

Attitudes that Adorn the Gospel

Philippians 4:4-7

We are halfway through our sermon series on evangelism and I hope it has been encouraging to you and given you a fresh desire to let your light shine for Christ. I hope it has replaced the pressure and obligation you might feel in sharing your faith with a sense of hope and freedom to plant and water seeds of the gospel in conversations you have with unbelievers. God is at work in people's lives and uses our efforts in planting and watering to bring about salvation and new life and we are partners with him in this great calling.

This week, the study guide focuses on the importance of our attitude as we let our light shine and share the gospel. Attitude matters. Attitude conveys things to people, sometimes even more than words. If you have a bad attitude, even if you're doing something good, it can dismantle what you're doing. But if you have a good attitude it can enhance and give added benefit to what you're doing.

We run into this in parenting all the time – you tell your kids to do something to help out around the house and they whine and complain. (Picture) They do it, but their attitude basically ruins whatever they're doing. On the other hand, if they have a good attitude it makes a huge difference. (Picture) It makes whatever they're doing that much better. They might even get a reward for doing it.

We encounter this at work as well. If someone has a bad attitude it effects everyone around them. One bad apple ruins the whole batch. Nobody enjoys the work regardless of how fun and rewarding it could be. (Picture) But if someone has a good attitude, it can change the whole environment. People can enjoy being at work and even get a lot more done.

Attitude makes a huge difference no matter what you're doing. And when it comes to sharing your faith, the same is true. Your attitude can give wonderful confirmation to what you're trying to say and show people the beauty and wonder of the good news of Christ, or it can dismantle your efforts and make you and other Christians look like hypocrites. (Picture)

Think about the following attitudes and the negative effect they might have on someone's efforts to share the gospel with people...

- Dutiful attitude – I’m doing what I’m supposed to do, even though I don’t really want to.
- Domineering attitude – I’m going to win people to Christ whether they’re ready or not!
- Sullen attitude – people are condemned and under God’s wrath. I need to tell them about the danger they’re in if they don’t turn to Jesus.
- Self-righteous – I’d better enlighten these foolish unbelievers who are controlled by their sinful passions.
- Hostile – these nasty heathens want to ruin our lives and don’t even deserve to go to heaven.

Any of these attitudes are going to hinder the way we come across while sharing our faith and they don’t accurately express what we’re trying to say. We’ve got wonderful news to share and it’s really important that we have the right attitudes to go along with it.

The study guide focuses on a couple attitudes that adorn the gospel well. And I want to look at a passage that highlights two of them as well. It’s a passage that we can apply to any area of our lives so today we are going to apply it to sharing our faith.

Read Philippians 4:4-7.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

These are some general instructions given to the church in Philippi. Paul begins with the command to rejoice, and he repeats it, so it’s obvious he considers it really important. What does it mean to rejoice? What comes to my mind is something like ‘have joy’ or ‘be glad in God,’ but there’s more to it than that. I looked up the Greek word for rejoice and found that it is closely connected to grace – they both share the same root and the same core meaning. So to rejoice is to delight in God’s grace – to experience it and be glad for it.

Grace is God's kindness and blessing. If you begin to think about it you realize his grace is overwhelming. Grace is all the kindness and favor freely given to us from God because of his deep love for us. We don't do anything to earn it; it is a gift. It includes spiritual blessings in Christ like forgiveness, adoption, reconciliation, and eternal life, and it includes many earthly blessings like family, friends, church, work, home, health, possessions... It can even include suffering that turns us from sin and draws us near to God. Every good and perfect gift comes from our heavenly Father.

By commanding us to rejoice, Paul is calling us to focus on and delight in God's grace. It's something we can do internally in prayer and meditation, and outwardly in praises and singing – very much like what we do on Sunday mornings. It's very important – that's why Paul repeats the command – and it's important because of the effect it has on our lives. When we rejoice it changes our outlook on life and it changes our attitude. It lifts our eyes off of our circumstances and puts them on God and his goodness for us.

So as Paul continues, he writes about a couple attitudes that spring forth from rejoicing. The first is "reasonableness." In verse 5 he writes: "*Let your reasonableness be known to everyone.*" I looked up reasonableness in the original language to get a better idea of what it meant, and it is defined as: gentle, mild, patient, fair, reasonable, moderate. When you experience and delight in God's overwhelming grace, that's the effect it has on your attitude.

I met with a friend this week, and when he gets overwhelmed with the circumstances in life, he stops what he's doing and starts playing worship music. He set up big speakers in his office for this very reason. He plays the music and starts rejoicing and he said the effect it has on him is that he feels secure. He's safe. He's on steady ground. When he is reminded of God's goodness and grace it changes his attitude. And that's what I think Paul has in mind in these verses – an attitude of reasonableness springs from rejoicing.

And reasonableness is an attitude that adorns the gospel. Paul says, "*let your reasonableness be known to everyone.*" Put it on display; let it shine. In so doing, you will have a gracious spirit toward others. There will be meekness, and kindness. As you remember how God has poured out kindness to you, you will

pour out that same kindness to others. And that's the kind of attitude that's compatible with sharing our faith.

If we are critical and judgmental toward others, especially toward the lost who don't know any better, or if we look at unbelievers with enmity and treat them as inferior because of their ongoing sin, if we come across as being condemning and judgmental, we are not representing the grace of God that has been demonstrated to us in the gospel. Therefore, we are to be reasonable and let our reasonableness be known to everyone.

Paul brings up another attitude that springs forth from rejoicing in verse 6 and that's prayerfulness. Paul writes: *"The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."* If you rejoice in the Lord and remember that he is generous and kind and has given countless blessings in Christ, then when you face circumstances or people that normally make you feel anxious, rather than giving in to worry and fear, Paul says pray. Present your requests to your gracious God who bestows bountiful blessings on his people.

If you have a sickness that keeps getting worse, you don't just sit around and worry about it, you go to the doctor and ask for help. They have what you need to find out what's wrong and provide treatment.

If an unexpected financial burden comes up and you don't have enough money to pay for it, you go to a bank or maybe a family member who can help you get through. They have what you need and can help you.

How much more, when we're in those difficult situations that make us worry and fear, should we go to our heavenly Father who is rich in mercy and grace and able to help us in our time of need? We don't need to sit around and be anxious. If we are rejoicing in God it will produce an attitude of prayerfulness and we will present our requests before him.

When it comes to sharing our faith, we will have situations and people that will lead to anxiousness and worry. They aren't following the Lord yet and it makes us worry. But we know we have a God who is not willing that any should perish, but that all would come to repentance. We have a God who delights to show kindness

to sinners, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring the lost sheep into the fold. So rather than suffer in fear and anxiety we can go to the Lord and present our requests before him. Ask him to save your lost loved ones. Ask him to save your friends. Ask him to move in the hearts of the people who don't know him and to give you opportunities to share. An attitude of prayerfulness adorns the gospel and goes hand in hand with our efforts to share our faith with others. God is the one who changes people's hearts and he wants us to come before him in prayer.

So here we have two attitudes that adorn the gospel: reasonableness and prayerfulness. And they both come from the practice of rejoicing in God. So this week as we try to apply this Scripture to our lives, I encourage you to practice rejoicing on a regular basis – in your prayer time in the morning, in the car or at home when you're listening to music, right here at church when you participate in worship. Experience and delight in the grace of God. And then, let your reasonableness be evident to everyone and be quick to turn to God in prayer. Pray for you loved ones, pray for our community, pray for yourself – that God would give you opportunities to let your light shine and share what you believe.