

Holy Spirit's Upside-Down Way of Adjusting Your Attitude

In a few hours, we would begin a national prayer gathering with denominational, kingdom network and marketplace leaders. Of an estimated 350,000 churches in the United States, more than 120,000 would be represented by the 185 leaders in the room. Along with a select group of pastors and intercessors, we had come to humble ourselves and cry out to the Lord for a Christ awakening in our nation.

For months, I had served with the leadership team—praying, planning and doing some of the “nitty gritty” prep work. Yet, I suddenly found myself on the outside looking in as last-minute decisions and programming were being handled without my knowledge or input. I was quickly approaching the need for an attitude adjustment when I decided to visit the designated prayer room. I began praying through the intercessors’ prayer guide that a dear friend had prepared weeks prior to our gathering.

Christ's Attitude

Thankfully, God is patient and wants “all to come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9b). Knowing in advance that I would need to do some repenting, He had lovingly orchestrated to include Psalm 99:4 (NIV) as part of one prayer target, focusing on God’s righteousness, power and authority. “The King is mighty, he loves justice—you have established equity; in Jacob you have done what is just and right.”

At first, that seemed to be a very unlikely Scripture for the setting, but Holy Spirit immediately drew my attention to a New Testament passage that also speaks of “equity.” You may recall Paul’s words to the Philippian believers:

“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ

Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:5–8, NASB).

Essentially, Paul was instructing them to break all the rules of the Greco-Roman world in which boasting was common and pride a virtue. Position and power were primary goals to be obtained. Humility and meekness were considered weaknesses. Weakness was a despised character trait. It was much like our world today, where the dominate mindset seems to be "take all you can, whenever you can, wherever you can, from whomever you can, for as long as you can ..." The problem is, if you follow that mentality, you'll find yourself with an empty trash can.

What was Paul telling the Philippians and Holy Spirit gently reminding me? The just and righteous Lord God, Creator of the universe, establishes equity, and if Christ, who was God personified, did not regard equality with God to be His most prized possession, who am I to be grasping for position? Humility makes a much more attractive attitude if I am going to be like Christ.

What we may call righteous indignation has a way of morphing into radical irritation that can eventually lead to rebellion. Pride goes before destruction and an arrogant spirit before a fall, but humility, even humiliation, can lead to exaltation and ultimately God's glorification.

"For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9–11).

In today's world, having the mind of Christ may seem like an upside-down attitude, but in God's economy, that is the only way for His true bondservants to live.

Contrasting Attitudes

An "oxymoron" is a rhetorical figure of speech in which contradictory terms are combined, as in a "deafening silence," "black light," "pretty ugly," "calm wind," "icy hot," "original copy" ... I think you get the idea. Christ was the God-Man or Suffering Messiah. For us to imagine that we, mere humans, could have the mind of Christ seems to be the ultimate contradiction. It is much like a paradox—a statement that is contradictory or opposed to common sense, but perhaps true. Scripture is filled with such concepts. If you would receive love, you must first love. In order to save your life, you must lose it. To truly live, you must die to yourself. To be an effective leader, you must be a servant. To ascend to heavenly places, you must humble yourself.

In 1965, after the banning of school prayer, Bel Kaufman wrote a novel entitled, *Up the Down Staircase*. The long-running *New York Times*' bestseller eventually became a movie about an inner-city teacher who is facing an uphill struggle trying to transform wild students into successful graduates and citizens. She almost decides to resign until realizing she is truly making a difference. As you join Christ in coming down the up staircase by pursuing what the world would term an *upside-down attitude*, you will make a real difference in your world.

What happened after my attitude adjustment in the designated prayer room?

Following the closing session of our event, a well-respected leader of a national ministry approached me near the back of the auditorium. He invited me to serve on the steering committee for a biannual event at the Billy Graham Training

Center (The Cove). He specifically wanted me to serve because I was a woman and would be the first woman leader (other than the administrative assistant) to serve on the steering committee and only the second female speaker in a plenary session. This was definitely a God-inspired change in attitude, structure and programming for this particular event. The Holy Spirit anointed and blessed in significant ways during the conference. I was thankful to be graciously accepted and respected on the leadership team as we ministered "together." To God be all glory and praise, for He was the one who "established equity" (Ps. 99:4). {eoa}

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