

The Spirit That's Taking Over Our Nation—And It's Not Jezebel

It's time to repent for a spirit of entitlement that is destroying our testimony.

entitlement

noun en·ti·tle·ment:

*the condition of having a right to have, do or get something
the feeling or belief that you deserve to be given something
(such as special privileges)*

In a self-centered, narcissistic world, one can only presume entitlement would be in the mix, as well. This attitude is doing great harm to our testimony as Christians in addition to creating a proud, lazy people who expect to be served instead of to serve.

“Let nothing be done out of strife or conceit, but in humility let each esteem the other better than himself. Let each of you look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Let this mind be in you all, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped. But He emptied Himself, taking upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in the form of a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:3-8).

Attitudes of entitlement have overwhelmed so many and it is actually a clear manifestation of the enemy. His character is defined by selfish ambition. Lucifer presumed it was his right, his portion, to be exalted.

“How are you fallen from heaven, 0 Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weaken the nations! For you have said in your heart, ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also on the mount of the congregation, in the recesses of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High” (Is. 14:12-14).

Lucifer desired to be lifted high while Christ went low, to the grave, in the greatest act of service history has ever known. Our invitation is to serve and give ourselves for others just as Christ did.

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

A Simple Evil Desire

“‘All things are lawful for me,’ but not all things are helpful. ‘All things are lawful for me,’ but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own, but each one the other’s well-being” (1 Cor. 10:23-24).

We can presume we are entitled to something because it seems right. If other people stand in the way of what is rightfully ours, we might presume we have the right to obtain it—even at the cost of others. It might be lawful for us, but is it helpful? Does our pursuit of that build others up?

Understand, I’m not saying we roll over and become doormats. This is a heart issue.

When in Orlando recently, my wife and I had the worst experience with a hotel we’ve ever had in our 20 years of marriage. In fact, this was a celebration of our 20-year anniversary and the room met us with scurrying roaches and hairs in the bed. We had prepaid for four nights, yet we

absolutely were not going to stay there. The short version of our long drama was that the hotel only agreed to refund three of the four nights because we had checked in the first night. That was astonishing to us! We didn't spend more than a couple of minutes in that roach infested hotel room!

So, we absolutely believe it's lawful for us to receive our first night's money back since we had to find another hotel to stay in that night. We made some phone calls and dealt with several people, but we continually had a heart check. We refused to cross the line that would have compromised our testimony. It's better to lose some money than to put people's eternities at risk.

We didn't want to function in a spirit of entitlement. We wanted to do our due diligence, to honor those we were dealing with and to represent Christ as powerfully as we could. In a way we were being "cursed" and we wanted to bless those who were giving us trouble. Again, it's a heart issue. It is possible to deal with significant violations of what is right if we learn how to handle the small problems with the right attitude. There's no room for entitlement whether it's a minor grievance or a major assault against us.

Entitlement is usually a simple, subtle desire or expectation that we don't give much thought to. This is why it's so important to allow God to search our hearts and to reveal selfish motives, attitudes and issues that bring forth death instead of life.

Entitlement puts us on the throne as others are scrutinized and ridiculed if they don't measure up. This is an anti-Christ spirit and we have to allow the Holy Spirit reveal that deadly heart issue to us. We must endeavor to consider others more important than ourselves. We must go low.

An Emergency in Haiti

On a recent ministry trip to Haiti, mere minutes after I

preached my final sermon of the 10-day trip, I suddenly came down with an extremely high fever and an unbearable pain in my lower right abdomen. I didn't realize it at the time but I later discovered that I was hours away from my appendix bursting—far away from the familiarity of home and the medical care that I was most comfortable with.

A few hours later, I was on a flight from Port Au Prince to Atlanta—possibly the worst three hours of my life. By the grace of God, for the first time in many years I was able to sit in first class. This minor perk was so appreciated. I must have been a sight to behold as I turned down the free meals and constant attention of the flight attendant. I was curled up almost in the fetal position with blankets covering me as I futilely attempted to get warm. My temperature must have been over 104 degrees.

The pain in my right side was off the charts. I had to unbuckle my belt under the blanket just for the slightest relief from the pain. I was convinced I would need to have the attendant radio ahead to Atlanta to have medics ready for my arrival.

As I shook from chills attempting to find the slightest relief someone tapped me on the shoulder. The person behind me demanded that I put my seat back up so they could be more comfortable.

This was also a first-class passenger who had probably paid a lot more for the flight than I did (I found a ridiculous deal that was cheaper than coach). He was entitled to all the comfort he could muster, right?

Now, the reason I'm sharing this story is not to make you feel sorry for me or to get upset with the man who sat behind me. You see, a spirit of entitlement would want you to do just that!

The reason I'm sharing this is to reveal how simple it was for

me to reject a spirit of entitlement and to serve the man in the first class seat behind me. Did I deserve to have the seat lean back a few inches? After all, I was in the midst of a medical emergency. That didn't matter. If Jesus can be slaughtered by and for evil people, surely I could put my seat up. It really was quite easy! I simply had to choose to love a stranger more than myself.

"Above all things, have unfailing love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without complaining" (1 Pet. 4:8-9).

Waiters and Waitresses

My wife and I have a standing rule in our family. When we go to a restaurant we always tip at least 20 percent—no matter how great or terrible the service is.

An attitude of entitlement rises up possibly most often in our nation when seated for lunch or dinner in a restaurant. The expectation is that we are to be served, and if we are, then we will give the server a small gift.

What would happen if we turned those dinner tables by determining to serve the server instead of demanding they jump through our hoops?

"Give to everyone who asks of you. And of him who takes away your goods, do not ask for them back. Do unto others as you would have others do unto you. 'For if you love those who love you, what thanks do you receive? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what thanks do you receive? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what thanks do you receive? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much in return. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return. Then your reward will be great, and you will be the sons of the Highest. For He is

kind to the unthankful and the evil. Be therefore merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:30-36).

I'll say it bluntly: Servers aren't dogs we give treats to when they obey our commands.

Additionally, we aren't there to train them or to punish them when they fail. What better place to break an attitude of entitlement than a restaurant? What better place to serve with passion?

Just as it was extremely easy to push the button to raise my airplane seat back up, it's just as easy to write in a few extra dollars on the tip line on your receipt. In fact, maybe we should give more when service is poor. That sure would seem to follow biblical principles much more than punishing those who fail us does.

If we are to bless those who curse us, surely we can bless those who fail to refill our drink as quickly as we'd like.

"We who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of the weak and not please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification" (Rom. 15:1-2).

I was sitting in a popular national chain restaurant on a ministry trip recently. A hostess seated an older husband and wife at a table near ours. Admittedly the hostess was a little quirky and possibly a bit insecure, but she was, without exaggeration, one of the most friendly people I've come across! She was pleasant, extremely attentive to everybody she came in contact with and did an amazing job. The couple she seated didn't like that the sun was shining in their eyes so they asked if they could move. The hostess very nicely told them she could pull down the shade for them, which she did. After she left their table the couple grumbled. They were exhibiting entitlement. After all, they were the paying customer and they should be able to be accommodated per their wishes, right?

Or, maybe they could have endured the discomfort with cheerful hearts.

“Do all things without murmuring and disputing, that you may be blameless and harmless, sons of God, without fault, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:14-15).

I read a story the other day of a patron in a restaurant that wrote in LOL on the tip line of their check with the comment “1 hour for food” alongside it. The server lost out on over \$20 because the kitchen didn’t turn out food quickly enough for the entitled customer. The customer took it upon himself to teach the server a lesson instead of blessing her extravagantly. This has to stop.

Revival

Interestingly, one of the major manifestations of a spirit of entitlement comes when contending for revival in a region (or any manifestation of God’s plans and promises in any setting).

Something happens when the prophecies of a massive outpouring in a region start flooding in. Instead of resulting in a contending spirit in the church it most often results in a lazy, entitled church that presumes they are due a move of God. They wait and wait with eyebrows raised irritated that there’s a delay of the arrival of what’s rightfully theirs.

We need to remember that any prophecy not found in Scripture is conditional. It’s contingent on the response of the people. If revival is prophesied over a region then a primary enemy to revival is a people who are expecting revival to come—without being the laborer that revival demands.

I believe this is the result of a casual, American theology that emphasizes easy salvation and an easy life for those who name the name of Christ. If we jump through the hoops of tithing, praying, reading our Bibles and asking Jesus into our

hearts (which really isn't biblical, but that can be addressed at a different time), then by all means we presume to be owed a mansion in heaven!

It's no wonder there are over 19,000 cities in our nation and none of them are engulfed in revival. Not one. Is there a presumption that we are entitled to revival and that it will come regardless of our participation?

In one particular region there was an extremely strong spirit of entitlement that had infiltrated the culture. Revival was extremely close to breaking out, yet you could pick up on that spirit as people were slow to respond, casual and lazy. The laborers didn't show up in sufficient strength.

I'll never forget a stern prophetic word that was given in that season: If this region doesn't respond to the opportunity for revival, then God will move on.

He named the next city that would be given an opportunity.

Well, the hope of revival did leave that region (not that it can't return at some time; it absolutely can). Very interestingly last night I was in a meeting led by Mario Murillo here in Branson, Missouri. He named a few regions that are currently on God's radar for revival. The city that the first prophetic messenger named a few years ago was on that short list. Mario mentioned that God will move if there isn't a right response. That brought me back a few years, and the truth remains—we must say yes to the call of God and advance as if the prophecy may not come to pass—because it absolutely won't if we hold back.

The question is, will that city (Chicago) mentioned by both prophetic voices respond in this critical season or will entitlement cause the church in the region to expect the outpouring with no investment?

False Faith

Entitlement in spiritual contexts can feel a lot like faith. It's not. It's presumption.

Faith without works is dead. Maybe another way to say that could be, faith without works is presumption, or faith without works reveals a spirit of entitlement.

"What does it profit, my brothers, if a man says he has faith but has no works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and lacking daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' and yet you give them nothing that the body needs, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. But a man may say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God; you do well. The demons also believe and tremble. But do you want to be shown, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2:14-20).

True faith results in action. Entitlement results in inaction.

True faith results in joyful expectation. Entitlement results in grumbling and disappointment.

True faith results in blessing those who curse us. Entitlement results in resisting and rejecting those who don't meet our expectations. We need a people to rise up who are dead to self, full of life, driven by faith, relentless in their pursuits and ready to serve others with passion, not expecting to be honored, served or counted.

Enough Is Enough

It's time for the spirit of entitlement to be eradicated from the church and the nation.

We must go low, serve others and quit making demands that promote our special interests.

Everywhere we look people are demanding what is presumably

rightfully theirs. This spirit of entitlement drives major, evil movements today such as abortion, homosexuality and feminism. It's also fueling crusades and campaigns that are generally good, but tainted because of this foul spirit.

What if we stopped focusing on our own rights and started loving people even if it costs us comfort, money and vindication?

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