Numbers 20:3-4; 21:4-5** – They blamed Moses and God for all their problems, and they did nothing but complain.
 - 2. **Numbers 21:6** – Their lack of responsibility opened a door for the devil.
 - a. Being responsible slams the door in the devil's face.
 - b. Face TRUTH – the Truth makes you free!
- B. **Genesis 11:31; 12:1-2** – Abram's father was offered an opportunity to go to Canaan, **BUT** he settled in Haran.
 - 1. Somewhere along the way, Abram's father said: “I just don't want to be responsible for this anymore – it's too hard.”
 - 2. Notice that he died where he settled.
- C. **Proverbs 6:6-11** – We are encouraged to look at the ant who takes responsibility to do what is right without any oversight.

IV. “My Behavior May Be Wrong, But It’s Not My Fault.”

- A. **Genesis 3:12-13** – Adam and Eve blamed each other, God, and the devil – therefore evading personal responsibility for their actions.
- B. Blame shifting is being irresponsible.
 - 1. I act badly because I was abused.
 - 2. If you did what was right, then I wouldn’t be upset.
 - 3. I don’t feel good – that’s why I am so grouchy.
 - 4. I would like to help you, but I’m pressed for time.
 - 5. I am late because I got a phone call just as I was walking out the door.
 - 6. I am late because I just can’t get my kids going in the morning.
- C. People who blame shift have endless excuses.
 - 1. An excuse is a reason stuffed with a lie.
 - 2. Excuses are rarely 100 percent truth.

V. The Biggest Excuse I Hear

- A. It’s too hard!
 - 1. **Deuteronomy 30:11** – My commands are not too hard.
 - 2. When God gives us a command, He always gives the grace to do it.
 - 3. What God requires may be hard, but it is never TOO hard.
- B. We need resistance – without it, we don’t grow.

1. **I Peter 5:8-9** – We must resist the devil and stand firm in our faith.
 2. **I Timothy 6:12** – *Fight the good fight of the faith . . .*
 3. **Ephesians 6:11-18** – We are in a war. You will have to stand and resist.
 4. God ordained it this way because we need the struggle.
- C. The baby eaglet has a tooth on the end of its beak. While still in the egg, it begins to peck and peck. This lasts for what seems to be forever. This process is what prepares the eaglet to be an eagle. It helps him build the strength and determination he will need in the future.
- D. A group of astronauts wanted to take a bee along into outer space to see how it would respond to a weightless atmosphere. The report was that it enjoyed the ride but died.

VI. Our Society Today

- A. More than ever, people don't want to take responsibility.
1. Men by the thousands leave their wives and children and refuse to support them unless the law intervenes and makes them.
 2. \$84 billion is due in back child support right now. Men who don't support their children are stealing from them.
 3. There are 46 million abortions each year or 126,000 each day. Abortion is a symptom of irresponsibility, and that is the kindest way to describe it.
 4. 43 percent of all women will have had at least one abortion by the time they are 45 years old.
 5. In the year 2000 over 21 million couples got a divorce. The statistics are no longer collected by the government.

6. Over one million children each year are affected by divorce.
 7. More people today are part of a second marriage than a first.
 8. Approximately one-third of divorced parents remain bitter for several years.
 9. There is basically one divorce for every two marriages in the United States.
 10. There has been a 70 percent increase in the past ten years of couples living together out of wedlock.
 11. Children living in these homes are more likely to perform poorly in school and live below the poverty line.
 12. A 1992 study by the Department of Justice showed that women cohabiting with their partners and not married are 62 times more likely to experience domestic abuse.
 13. A study in Britain showed that instances of child abuse are 33 percent higher in couples cohabiting together.
 14. Those who cohabit together and later get married are 50 percent more likely to divorce than those who never lived together before marriage.
 15. When people are not responsible to direct their lives according to God's Word, they will pay for it in every kind of misery.
- B. It is our scriptural duty to take care of elderly parents and grandparents, as well as other relatives who have genuine need.
1. **I Timothy 5:4, 8** – Believers who don't take care of their families are worse than unbelievers who do.
 - a. Have a responsible attitude – do your duty concerning your family.

- b. It may be expensive and require time you feel you don't have, but God always rewards those who have a responsible attitude.

C. Millions are not responsible to pay their debts.

1. Bankruptcy cases average 1,600,000 per year in the United States. Besides this, millions of others are negligent and behind in paying their debts.
2. There are some who have problems that cannot be avoided, but the majority of the problem is the result of an irresponsible attitude.
3. **Romans 13:8** – Stay out of debt and owe no man anything except to love him.

Be responsible – don't borrow money to do things that simply tickle the flesh.

4. **Proverbs 22:7** – The borrower becomes the servant (slave) of the lender.

Be responsible – pay your bills on time.

D. Be responsible to take care of what you own.

1. Take care of your house, car, clothes, and other possessions.
2. Wash your car, have the oil changed, and rotate the tires.

Once we **GAIN** something,
we are responsible to **MAINTAIN** it.

E. You have civic responsibility.

1. If you don't vote, you are being irresponsible concerning your civic duty.
2. Paul teaches us that we are responsible to pray for our leaders and those in authority.

- F. Raising children is a big responsibility. Get educated so you can do it correctly.
1. Take some good parenting classes, or read some Bible-based material on parenting.
 2. Be responsible to correct your children and train them properly. Don't just depend on the church and the school to teach them everything they need to know.

YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE.

- G. Be responsible to keep your word. Be on time for appointments, and do what you tell people you will do.
- H. On a scale of one to ten, how responsible are you?
1. If your score is too low, you may have found the reason for many of your problems.
 2. People who have an irresponsible attitude will have all kinds of problems in life, and they will probably blame them on somebody else.

A Contented Attitude

Foundation Scripture: **Philippians 2:5**

I. Be Content.

A. **Philippians 4:11-12** – Paul learned how to be content (satisfied to the point where he was not disturbed) no matter what state he was in.

1. Being content does not mean we never want to see change or progress. It means we are not unhappy with what we have now.

a. Content (defined) – Satisfied, fulfilled, adequate, sufficient; to be strong or have strength.

b. Just as the joy of the Lord is your strength, contentment is also strength. A content and satisfied person cannot be as easily tempted by the devil.

2. A person can be content and aggressive at the same time.

A person can and should press toward greater things but enjoy where he is at on the way to where he is going.

3. Passivity is not contentment.

A passive person takes no action to get what he wants. He expects others to do for him what he should do for himself.

B. **I Timothy 6:6** – Godliness accompanied with contentment is great and abundant gain.

1. To be content is one of the greatest blessings a person can have. It is much more valuable than having more things with discontentment.
- C. Contentment does not come from possessions, position, or power. Contentment comes from within the heart of man. Contentment comes from being in right relationship with God.
1. **Psalm 17:15** – *As for me, I will continue beholding Your face in righteousness . . . I shall be fully satisfied, when I awake [to find myself] beholding Your form [and having sweet communion with You].*
 2. True contentment can only be found in knowing that you are right with God and in seeking and serving Him.
- D. Contentment is a result of righteousness; therefore we are never told to seek things, but we are told to seek righteousness.
1. **Matthew 6:33** (NKJV) – *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*
 2. **Proverbs 14:12-14** – Sinful ways seem right to man, but he ends up miserable. A man is satisfied with right actions and thoughts.
 3. I repeat what I said previously:

TRUE CONTENTMENT comes from within a man.

II. Discontentment Dishonors God.

- A. Discontentment (defined) – Unhappy, not satisfied; a sense of resentment.
1. Discontented people are saying with their attitude: “God, I am not happy with what You are doing in my life at the current time, and I really don’t trust You.”

- B. Discontented people resent those who have what they want.
1. I have never had anyone criticize me for having something that they also had, but I have had plenty of people get jealous and criticize me for having what they don't have.
 2. The only people jealous of your big house are those who have no house or a small house.
 3. The only people jealous of your swimming pool are those who don't have one.
 4. The only people jealous of your new car are those who have never had one.
 5. The only people jealous of your promotion at work are those who didn't want to work as hard as you did to get it.
- C. **James 4:1-2** – Discontentment, jealousy, strife, and greed come from wanting what others have and trying to get it – instead of merely asking God for what you want and trusting His ways and timing.
1. Coveting what others have is sin!
 2. The tenth commandment is “Thou shalt not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

III. Greed

- A. **Proverbs 1:19** – . . . *[greed for plunder] takes away the lives of its possessors.*
1. When a person is greedy, they concentrate on GETTING instead of GIVING.
 2. Greed causes a person to keep what he should give away – even things he is no longer using.
- B. **Proverbs 28:25** – *He who is of a greedy spirit stirs up strife, but he who puts his trust in the Lord shall be enriched and blessed.*

1. I don't believe God ever gives MORE to someone who is already UNSATISFIED with what he has.
- C. Greed must be a very serious problem because Paul instructed us in **I Corinthians 5:11** not to even associate with anyone who is greedy.
1. How many discontented, murmuring, complaining, unhappy people do you hang out with?
- D. We don't like to think we are greedy, but we need to get honest with ourselves.
1. Greed is what makes us jealous.
 2. Greed prevents us from being happy when others are blessed.
 3. Greed is never satisfied for very long. It always cries "MORE, MORE!"
- E. Greed does not want what it wants for the right reasons.
1. **James 4:3** – Some people fail to receive what they ask for because their intention is to use it on sensual pleasures.

They are selfish.
- F. **Ephesians 5:5-7** – Greed is a serious sin. Paul says that it is idolatry, and those who are greedy will not have a share in the kingdom of God.
1. Greed shows that something is seriously wrong in the heart attitude of a person.
 2. We must fight against greed just as we would the temptation to murder someone.

IV. Giving On Purpose

- A. The best way to fight greed and covetousness is to be an aggressive giver.

1. Give on purpose. Don't wait to feel like it.
 2. Don't just give to those who you think "deserve" it.
- B. According to **Malachi 3:10-11**, giving is a weapon against Satan.
1. We can fight destruction with it. We can fight greed with it.
 2. As soon as you are tempted to be jealous of someone, send them a gift or help them in some way.
 3. **Romans 12:21** – We overcome evil with good.
- C. Remember that God's Word says to bless your enemies. When they are hungry, feed them; when they are thirsty, give them something to drink.
1. **Matthew 5:43-44** – When you are good to those who don't deserve it, you are the "most like God" at those times.
 2. When you give to those who have not treated you right, you confuse and defeat the devil.
 3. **I Thessalonians 5:15** – Give on purpose. **SEEK** to do good to others.

Seek means to crave, pursue, and go after with all your might.
 4. Becoming a regular, aggressive, radical, excited giver is one of the most powerful things you can ever do.
 5. Generosity is a weapon!
 6. When you are hurting, keep being good to others.

V. People Who Became Losers Due To Greed

- A. **Acts 5:1-5** – Ananias and Sapphira lost their lives due to greed.

- B. **II Kings 5:26-27** – Gehazi (Elisha’s servant) lost his position and became a leper due to greed.
- C. **I Samuel 15:3, 8-11** – Saul lost his kingdom due to greed. His greed caused him to disobey God and keep what God told him to destroy.
- D. **Joshua 7:13-25** – Achan took and hid items that were devoted to destruction because of greed, and it caused him to lose his life.

CLOSING STATEMENT:

The attitude of contentment has a voice. It says you trust God. It says you are thankful for what you have. Be content and satisfied with what you have and God will release more as He knows you are ready. Contentment is the doorway to happiness. It is spiritual warfare against the devil. If you are not content, then you are looking in all the wrong places for fulfillment. Remember that things cannot satisfy – only God Himself and being in His will can satisfy us completely.

If you are not satisfied, don’t seek anything the world has to offer – **SEEK GOD!**

A Humble Attitude

Foundation Scripture: **Philippians 2:5**

I. What Is Humility?

- A. Humility is the opposite of pride.
- B. Pride (defined) – To boast, to be high-minded (think more highly of yourself than you ought to), to take glory unto yourself or be vainglorious.

(Webster's) – Inordinate self-esteem; an unreasonable conceit of one's own superiority in talents, beauty, wealth, accomplishments, rank, or elevation in office which manifests itself in lofty airs, distance from others, and often contempt of others. Insolence or rude treatment of others.

1. To see yourself as better, more capable, or more intelligent than others.
2. Pride causes us to overestimate ourselves and underestimate others.
3. **Romans 12:3** – Pride causes us to have an exaggerated opinion of our own importance.
4. **Obadiah 1:3** – *The pride of your heart has deceived you . . .*

Pride distorts our perception and we don't see things as they truly are. We don't see other people's value, and we don't see our flaws.

- C. Humble (defined) – To be low-lying, but always used in a good sense. Humble in Spirit, humble-minded or courteous, a modest evaluation of your own worth. Having a consciousness of your own defects.

To remain under as in: “Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that in due time He may exalt you.” (See **I Peter 5:6**.)

1. Humility is connected with good manners. People that are proud are ill-mannered and quite often rude simply because in their high-mindedness they see themselves as better than others. We are never rude to people that we respect, honor, and admire.
2. Quite often familiarity breeds contempt. We might be rude to a family member, but we would never be rude to our pastor or the President or Billy Graham, etc.

D. Humility **ALWAYS** comes before exaltation and pride **ALWAYS** comes before destruction.

1. **Proverbs 15:33**

2. **Proverbs 16:18**

3. I know a lot of people who have destruction everywhere you look but it would never occur to them that pride might be the root of their problem.

People with pride are too proud to ever admit that they are proud. The nature of the problem won't allow them to admit they have a problem.

4. Pride will keep you from being promoted. I had to learn how to be “under” authority with a good attitude before God promoted me to being the one in authority.

E. **Matthew 5:3** – *Blessed (happy, to be envied, and spiritually prosperous – with life-joy and satisfaction in God's favor and salvation, regardless of their outward conditions) are the poor in spirit (the humble, who rate themselves insignificant), for theirs is the kingdom of heaven!*

1. Think seriously about what this Scripture says.
2. Humility brings so much happiness and blessings that you will be envied. You will be spiritually prosperous.

You will have a life of joy and be satisfied. You will experience God's favor. All these things are yours regardless of your outward condition. The kingdom and all it includes is yours. All this is yours for the exchange of humility!!

II. God's Attitude Toward Pride And Humility

A. Pride is something God hates.

1. **Proverbs 6:16-19** – Six things God hates, indeed, seven are an abomination to Him.
2. The seventh thing that God hates is: he who sows discord among his brethren.
3. Discord or strife is always a result of pride.
(See **Proverbs 13:10**.)
4. **Isaiah 14:13-15** – Pride was Lucifer's sin, and it is still the root cause of all other sin.
5. Pride is "I." I want, I will, I will not, I need, I know, I am right, etc.

B. **Philippians 2:2-9** – Jesus is our example in humility.

C. God always ultimately deals with pride.

1. **Daniel 4:1-4** – The king was prospering and at rest as long as he maintained a humble attitude.
2. **Daniel 4:29-37** – The king's attitude changed from humility to pride, and he lost the kingdom and lived as a wild animal until his attitude was corrected.

III. Ten Characteristics Of Humility

A. **Number one – The humble ask for help when it is needed.** The proud man wants to do everything himself, his own way. If he does let people help, he still wants to be totally in charge.

1. When we ask people to help us, we must give them a certain amount of liberty to be themselves while accomplishing the job. They may not do it “our way” but “their way” may be just as good even though it is different.

2. **I Samuel 17:32-40** – David could not defeat Goliath with Saul’s armor on.

B. **Number two – Humble men and women give credit where credit is due.** They are quick to give God glory for any good that is accomplished through them. They also give others credit for things they do.

1. The proud man lets others do the work while he steals all the credit. Others make him look good and he never even shows them appreciation or says “thank you.”

C. **Number three – The humble are quick to forgive, difficult to offend, and gladly wait on God for their vindication.**

1. They are fully aware of how much they have been forgiven.

Colossians 3:13 – *Be gentle and forbearing with one another and, if one has a difference (a grievance or complaint) against another, readily pardoning each other; even as the Lord has [freely] forgiven you, so must you also [forgive].*

2. They are not easily offended because they don’t center on how others make them feel. Their life is not all about them. They are more concerned with how they treat others than how they are being treated.

3. The humble have a reverential fear of trying to avenge themselves. They wait on God! They know His ways and plan are much better than theirs would be. The proud man however always has a better idea than anyone – including God.
- D. **Number four – The humble are patient and long-suffering with the weaknesses of others.**
1. **Galatians 6:1-3**
- E. **Number five – The humble are peace lovers.** They are makers and maintainers of peace.
1. **Romans 12:14-21** – A strong exhortation to live in peace
 2. All turmoil is fueled by pride. The humble are peacemakers because they don't have to be right or have the last word. They know when to speak and when to be quiet. They are the first to apologize. They are willing to adapt themselves to others. They don't expect everyone to be just like them. They lift others up rather than tearing them down.
- F. **Number six – A humble man serves others.** He lives with the attitude of being a blessing rather than being blessed.
1. **John: Chapter 13** – Jesus washed His disciples' feet as an example of the attitude we should live with.
 2. **Galatians 5:13** – Through love you should serve one another.

Love is expressed in doing things for others. It is expressed in giving – not in getting. Love is not merely theory or talk, but it is action.
 3. **Matthew 20:20-26** – Proud people want positions and titles, but humility seeks to serve.
- G. **Number seven – A humble person is very thankful.** He does NOT have an attitude that he not only deserves what he gets, but also more besides. He notices and appreciates everything that God or any person does for him.

H. **Number eight – A humble person has a tender conscience and is quick to repent.** Pride makes a person hardhearted. Humility softens our hearts and we approach life with a mildness that is soothing rather than abrasive.

1. The humble are grieved when they feel they have hurt or mistreated anyone.
2. Humble people are grieved when they feel they have transgressed the commandments of God.
3. They are easily touched with the infirmity of others.
4. Jesus is our example in humility, and He was touched with the feelings of our infirmity and moved with compassion to help us. (See **Hebrews 4:15**.)

I. **Number nine – The humble see and readily admit their weaknesses.** They know their strengths are gifts from God and not something they possess within themselves.

1. **I Corinthians 15:10** – I am what I am by the grace of God. I did not take God's grace in vain, but I worked harder than anybody – it was not really me doing the work but God's grace in and through me.
2. We often talk about how hard we work and how busy we are. We should remember that if we do work hard, God gives us the strength; and if we are able to peacefully maintain a busy schedule, it is because God has gifted us to bear much fruit in our generation. We are called for such a time as this!
3. The humble person purposely exposes his or her weaknesses and faults in order to make others feel better about themselves. They are not afraid to be vulnerable and transparent. They have nothing to lose by exposing their faults. Their goal is to help people, not impress them.

J. **Number ten – The humble man or woman gladly receives God’s chastisement** – whether it comes directly from God or through a human agent God chooses to use. He knows that if he does not let God correct him privately, God will do it publicly.

1. **Proverbs 3:11-13** – The humble embrace chastisement – they don’t despise it.

2. God gave King Nebuchadnezzar a warning about his pride in a dream, but he ignored the warning; therefore, God dealt with him publicly. He lost the kingdom and lived as a wild animal for seven years before returning to his right mind and humbling himself.

3. **I Peter 5:6** – **Humble yourselves** under the mighty hand of God, that in due time He may exalt you.

An Unselfish Attitude

Foundation Scripture: **Philippians 2:4-5**

I. Forget About Yourself.

- A. **Mark 8:34** – Disciples of Jesus must deny themselves (forget, ignore, disown, and lose sight of themselves and all their own interests).
1. Living with an unselfish attitude is our cross to carry in this world.
- B. **II Corinthians 5:15** – *And He died for all, so that all those who live might live no longer to and for themselves, but to and for Him Who died and was raised again for their sake.*
1. Jesus died so we might be free from unselfishness. He died so we might no longer have to live for ourselves.
 2. We can live for God and others, trusting God to take care of us.
 3. We can retire from the lifelong job of self-care.
 4. We can finally sing a new song – something besides *I Was Always On My Mind* **or** *What About Me*.
- C. **Philippians 4:5** – *Let all men know and perceive and recognize your unselfishness (your considerateness, your forbearing spirit). The Lord is near [He is coming soon].*
- D. Living only for yourself and selfishly seeking only what pleases you is like living in a prison.

1. In your little world there is only you! It is like a prisoner living in solitary confinement.
2. **John 12:24** – Unless we are willing to die to self, we abide alone; we live isolated lonely lives; very few people would call us friend; and when we are gone, nobody really cares that much. We have traveled through life, and the world is no better because we were here.

II. Declare War On Selfishness.

- A. Selfishness, it seems, is ingrained in every fiber of our being. There is no hope of it merely disappearing because we ask it to go – we must fight against it. We must literally declare war on selfishness.
 1. **II Timothy 3:1-2** – We live in very self-centered times. The opportunity to be selfish is everywhere.
 2. BUT the opportunity to be **unselfish** is also everywhere!
- B. **Galatians 6:10** – As occasion and opportunity open up to us, let us do good to all people.
 1. Learn to really listen to what people tell you about their needs and desires; and determine that if there is any way you can bless them, you will.
 2. Be a blessing on purpose! Don't wait until you are ordered to do good to others by God – and you have three confirmations that it really is God telling you to bless someone – before you will take action.
 3. Instead of saying: "I'll give and be a blessing if I really know it is Your will, God," say: "Lord, I'm going to bless everyone I meet unless You tell me not to."
 4. Let me give an example:

A Cold Day In December

A little boy about ten years old was standing before a shoe store on the roadway; he was barefooted, peering through the window, and shivering with cold. A lady approached the boy and said, "My little fellow, why are you looking so earnestly in the window?" "I was asking God to give me a pair of shoes" was the boy's reply. The lady took him by the hand and went into the store and asked the clerk to get her a half-dozen pairs of socks for the boy. She then asked if he could give her a basin of water and a towel. He quickly brought them to her. She took the little fellow to the back part of the store; and removing her gloves, she knelt down and washed his little feet and dried them with the towel. By this time, the clerk had returned with the socks. She placed a pair on his feet and then bought him a pair of shoes. She tied up the remaining pairs of socks and gave them to him. She patted him on the head and as she turned to go said: "No doubt, my little fellow, you feel more comfortable now." The astonished lad caught her by the hand and looking up in her face with tears in his eyes answered the question with these words, "Are you God's wife?"

5. I suggest we don't ever pray for God to do something that we are not willing to do if we are able.
- C. **Romans 12:1** – Dedicate all your members and faculties as a living sacrifice to God.
1. Let's not over spiritualize this Scripture, but instead, let it be worked out in our everyday life.
- D. **Philippians 2:4-5** – Let each of you be concerned for not merely his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let Christ be your example in humility.
1. Learn to be genuinely interested in other people. Listen to them. Ask them what they like and what they want in life. Ask them to tell you their story; and believe me, everyone has one.
 2. People are desperate to be loved. They are desperate to find anyone who is genuinely interested in them.

E. Become violent against selfishness. Every time you recognize the feelings of selfishness rising up in you, resist them aggressively. Refuse to live for yourself.

1. Example:

- a. There are two seas in Palestine. One is fresh and fish are in it abundantly; the banks of the river are green and lined with beautiful green trees. Children play on its shores. Not far away Jesus fed five thousand people. The Jordan River makes this sea with fresh water from the surrounding hills.
- b. The Jordan River not only makes this sea called the Sea of Galilee, but it also makes another sea. This sea however has no fish, nothing is green, no birds nest nearby, no children play, and the air hangs heavy above it.
- c. What makes the difference in the two seas? The Jordan River flows into both, but they do two different things with what flows into them. The Sea of Galilee receives water and gives it out drop for drop. Water flows in and water flows out in equal measure. The other sea, however, thinks it is shrewder; it hoards its water jealously. Every drop it receives, it keeps. It will not even be tempted to be generous.

The Sea of Galilee gives and lives. The other sea gives nothing; its name is dead – it is the Dead Sea. There are two kinds of people in the world, just as there are two seas in Palestine.

F. **I Timothy 5:6** – The selfish person is dead even while he still lives.

III. Have You Washed Any Feet Lately?

A. **John 13:1-17** – Jesus washed His disciples' feet as an example to them of what they should do as they had opportunity.

1. Washing feet simply represents doing things for people which need to be done. In the culture of Jesus' time, people walked on dirt roads with sandals on their feet. When they came home, their feet needed to be washed – so Jesus washed them.
2. Foot washing was considered to be a lowly task, one that a servant would perform. After all, most feet are not all that pleasant – especially if they are dirty.
3. Serving is not a low position; it is not a sign that one has no real talent. It requires great spiritual strength, tremendous security, and confidence to serve with a good attitude.
4. True servants know who they are in Christ. They are not trying to prove anything. Having a “title” or what the world would call an “important position” does not matter to them.

B. **John 13:17** – Jesus told the disciples that they would be happy if they did these things.

1. Isn't the message then clear that we will not be happy if we don't do them?
2. Many people have no joy simply because they are selfish and self-centered.

C. Relationship is based on doing things for one another. Some people want everything done for them, and then they can't understand why people don't like them or why they have very few friends.

1. Some people say, “I'll do something for you if you will do something for me!” But I believe Jesus would say, “A more mature person will be the one to go first!”
 - a. **Luke 14:12-14** – Do things for people who cannot pay you back, **then** you will receive a reward from God.
 - b. The attitude of selfishness always wants to make sure that “**there is something in it for me.**”

- c. Quite often, we even get that same attitude in our giving to the Lord. I am tired of dealing with people who won't give into offerings unless I can convince them they will get rich quick.

God always blesses us when we give with a right motive. A right motive is giving to be a blessing – not giving to get blessed.

2. What are you waiting for?

Are you waiting for somebody to wash your feet before you are willing to wash theirs?

OR

Perhaps to FEEL like washing feet?

OR

For a more convenient time when you can do it and not get dirty?

OR

A time when you have nothing else to do?

Ecclesiastes 11:4 – If you wait for all conditions to be favorable, you will not sow.

- D. The same as we are **tempted** to do evil by Satan, we are also **tempted by God to do good**.

1. Are you doing a better job of resisting God than you are resisting the devil?

- E. **Acts 10:38** (KJV) – *How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who **went about doing good**, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.*

IV. You Can Change A Life Today.

- A. Random acts of kindness are one of the most powerful things in the universe.

1. **II Samuel 9:1, 3** – David **sought** someone to be kind to.
 2. He was the king. He did not have to look for lame people to help. But, then again, maybe he did – that is, if he wanted to remain king.
 3. How much do we lose because we try to keep everything?
- B. **Matthew 25:40** – If you have done it for the least of these My brethren, you have done it unto Me.
- C. Example:

The Story of Teddy Stallard

Ted Stallard undoubtedly qualified as one of “the least.” He did poorly in school and he was very sloppy in appearance – expressionless and unattractive. Even his teacher, Miss Thompson, seemed to enjoy wielding her red pen as she placed x’s beside his many wrong answers.

If only she had studied his records more carefully. They read:

1st grade: Ted shows promise with his work and attitude, but (had) poor home situation.

2nd grade: Ted could do better. Mother seriously ill. Receives little help from home.

3rd grade: Ted is a good boy but too serious. He is a slow learner. His mother died this year.

4th grade: Ted is very slow, but well behaved. His father shows no interest whatsoever.

Christmas arrived. The children piled gifts on their teacher’s desk. Ted brought one too. It was wrapped in brown paper and held together with Scotch tape. Miss Thompson opened each gift, as the children crowded around to watch. Out of Ted’s package fell a gaudy rhinestone bracelet, with half of the stones missing, and a bottle of cheap perfume.

The children began to snicker, but Miss Thompson had the good sense to silence them by splashing some of the perfume on her wrists and wearing the bracelet.

At day's end, after the other children had left, Ted came by the teacher's desk and said: "Miss Thompson, you smell just like my mother, and her bracelet looks real good on you. I'm glad you like my presents." When he left, Miss Thompson got down on her knees and asked God to forgive her and to change her attitude.

The next term, the children were greeted by a reformed teacher – one committed to loving each of them – especially the slow ones – especially Ted. Surprising, or maybe not surprising, Ted began to improve. He caught up with the other children and even passed some of them.

Time came and went; Miss Thompson heard nothing from Ted for a long time. Then, one day, she received this note:

Dear Miss Thompson,

I wanted you to be the first to know – I will be graduating second in my class.

Love, Ted

Four years later, another note arrived:

Dear Miss Thompson,

They just told me I will be graduating first in my class. I wanted you to be the first to know. The university has not been easy, but I liked it.

Love, Ted

And four years later:

Dear Miss Thompson,

As of today, I am Theodore Stallard, M.D. How about that? I wanted you to be the first to know that I am getting married next month – the 17th to be exact. I want you to come and sit where my mother would sit if she were alive. You are the only family I have now – Dad died last year.

Miss Thompson attended that wedding and sat where Ted's mother would have sat. The compassion she had shown that young man entitled her to that privilege.

