

4 Attributes That Empower You to Walk in a Different Spirit

All you have to do is take a glance at social media or the news these days to see the prevalence of hate-filled speech and unbridled anger almost everywhere. It is human sin nature to put up guards, defend our positions and rip into those who disagree. But if we are in Christ, we can no longer live according to our sin nature, but should live according to God's nature.

As Christians, our lives are to be lived in a different spirit than the world, no matter what is going on around us. The way we interact with others—be it our family, friends, neighbors, co-workers or those strangers we meet throughout our busy days—should have a marked difference from the rest of the world. The way we respond to circumstances and events should reflect that we are born from above, bearing the likeness of our Father.

When we approach the world with a different spirit, opportunities to share the reality of God's kingdom with those around us will abound. Even as the world around us continues to shake—with economic breakdowns, political battles and other natural and man-made disasters—we can and should be approaching each situation with the spirit and character of Christ. As a result, many will see our good deeds and glorify our Father in heaven (Matt. 5:16).

Bless Those Who Persecute You

When the devastating Indian Ocean tsunami hit Indonesia in 2004, our ministry and ministry partners were in a unique situation to assist the Indonesians to bring much needed aid to the people suffering in the tsunami's wake. We had incredible favor with the Indonesian government, and as a

result, we had access to military airlifts that allowed our partners to set up medical clinics and relief centers in the hard-hit area of Banda Aceh.

The reason we were able to bring fast relief and the love of Jesus was simple. Our previous actions had spoken volumes. Back in 1998, Indonesia suffered economic collapse, which saw half of the nation's population—more than 100 million people—fall below the poverty line in a matter of days. During the months of unrest that followed, many Christians were being persecuted and their churches vandalized by crowds who were looking for someone to blame for their misfortune.

During this chaotic time. I was invited by Indonesian pastors to minister to believers in Indonesia, many of whom had also been affected, as well as many becoming victims of persecution. I asked the pastors if we could do some kind of compassion outreach while I was there.

The pastors agreed, and 35 churches set up 35 different feeding centers where those in need could come for food. We set up signs that said, "Free lunch from the Lord." Many of the churches did not know where they would get the resources to feed the crowds. Their money had become worthless when economy economic collapsed. But with faith in the same way Jesus who fed the 5,000, they initiated the outreach.

The president of Indonesia heard of the outreach efforts of the churches in the midst of a time of national crisis. Shortly after, he invited 100 Christian pastors, our Somebody Cares team and me to come to the presidential palace. That day during our visit, on national television, he took seven minutes of airtime to apologize to these Christian leaders.

Quoting Jesus, he said, "forgive us, for we know not what we do." He went on to say that Muslims, Christians and Jews all have connection through Abraham. He also endorsed the Somebody Cares Indonesia efforts by the partner churches and

organizations.

Coming in a Different Spirit

Six years later, the tsunami struck. Somebody Cares and our ministry partners were able to provide quick relief aid in Indonesia, where hundreds of thousands of lives were lost and another half million were displaced as a result of the devastation. Because of the relationship we had built with them in 1998, our Somebody Cares partners already had a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Indonesian government, which eliminated much of the red tape that often slows down disaster relief. Our efforts in Banda Aceh, one of the areas worst hit by the tsunami, were again noticed by the government.

The vice governor of the region said to one of Somebody Cares International teams that was representing me during a visit, "My mind and heart are in conflict. When 9/11 happened, we rejoiced in the streets at your calamity. But in our disaster, you did not rejoice. You came to help."

The response of the Christian church in Indonesia after the tsunami opened incredible doors for sharing the Gospel. The church became the hands and feet of a compassionate God reaching out to a hurting people. By coming in an opposite spirit than that of their enemies, many of those "enemies" became responsive to the message of the gospel. Muslim imams began to seek out Christian pastors for advice and prayer. Relationships with government officials were improved. Souls were saved and the gospel advanced. When we come in a different spirit, the kingdom of God is made manifest in power and deed.

What Spirit Are We Carrying?

As I reflect on these stories, I can't help but think about the Church in America. How are we interacting with those around us? What spirit do we carry and manifest to our enemies

and those who “persecute” us? Of course, we face nothing like the persecution of many believers around the world in nations where they risk their very lives by believing in Jesus or owning a Bible. Even still, there are those that oppose us and our faith in America. How are we responding to them?

In Luke 6:27-28, Jesus says to us, “But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who spitefully use you.” Who can remember the last time they did something good for someone who hates them? How much time do we spend in prayer for those who mistreat us?

I am astounded to this day by the testimony of what God did in Indonesia both in 1998 and in 2004. I believe that when we in America can learn to be a church that radiates with the Spirit of Christ, we will find our opportunities to advance the kingdom are multiplied. We will be a radiant bride who is the glory of her Bridegroom, and many will come to the light of His love.

Becoming an Attractive Bride

Revelation 19:7 says that when the marriage of the Lamb is come, His wife will have made herself ready. What does it mean for a bride to make herself ready? Every bride wants to make herself attractive. She does those things which will make her appealing and attractive for the one she loves. This makes me ask, “What is it, Lord, that will attract Your presence? What is it that will make my life more attractive, demonstrate the power of Your kingdom and leave an impact on those around me?

To have an attractive spirit, different from that of the world around us, I believe there are four attributes we must pursue:

1. **Holiness.** Holiness attracts God’s presence. When we live in alignment to God’s Word and in holiness, we live in unbroken fellowship with Him and in His presence. When I say holiness, I don’t mean an outward piety, but rather

an inward consecration of the heart. It's a heart that says, "God, I want to go deeper in you! I want live the way You want me to live and not succumb to the pressures of the world I live in."

Psalm 29:2 tells us to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Holiness is beautiful to the Lord and attracts His abiding presence.

2. **Humility.** Humility is appealing to God. How many of you know people who are arrogant? A normal response to arrogant people is to be repelled. God feels the same way. James 4:6 tells us God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Humility attracts God and opens up the portals of grace.

A man or woman who carries the authority of God and yet walks in humility is one who walks in an opposite spirit than the world around us. This is someone who has learned to trust in God and is confident in Him, which is far greater than the confidence of the flesh.

Not only will a person of humility attract the grace of God, but he or she will also be noticed by those around them and have opportunities to share the gospel of His grace.

3. **Honor.** The third thing that attracts the presence of God is honor. In Malachi, the Lord asks, if He is our Father, then where is His honor? (see Mal. 1:6b). We are to honor the Lord. We are to honor our parents, our leaders and those in positions of authority around us.

We can disagree with someone while still showing them respect and displaying civility our interactions. All authority comes from God. Even if we voice our disagreement, we must do so in a way that is still respectful to them and their office.

4. **Honesty.** Honesty is essential for God's abiding presence. 2 Thessalonians 2:10-11 says that many were

given over to strong delusions because they had not loved the truth. I want to love the truth more than my own life. I want to love the truth more than my personal preferences. I want to live by the ideology of the kingdom of God, not the ways of the flesh and the world.

Today, more than ever, there seem to be countless people with itching ears who only want to hear what confirms their already held beliefs. They don't want to be challenged with another perspective. But when we boldly speak the truth, coming in an opposite spirit than those around us—a spirit of love and humility—we will find there are many who will be drawn to the light and truth of Jesus. I am often reminded to speak the truth in love, seasoned with grace.

A New Life and a Different Spirit

As we put on Christ, let us consider how to live each day with a different spirit—a spirit of holiness, humility, honor and honesty. Let us walk in love and forgiveness, blessing those who curse us and praying for those who mistreat us. By wearing this spirit, we will attract the presence of Christ and carry Him to a world in need.

Dr. J. Doug Stringer *is the founder and president of Somebody Cares America and Somebody Cares International, a global network of chapters, centers, affiliate and partner churches and organizations working together to bring hope and healing to their communities through prayer initiatives, compassion outreaches and cooperative efforts.*

For more of Dr. Stringer's teaching, listen to the podcasts below!