

Attitude Check

This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it ... Do all things without complaining and disputing. (Psalm 118, Philippians 2)

The story is told of two young boys who decided to play a prank on their sleeping grandfather. They crept into his bedroom and smeared Limburger cheese on his moustache. A short while later he awoke declaring, "this room smells!" He went into the kitchen where grandma was baking some chocolate chip cookies. But he couldn't smell the baked goods. "This room smells too," he exclaimed and headed to the back. But as he stood on the porch he sighed, "the whole world smells!" This story demonstrates what a bad attitude can do to our perception of everyday life. If we have too much cheese in our attitude, life will seem a little smelly

On the other hand, a good attitude will go a long way toward making us happy. Have you ever said to yourself, "If I just had more money I would be happy," or "If I had done things differently I'd be happy?" or "If this person or that person would change, everything would be fine." The error in this logic is that external factors have almost nothing to do with our happiness. At some time in life we will all experience trials. Things will go wrong. Unfortunate circumstances will happen. These difficulties can either harden us or make us more caring. At some point each of us has to make a decision about how we will respond to these external factors in our lives. *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.* (Romans 8)

Our attitude and perspective in life can be like medicine that heals or poison that kills. When we look at our life and circumstances do we respond positively or negatively? When we look

at others around us do we first see their faults or their gifts? Cynicism is a virus that attacks the spirit and breaks down our relationship both to others and to God. The cynic suspects the worst even in the best of people. He can see more evil through a keyhole than others see through an open door. Theodore Roosevelt understood the dangers of cynicism when he observed, "The poorest way to face life is to face it with a sneer."

Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else. Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.(1 Thessalonians 5)

Many of us struggle with restlessness at various times. One friend in recovery shared about starting a new habit. Throughout each day he tried to notice every blessing, large or small, that came along. Each night in bed he named them one by one and thanked God for them all. Not only did this practice change his attitude from negative to positive, but he often fell into a peaceful sleep before finishing his list. God used a time of struggle in his life to help him to develop an attitude of thanksgiving.

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. What effect does attitude have on quality of life?
2. What makes us a cynic?
3. How can we keep ourselves from the sickness of a negative or pessimistic attitude?
4. How can difficult circumstances make us more caring?
5. What tools do I use that help me to have an "attitude of gratitude?"