

Attitude Is Everything

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[0 : 0 0] Well, hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. You can always check us out at FCCGreensburg.com or by going to the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

But thank you so much for tuning in to the Word of God being preached today. Our heart is to get into the Word, but most importantly, let the Word get into us and transform these hearts more and more into the image of Christ.

Now, there was an ornery little four-year-old boy at church one Sunday, and he just so happened to have red hair like me, go figure. But there he was during the communion time, and he's watching the rows in front of him, and he's watching people take the bread and then take the juice.

And finally, it came time for his row to take communion. And so as it was being passed, he went to reach his hand to grab the cups, and that's when his mother stops him.

She grabs his hand, and she whispers in his ear that he's just not quite old enough yet to take communion. Well, he was not happy about that.

[1 : 1 1] And he let the whole world know, as some of you parents understand those fits. I know I do. So right after that, when the offering plates were going by, his mother leaned over, and she whispered to him, Hey, now's the time to give your dollar to God.

And that's when the boy crossed his arms, and he said, No way. If I can't eat, then I won't pay. Well, hey, I want to welcome you back to the second week of our stewardship series called, Take God at His Word.

I hope you've enjoyed reading the first two chapters of this book by Dr. Craig Hood that are all about biblical principles. And last week in our message, we kind of zoomed out, and we took a broader look at four different giving principles from the Word.

And this week, I want to get a little more specific and talk about something that this little boy didn't have when it came to his giving, and that was a good attitude. Now, as many of you may know, my wife taught third grade for five years before now staying home with our children, the last ten.

And I think it was probably her first or second year of teaching when she came home from school, and she had, you know, one of those rubber bracelets that you can get for rather cheap, you know, you can have those made.

[2 : 3 4] Well, her bracelet had on it the words, Attitude is Everything. Come to find out, that was the theme for all the teachers, all the staff in Rush County schools that year.

In other words, if you come to school with a sour attitude, then there's a good chance your day is probably not going to go so well. But if you come with a good, positive attitude, ready to love and educate these kids, ready to help them reach their potential, especially as a believer, help them to see the love of God through you in very practical ways, then that's going to make all the difference because attitude is everything.

And, you know, I got to thinking about that, and it doesn't just apply in the school system, but it's true in every single area of our lives. It's true no matter where you work, in your home, with your relationship, with your spouse and kids, with your extended families and how we deal with all the crazy family drama.

It's true in the church and how we relate to one another and how we serve the Lord. It's even true in our giving. And church, this is one of many things I love, love about our God.

He looks at the heart. He wants us to come to a place in our faith, our walk with Him, where out of the overflow of the heart comes all these things that truly honor and glorify Him.

[4 : 0 0] And specifically, when it comes to our giving back to Him, it really is true. Attitude is everything, and that's what truly matters to God. So if you would, go ahead, grab your outline.

And for those of you listening here through audio, what that means is you can go to the YouVersion, Y-O-U-Version Bible app on your phone, on your tablet.

When you get there, there's those three lines that you can click on the menu in the bottom right-hand corner. You can go to that, go to events, go to First Christian Church, Greensburg, Indiana, and then you can see our outline that way.

But let's talk about some attitudes, or here's another way to put it, some barriers to healthy God-honoring giving. And the first barrier I want you to see is guilt trips.

It's this I have to type of attitude. Listen, I meet people all the time who have left churches in the past because every Sunday they were bombarded with guilt trips intended to shame them into paying for poorly planned budgets and renovations.

[5 : 09] No wonder so many nonbelievers have this misconception that all the church wants is my money. And often when I invite people who've never really been involved in church to come and visit FCC, usually I'll get two questions back, okay?

Number one, if I come in my jeans, if I come casually, are people going to look down on me? And then number two, are you going to nag me about money every Sunday?

And man, I'm so glad that I can answer no to both of those questions. Come as you are because God looks at your heart and we want you to give from your heart as you seek to honor Him.

And I also just tell them up front that, hey, we're going to take a month, at least every couple of years to talk about giving because God's Word has a lot to say about it.

And we want to be faithful to preach the whole counsel of God's truth while building the kingdom. In fact, I usually push them towards 2 Corinthians 9-7.

[6 : 08] And we looked at this passage last week, but let's look at it again. The Apostle Paul, through the Holy Spirit, says each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

And one great example of this is a church that we read about in Acts 11. Here was this group of believers who had scattered out of Jerusalem when persecution came.

A group of them ended up in a place called Antioch. And so here comes Barnabas to preach the Word, to minister to them. And through this church, a lot of people were coming to faith in Christ. They were getting the reputation for being all in when it came to their love and devotion to Jesus. And when they heard about this famine that was affecting Christians in Judea, you better believe that Barnabas didn't have to gill anybody into anything.

Because out of the overflow of their hearts, they wanted to make a difference. They wanted to help their brothers and sisters in Christ. See, attitude is everything. And this church in Antioch was a great example of cheerful giving.

[7 : 20] And to be honest with you, I want FCC to be known as a generous church, where we care about people. We care about sharing God's amazing love on this earth.

And I'm thankful that we are, but this must be true of every single one of us. So guilt cannot be my motivation for giving faithfully to God.

It needs to come out of the joy that overflows from my heart because of the grace that I walk in in Christ every single day. Now, to the second barrier to healthy giving that I see quite a bit, and this is legalism.

It's the whole you ought to type of attitude. It's your responsibility to give type of motivation. That's what a good Christian should do, they say.

And I'll tell you, although I completely agree that every one of us has a responsibility to give back to God according to the truth of his word, what God cares about is the heart that our giving flows from.

[8 : 23] So let me give you this example. And it's really not even about giving, but I think you'll see the point. I once ran into this couple that is very faithful to their church.

And they have been for many years. And as we're talking, the lady began to tell me about some of their family members who were raised in church, but now who just don't make it a priority.

And then she told me this, and it kind of bothered me, and now I understand why they don't want to come. She told me every time she sees them that she nags them about going to church. I mean, these are her words.

Even tells them that if they don't go, that they're going to go to hell. And I just wanted to say to her so badly, lady, I know your intentions are well and good, and you just want them in church, and you want them growing in their faith.

God bless you for that. But that legalistic approach is probably what's going to push them farther away from church rather than bring them in. Because like we've said before, if going to church automatically makes you a Christian, then standing in your garage should make you a car, right? [9 : 27] Uh-uh. Not at all. See, it's all about your heart and whether we've surrendered everything to the lordship of Jesus Christ. The same is true with our giving.

If we just kind of smack everybody around who's not giving the way they should and say, shame on you. You're a lousy Christian. It's your responsibility. Then really, that's not helping anyone to be a cheerful giver.

Our motivation has to be to honor God. And Paul put it this way in 2 Corinthians 8, 7. He said, but just as you excel in everything.

And so he gives some examples in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness, and in your love for us. So he gives all these examples where they're supposed to excel in their faith.

And then he says this, see that you also excel in the grace of giving. See, our giving can't be guilt-driven. It cannot be legalistic.

[10 : 27] It has to be driven by grace. Until someone's heart changes and beats for Christ, we can never expect things like giving faithfully to happen.

And then third, and this may be the biggest barrier for most people, and that's fear. It's this, I'm afraid to type of giving.

Because if I tithe back to God, and we'll talk about that next week, what a tithe actually means. If I tithe back to God, then I don't know if I'll be able to pay my bills. I don't know if I'll be able to go on vacation, or buy that car, or that boat, or that RV, or whatever it is.

And to be honest with you, I think most of us have been there. And this is where our faith in God comes into play as we realize that He is the source.

He promises over and over again in God's Word to take care of us when we're faithful to tithe back to Him. You know, one story that Dr. Hood told in the short book, and by the way, for those of you listening here on the radio, we are handing out a book to each family in our church that they go through a chapter every week.

[11 : 37] They answer some questions in the back of each chapter. It just kind of helps us to get our arms around this topic even more. And one story he tells is about building a house.

Years ago, a man built a house in rural New England, obviously needing water for the home. He got an expert guide to dig a well for him. The old well digger, seasoned in the art of his trade, looked over the property, found the right spot, sank his shaft in, sure enough, found an underground river and put in a well.

Packing up his gear, he left the homeowner with some very important advice. He said, every day, you must pump some water from the well. If you don't, you'll be sorry.

Now, we know technology has kind of changed that, but we're talking years ago. So the homeowner thanked the man for his advice, and for weeks, he followed the well digger's counsel, and he pumped water every day.

As time went on, the homeowner began to take the cool, sweet water for granted. One day, he left on a trip, and he forgot to get someone to pump water for him while he was away.

[12 : 46] When he returned, the water at the bottom of the well was stagnant. It was almost gone. He tried pumping fresh water, but nothing came out. And so he went to town, and he told the old well digger about his dried up well.

And that's when this older gentleman asked, did you remember to pump water every day? And he admitted to his neglect, and that's when the well digger said, listen, the water in the well comes from an underground river that feeds these small tributaries of water, which are connected to your well. Water must continue to flow from these small tributaries so the well can receive water. If you quit pumping the water, the ground will dry up slightly, and the underground river can't find its way to your well.

That cuts off the water supply. And then the old man said something that, you know what, is so true when it comes to our giving as well. He said, remember, the source of the water is the river, it's not the well.

The same thing is true for us. If our source of financial strength is based completely off our own personal well of finances or resources, trust me, we're going to run dry.

[13:56] Because this economy is brutal. This world is too unstable. However, if we are driven by faithful and obedient hearts for God, we'll tap into God's river of resources that never runs dry.

So, look at me here at how Jesus puts this in Matthew 6, starting in verse 31. He says, So do not worry, saying, What shall we eat?

What shall we drink? What shall we wear? He says, For the pagans or the unbelievers, run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things, all these needs, will be given to you as well.

See, when we realize that God is our source of every blessing, and we put our faith totally in his hands, we can rest assured that God will meet every single need we have.

Wallace Johnson, the founder of Holiday Inn, faithful follower of Jesus, once put it like this. He said, I am totally dependent on God for help in everything I do. Otherwise, I honestly believe I would start to fall apart in months.

[15:06] Now, as a pastor, there's nothing that fills my heart more than to see the light bulb come on in the life of a believer after hearing God's word preached. In fact, years ago, I preached a message kind of similar to this at a different church, and someone came up to me, and they said, You know, God is really opening my eyes to what healthy giving truly is.

I realize now that my problem has been fear. I've been scared to take God at his word. And now I know that my God is more than big enough to take care of me and my family.

And you know, that's the same message that the Apostle Paul was preaching in Philippians 4.19. He said, And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

We have nothing to fear when we realize who we serve, just how awesome our God really is, and even that he loves you and me more than our minds can comprehend.

Now, now that we've talked about some different barriers that I think we've all struggled with at times, now let's talk about the attitude in the heart that truly glorifies God when it comes to our giving.

[16:18] First thing I want you to see is that I want to give out of a thankful heart. A thankful heart. That's where it has to start. And my mind goes back to the pilgrims who settled in the U.S.

and immediately gave God the glory, right? And then we fast forward to 1863 where this country was in the heart of a brutal civil war when President Abraham Lincoln officially designated a day to be set aside every year for one purpose, and that is to praise God for his blessings and his provision.

We celebrated that day a little less than two months ago. And so here we are, just two weeks into 2024. And even though we've experienced radical inflation over the last few years, we are still the most blessed country on the face of the earth.

And I like how William Boyce has put this. He said, Dear Lord, I have been rereading the record of the rich young ruler and his obviously wrong choice.

But it has set me to thinking, no matter how much wealth he had, he could not ride in a car, have any surgery, turn on a light, buy penicillin, hear a pipe organ, watch TV, wash dishes and running water, type a letter, mow a lawn, fly an airplane, sleep on an innerspring mattress, or talk on the phone.

[17:37] If he was rich, then what am I? And you know what? This guy's list is even a little outdated to us. See, as I read biographies from a couple hundred years ago, which I love to do, it always amazes me at how rich I really am compared to how others have lived for thousands of years.

It's amazing how sometimes when we think we're poor, we are rich in the United States compared to most of the world. And with that in mind, my thoughts immediately go to Luke 17, where Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem.

And a group of ten men who were suffering with the worst disease of that day, leprosy, a disease that would eat your body away from the inside out.

It was an awful disease. And they called out to him, Jesus, Master, have pity on us. And Jesus, as calm as can be, said, hey, go show yourselves to the priest.

In other words, you're healed. Go let the priest verify it so you could go back to your families because they had to live in these colonies for lepers, this depressing colony of a bunch of people who were rotting to death, basically.

[18 : 51] He said, go let the priest know. Go show yourself to him so he can verify it so you can go back to your families. Some of you haven't seen your family in years. And this would have been the greatest day of these ten guys' lives.

So off they went. A little while later, one of the ten comes running back and he throws himself at Jesus' feet thanking him, praising God.

But the other nine never did show back up. And you know what? I look at that story and I think it's amazing how that fits into our giving as well.

How ironic that all the statistics say that only between five and eight percent of Christians tithe. Let's just go on the high side of that and say ten percent, okay?

I think that's really high, but let's just stop there. That means one out of ten Christians. So make the parallel with this story. One out of ten Christians who have been healed by the grace of God, set free from the disease of sin, are coming back in their giving, falling at Jesus' feet, and by their tithe, by their offering, saying, thank you, Lord.

[20 : 03] See, healthy giving starts with the heart of thanksgiving for everything that God has done and He continues to do in each of our lives every day. 1 Chronicles 16, 34, Give thanks to the Lord for He is good.

His love endures forever. Or maybe we could say it like this, Lord, may my tithe and my offering show you just how thankful I truly am for your amazing grace.

So I want to give first out of a thankful heart. And then second, I want to give out of a heart of worship. Out of a heart of worship to my God. See, Hebrews 12, 28 and 29 puts it like this, Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe for our God is a consuming fire.

You know, one story that I heard several years back that has always stuck with me, I love to share this story. And it was about some African Christians. I don't even remember which country it was in Africa.

But when they would give their tithes and their offerings to God, it was unlike our country. Their culture is a lot more expressive. But they really don't have a church on every corner in a lot of parts of Africa.

[21 : 26] So it's not uncommon to see large groups, I mean, we're talking thousands thousands of Christians coming from a distance to worship together once a week.

And just like us, they have a time where they praise God through song. And I'll tell you what, they cry out with all their heart in song and prayer. Then they take communion together.

They listen to the word of God being preached. And then they have this time where the music starts back up. And if you could kind of hear some African drums maybe in your ears right now, I mean, they're going good.

And all of a sudden, out steps a man. And he just starts dancing his way up to the altar, kind of like David, starts dancing up to the altar, praising God the entire way.

And when he gets there, he pulls out his tithe to God. And with an absolute heart of worship, he sets it on the altar and he dances his way back to his seat.

[22 : 28] Before long, a huge crowd is lined up. They're dancing. They're praising God because of his faithfulness and because they have the privilege to use that offering to impact the world for Christ.

You know, the whole purpose of everything we do on a Sunday is to worship God. We worship through song. We worship through prayer. We worship through remembering the cross and getting our hearts right in communion.

We worship through a time of growing in God's word. We worship through doing life together and building one another up. And you better believe that our giving is just as much a time of worship as the rest.

So the big question is, why? Why do we worship God in all these different ways? Because of Jesus. When you and I were lost in our sins and one sin, which we've all committed, separates us from a perfect and holy God.

When we were lost in our sins, Jesus went to the cross to take our place, to pay for all the awful things that each of us have done called sin, and then the most important act in human history.

[23 : 41] He rose from the grave to prove that life comes only through Jesus the Messiah. Church, I don't give my tithe and my offerings every week to God because of guilt trips.

I don't give it because it's just what a good Christian is supposed to do or even what a pastor is supposed to do. I always want my giving. I always want our giving to flow from a heart of worship that simply cries out, thank you, Jesus.

Because of your grace and mercy over my life, thank you, Jesus. And this is just one more way that I can worship you with all my heart.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for your word today. I thank you for just how you speak to us.

I know this is a topic that people are often kind of closed off to. We don't like to talk about our money and our possessions and what we're supposed to give. And I get this can be kind of an awkward topic, but yet, God, I'm thankful for the whole counsel of your word.

[24 : 52] I'm thankful that we don't have to wonder what we're supposed to do, that we can be faithful to what your word teaches us, that our giving is an act of worship or possibly an act of not worshipping.

And so, Father, we don't want to be driven by guilt. We don't want to be coerced into giving in any way. We don't want to be driven by fear. We want to worship you through our giving, knowing that you're a God who's in control, who provides everything that we need, and who has our lives in his hands.

So, Father, thank you for the hope that you give through Jesus. Thank you that you are with us every single step of the way. and may our hearts of thankfulness and worship show in our giving that you are our God and that we are putting you first in everything.

So, Father, we glorify your name. We lift you up, Jesus, the name above all names, and we pray in that precious name. God's people said, amen and amen.

Hey, just want to give you just a quick invitation here today. If you'd like to maybe ask some questions about faith, or maybe you want to talk about what it means to give your life to God.

[26 : 20] Because listen, all this talk of giving, you can disregard all of that if you've never truly surrendered your heart to Jesus. If you don't have the Holy Spirit living inside of you, which comes at salvation, if you don't have the Holy Spirit living inside of you, then you don't need to worry about this.

The first thing to concern yourself with is realizing that if you don't have the Holy Spirit living inside of you, then you're not a follower of Christ, and you are lost for all eternity.

That's what God's Word teaches, and yet, that can be remedied so easy as you repent of your sins. That means to not just lay my sins down and ask for forgiveness, but I'm going to turn with my life, and where I used to run after so many other things, Jesus, you are my Lord and Savior, and my life belongs to you.

I'm going to confess you before other believers because my faith is not going to be private. It's not going to be secret. I'm going to follow Jesus no matter what comes. I'm going to believe that you are the Christ, that you are God, and I'm going to be baptized into you, Jesus.

I'm going to see my sins washed away, and I'm going to come up as that brand new creation in Christ, and every day from this point, I'm going to live for you as your Word guides me, as the Holy Spirit leads me, and I'm going to run after you, Jesus.

[27 : 43] You are the treasure I seek. So if that's the commitment level that you're ready to make, it's not just an emotional decision, not something I do just because my life is falling apart, it's a true commitment to say, Jesus, my life is yours.

I surrender it to you. We would love to talk to you if that's a commitment that you'd like to make. So here's a couple ways you can reach out to us. You can call us in the office Monday through Thursday, 8 to 430.

You can ask for me. My name's Ray, or Pastor Steve, Pastor Tyler, Pastor Mitch, any of us would be glad to help, but give us a call, 812, area code 812-663-8488.

That's 812-663-8488. Or you can email me at ray at FCC Greensburg dot com. Hey, God bless you. Thank you for tuning in today. And may God bless you richly as you get into his word and let his word get into you.