

**AS HE THINKETH IN HIS HEART**

Matthew 15:15-20

**I. INTRODUCTION: I**

1. Several weeks ago we began a series of lessons with the general theme of “grow[ing] in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.” (2 Pet. 3:18)
  - A. These lessons are designed to help Christians grow and be strong in the Lord (1 Pet. 2:2).
  - B. We cannot remain “babes” in Christ (1 Cor. 14:20); and even if we’ve been Christians for many years, we need to be reminded of these first principles (2 Pet. 3:1)
2. **2** The old saying goes, “You are what you eat”. There is a lot of truth in that statement, but even more in the statement, “You are what you think” (Prov. 23:7).
  - A. Consider some wise men of the world:
 

“Success or failure in any undertaking is caused more by mental attitude than by mental capacity.” (Walter Scott, professor, Northwestern University)

**3** “The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes of mind.” (William James, Psychologist, 1842-1910, considered by many to be the founding father of modern psychology)
  - B. **4** This truth was recognized long ago in the Bible (Prov. 23:7; **Matt. 15:16-20**: “So Jesus said, ‘Are you also still without understanding? 17 Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? 18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. 20 These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.’”).
3. Our attitude is a reflection of us as a person. Our attitude reveals and reflects what’s on the “inside,” in our heart.
4. **5** Let’s briefly consider our attitude this morning (five points).

**II. DISCUSSION:**

1. **6** The importance of attitude:
  - A. Attitude is everything! Prov. 23:7 Our attitude toward life determines life’s attitude toward us.
    - (1) For example, if we have a poor attitude toward learning, we will not learn.
    - (2) For example, if we have a poor attitude toward others, more than likely, they will have a poor attitude toward us.
    - (3) What we achieve in life, or fail to achieve, is largely due to our attitude.
      - (a) Jim Shekhdar, Brit, at age 54 set off from Peru on 06/29/2000 and 274 days (8,000 miles) later arrived in Australia.
      - (b) First person to row non-stop across the Pacific Ocean.
      - (c) He did all of this while being on the waiting list to receive an artificial hip!
    - (4) If you think you can’t, you won’t. If you think you can, you will!
  - B. Christians need a “can do” attitude! **Neh. 4:6**: “So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.”; Phil. 4:13; **Num. 13:30**: “Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, ‘Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.’”

## 2. **7** Developing a good attitude:

- A. Before metal can be cast into a desired shape, the mold must first be fashioned.
- B. Before a building can be built a foundation must be laid.
- C. Here are some ways which will help us develop a good attitude:
  - (1) Develop a good attitude toward yourself. One who has a bad attitude toward life and others, will of necessity have a poor attitude toward himself (Prov. 23:7).
  - (2) Expect more good than bad from life (**2 Cor. 4:16**: “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.”).
    - (a) Some just sit around waiting for something bad to happen! (**Ex. 14:15**: “And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward.’”).
    - (b) Most people do not expect things to work out so they usually don’t! **Prov. 17:22**: “A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones.”)
  - (3) Make a list of reasons why you CAN grow and be strong in the Lord (Eph. 3:20).
  - (4) Associate with others who have good attitudes (**Prov. 12:25-26**: “Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad. 26 The righteous should choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray.”).
- D. Remember: One does not have a good attitude because of his position in life; he has a good position in life because he has a good attitude!

## 3. **8** Proper attitude toward goals in life:

- A. It has been said, “If we aim at nothing, we are guaranteed to hit it.”
- B. One secret to success in life is to have some concrete goals in life.
  - (1) We’ve all read about success stories of those who overcame handicaps and hardships to become successful in life.
  - (2) The key: These people had goals! (e.g., Tiger Woods)
- C. “What the mind of man can conceive and believe—it can achieve.”
- D. It has been estimated that less than 5% of all people are working toward a goal.
  - (1) To be without a goal in life would be like a ship without a rudder.
  - (2) In World War II the British were able to sink the greatest battleship ever built, the Bismarck, by first knocking out it’s rudder!
  - (3) A ship’s captain may not be able to see his destination 99% of the way, but he knows where he is going!
- E. You will find that as your grow older you might “kick yourself” for not believing you could achieve great things if you had just put your mind to it!
 

“Set your goals high, and don’t stop till you get there.” —Bo Jackson

## 4. **9** Decide on one main goal:

- A. All of us need to decide that being a Christian and going to heaven is our number one goal in life! Matt. 16:26; 6:33; **Phil. 3:12-14**: “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; **but one thing I do**, forgetting those things which are

*behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I 4 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*“

- (1) **\*\* Phil. 1:21:** “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” Write it down on a card, carry it with you, look at it several times each day. Think about it often!
- (2) Remember Prov. 23:7...we become what we think! (cf. **Phil. 4:8-9:** “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things. 9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”).
- (3) We are the sum total of our thoughts (**Prov. 4:23:** “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.”).

B. There are great advantages in setting goals in life:

- (1) Helps us know why we get up in the morning.
- (2) Motivates us to do right (Phil. 1:21).
- (3) Makes life meaningful. Many commit suicide or turn to drugs and alcohol to escape life. Life has no meaning for them (Phil. 1:21).

5. **10** Some areas in which we need to develop good attitudes:

A. **\*\* Attitude toward life itself:** We must learn to love life and choose life (Deut. 30:19). So we need to be thankful we are alive and have something to live for. Consider some good attitudes toward life:

- (1) Life is a gift of God (Gen. 2:7).
- (2) We are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27).
- (3) Realize that life is the target of the devil. It’s the devil’s business to destroy the work of God; therefore, Satan made his appearance in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3) and is still working toward that end today (1 Pet. 5:8).
- (4) Life is full of choices. We will have to make many decisions in life. We are free moral agents; thus, no one forces us to make right choices (Josh. 24:15; Rom. 6:16).
- (5) Life is brief (Jas. 4:14). Instead of sowing “wild oats,” we need to make hay while the sun shines! (Gal. 6:7-8)

B. **\*\* Attitude toward sin:**

- (1) “Sin” has almost disappeared from our modern vocabulary. But, sin is still sin and many seem to think that since everyone is doing it, it is “ok.”
- (2) God will not overlook sin in our lives (Heb. 5:9; **10:28-31**).
- (3) Sin separates us from God (Isa. 59:2).
- (4) Sin is deceptive, it looks like there is no harm in it (Heb. 3:13). Sin only provides temporary pleasure (Heb. 11:25), but the final results are terrible! (Prov. 13:15; results of alcohol, drugs, sexual immorality, etc.)
- (5) Sin has its consequences (Rom. 6:23; Gal. 6:7).
- (6) Sin is not inevitable (1 Cor. 10:13).

C. **\*\* Proper attitude toward work:**

- (1) We live in a “the world owes me” society. Many want something for nothing!

- (2) Bible teaches we must work for the things we need (**1 Thess. 4:11-12**: “that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, 12 that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.”; 2 Thess. 3:10-12; **Eph. 4:28**: “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.”).

- (3) Don’t think you must have a college education to have a good career!

D. **\*\* Proper attitude toward self:**

- (1) How we feel about ourselves is important. Many have the wrong attitude about themselves.
- (2) Some think too highly of themselves (**Rom. 12:3**: “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.”; Gal. 6:3; **2 Cor. 10:17-18**: “But ‘he who glories, let him glory in the LORD. 18 For not he who commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends.”).
- (3) Many do not have faith in themselves. We are not to exalt ourselves, but we must believe in ourselves (Phil. 4:13).
- (4) Must deny ourselves. We live in an age of instant gratification, but we must learn the hardest lesson of all...self-denial (Lk. 9:23; 1 Cor. 9:24-27).

E. **\*\* Proper attitude toward others:**

- (1) We live in a “me first” society. Everybody is so concerned about their “rights.”
- (2) We must put others ahead of ourselves (Phil. 2:3-4).

F. **\*\* Proper attitude toward death:**

- (1) Death will come sooner or later. One of my favorite songs has a line that goes like this, “The sun is the same in a relative way, but you’re older; shorter of breath and one day closer to death.” (*Time*, Pink Floyd).
- (2) We all have an inevitable appointment with death (Heb. 9:27), thus, we need to be making the proper preparations NOW!
- (3) Death is as common as living and part of God’s plan. Death is not the end of things, but can be the beginning (Matt. 25:41; **2 Cor. 5:1**: “For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”).
- (4) Death is nothing to fear if we are faithful to Christ (Phil. 1:21).
- (5) Only if we live right can we have the right attitude toward death and die confident (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

### III. CONCLUSION:

1. Remember: Attitude shows what we are on the inside.
2. We all need to keep our thinking straight, “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7).

Adapted from: *Growing in Grace and Knowledge of the Lord*, by Johnie Edwards, Titus Edwards, Johnie P. Edwards, Edwards Publishing, pp. 30-33)