

Attitude and Wellbeing

One of the favours I can do myself towards good psycho-spiritual health is considering my attitude. So, how might I make my attitude work best for me? Answering that question requires a knowledge of what attitude is about. It begins with the realisation that attitude colours all I do and say. That makes attitude, or disposition if you like, a very important aspect of personhood.

In essence, attitude is a dynamic of the human spirit. It is shaped by feelings and thoughts, by experiences and memories. Our spirits are deep waters and attitude draws from that well below everyday awareness. In many ways, I am my attitude. At least, attitude influences how I am known to myself and to others. It requires continual attention and needs adjustment towards the positive for life to become healthy and meaningful.

Am I to blame for my attitude, you might ask? Sometimes yes and sometimes no. If I have a down day, or possibly a depression, a positive attitude might prove difficult. It wouldn't be my fault. If I have a happy day, or a sunny disposition by nature, I should not take any credit for that. Life throws up many a curve ball that affects how I may feel and respond. But whatever the circumstances there resides within me a deep seated attitudinal imprint that is only partially affected by what is happening. That imprint contains much of what makes me unique as a person, for good or on the downside. The nature of that information within my spirit cannot be changed altogether, but it can be adjusted.

In explaining the possibilities of attitudinal competence, the Great Commandment is a helpful example. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, your mind, your soul and your strength. This advice is not a suggestion; rather it is a decree. Let's consider the dynamics involved and gain an insight into how attitude works.

First of all, there is mention of a relational dynamic. Attitude is by nature relational for it finds reality in the interaction between me and someone or something else. That someone can even be myself – consider self-talk. The relational ability that towers above all else is the capacity to love, which is what the Great Commandment addresses. My explanation of how attitude functions focusses on love while being relevant to all other relational dynamics.

Regarding God, I am asked to love. It does not mean having fuzzy feelings, but rather to care deeply about God and to express that in my spirit. The desire to care must be the disposition of *my heart*, my innermost being. However, that challenge within me is in flux. It needs a continual refocusing. The experiences of life tend to draw me away from my best intentions towards what is good and necessary. Life dulls my sensibilities.

It is *my mind* that should call a halt to this. But the mind also tends to drift. Apostle Paul insists on a renewal of the spirit of the mind. I must sharpen my thought processes towards right thinking in Christ. The mind must safeguard the heart, while the heart must encourage the mind – in my example towards love. Adjusting my attitude involves an awareness of what is required, a sensing in my heart of how I measure up, and a mental response towards improvement.

I cannot live a good life with questionable attitudes. Jesus and the Apostles had much to say about that. They were concerned about the wellbeing of *my soul*. With regard to love, a soul infused by it will be a healthy one. I have always seen the soul as a manifestation of the interaction between body and spirit. (Explaining this is beyond the scope of our present discussion.) The soul is my awareness of being alive and all that entails. Body, soul and spirit are concepts used in describing personhood which itself is one undivided whole.

I must love with all *my strength*. This refers to my will. Willpower is a key to attitudinal success. With love, I simply must set myself to practise it. I must express care wherever that is needed and within my ability. This is a continual struggle. Having the right attitude is a challenge. Often I get it wrong. Then I have to pull myself up and get back on my bike. The road is full of potholes. But I persist. Why is that so?

The answer is given in the second part of the Great Commandment – to love your neighbour as yourself. I am being asked to love myself. I prefer that to read: to care about myself – not to throw my opportunities for betterment away. Love and care are the road to wellbeing. And not just for me, but for everyone. Just as much for my neighbour. Good care will bring wellbeing to that person, his or her family, and to society as a whole.

An informed attitude is a treasure. Knowing how and why to approach life in certain ways is worth much. Attitude involves every aspect of personhood and personal history. It is central to psycho-spiritual health and can be adjusted by intent. Above all, God rewards a good attitude. The benefits are many while there is no need for perfection. A solid and consistent try in getting it right will do fine. I can hardly do myself a better favour.

If you have found this interesting please consider my books in which much more is explained about God and the reality of an authentic Christian perspective on life – the benefits that offers.

Thank you,

Michael