

COMMISSIONED Prt 5

Have you ever had to deal with someone with an attitude that stinks or you have been on the receiving end of the statement “your attitude stinks”?

I am of the view that your attitude determines how far your life will go. Your attitude will distinguish you from the rest of the crowd. That is why these days companies are hiring more for attitude than for competence – competence can be taught but attitude cannot.

You can be as gifted as anything but if you have a wrong attitude, your gift will be limited over time.

In the same way, the gospel can be greatly hindered by a believer’s attitude.

If you are joining us for the first time, you find us in the middle of a series titled **COMMISSIONED** and today we are doing prt 5.

The title of my message is **WHEN YOUR ATTITUDE IS IN THE WAY** – as I have already alluded to, your attitude can either take you higher or can keep you closed up.

- This is so true regarding your ability to reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- We have been learning a lot from the story of Jonah, where we found Jonah having received a mission to go and warn the great city of Nineveh.
- Initially he refused and sought to run away from God but eventually he went to Nineveh to warn the city.
- After sounding the warning, to everyone’s surprise, the city heeded the warning and repented and God forgave the city.
- It was an awesome thing that happened because a whole city was saved from destruction.
- Unfortunately, we find Jonah having an attitude towards what had happened.

Jonah 4:1 But it was a great calamity in Jonah's sight, and it kindled anger in him. 2 And he prayed to Jehovah and said, Please, O Jehovah, was this not my saying when I was still in my land? On account of this I fled before to Tarshish. For I knew that You are a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and One who repents over calamity. 3 And now, O Jehovah, I beseech You, take my life from me. For better is my death than my life. 4 And Jehovah said, Is anger rightly kindled in you?

- Jonah was very detached from the business of heaven and this is a common issue amongst believers. Refuse to be a believer who is divorced from what concerns God.
- Jonah’s attitude is not unique to him but rather a reflection of the ordinary Christian today. Jonah’s attitude explains the reason why many people have not reached as many people as they could have.

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- Firstly, he was not willing to cooperate with God on reaching Nineveh with God's word, secondly when Nineveh repented and God had mercy on it, Jonah could not stand that.
- Let me ask you a question; what has been your attitude regarding sharing the gospel with people around you?
- We need to unpack Jonah's attitude in order to shade some light over our own attitudes.

1. Jonah suffered from an exclusivity (sectarian) spirit

- Jonah was so caught up on the welfare of his own country above that of any other person.
- Jonah would have preferred to be the only one who could make it to heaven. His anger got the best of him to a place of being suicidal – Jonah prayed that he could die (*O Jehovah, I beseech You, take my life from me. For better is my death than my life.*)
- Today's Jonah believes that his church is the only true church in town and everything has to come through them.
- Today's Jonah does not want others who are different from him to hear the gospel – for him the gospel is an exclusive commodity reserved for a few special ones.
- Peter struggled with this prejudice until God challenged him in a vision in Acts 10.
- The disciples of Jesus were perplexed when they saw Jesus talking to a Samaritan woman in John 4.
- You will not share the gospel if you are still fixated by skin colour, education levels, job titles, the neighbourhood you stay in, the language you speak etc.

2. Jonah wanted things done his way and not God's way

- Jonah was angry over God's ways of showing mercy to a lost city – he would rather have his will and not God's will to prevail.
- Jonah was more into his comfort than the well-being of others, in other words he was a self-centred believer.
- It shows you the degree to which man can go when self-overtakes them. When self is exalted, the plans of God will play second fiddle in your life.
- Jonah questioned God's judgement regarding showing mercy to those whom he thought did not deserve it. God's way was so unacceptable by Jonah such that he became suicidal, he prayed that he would rather die than see God's mercy at work.
- The disciples of Jesus struggled with how gracious Jesus was. On his trip to Jerusalem, Jesus and His disciples passed through a village of Samaria. The village did not receive them and the disciples were not impressed and saw it as opportunity to judge the village.

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Luke 9:54 And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?" 55 But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. 56 For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them." And they went to another village.

- The church will make more disciples the moment it chooses to incorporate with God's ways of salvation.
- Do not hinder the power of the gospel by applying your standard, which is below or above God's standard.

3. Jonah was not interested in interacting with sinners

- To warn Nineveh, Jonah needed to be found in a pagan city, relate with pagans, eat pagan's food. This must have been a traumatising thought for a devout Jew.
- The disciples were appalled by the fact that Jesus spent time with sinners.
- On one of His trips, Jesus met Zaccheaus a tax collector. The man was keen to see Jesus and when Jesus saw Zaccheaus's interest in Him, He decided to pay him a visit.
- This perplexed some people because Zaccheaus was chief among sinners

Luke 19: 5 And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house." 6 So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. 7 But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner."

- The truth is that if we are to reach as many people as Jesus did, we need to do it the Jesus way. Jesus was relatable to sinners, Jesus acted normal among sinners, Jesus made sinners comfortable to be around Him.
- You cannot reach sinners unless you are found among sinners.
- Be a friend of sinners but do not be friends with their sin.

4. Jonah did not want to deal with people with real problems

- Going into Nineveh meant that Jonah was going to encounter people with real issues. He was going to encounter people with addiction problems; he was going to deal with people with sexual identity issues etc.
- When God showed them mercy, it meant that someone was going to be responsible to teach them the torah and guess who was positioned to do so, it was Jonah.

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- Many believers do not reach others with the gospel because of the burden of having to deal with the issues they bring along.
- At some place, Jesus had ministered to a crowd and when it got late, he asked the disciples to arrange some food for them.

Matthew 14: 15 When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food." 16 But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

- The people had been listening to the teachings of Jesus and when they were hungry, the disciples did not see this as their responsibility to deal with their hunger but rather asked Jesus to send them away.
- Jesus taught them a lesson, instead of agreeing with them, Jesus said “, *“They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”*
- When people get saved, they come along with their baggage and the church must be ready to provide a solution through counselling, prayer, care etc.
- Be prepared to get dirty with newly saved people in order to avoid spiritual baby dumping.