

## ATTITUDE DETERMINES ALTITUDE IN LIFE

*“God places examples before us who point to a higher level of living.”*

Winston Churchill’s cigars were odorous, but his observations sweet. He stated, “Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference.”

Attitudes determine countenance, define character and establish quality of influence. Contact with a great attitude is life-giving; encountering a bad one is a killer – at least emotionally.

Both types are easily recognized.

Chatting with a grocery clerk recently, I asked how her day was. She replied, “Not bad for a Monday.” Interpretation: “It kind of stinks that the weekend is over and I’m stuck here behind this till.”

Intrigued by this excuse for not enjoying the 24 hours commonly labeled “Mondays” I did some simple math, discovering that if the young lady continued with this outlook and lived to be 84 she would experience 12 years worth of Monday-blahs. That’s right -- 12 years of depression because it happened to be the wrong day of the week.

Bad attitudes condemn us to waste precious time, somehow believing that we deserve to feel down. After all, it’s Monday, it’s raining, I’m sore, a friend disappointed me, we ran out of strawberry ice-cream and ... well, you get the idea. There is no end to excuses for a soured outlook on life.

Thankfully, God presents us with examples who point to a higher level of living. Mine is named Emma.

Emma is 90 years young and the primary care giver for her two older brothers. I met her several years ago as she oversaw the affairs of another sibling, Henry, who was part of our church family until his death. He also happened to be blind.

She recently commented, “Some wonder why I never married. I think it was so I could care well for my family, Mama and Papa and my brothers. Who else would have done that? They needed someone to care for them and that’s something I could do.”

Her simple statement presented a positive spin to a life that some would consider relationally impoverished. However, an empty ring finger does not equate with an empty life. Some pine for future relationships. Emma focused upon those who were currently around her, choosing to exhibit selfless sacrifice, lavish love and extraordinary service. And it all began with her attitude.

Recently, excruciating back pain forced her to the hospital, where doctors diagnosed the degenerative bone disease, osteoporosis. While I chatted with her, she addressed the problem in typical Emma fashion, stating that when God wanted her to go "home" she was ready, but until then she would just keep doing her best to live well. Though personal problems loomed large, she refused to let them rule her life.

As I left her room, I cast a glance back. But Emma didn't see me; she was already busy. A lady was suffering in the next bed, and Emma wheeled over on a mission of encouragement, sharing a blessing and speaking words of life. As I saw her weathered hands grasp those of her "neighbor," the words of Jesus leaped to mind: "...whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it."

Truth in action is always beautiful to behold.

Emma is single, pain-wracked, emaciated and doing quite well -- thank you very much. Like Churchill, she knows the secret to great living is a great attitude -- even on Mondays.