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Does Christianity Require an Attitude Check?

Luke 14:18: (NASB) *But they all alike began to make excuses.*

The first one said to him, I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.



For a Christian, following Christ is supposed to be a way of life. It is supposed to dominate our thinking and actions, which means it is supposed to dominate our attitude as well. This can be a problem, because we often do not focus on our attitude - instead we just use whatever attitude we might have at the moment to dictate what our thoughts and actions will be. What drives our attitude? What makes, shakes or breaks it? How can we drive our attitude so it can drive us to Christ?

What develops a person's attitude? **DESIRE + PERCEIVED OPPORTUNITY = ATTITUDE!**

We are going to use the Parable of the Great Dinner in [Luke 14:16-24](#) to help us identify what drives our attitude. However, before we get to the Parable, let us look at [Luke 14:1-15](#) and see what attitudes Jesus observed. This will show us why he used the story and how important attitude is!

Observations regarding the context [leading up to the Parable of the Great Dinner:](#)

- **Jesus ate with the Pharisees:** [Luke 14:1:](#) **What is the Pharisees' attitude displayed here?** Guarded anticipation perhaps? **This was not the first time Jesus ate with the Pharisees - he did it often:** [Luke 7:36](#) and [Luke 11:37](#)
- **Jesus healed on the Sabbath - something he often did:** [Luke 14:2-6:](#) The Pharisees thought healing was "work," and Jesus broke the Sabbath by working. They did not see Jesus as enhancing the Law and in fact saw him as their competition for the favor of the people. **What is the Pharisees' attitude displayed here?** Anger and caution perhaps?
- **Jesus spoke in parables when he saw a lesson needing to be taught:** [Luke 14:7](#) **What is Jesus' attitude displayed here?** Love and compassion! He wants to help them rise above to a higher level of thinking.

[Luke 16:13-15:](#) Jesus called them out for not having an attitude that brought glory to God. But what drove their attitude? **DESIRE + PERCEIVED OPPORTUNITY = ATTITUDE!**

Those coming to dinner had the DESIRE to be well-recognized, wanting to be looked at as somebody special. (SHOULD HAVE BEEN humble.) Their PERCEIVED OPPORTUNITY was to get the best seat so others coming in could see they were special. (SHOULD HAVE BEEN to take the lowest seat and see what the situation offered.) Their ATTITUDE was self-absorbed. (SHOULD HAVE BEEN one of expectation rather than "look at me.")

- **Jesus teaches a much-needed lesson in personal humility by way of a parable:** [Luke 14:8-11:](#) Using the parable, Jesus taught them to be humble and allow their circumstances to bring out whatever "specialness" existed. This is a simple but often-overlooked lesson, for we so easily focus on what we want rather than what any given experience will appropriately produce.

This warning came later: [Luke 20:46-47](#) **What is the Pharisees' attitude displayed here?** Pride and position perhaps? **This was not a new lesson. Like so many of Jesus' teachings, it had an Old Testament basis:** [Proverbs 25:6-7](#)

- **After telling the Parable, Jesus gives a kind admonishing to his host based on its lessons:** [Luke 14:12-14:](#) Jesus challenged his host to "break the code" and step out of the "give to get" attitude into an attitude of benevolence! Christianity is NOT supposed to be about getting wealth, position, comfort or personal satisfaction. It is supposed to bring us to a point of humility and following after the will of God.

[James 2:1-5:](#) James' lesson was in line with Jesus' teachings. Just because someone does not have a lot of material wealth does not mean they are less worthy or valuable. As a matter of fact, they could be more valuable in the eyes of God because of a more humble attitude. **DESIRE + PERCEIVED OPPORTUNITY = ATTITUDE!**



When we look at those around us, what eyes are we looking at them with? Are they the eyes of social or political standing and comparison or are they the eyes of understanding and compassion? What do we DO with what we SEE?

Attitude is something we can change. Today we want to understand what drives our attitude to figure out how to change it depending on the circumstances around us. For Satan to thwart God's plan, he needs to keep us off focus, off the mark or somehow distract us from being faithful. Satan uses certain desires and perceived opportunities we have to craftily change our attitude to not be Christ-like.

- Jesus eats with the Pharisees and they watch him closely.
- Jesus heals on the Sabbath. The Pharisees do not like it but have no answer.
- Jesus speaks in parables when he sees a lesson needing to be taught. This shows his love and compassion. His attitude was one of "building up." The Pharisees' was one of skepticism and "tearing down."
- Jesus teaches a much-needed lesson in personal humility by way of a parable.
- Jesus gives a kind admonishing to his host, based on the previous parable. He was focused on the attitudes displayed before him.

Our attitudes should be in line with our life's objectives. When we have a cynical attitude, we are not looking towards anything valuable and positive. How do you become cynical? What do you desire? What do you see as a perceived opportunity? Attitude directs how we think and what we do.

Now that we have reviewed the context, we drop in on Jesus speaking the next parable to this dinner guest: Luke 14:15-16: **Someone gave a great dinner**: Representing God Himself who prepared the Messiah to bring a calling of blessing.

Malachi 4:5-6: Malachi was the last Old Testament prophet and he explained that God promised to send Elijah to draw the people to Him. There was an idea of preparation. **Invited many**: Representing the Jewish people. The call of the gospel went out exclusively to the Jews up until the conversion of Cornelius.

(Source: Biblical commentary by C.T. Russell) It was customary to send out the notifications long in advance, without specifying exactly the time, which would depend upon contingent circumstances.

The Jewish people had a very distinct privilege: Amos 3:1-2. They had an expectation of the promised seed during this time: Matthew 2:1-2

Back to the parable: Luke 14:17: **His servant**: Representing John the Baptist going out to the guests with the invitations.

John the Baptist was foretold. How important is attitude? Listen to what the angel said: Luke 1:16-17: If you think about it, John's work was to be the "attitude adjuster" sent by God. Acceptance of the Messiah would depend on attitude! John's whole message was repentance, which begins with attitude. DESIRE + PERCEIVED OPPORTUNITY = ATTITUDE!

John's work was to refocus the attitude of the people. Their desire was towards wanting to see their Messiah - that was good. But until the time of John the Baptist, there had been no real opportunity. John presents the perceived opportunity and tells the people to change their attitude to one of repentance.

Luke 14:18: No one wanted to hear the time of the banquet had arrived! Here begins the real core of the lesson Jesus is teaching: We all have a life in which many things take our attention - so much so that we can lose out on great things because we are focused on other things. What determines our focus? Our attitude!

We see prophetically how the invitation to the Great Dinner would work out: John 1:11: (NRSV) *He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.*

Those who are of a seeking attitude can receive the gospel. For those who think they have already found all they need, there is no reason for them to look - a closed off attitude.

Today's Christian leaders need to be careful not to act like the Pharisees, clinging to complacencies and traditions. Parishioners need to be on guard against the so-called



Prosperity Gospel, which focuses on "me" instead of Christ. We want to focus on what Christianity offers - a way to follow Jesus.

We will explore three things that get in the way of our attitude. Before we finish the Parable of the Dinner, let's take a quick look at the end lesson of another parable, the Parable of the Sower...

Mark 4:11-12: The Parable of the Sower shows us three kinds of failure in receiving the gospel using the type of ground as a metaphor. **For more on this Parable, please see our program from February 21, 2016, "Is the Power of the Gospel Fading?"**

Three types of ground failed to produce fruit: By the wayside, rocky ground and thorny ground. The thorny ground was a little different from the other two, as the gospel seeds actually grew. **But three problems occurred:** Mark 4:18-19: (NRSV) ¹⁸And others are those sown among the thorns: these are the ones who hear the word, ¹⁹but **the cares of the world**, and **the lure of wealth**, and **the desire for other things** come in and choke the word, and it yields nothing. All of these things choked out the gospel seed.

These three attitude-shapers from the Parable of the Sower fit well with the sources of sin laid out here: 1 John 2:16: (NASB) For all that is in the world, **the lust of the flesh** and **the lust of the eyes** and **the boastful pride of life**, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

Ecclesiastes 5:10-11: Our desire is easily stimulated by what we see. What we see ignites our imagination for what we would like to have or to be, and that sets our attitude towards a narrow and pride-laden focus like Jesus' audience. What we see triggers desire, which will eventually trigger attitude. Am I like those Pharisees?

Solution: Psalms 119:36-37

Luke 14:19: (NRSV) Another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my regrets.

In other words, "I need to unveil my new income stream!" You bought a yoke of oxen so they could work and produce for you. One person could not try out five yoke of oxen, so this would have been quite a business.

Yet ANOTHER Parable addresses this: Luke 12:16-21

The attitude of the man in the story was a direct result of his desires and opportunities. What is the MOST IMPORTANT THING to you? Answering this question honestly could be depressing! Our desire is easily stimulated by what we have and by what we think we can gain from what we have. Our attitude rises and falls according to that focus. Jesus saw the blindness his audience had to higher things - he saw them trapped by an attitude of complacency.

Solution: Matthew 6:19-21

Luke 14:20: (NRSV) Another said, I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come. But surely marriage was a legitimate reason and not an excuse? Well, for the incredible opportunity Jesus was offering them compared with the attitude they adopted, it was only an excuse. Jesus was simply illustrating the necessity of priorities: God, His will and His plan comes first.

1 Corinthians 7:29-31: Our desire is easily rationalized with the parts of our lives that are truly important, which gives us an attitude of self-justification. Jesus' message here is that we should instead seek to adopt an attitude of God-glorification. **Solution:** Romans 14:5-8.

Luke 14:21

With the rejection of a nation with a bad attitude came an open door to those who were willing: Matthew 11:28-30: **All you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens** - Representing the individual Jews of the time and no longer the nation. Note the invitation is still local (still in town). For three and a half years after Pentecost, the call went to those Jews whose attitude was such that they could hear the gospel call.

All the excuses to the dinner meant the Jewish nation missed out on a higher opportunity.



Luke 14:22-24: After going to the people in town, there still was not enough to fill the banquet hall. **Go out into the roads and the lanes**: Representing the gospel call going out further, beyond the Jewish nation.

Back to the Pharisees after Jesus repeatedly tried to teach them: Matthew 23:37-38

MISPLACED DESIRE + IGNORED OPPORTUNITY = IDOLATROUS ATTITUDE! This means LOST BLESSINGS.

Now the invitation goes throughout the rest of the world (just like in the Parable of the Dinner), beginning with Cornelius: Acts 13:46-47: We see the Parable of the Dinner is all about attitude. The attitude of those who were originally invited was detrimental - they lost out on the blessings of the gospel. They would miss the opportunity to be footstep followers of Jesus. Taking control of and understanding our attitude will bring us one place or another. We can choose to change our attitude by changing the focus of our primary desire. Watch carefully for the three areas that bring us down: *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.*

HUMBLE DESIRE + RECEIVED OPPORTUNITY = ATTITUDE THAT GLORIFIES GOD!

Bottom line lessons for us based on the rejection of those whose hearts and minds were not open to accept the gospel call when Jesus first came:

- True Christianity is an invitation - let us set our desire on this most amazing opportunity and focus our attitude to be one of humble acceptance.
- True Christianity is a distinct and high privilege. Let us have an attitude of single-mindedness and reaching up.
- God does not need ME to fulfill His Plan! Let us forge an attitude of thankfulness for His unmerited grace.

1 Peter 5:6-8

Parable of the Dinner <i>Three excuses people use to decline the invitation to the gospel call</i>	Parable of the Sower <i>Three things choke out the gospel seed</i>	Sources of Sin <i>Three sources identified in 1 John 2:16</i>
"I have to see my new land!" <u>Luke 14:18</u> 	"The cares of the world" <u>Mark 4:19</u>	"The lust of the eyes" <u>1 John 2:16</u>
"I have a new income stream!" <u>Luke 14:19</u> 	"The lure of wealth" <u>Mark 4:19</u>	"The boastful pride of life" <u>1 John 2:16</u>
"I am newly married!" <u>Luke 14:20</u> 	"The desire for other things" <u>Mark 4:19</u>	"The lust of the flesh" <u>1 John 2:16</u>

What is our desire and is it in agreement with what is required of us? What do we see as our opportunity and is it in agreement with what is required of us? What is our attitude - to glorify self? Glorify God? Change your attitude to glorify God!

**So, does Christianity require an attitude check?
For Jonathan and Rick and
Christian Questions...
Think about it...!**