

Attitudes

Attitudes – we all have them – sometimes they are good, and sometimes they are bad. Usually when we accuse someone of having an attitude, we are implying that they have a bad attitude about something, someone or just life in general.

The dictionary definition for the word “attitude” is, “1. manner, disposition, feeling, position, etc., with regard to a person or thing; tendency or orientation, especially of the mind: *a negative attitude; group attitudes*. 2. position or posture of the body appropriate to or expressive of an action, emotion, etc.: *a threatening attitude; a relaxed attitude*.” We display an attitude by the words we use, our tone of voice and by our actions. **Even one’s posture may be indicative of an attitude!**

Although the Bible does not use the word “attitude,” this topic is discussed in Scripture. Consider Jesus words, “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44 NKJV). Our Lord contrasted in this passage two different attitudes – love and hate. We are instructed to do the opposite of what our nature wants to do. Our natural reaction to those who mistreat us is to abuse them. However, Jesus instructed us to show love and kindness to those who harm us physically or mentally.

The apostle Paul told the Roman brethren, “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse” (Romans 12:14). We are to speak well of those who attempt to harm us by their words and or actions. Again, we are instructed to have a “good attitude” rather than a “bad attitude.”

“Therefore ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:20-21). Once again Paul addressed the Roman Christians’ attitude toward those who mistreated them. His instructions in these verses went beyond saying nice things about our persecutors to showing acts of kindness – taking care of their physical needs.

The apostle Peter taught about the relationship Christians should have with one another. “Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing” (1 Peter 3:8-9). He encouraged the brethren to be united; show love, compassion and humility; and to sympathize with others in their difficulties. He further admonished Christians to refrain from retaliating against other Christians who mistreated them with actions or slanderous words. Peter spoke about Christians mistreating other Christians and the attitude brethren should have toward other saints.

Joseph is a great example of one showing a good attitude when mistreated. His brothers sold him into slavery, and they then implied to their father that he was dead. Many years later when the land of Canaan was suffering a great famine, Joseph’s brothers traveled to Egypt to purchase grain. Since Joseph was in a place of great authority in the land of Egypt, he could have abused his brothers, but instead he treated them well. Eventually Joseph’s father and all his brothers moved to Egypt. Modern day thinking would justify Joseph retaliating against his brothers for their mistreatment of him. However, the Bible teaches us to “turn the other cheek” (Luke 6:29)!

Unfortunately, as we look back upon our lives, all of us remember instances when we have been wronged by others. Some of those wrongs were heart wrenching and extremely difficult to overcome. Sadly, the injustices often were caused by other Christians. What do we do? How do we overcome the pain and anguish?

We pray to God to assist us with our “attitudes.” We ask God to give us forgiving attitudes – just as Christ forgave those who crucified Him (Luke 23:34). Yes, there are consequences for one’s actions. A penitent embezzler is not appointed as treasurer of the congregation, but we must forgive sinners who repent and ask for forgiveness. Christ forgave those who crucified Him before they repented and asked for forgiveness, and we must have an attitude of forgiveness toward those who wrong us.

We immerse ourselves in good works. When we are busy doing the will of God, we can concentrate on the joy we bring to others. “A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones” (Proverbs 17:22).

We need to move forward with our lives and stop dwelling on the past. When we continually think about past injustices, we allow those circumstances to control us – often becoming bitter and cynical. These qualities are the opposite of love and kindness – the characteristics God expects all Christians to display for the world to see.

Attitudes – we all have them. Sometimes our attitudes comply with God’s will, and occasionally we need an “AA” – an *attitude adjustment*. Even Christians need to adjust their attitudes so that they align with God’s will instead of their own wills. There is a stark difference between the attitude of the world and the attitude of God’s children. May we ever strive to have a good attitude toward all with whom we interact.

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