



"There is a difference between losing and failing. Losing reflects the score. Failing reflects our attitude."

—Simon Sinek

23-Oct-26

Killer Attitudes

Most people utilize an innate ability of personality nearly every day without realizing it. No one must bring it to another's attention before using it, and no one needs to practice it to become skilled at it. In fact, a person could go his or her whole life without being consciously aware that this ability even exists, yet nevertheless use it all the time. This ability is mood or attitude reception.

How does it work? Someone can be going blithely through his day, thinking that all is right with [the world](#). Nothing bad has happened all day, so he comes home from work, whistling a cheerful tune. Hearing activity at the back of the house, he walks into the kitchen and instantly knows that something is very wrong. He can almost feel a chill in the air. Though nothing has been said, and he has hardly met his wife's eyes across the room, he knows he is in deep trouble. Only then does he remember he forgot to do his share of the chores again! Guess who had been forced to do them before her friends had arrived for the book club that morning?

Without a word being spoken, the young husband could read his wife's mood—her attitude—instantly and accurately just by walking into her

presence. There is nothing weird or mystical about this. Anyone can do it because it is a quality or ability of the spirit in man, which [God](#) gives to each person ([Job 32:8](#)). It is an element of the spiritual essence in human beings that makes them rational, intelligent, language-using, creative, and talented.

The flip side of this fact of human existence is that we also unconsciously project our attitudes to those around us. We must learn to be careful about this aspect of our inner life because the attitudes we project reveal a great deal about us. It becomes especially important at critical moments, such as when we need to interview well to get a job, give an important speech, or make a request of someone we respect. Our attitude can make or break such circumstances before we even say a word!

We often see people's attitudes most clearly when they are young because adults are generally better at masking or controlling their moods. Nowadays, adults are adept at picking up two common youthful attitudes that immediately turn them off. For their own good, young people should seek to overcome these attitudes, especially if they desire an adult's (or God's) acceptance or respect because, unfairly or not, most adults will immediately think less of them.

The first distasteful attitude adults notice a great deal among teenagers these days is a classic hallmark of teen angst: the *sullen* attitude. The young person lives in a perpetual state of dissatisfaction and gloom. He resents his parents because he believes they repress him in every facet of his life; they will not let him be himself. It is him against the world. He feels sorry for himself, and his favorite phrase is "It's not fair!"

It is not uncommon to see teenagers sulking by themselves, unwilling to be sociable or even to smile and say hello to an adult. Some teens are so surly and uncommunicative that one might wonder if they are budding delinquents or borderline suicidal! If they were forced to smile, their faces would crack!

The Bible provides an example of this in [1 Kings 21:1-4](#), but it is about a grown man—a king!

Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard which was in Jezreel, next to the palace of Ahab, king of Samaria. So Ahab spoke to Naboth,

saying, "Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near, next to my house; and for it I will give you a vineyard better than it. Or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its worth in money."

But Naboth said to Ahab, "The LORD forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!"

So Ahab went into his house sullen and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him . . . And he lay down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no food.

What a crybaby! This is how a king looks like a fool, sulking, despondent, and taciturn because he does not get his way. The sullen attitude really makes a person look unappealing, juvenile, and spoiled. No one wants to be around such a person.

If a manager at a place of employment has two equally qualified candidates for a job, but one smiles and engages in conversation, while the other is sullen, giving monosyllabic answers and looking as though he would rather be anywhere else, who will get the job? A surly, taciturn attitude will doom any positive expectation if it depends on an adult's decision. A little work on being cheerful and outgoing could mean the difference between getting that job, that date, or that opportunity and missing out altogether. It could change the trajectory of one's life and begin a stream of blessings—all because a change in attitude allows others to react more positively.

Perhaps not quite as bad as the first, but off-putting nonetheless, the second attitude most adults find irritating is the *know-it-all*. This is not the person who is legitimately intelligent and may indeed know a great deal, but the swaggering, conceited youth who *thinks* he knows more than his wiser, more experienced elders. Young men often act like this in relation to, as they see it, their stupid, behind-the-times fathers. It is an attitude of cockiness. Confidence and smarts are good, but they cross the line when arrogance creeps in. Most people have an almost irresistible urge to put a cocky person in his place.

Though he later grew out of his cockiness, Joseph strutted his favorite-son status before his older brothers, even to the point of giving their father a bad report about them ([Genesis 37:2-3](#)). They hated him for it, and when he confidently told them his dreams that showed them bowing down to him, they hated him even more (verses 5-11). His cockiness almost led to his murder, but the actual result was not much better: The brothers sold him into slavery (verses 18-28).

Even God has an impulse to put the proud, the arrogant, the cocky in their places. He says in several passages that He cuts the proud down to size and raises the humble and [poor in spirit](#) above them ([Proverbs 3:34](#); [Job 22:29](#); [Isaiah 2:11-12](#); [Matthew 23:12](#); [Luke 1:52](#); [14:11](#); [18:14](#); [James 4:6](#); I Peter 5:5-6). The proud spirit demonstrated by a know-it-all is distasteful and not at all godly.

For a young person, the best antidote to this failing is to remember that his knowledge and experience are limited compared to an adult's years of practical living that bring [wisdom](#). In the same way, adult Christians can remain humble by realizing how little they are, know, and understand compared to God's might, intelligence, and eternity.

The example of [Jesus](#) provides wisdom in how we should comport ourselves before others: "Then He went down with [His parents] and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them . . . And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" ([Luke 2:51-52](#)). Even as a youth, He worked to grow in understanding, reputation, and goodwill with God and other people. Controlling our attitudes and seeking to present ourselves positively to others will help us make strides in that direction.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[What's Your Attitude?](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

The different strokes exhibited at a swim meet (freestyle, butterfly, breaststroke, or backstroke) metaphorically could depict different attitudes or approaches to life (aggressive, timid, wistful, fearful, self-controlled or uncertain). Because the human heart is deceitful and hopelessly corrupt, mankind does not inherently have an attitude which pleases God. An attitude constitutes a settled way of thinking or feeling about something in a person's behavior—an overall approach to living (such as optimistic or pessimistic; stingy or altruistic; introverted or extroverted) that transcends transitory feelings or emotions. The Scriptures reveal that attitude or disposition constitutes the critical difference between pleasing God and incurring God's wrath, as is seen in Abel's disposition to please God contrasted to Cain's attitude to please himself or have his own way. Joshua and Caleb garnered God's favor by demonstrating an attitude of trust in God's providence, as contrasted with the woe-is-me slave mentality displayed by the ten evil spies. Jesus Christ modeled the attitude of always doing the Father's will, the attitude which God's called-out ones, the First fruits, should be practicing now and in the tumultuous future.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Having a Right Attitude](#)

by John O. Reid

Not only must Christians follow the correct doctrines, but they must also live God's way in the proper attitude. John Reid uses Jonah's and Moses' examples, among others, to explain how important a right attitude is to God's people.

Featured Audio Schedule

Friday Night Bible Study

The next Bible Study (Friday 23-Oct-26) will be **Looks Fair, Feels Foul**, given by **Richard T. Ritenbaugh**. The Bible Study will be featured on the [CGG homepage](#) from **6:00 pm Friday (EST)** and all day Saturday.

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