

Taking the Next Step Week of August 24th

Day 1 – First Read I Will by Thom Rainer before moving forward. If you have already read it, read **Philippians 2:5-11 and Philippians 4:4-9.**

You may or may not have seen the movie “Remember the Titans.” You can watch a clip of it at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=guA_4AzXqh0. A football team is trying to work together but it is smack dab in the middle of a time where race relations were at a fevered pitch. The team was to run 3 practices a day until they “got it right.” One reason they were not “getting it right” was because everyone was focused on themselves. In the clip the captain and another football player have a chat. The member of the football team tells the captain that he is just going to look out for himself and no one else, to which the captain responds, “that’s the worst attitude I’ve ever heard,” and the player responded, “attitude reflects leadership, captain.”

Our attitude will make or break us. Our right attitude comes from God, spending time with Him and having a right perspective. A bad attitude can come from anywhere else. Truth is, our attitude can affect our spouse, kids, co-workers, church members and the people that we run into daily. Our attitude says a lot about us, we can be in the worst situation and yet maintain a right and Godly attitude.

In today’s passage, Paul tells us that our attitude should be that of Christ Jesus. In chapter 4 he goes on to tell us that our attitude should think on Godly things that are true, noble, just, pure and lovely. When our attitude and heart is wrong then everything else will be wrong. Most often those around us are the ones that know it first.

Begin practicing this week by asking God to give you the right heart and attitude daily. As believers we can’t afford to be angry, bitter, unforgiving, hateful and mean, just to name a few. Before we can take a step in our relationship with God, we must fix our attitudes. But we must surrender and let Him fix them. How is your attitude? Ask God to work on it today and make it like His.

Day 2 – First Read 2 Corinthians 11:22-30

In these verses Paul gives us his resume of sorts and it is quite a long one. It wasn’t necessarily what he had accomplished but the result of that which came from following God. From almost dying to being beaten and shipwrecked, Paul faced extreme challenges. Yet nothing held him back; he kept going. Not because of him or to boast in him (verse 30) but because of his relationship with Jesus and having the right attitude of keeping his eyes on Jesus. No matter what happened to Paul his attitude seemed to remain the same. Sure he faced discouragement and struggles but he kept going and no one person or circumstance changed his attitude.

Growing up I would tell my dad that “so and so made me mad” and to this day I hear the response, “son no one made you mad or angry, you chose that.” I was mad or angry and it wasn’t who I was made at that made me angry, I chose to be angry, I chose to let it affect me that way. As you begin your week, be reminded that you and God direct your attitudes, not a circumstance, person, place or thing.

When we realize that our attitude is not dependent on anything other than Jesus, our attitude can indeed be like Christ’s. Don’t play the victim! Jesus became our victim and was sent to death on the cross for us so we didn’t have to, we can now live victoriously in Him because He has given us a new heart and a new attitude. Whatever you are facing today or will face tomorrow, remember Paul’s resume and remember God directs our heart and attitude, man does not.

Day 3- First Read Acts 28:30-31

The book of Acts is about the birth, growth and expansion of the church. We see the amazing start of the church on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came and filled the people with power to take the gospel into the world just as Jesus said in Acts 1:8. Immediately the Lord added daily to the number of believers those who were being saved. The gospel spread against overwhelming odds. But the power of the new church was people empowered by the Holy Spirit.

One of those saved was a man who was persecuting, arresting and consenting to the executing of followers of Jesus. This man was Saul. However, one day as he was traveling to Damascus to continue to bring threats and hardships upon believers he was encountered by the resurrected Jesus. In this event known as the Damascus Road experience Saul was transformed into a new man and given a new name—Paul. Paul became the evangelist the Lord used to take the gospel to the gentiles. He continued to preach and go on mission trips throughout the remainder of the book of Acts. As the

book concludes Paul is under house arrest in Rome for preaching the gospel. Paul did not think of himself as a prisoner but a witness and preacher of the good news. On all occasions Paul used his situation to tell the gospel account. The very last two verses of the book of Acts tell how he continued to preach the gospel. The very last word is one that really inspires me. The last word of the book of Acts in the Greek means 'unhindered.' Paul continued to preach and was unhindered. We all need to be witnesses of the Lord without anything hindering us. This includes our own sinful activity, other people, bad attitudes and the like. I will allow nothing to hinder me from bearing witness to the salvation which comes through Jesus Christ.

Day 4- First Read Hebrews 10:19-25

Our first 3 days we were reminded of keeping a Godly attitude despite our circumstances, people and everything going on around us. The writer of Hebrews tells us to remember that Christ is faithful and then says, "let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together." We are reminded that we are to encourage each other as believers. One of the great ways we do this is by joining each other for worship and Sunday school. In other words, we need to be connected to God's Church continuously. When we decide on Saturday night or Sunday morning that we just can't make it to worship with other believers, not only are we being unbiblical but we are potentially selling ourselves and others short. The Sunday you miss could be the Sunday that someone in your class needs to hear your story. Maybe that specific Sunday, the lesson is for you or maybe you need to hear from God in a way that you wouldn't if you weren't connected to His Church. I want to challenge you to connect with God's Church weekly. That is "I Will" connect to God and His Church unless I am physically unable. We need each other because we are a family and when a family member goes missing, even for a week, it leaves a big hole. Commit to God and commit to your Church, to God's Church.

Day 5-First Read

As far back as I can remember I was taught about giving to my church. My parents would prepare my offering envelope for me and put a dime in it when I was really young and then a quarter as I got a little older. When I got older and started cutting grass in my neighborhood the habit was in place. I was a giver and the starting place was a tithe which is 10% of what you make. Today I am thankful my parents taught me about stewardship and giving. We did the same with our children.

It is important to learn to tithe and to give. I say tithe because I believe biblically that is the starting place. Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). He also told us to start right where we are and take the gospel to the whole world. He says this in Acts 1:8, telling His disciples to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the whole world. Have you discovered that takes money and a lot of it? Harp's Crossing Baptist Church has missions and ministries in our community, but also to North America and to Asia and other locations in the world. That takes money. We are currently in our budget process for the 2016 year. The Fayetteville campus budget this year was \$ 2,504,946 and the Hollonville budget was \$ 261,228. This sounds like a lot of money and it is. However, I believe if all of the members and attenders at both locations would say "I will give" and the beginning place were the tithe, I believe the budget amounts would be 3 to 4 times that amount! What a blessing it would be to go into new areas of the world and send more people.

Are you a tither and giver? The place to tithe and give is to your church. We are on mission together pooling resources—skills, talents, abilities, gifts, and yes, money to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with every person in the world starting right where we live.