

Chapter 10

My Attitude Stinks

(God, I have a bad attitude, please help me.)

We get to daily witness the ugliness of bad attitudes in others. But what do I do when the BA is in my own self? When my perspective on everything seems negative? When grumbling is the main mental activity?

The result of such a day is a loss of joy and a gain in discouragement, even depression. The negativity breeds more negativity and soon I see the effect on those around me.

What can I do to stop the spiral of yuckiness? The old fable is if you get up on the wrong side of the bed, go back and get up on the other side. If you have tried that, it may seem practical but usually doesn't work.

What is a "bad attitude?" How does it get started? What feeds it?

One way of diagnosing a bad attitude is to evaluate your current outlook. If everything is being measured in a perspective of self-comfort, there will be days of misery. If the perception is one of entitlement, then earnings seldom match desire. If I am giving myself freedom to practice a critical spirit, the lens with which I view everything will be dark and quite scratched. If I am busy with comparison, I can quickly work up a negative attitude.

"Stinking thinking" has many connotations but for the person with some measure of sobriety, it is defined as a bad attitude. The definition of a bad attitude includes thinking that is completely self-focused and frequently results in a "pretty pronounced pity party."

Here are some starting thoughts that indicate you are on the steep decline into a bad-attitude day:

- I am busting my rear to help these folks and they are sure not grateful for all I do for them.
- No one seems to notice how hard I am working.
- Why should I spend all my time on this when no one cares?
- Here I am, working harder than anyone else. He's always taking time off, so what about me?
- They aren't doing their share of the work and I'm left holding the bag.
- Why can't people drive faster? They must be talking on their cell and not paying attention.
- Talk about inconsiderate! Can't they see I am in a hurry?
- Why did it have to rain today? It's my only time to be outside.
- That person is wasting God's money buying that expensive toilet paper.
- Why should I work my tail off when these people get everything they need without working?
- I am sick and tired of all the griping going on.

Once the negative thoughts begin, the poison seeps into the interactions and activities of the day. No wonder the Scripture gives the Christian specific instruction in this matter:

Philippians 4:8 (NIV) “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.”

Philippians 2:14 -15 (The Message) “Do everything readily and cheerfully – no bickering, no second-guessing allowed! Go out into the world uncorrupted, a breath of fresh air in this squalid and polluted society. Provide people with a glimpse of good living and of the living God.”

Ever walk into a room and notice an unpleasant odor? What do you normally do? You investigate to see where it is coming from, you identify the issue, you wrap it up in an appropriate way, and you do away with it, to either the washing machine or the trash container. Bad attitudes stink. Find out where it is coming from and clean it up or discard it. It will not get any better if you leave it lying around.

Attitudes are like viruses. They spread easily. I can affect others around me by the attitude I am displaying. After all, we are ambassadors for the Most High God. Others are watching us continually. Since I cannot hide a bad attitude for very long, if at all, then I need to find ways to change it. Once I have begun to exemplify Jesus to the clients in my attitudes, then I will have better opportunity to see success in helping them with attitudinal adjustments!

The Patience of Ministry

Unfortunately, I will not be the only one in the workplace that is challenged with an occasional bad attitude. I need a plan on how not to catch negativity from the clients or other staff. My best encouragement is to be a person willing to pray for the other person when I see them in the struggle.

Encouragement to a fellow staff member can come, NOT from being preachy or accusatory, but offering understanding. Try something like, “Sounds like you are really struggling with...” Pause for their answer. Then follow, NOT with getting in the gutter with them, but offering some short response like, “I’m sorry you are facing that today. I will be asking God for your deliverance.”

God has been long-suffering with me, so I can afford some tolerance for those He is asking me to serve. We will spend a whole chapter (15) on understanding clients and their attitudes. Remember to apply stuff to yourself before you decide to try it on someone else!

Sow a thought, and you reap an act;
Sow an act, and you reap a habit;
Sow a habit, and you reap a character;
Sow a character, and you reap a destiny.

- Anonymous (1881)