

Five Ways To Change Your World 02
How Attitude Affects Your World
By Bill Denton

INTRODUCTION

A. We're looking at a sermon series titled, "Five Ways To Change Your World"

1. Most of us would like to change something about our world
 - a. from minor things like appearance
 - b. to serious things like a bad marriage or drug addiction

2. Last week we considered a very important truth at the heart of the whole idea
 - a. the only person you can change is yourself
 - b. that's a tip off to where the rest of this series is going
 - c. changing your world is really about changing yourself
 - d. it's not about forcing others into your desired mold, and it's not necessarily about changing externals (though sometimes we do that)
 - e. changing your world is primarily about changing yourself

B. This morning I want to talk about one indispensable element of change – attitude

1. Writer, Liberty Savard, observes

I remember a time when saying that someone "had a real attitude" was a very negative statement. Today, when someone or something has a real attitude, it denotes desirability and being very cool. I remember when attitude was a hot word in media advertising as far back as the early 90s. I have seen ads for music groups, cars, beers, beautiful women, and famous actors all touted as having attitude which translates to superiority, advantage, and power. Attitude was bankable in the decade of the 90s.

The word attitude has been revised over the years. My 1946 *Webster's Dictionary* defines "attitude" as an instinctive mental reaction that reveals an opinion. My 1977 *Webster's Dictionary* defines "attitude" as a mental position or feeling assumed for a specific purpose. My 1988 *Webster's New World Dictionary* defines "attitude" as a manner of acting, feeling, or thinking that shows one's disposition or mental set. The media defines "attitude" as charisma, importance, and power.

We have spent our whole lives acquiring various attitudes, some good and some quite destructive to ourselves and others.¹

2. Attitude is difficult to define
 - a. it is one's manner, disposition, feeling, position, etc., toward a person or thing
 - b. we might say it is largely an emotional connection or disconnection to a person or thing, based on strongly held ideas, beliefs or opinions

C. If you want to change your world, your attitude is a major key of success

¹ Savard, L. S. (1992). *Shattering your strongholds* (83). North Brunswick, NJ: Bridge-Logos Publishers.

I. WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT ATTITUDE

A. There are lots of books written about attitude

1. Lots of theories about how attitudes develop
2. Lots of ideas about how attitude affects us
3. Lots of suggestions about how to change your attitude
4. I would suggest that everyone read at least one or two good books and do the hard work of personal introspection and application

B. Today, I can only share a few of the things we know about attitude, but these few are very important

1. Attitudes are often “caught” or “taught” by others
 - a. you can sometimes see that members of the same family will display similar attitudes toward people or things
 - b. some attitudes are passed through socio-economic connections
 - c. you can “catch” an attitude from the people you call friends
 - d. you can “teach” your attitudes to your children
2. Generally, attitudes are grouped into “good” and “bad” categories
 - a. good attitudes are those that enable a person to develop positive relationships with others, develop a good work ethic, develop a high moral standard, promotes success, etc
 - b. bad attitudes are those that keep us from connecting with others, move us to be lazy or unproductive, causes us to make bad choices, and causes failure in life
3. A person’s attitude is often far easier to see than that person knows
 - a. this is often true of young people, but it is equally true of adults
 - b. ever see a “smart aleck”
 - c. ever see someone with a superior, condescending attitude
 - d. ever see someone with an angry, bitter attitude
 - e. ever see someone with “kind” and “gentle” written all over them
 - f. whether good or bad, our attitude more often than not betrays us
4. I may not be able to read your mind, but I can sure read your attitude, and your attitude advertises what you think
 - a. a “know it all” attitude betrays more than a person is aware
 - b. often in counseling, I have played back to a person the attitude I perceived in them, and if they are willing to listen, it can lead to some self understanding that has eluded them
5. Attitudes can get in the way of truth, facts, reality, etc.
 - a. ever know somebody with the attitude that says, “Don’t bother me with the facts, I know what I believe?”
 - b. a lot of social problems, racial issues, etc., are attitude problems

C. You need to be aware that we all have attitudes – we need more good and less bad

II. WHAT IS A GODLY ATTITUDE

A. Philippians 2:5 (NAS) —

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

1. “Have this attitude” is literally, “this think in you”
2. It’s the verb *phroneo* (φρονεῶ) which means to think, to form/hold an opinion – “attitude” is a good way to express the meaning
 - a. other versions read “have this mind”
 - b. some say “think the same way”
3. What ought to be clear to us is that anyone who has the mind of Christ, or thinks like Jesus thought, will display the same attitude that Jesus displayed
4. For Christians, this ought to be huge
 - a. more than any other way, the display of attitude shows what kind of mind we have
 - b. you want others to see and hear Jesus in you – have the same attitude that Jesus had

B. In Philippians 2, Paul writes about a particular attitude or way of thinking present in Jesus, that set the stage for his entire life and ministry

1. Philippians 2:6–8 (NLT) —

6 Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. **7** Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, **8** he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross.

2. This is one of the most powerful passages in the Bible, for Paul is laying down the fundamental way to think the same way Jesus thought
 - a. though Jesus was God, he didn’t think like God here
 - b. he thought like a slave
 - c. when he took on a body of flesh, rendered obedience to the Father, and died a criminal’s death on a cross, he was showing us how to think
 - d. he was showing us how to have a godly attitude

C. I can think of nothing more likely to change your world or mine than for us to adopt for ourselves, the attitude of Jesus Christ

1. It would immediately eliminate all the selfish, demanding, over-bearing attitudes that are present even among Christians
2. It would change forever how we relate to one another and to the world
3. If you don’t think this attitude is powerful to change your world, you’re going to have to explain why God chose this very attitude to reach you, to save you from the consequences of your sins, and to change you into what he desires

III. ATTITUDE IS THE KEY TO ANY CHANGE WE HOPE TO MAKE

A. Paul's letter to the Philippians is an excellent example of communicating in different ways, one fundamental key to change

1. **Philippians 2:2 (NAS)** —

2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

- a. looking at that verse at a glance, it's easy to see that Paul is urging the Christians at Philippi to get together on some things
- b. looking closer, twice in the same verse, he uses this idea we've already noticed – the idea of getting our thinking, or attitudes, together
- c. “being of the same mind” is literally, “that you might think the same”
- d. notice the phrase, “united in spirit”
 - 1) it's a word that means “together in soul”
 - 2) he is encouraging us to match our attitudes with one another

2. We already looked at Phil 2:5

- a. note again the instruction to have the same attitude Jesus had
- b. it happens when we think like Jesus thought

3. **Philippians 2:19–20 (NAS)** —

19 But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. **20** For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare.

- a. NAS “kindred spirit” is often rendered “like him” or “likeminded”
- b. the text is literally, “I have no one of equal soul” or “same soul”
- c. Paul is saying, “Nobody has the same attitude about you that I do, other than Timothy”

4. **Philippians 4:2 (NAS)** —

2 I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord.

- a. “live in harmony” is literally “think the same” way
- b. these two sisters evidently had a bad attitude toward one another
- c. both needed to experience a change in the way they thought so that they could display a more positive way of thinking about one another

B. For years the “positive mental attitude” proponents have told us about the power of attitude to help us achieve great things, to be successful, and to enjoy life

1. Since you're the only one you can change, I'd say it makes perfect sense for each of us to do some work on our own attitude
2. When you get a better attitude, you might be surprised at how your world has changed – it won't really be the world that changed, but it'll look like it!!
3. I know this to be true – if you won't change your attitude, your world will never change for the better

CONCLUSION

A. We've looked at two powerful truths about changing your world

1. You're the only one you can change
2. Changing your attitude is a key toward successfully changing yourself

B. We even know the kind of attitude change we all need – to have the same attitude that Jesus had

1. That attitude begins when we start thinking like Jesus thought
2. Then we apply it to every person we know, every situation and circumstance of life we find ourselves in, and everything that happens around us

C. Invitation