

Attitudes Essential for Effective Evangelism

January 27, 2008 — Mike Ratliff

I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (1 Timothy 1:12-17 ESV)

What are the necessary attitudes believers must have in order to effectively tell others about the Gospel? Unless the following attitudes are foremost in the hearts of believers, any evangelical efforts in which they become part of will not be as effective as they could be. Why? The attitudes outlined below are growing in those who have matured as a Christian to the point that their lives reflect God's grace to those around them. If a believer is still enslaved to their flesh their attitudes will reflect their flesh more than God's grace. The following are the attitudes that are essential for effective evangelism:

1. Be Submissive.

“Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.” (Titus 3:1-3 ESV)

God has ordained the levels of authority to which all believers must submit. (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:12-17) Why is it important that believers submit to others? It is part of our Christian testimony. Believers who do not submit are cultivating pride in their hearts. Pride bears rotten fruit. On the other hand, humility, which is necessary in order to submit to others, bears eternal, godly fruit. Our attitudes are the fruit. Will a believer who only cultivates pride in their hearts be subject willingly to others? They cannot consistently do it, if at all. On the other hand, the believers who are maturing and becoming Spirit-filled are cultivating humility and that means they are willingly subject to them. What this does is reflect God's grace to those around them. This allows those to whom they witness to feel they can share without being judged.

2. Be Christ like.

Christians are called to become Christ-like. Christ-likeness is how we describe the character of a Spirit-filled believer. These believers obey God and are ready for every good work. Those around them witness that they never speak evil of anyone. They are humble and gentle. This allows those to whom they witness to trust them.

3. Remember where you came from.

All people prior to regeneration and salvation were once, *“foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.”* It’s not that we all committed all these sins. What Paul means is that the unregenerate life is characterized by sins such as these. Believers must never lose sight of where they came from. It is sobering to us and humbles us when we think of this. Therefore, in our dealings with unbelievers we need to remember from where we came. We must never forget that if it weren’t for God’s grace to us, we would be wicked.

4. Remember that God saved us.

“But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” (Titus 3:4-7)

The goodness and loving kindness here refers to Jesus Christ. He is kindness and love incarnate. He saved us. Salvation has never been by works. It is according to God’s mercy. We were saved as God washed us clean of our sin nature in our regeneration. This miracle of salvation cleansed us from sin and gave us the gift of a new, Spirit-generated, Spirit-empowered, and Spirit-protected life. The Holy Spirit is the agent of our regeneration. Also, God blessed us abundantly at our salvation by justifying us by His grace, declaring us righteous that we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Let those you witness to know that there was nothing you did that saved you, instead it was a free gift from God.

5. Dare not keep it to ourselves.

Now, since all in Christ have been blessed beyond measure this way what should their attitude be about evangelism? Are all believers extending to others the grace they have received? If not, then why not? In light of the astounding miracle of our salvation, how dare we keep it to ourselves! Those who hold it all in and do not share their faith with the lost and dying world are hiding the fruit of God’s grace within their hearts and not letting its light shine forth into the darkness.

6. Avoid foolish conflict.

“But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.” (Titus 3:9-11 ESV)

We are never commanded in scripture to refrain from admonishing those who are in error and teach that error to others. We are obligated to do that, but we must avoid foolish conflict. It really isn’t important that we are perceived as the victor in these disputes or arguments. I have learned the hard way that when these “discussions” are not terminated at the right time, that they devolve into sinful, prideful, arguing that only results in damaging our testimonies. Our attitudes can also be damaged here. State the truth of the Gospel in love, and then move on.

If we will take on these attitudes and pray for the Lord to create and bless our efforts to witness, we will be effective evangelists.