

The ABCs of Stewardship

Attitude: The Response of a Successful Steward

Luke 10:25-37

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Attitude: The Response of a Successful Steward

Scripture

Think of a person whom you greatly admire and respect. Do you have such a person in mind? Good. Now, what is it about that person that you appreciate so much? What is it that really draws you to them? Let's list the qualities and characteristics of the person whom you greatly admire. What is it that you really love about that person? Give me the one quality that draws you to that person.

You may have listed qualities such as loving, joyful, sense of humor, kind, encouraging, warm, honest, humble, godly, etc.

My contention is that the key thing that makes people attractive to others is their *attitude*. Almost all the qualities you gave me are *attitudes*. Isn't it interesting that you have said very little about *skills, abilities, talents, gifts* or *appearance*?

Your attitude makes you attractive to other people. But not only does your attitude make you attractive to other people, your attitude makes you attractive to God. What makes you attractive to God is not primarily your skills or your abilities or your talents or your gifts or your appearance. God has given them to you, but it is your attitude toward them that makes you attractive to God.

For the next four Sundays I plan to teach about stewardship. I am calling this series *The ABCs of Stewardship*. Today I want to talk about "Attitude: The Response of a Successful Steward." The material for this series of sermons comes from Dr. John Maxwell.

I want you to see several attitudes displayed in the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. Here in this parable we will see how attitude guides the response of a successful steward.

By the way, please take note of the definition of stewardship that I am using. Stewardship *is utilizing God-given abilities to manage God-given resources to accomplish God-ordained results*.

Let's read Luke 10:25-37:

²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

²⁶ “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

²⁷ He answered: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

²⁸ “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

³⁰ In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

³⁶ “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

³⁷ The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.” (Luke 10:25-37)

Introduction

Some time ago, *Closer Walk* (a daily devotional guide) wrote about the widow (in Luke 21:1-4) who put two very small copper coins into the temple treasury. You remember Jesus’ statement, don’t you? “I tell you the truth,” he said, “this poor widow has put in more than all the others” (v. 3). Now listen to the comment:

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How is it possible to add together the offerings of countless rich men and declare their total less than two very small copper coins of a poor widow? How is it possible that so little could be so much? Jesus' arithmetic is not hard to comprehend when you understand, as he did, that the secret of giving is not the amount that was given but, rather, what was given up. *Attitude, not abundance, is the key.*

Jesus teaches us that liberality is determined not by the *amount* of our giving but by the *attitude* of our giving. Giving is not a function of cold numbers but the result of a warm heart.

It's the attitude that counts. You know, you can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving. Let me illustrate.

Do you remember when you were romancing someone how you constantly gave to that person? You gave flowers, cards, candy, and gifts. It might not have been much, but you could hardly wait to give them a gift to show your love. Remember?

Now, think of when you pay taxes. Do you *love* giving money to the IRS? Hardly!

You see, *you can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.*

Lesson

Today, I want to examine the Parable of the Good Samaritan. In this parable, three attitudes are exhibited. Let's look at each one.

I. **What Is Yours Is Mine and I'm Going to Take It (10:30)**

First, what is yours is mine and I'm going to take it.

The first attitude we come upon in the parable is that of the robbers. The **robbers saw a man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho** and said, in effect, "What is yours is mine and I'm going to take it." So **they stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead (10:30).**

And immediately we say, “We want to have nothing to do with this attitude.” It’s an attitude of *greed*. We don’t want to have anything to do with that kind of attitude, and rightly so.

Do you remember reading Aesop’s fables as a child? Do you remember the fable about the dog that stole a piece of meat from the butcher? Then he ran away. He wanted to go to a safe, secluded place to eat the piece of meat. As he crossed a little stream he saw his own reflection, and saw another dog with a piece of meat in its jaw. You know what he did. He opened his mouth to grab the other piece of meat, and lost what he had. That simple story illustrates what greed will do to a person.

The principle that you need to grasp today is this: *God owns everything and we simply manage what he has entrusted to us*. God is the owner of everything. The robbers say, “What’s yours is mine and I’m going to take it.”

In the temporal realm we oppose such thinking. Someone goes in to the gas station and robs the store, and we say, “That’s terrible!”

But in the spiritual realm so often we talk out of the other side of our mouths. We rob from God and think nothing of it.

Let me ask you a question. This will help you understand where I am coming from. If you made \$100.00 this week, how much of that \$100.00 belongs to God?

If your answer is, “Well, a tithe is 10%, so \$10.00 belongs to God,” you’re wrong!

All \$100.00 belongs to God! You see, everything you have, not just 10%, but *everything* you have belongs to God. And that includes your time, talents, as well as your treasure.

When Lauren and Jon were very small, I remember clearly teaching them this principle. I would get 10 dimes and spread all 10 dimes on the table for their pocket money. I would ask, “How much belongs to God?”

At first, they would say, “One dime.”

And I would teach them that *all 10 dimes* belong to God. He owns it all. He entrusts us to manage what belongs to him. Now,

we give him 1 dime (or 1/10th) through the church, but *all* of it belongs to him.

God owns *everything* you and I have. We are simply managers of *his* possessions. Don't be like the robbers in this story and say to yourself, "What is yours is mine and I'm going to take it." That is the wrong attitude for a Christian.

II. What Is Mine Is Mine and I'm Going to Keep It (10:31-32)

Second, what is mine is mine and I'm going to keep it.

This is the attitude of the **priest** and the **Levite**, and it is the attitude of *selfishness*. They were not going to rob or steal. They were not going to take from someone else. They would shudder from that kind of behavior.

Listen to what Jesus says in Luke 10:31-32: "**A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.**"

Neither the **priest** nor the **Levite** was going to rob the man and take his possessions. But they operated on the attitude that says, "What's mine is mine and I'm going to keep it."

Interestingly, both these men were religious. Priests and Levites served in the temple on a rotation system, and only served one week per year in the temple. So, most likely, the **priest** and **Levite** were on their way to the temple to do their yearly duty.

Furthermore, the Old Testament Law forbade any **priest** or **Levite** from serving in the temple if they were unclean. They could not be unclean at the time of their service.

So therefore, when this **priest** and **Levite** saw the man lying on the side of the road, and he looked like he might be dead, they thought of the Law which said that they would be unclean if they touched him, and they could not then do their temple duty.

Let's pause and take note here. Some people have a set of rules and are so legalistic that they can't see past those rules and

see people, as it were, dying, on the right and on the left. And what they don't understand is that Jesus came to show us that love is the way in which the Law is fulfilled. Nothing is worse than a legalistic Christian who does not understand that the Law has been given to us to show us how to love.

And they're just like the **priest** and the **Levite**. They aren't going to break any rules. They say, "Your world is there and my world is here. I won't bother you and you don't bother me. I'll just go through life doing my own thing."

A few years ago a newspaper editorial commended most truck drivers for using their CB radios in a constructive way. However, it concluded with a warning to those who misuse this means of communication. The writer gave this unforgettable example.

In Colorado, several people begged a trucker to free the channel so that they could put through an emergency call, but he refused to cooperate. They wanted to direct a doctor to the scene of a serious accident. An automobile had driven into the rear of a flatbed trailer carrying metal tubing. A piece of pipe had gone through the car's windshield, pinning a woman in the wreckage. The trucker continued to tie up the channel, frustrating all attempts to obtain help. Finally, he came upon the scene of the accident himself. To his utter dismay, he discovered that the critically injured woman was his own wife! When a doctor did arrive, he said that if he had been notified even 10 minutes earlier, the woman's chances for survival would have been much greater.

The attitude of the **priest** and **Levite** that says "What's mine is mine and I'm going to keep it" is not sufficient. We need to understand that selfishness is ultimately a destructive lifestyle. And one of the first lessons of stewardship is that I am not only responsible for what's mine, but I am responsible for you and for others.

III. What Is Mine Is Yours and I'm Going to Give It (10:33-35)

Third, what is mine is yours and I'm going to give it.

This is the attitude of the Samaritan, and it is the attitude of *giving*. It is drastically different from the previous two attitudes.

Notice what Jesus said in Luke 10:33-35: **“But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’”**

Notice the similarities in the story. The priest, Levite and Samaritan all saw the same thing. They all saw the same problem. They all saw a man who was in need. The difference was that the priest and the Levite looked and moved on, while the Samaritan looked and stopped to help.

There are some people who say, “I’m not a giver in life because I don’t have the opportunity to give. If I had the opportunity, I would give.”

Now listen carefully to me. *Every person in this room has the opportunity to give no matter what your lot in life.* Whether you are a millionaire or in debt over your head, you can be a giver. I’m talking about your time, your talent, your treasure, your kindness, and your love. Every Christian has an opportunity to give.

If you say, “I don’t have anything to give,” let me expound the Greek to you concerning that kind of excuse, “Nonsense!”

Stop making excuses. I have seen the poorest people who are among the greatest givers in life. You see, *giving has nothing to do with your possessions; it has everything to do with your attitude.*

Another similarity between these men is this: not only did they see the same problem, but each one of them had other things to do. They were all busy. They were all on a journey. None of them started that day thinking that they would look for someone to go and help. They were going some place. They had work to do.

Some Christians say, “I’d love to help and do something but I am too busy. I’ve got other things to do.” And I say again,

“Wrong! Wrong! Wrong!” You do not help people because you have free time on your hands. *You help people when you believe that people come before things in life.*

You see, the men all had reasons why they could not help. The priest and the Levite had reasons of the ceremonial law. And the Samaritan was on a trip somewhere. Besides, the Jews hated the Samaritans, and that was reason enough not to stop.

But the Samaritan’s attitude helped him overcome two things. *First, it helped him overcome his prejudice.* It helped him look beyond the ethnic difference.

And *second, it helped him give up his conveniences.* He gave up his donkey. He gave up his time. He gave up his energy. And he gave up his money. He had an attitude of giving.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan is picture of Christ’s attitude toward us. He gave himself to us so that we might be saved and healed. And now he calls us to imitate his attitude.

Conclusion

Here are four observations from this parable about attitudes. And as I give you these four attitudes, apply them to *yourself*. Don’t sit there and think to yourself, “Boy! My wife really needs to hear this!” Or, “Good! I hope my husband is listening!” Or, “I hope my brother or sister is paying attention!” No. I want *you* to think, “God, what are you saying to *me* today?”

First, your attitude is more important than your ability. Remember that, would you? Too many times we look at our ability and say, “Well, I don’t have anything in the way of ability. Therefore I can’t do anything.”

So many people worry about what they don’t have. Don’t worry about what you don’t have. Use what you’ve got! People say, “If I had a million dollars, I’d give half of it to the church right now!”

Don’t worry about the million dollars. Give what you have today. And I am not only talking about your treasure. I am also

talking about your time and your talent. Attitude is much more important than ability.

Second, your attitude is more important than your position. Your attitude about people and life is much more important than the position you hold in life. In fact, if you want to talk about position, the priest and the Levite had a very important position in that society. If there was anybody helping someone half dead, it ought to have been those guys. And if there was anybody not helping someone half dead, it ought to have been the despised Samaritan.

Attitude is more important than position. The priest and the Levite were trained to help people, but they didn't help the man.

People say, "If only I were a pastor or elder, then I could be involved in ministry and help people." Oh no you wouldn't. If you are not helping people now, what makes you think that you will help people when you get a piece of paper from a seminary?

You can be a minister right where you are taking your time, your talent, and your treasure and using them for the glory of God to minister to people in his name!

Third, your attitude is more important than your time. Your attitude is more important than the timing of the problem or situation. Some people say, "Well, I could help if I had the time."

The priest and Levite probably had better timing because they arrived on the scene shortly after the man had been robbed and beaten. The Samaritan arrived later and by this time the man was worse off than when the first two passed by. If the man was half dead when the priest and Levite passed by, he was probably three-quarters dead by the time the Samaritan arrived.

If you see someone who has a need, it may not be the best time, and it may not be convenient. Jesus says to forget what you are doing and meet that need! Help them!

Jesus so beautifully illustrates how we are to meet that need in this passage. When the expert in the law asked him about eternal life, Jesus said in verse 27: "**Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind.**" In other words, eternal life begins with

the right attitude by *first* loving God. And then you will **“love your neighbor as yourself.”**

And then the expert in the law said in verse 29: **“But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’”** In other words, he was making excuses for why he did not love his neighbor.

And fourth, become an active giver now. Become an active giver now. Today. Not tomorrow. Now!

When the expert in the law wanted to get into a theological discourse about who his neighbor was, Jesus told him the parable of the Good Samaritan. Then notice in verses 36-37 how Jesus concludes the parable. Jesus said, **“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”** The expert in the law replied, **‘The one who had mercy on him.’** Jesus told him, **‘Go and do likewise.’”**

In other words, Jesus said, “Stop making excuses and start doing something.” Or, in the words of the Nike ad, “Just do it!”

So, as we close today, let me give you your assignment for this coming week.

First, ask God for a giving attitude. Ask him to give you a servant’s heart like that of the Good Samaritan.

Ask yourself, “Who needs help? Who can I serve today?” There are many people who are figuratively like the man who was robbed and beaten. There are lots of people you can serve. You could baby-sit for a busy mother with pre-schoolers. You could befriend an unsaved neighbor. You could encourage a discouraged person with a note or phone call. You could help a hurricane victim. There are lots and lots and lots of people you can serve.

Second, eliminate excuses. The priest and Levite had their excuses. But the Good Samaritan is commended because he eliminated his excuses. Listen! Christ’s call to service is a call to eliminate excuses. You should constantly seek to serve. You should constantly check your attitude.

And finally, do something this week. As Jesus said, **“Go and do likewise.”** Amen.

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