

A T T I T U D E

i s

Everything



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LESSON TITLES

The Tragedy of a Bad Attitude

An Attitude in Trouble

The Attitude of Selfishness

The Attitude Toward Opposition Part 1

The Attitude Toward Opposition Part 2

Our Attitude Toward Criticism Part 1

Our Attitude Toward Criticism Part 2

Our Attitude Toward Friends

Our Attitude Toward Those Who Have Helped Us



ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING

Lesson #1: “THE TRAGEDY OF A BAD ATTITUDE”

INTRODUCTION:

1. A bad attitude can be a very dangerous thing for a number of reasons. One of the most common excuses for having a bad attitude is that a person was treated unfairly or unjustly. That perception then allows a bad attitude to come about and linger, until something happens, which, usually, is not good.
2. Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr were both opinionated men who, over time, developed a strong dislike for each other.
 - a. Hamilton did not like Burr for a number of reasons. When both men served on General Washington’s staff during the Revolutionary War, Burr was dismissed because he was suspected of having read Washington’s personal letters.
 - b. After Burr’s wife died, he became a womanizer and even bragged about his exploits, which further angered Hamilton.
 - c. At that time, it was customary for politicians to be nominated by others for an office, and if elected, they were to serve as their duty to their country. Burr, however, was one of the first politicians to campaign for himself, which was yet another reason he was hated by the more conservative Hamilton.
3. The problem with Hamilton’s bad attitude toward Burr was that it took him to the place where he chose to conduct a smear campaign against him, hoping to keep him from being elected President.
 - a. When Burr confronted Hamilton about newspaper articles that were making him look bad, Hamilton refused to answer him. The result was that Burr challenged Hamilton to a duel.
 - b. Traditionally, a duel was settled by firing over the other person’s head in what was called a wasted shot. The other person would do likewise, and both men were seen as having preserved their honor and the matter was settled.
 - c. In this duel, however, Hamilton was shot and killed by Burr.
4. The lesson to be learned from this tragedy is that while both men may have felt justified in having a bad attitude toward the other, the irony is that both men lost!

I. OUR ATTITUDES WILL AFFECT OUR FUTURES!

- A. (Gen. 3:16) - “Unto the woman he said, **I will greatly multiply thy sorrow** and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.”
- B. One of the most common mistakes in considering our attitudes is that it only affects that particular moment.
 - 1. If we have a bad attitude, we think we can always change it at a later time and if we need to apologize to anyone, we can do it then.
 - 2. In this verse, we are informed that when Eve foolishly chose to engage the serpent in a conversation and then chose to act against God’s desires, that attitude of independence would later come back to haunt her in her children.
 - 3. Most who read this verse see in it the promise of a painful childbirth, but there is an added consequence: sorrow.
- C. When Eve gave birth to Cain and Abel, it was her children who provided the sorrow promised by God.
 - 1. Cain would kill his brother, simply as a result of his attitude.
 - 2. How did his bad attitude come about?
 - 3. It came about as a result of his sin nature, which he inherited from his parents.
 - 4. Eve’s sorrow that she would experience with her children was a direct result of her own attitude towards God’s commands.

II. OUR ATTITUDES ARE DETERMINED BY WHAT IS IN OUR HEARTS!

- A. (Gen. 4:3-4) - “And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the **fruit** of the ground an offering unto the LORD.
4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his **flock** and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:”
- B. Both boys had the same parents, grew up in the same home, and enjoyed the same teaching from mom and dad.
 - 1. Why the difference in their offerings?

2. Adam and Eve both knew God better than anyone else who would ever be born. Adam walked with God before the fall. They were both instructed by God how to deal with sin and how to approach Him.
 3. If both offerings had been rejected by God, then it could be assumed neither had been taught how to please Him, and yet because Abel's offering was accepted, it must be assumed he had been taught by his parents or directly by God Himself.
 4. If Abel knew, then Cain must have known, as well. That raises the question why Cain brought a different kind of offering to God than his brother.
 5. The only way to account for the difference, therefore, is to realize that Abel chose to be obedient while Cain chose to please himself by bringing an offering of which he was proud.
 6. Cain's offering was the result of the rebellion he had allowed to remain in his heart.
- C. What this means is that when we realize we have developed a bad attitude about a thing or a person, we also need to *connect the dots* and see there is a heart issue which needs to be fixed immediately.

III. OUR ATTITUDES WILL IMPACT OUR EMOTIONS!

- A. (Gen. 4:5) - "But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very **wroth**, and his countenance fell."
- B. When God tried to teach Cain that his offering was unacceptable, Cain's bad attitude that led him to bring an offering of his own choosing then stirred up his emotion of anger.
1. He was not mad at his parents for trying to help him do right. He was not mad at his brother out of jealousy.
 2. He was angry at God for rejecting what Cain had chosen as being acceptable.
- C. A common statement given as a way of avoiding this sort of anger is, "Don't take it personally."
1. What is meant is that when an individual is personally involved, he is easily offended by the truth, and anger is usually the result.

2. Cain knew better when it came to which offering was preferred by God, and yet because he was the one who was rejected, he was also the one whose pride was injured.
3. What is the result of wounded pride? (Pro. 13:10) - “Only by pride cometh contention...”
4. In Cain’s situation, the contention was between him and God, not Abel.

IV. OUR ATTITUDES WILL EVENTUALLY BE PUBLICLY REVEALED!

- A. (Gen. 4:5) - “But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his **countenance** fell.”
- B. When a bull is angry, it snorts. When a lion is mad, it growls. When a dog is mad, it shows its fangs.
- C. When a person is mad, he shows it in his countenance (facial expressions).
 1. God made the human face to consist of fifty-six muscles.
 2. Why so many? It would seem God is wanting to make sure that what is in our hearts is also being portrayed on our faces for everyone to see. The idea is that it is easier to help a person if we know a problem exists.
 3. Most people do not have a problem trying to decide whether a person is happy, sad, angry, excited, or bored. The reason is because all those emotions and more are conveyed by the countenance.

V. OUR ATTITUDES WILL BE DEALT WITH!

- A. A bad attitude is dangerous to the person who has it, as well as those who are nearby.
- B. Because of the potential danger, a bad attitude must be handled in a proper and scriptural way. It is for that reason we need to examine how God chose to deal with Cain’s attitude when it was revealed.
- C. Step #1 - Confront it!

1. (Gen. 4:6) - “And the LORD said unto Cain, **Why art thou wroth?** and why is thy countenance fallen?”
 2. Perhaps the most common mistake people make when dealing with a bad attitude is to ignore it, hoping it will go away. Parents would be wise to follow God’s example and deal with children who display an attitude.
- D. Step #2 - Be prepared to offer a second chance.
1. (Gen. 4:7a) - “**If thou doest well**, shalt thou not be accepted?...”
 2. God provided Cain the opportunity to correct his attitude. The idea is that anyone can have a bad day and allow an attitude to develop.
- E. Step #3 - Issue a warning!
1. (Gen. 4:7b) - “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? **and if thou doest not well**, sin lieth at the door.”
 2. God was informing Cain that his bad attitude had the potential of causing him to commit an even greater sin, and if he continued, things would only get worse.
- F. God was willing to confront Cain’s bad attitude because He loved him. It was not enjoyable nor was it effective, but it was the right thing to do in hopes of helping Cain.

ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING

Lesson #2: “AN ATTITUDE IN TROUBLE”

INTRODUCTION:

1. John Wesley Hardin grew up in the home of a Methodist circuit-riding preacher, and he was named after John Wesley. In spite of his religious upbringing, however, Hardin, as a youth, proved what a bad attitude can do when left unchecked.
 - a. When he was fourteen years old, another boy made fun of him for liking a particular girl. Hardin stabbed him twice with a knife before running away.
 - b. A year later while, hiding out in Texas, a man grabbed the reins of his horse trying to stop him. Hardin shot him dead.
 - c. When he learned his brother was being pursued by three Union soldiers, Hardin bushwhacked them and killed them all. This brought his total of men killed up to four, and he was still fifteen years old.
 - d. While staying in a hotel in Abilene, Kansas, he grew tired of a man snoring in the next room and fired his pistol through the wall to make him stop. Unfortunately, his bullet hit the man and killed him. He quickly grabbed his belongings and climbed out of the window, just minutes before the sheriff, Wild Bill Hickock, arrived.
 - e. By the time he was finally arrested and convicted, John Wesley Hardin had killed forty-four men. Instead of being sentenced to be hanged, he spent seventeen years in prison.
 - f. What did he do upon his release? While he was in prison, he began reading law books and actually earned his law degree. When he got out of prison, he became a lawyer. What happened? He changed his attitude!
2. Not everyone is as ornery as Hardin was. Unfortunately, not everyone is as smart as Hardin was in recognizing how poisonous a bad attitude can be. It is for this reason God chose to identify how a bad attitude can be spotted, hopefully before it is too late.

I. OUR ATTITUDES WILL AFFECT OUR BEHAVIOR!

- A. (Gen. 4:8) - “And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and **slew him.**”
- B. When we are first introduced to Cain, he was bringing an offering to God with the intent of hoping to please Him. Notice how quickly he was transformed from a religious person to a murderer.
 - 1. What happened? What had changed?
 - 2. Cain was basically the same person as before. What changed was he allowed himself to get offended when rebuked by God, and that is what changed his attitude and ultimately his actions.
 - 3. His attitude was like a lid on a bottle of poison. When it changed for the worse, the worst things in his heart were allowed to be released, and murder was the result.
 - 4. This highlights the power of a person’s attitude. It can keep a wicked heart manageable, or it can open up a flood of hatred and evil.

II. OUR ATTITUDES WILL AFFECT OUR CHARACTER!

- A. (Gen. 4:9) - “And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: **Am I my brother's keeper?**”
- B. Not only did Cain’s attitude allow a murderous deed to escape from his heart, but also notice the change in his attitude in relation to God.
 - 1. The entire situation began with Cain’s willingness to bring an offering to the Lord.
 - 2. It has now been transformed into a change of character for him, in that he is now being disrespectful and sarcastic with God.
 - 3. When asked where his brother was, Cain’s reply was basically, “Since when am I supposed to be my brother’s babysitter?”
- C. Anybody can be guilty of a stupid act that is viewed as being out of character. But after Cain murdered his brother, he showed no remorse at all and then had an antagonistic attitude toward God, which is a clear display of a character issue.

III. OUR ATTITUDES WILL AFFECT OUR FUTURES!

- A. (Gen. 4:11-12) - “And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;
12 When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; **a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be** in the earth.”
- B. Typically, people with a bad attitude are only aware of its impact on the present.
 - 1. They know their attitude is bad. They also know they can change it anytime they want.
 - 2. So why do they not change it? The reason is they only view their present moment as being affected. They have fallen in love with hate. Their hatred affects their attitudes and rather than change it, they allow it to linger because they enjoy the hatred they feel.
 - 3. The sad truth, however, is that the longer a bad attitude is allowed to remain, the more their futures will be impacted by it.
- C. As punishment for Cain committing murder, his lack of remorse, and his belligerent attitude toward God, he was consigned to be a drifter and a homeless individual who would be chased from place to place. Sin has consequences, and a bad attitude is a sin!

IV. OUR ATTITUDES WILL AFFECT OUR VIEW OF GOD!

- A. (Gen. 4:13-14) - “And Cain said unto the LORD, **My punishment is greater than I can bear.**
14 Behold, **thou hast driven me out** this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.”
- B. Cain’s attitude brought him to the place where he was totally alienated from God and he viewed God as being grossly unfair.
 - 1. In his opinion, God’s punishment was too severe!
 - 2. Cain’s life was a wreck, and it was God’s fault because He was the One Who forced him to leave his home.
 - 3. Cain’s attitude caused him to excuse himself and place his unhappiness on God.

V. OUR ATTITUDES WILL AFFECT OUR REPUTATION!

- A. (1 John 3:11-12) - “For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.
12 **Not as Cain**, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.”
- B. A reputation is what people think of us, while character is what God knows of us.
- C. Four thousand years after Cain murdered his brother, the Jewish people still had a very negative view of Cain and used him as a warning of wicked behavior.
- D. Unfortunately, we tend to justify our bad attitude, and we assume that everyone who knows us feels the same way. What this passage is telling us is that they do not see it as we do.
- E. Over time, a person can develop a horrible attitude that causes people to think they have a critical spirit, a selfish disposition, an argumentative nature and are, in general, a pain to be around. Yet the person views himself as being just the opposite.
 - 1. What happens if someone tries to share with this person how others view him?
 - 2. He will quickly demonstrate the accuracy of his reputation!

VI. OUR ATTITUDES WILL AFFECT OUR INFLUENCE!

- A. (Jude 4, 11) - “For **there are certain men** crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.
11 Woe unto them! for **they have gone in the way of Cain**, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.”
- B. The last mention of Cain in the Bible is where Jude mentions the impact of his example in describing a group of evil men in (v.4) as “ungodly men.”
 - 1. These men were guilty of secretly trying to infiltrate the church with the intent of destroying it or at least taking it over.
 - 2. They were pretending to be saved church members but were in reality

anti-God.

3. They were worldly and while inwardly rejecting Christ as their Lord, they were also willing to deny His deity to those who would listen.

C. How did these men become so bold in their evil?

1. Cain.
2. They allowed themselves to become infected with the same kind of attitude he exhibited, and they would one day experience a similar judgment.

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Lesson #3: THE ATTITUDE OF SELFISHNESS

INTRODUCTION:

1. Selfishness is one of the greater characteristics of our current society, but it is really nothing new.
2. In 2008, in an off-the-cuff remark, President Obama stated he was in favor of abortion because if one of his daughters became pregnant as a teenager, he would not want her to be punished with a baby. No doubt, it would be an inconvenience for the teen mother and for her parents, but inconvenience is not a justification for murder.
3. In Bible times, King Hezekiah ruled Israel as one of the greatest kings of all time. He was a godly man who personally witnessed and enjoyed more than one miracle in his lifetime. Yet years later he mistakenly revealed the treasures of his palace armory to ambassadors of an enemy nation. When rebuked by God and told that God's judgment would fall on the nation for his foolishness after he died, his selfish response was basically, "Good, as long as it is not in my lifetime."
4. Both of these examples, thousands of years ago in Hezekiah's case, and just a few years ago under Obama, both indicate the same problem: selfishness. We are selfish by nature yet salvation allows us to subdue the flesh and to make better and right choices; selfishness is a choice!
5. In this lesson, there are three Bible characters who exhibited selfishness in their lives, along with what caused them to make some foolish and selfish decisions.

I. SELFISHNESS CAN BE CAUSED BY BEING SPOILED!

- A. (2 Sam. 3:1-2) - "Now there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker.
2 And unto David were sons born in Hebron: and **his firstborn** was Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess;"
- B. What was so significant about the firstborn male child in Bible times?
 1. They were to receive a double inheritance from the father, with the understanding they would also take care of mom after the father passed away.
 2. In the case of a king such as David, it was understood by everyone that

the firstborn would one day become the next king. Amnon, therefore, was the one.

3. As he grew up in the palace, everyone knew he was to be the future king, and as a result, he lived a life of privilege and was rarely told no.
4. Meaning, he was spoiled rotten.

C. Evidence of his selfish attitude is best revealed in an incident involving a half sister called Tamar.

1. (2 Sam. 13:1-3) - “And it came to pass after this, that Absalom the son of David had a fair sister, whose name was Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her.
2 And Amnon was so vexed, that he fell sick for his sister Tamar; for she was a virgin; and Amnon thought it hard for him to do any thing to her.
3 But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah David's brother: and Jonadab was a very subtil man.”
2. From this puppy-love adoration, Amnon’s emotions began to run wild until he was filled with lust, and then, thanks to his friend Jonadab, his selfishness took over and brought him to the place where Amnon raped her.
3. What was the outcome? Nothing happened. We are told that David was upset when he heard what happened, but Amnon was still the one who was destined to be the next king.
4. Actually, something did happen, but not by his parents. Tamar’s brother, Absalom, felt compelled to take matters into his own hands, and two years later, he killed Amnon. So much for the selfish one.

D. Parents need to realize when they pamper and spoil their children, they are doing them a spiritual disservice. While they are endearing their children to themselves, they are hurting the children spiritually by feeding them a special diet of selfishness.

E. How can parents tell when they are enabling their children to become selfish adults?

1. #1 - The children do not have chores to do around the home. They need to be taught that home is a place of teamwork and responsibility.
2. #2 - They indulge in an excessive amount of video playing, texting, or

social media. All of these things focus on the individual where he can build his own world around himself. These things promote me, me, me.

II. SELFISHNESS CAN BE CAUSED BY BEING HURT!

- A. In 1 Samuel 13, we are told of an occasion involving king Saul when he panicked at Gilgal and offered a priestly sacrifice prior to a battle, in hopes of keeping his army from running away. When he did so, he was confronted by Samuel and soundly rebuked.
- B. (1 Sam. 13:11-14) - “And Samuel said, **What hast thou done?** And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash;
12 Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.
13 And Samuel said to Saul, **Thou hast done foolishly**: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.
14 But now **thy kingdom shall not continue**: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.”
1. This was the turning point for Saul and his life took a quick nosedive from here.
 2. In chapter 15, he was instructed by God to destroy the Amalekites and even their animals. Instead, he chose to disobey God and keep the most valued animals. God viewed this as rebellion.
 3. Why not simply obey? Why risk his relationship with God simply to have more things?
 4. That is what selfishness does. It places the individual on the throne of his heart, and he becomes a god unto himself.
- C. Did you ever hear of comfort foods?
1. When people are hurting, depressed, or anxious, they will usually reach for cookies, cakes, or some other food that is high in calories, low in nutrition, and big in making them feel better.

2. That is a very mild example of what selfishness is all about. It is a decision on our part to forget about what is good or bad, and it is all about making ourselves feel better.
3. When Saul was offended because of Samuel's rebuke, Saul made a permanent decision to start taking whatever he wanted in life, to make up for his spiritual shortcomings.
4. Just like overindulging with the wrong kind of food, he became spiritually sick and was getting worse by the day.

III. SELFISHNESS CAN BE CAUSED BY MONEY!

- A. (Gen. 13:8-11) - "And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.
9 Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.
10 And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed **Sodom and Gomorrah**, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.
11 Then **Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan**; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other."
- B. If the plain of Jordan was well watered and so gorgeous that it looked like the garden of Eden, why was it wrong for Lot to choose that location to live?
 1. The reason was it was also the location of Sodom and Gomorrah.
 2. Sodom and Gomorrah were the most vile and wicked cities on earth. They were overrun with homosexuals and all sorts of vice and evil.
 3. When Lot parted company with Abraham, it was not because he wanted to live in these perverted cities, but to become more prosperous.
 4. The problem was, however, that in order to get the money, he also had to compromise what convictions he had and accept the lifestyle of these wicked people as one he was willing to tolerate.
- C. What was the result of his selfish decision to run after the money and make it his chief priority?

1. He chose to marry a heathen woman from Sodom.
 2. He reared his children in Sodom, who were just as worldly and depraved as the rest. After angels were sent to remove Lot from Sodom so that it could be destroyed, two of his daughters got him drunk in order to become pregnant by him. Where did they get such evil ideas? Sodom.
 3. He became a city official, which meant he was viewed honorably in their eyes as one of their own.
 4. He came to see himself as one of them, as revealed when he referred to a crowd of homosexuals who were trying to rape a man, as brethren.
- D. But how could a man who had been blessed to spend years living with Abraham and Sarah stoop to such an end? He put money first, and when the lust of money was in control, all things spiritual were either forced to hide under the rug or were thrown overboard and abandoned.
- E. What is God's solution for not being selfish with our money?
1. Give it away! At least, that is how selfish people view it.
 2. Nowhere is it found or mentioned in the Bible to give God's money to a human organization, such as the Cancer Society, United Way, etc.
 3. God demands and encourages us to give and He stresses the fact that it is not our money; it is His. We are to give in accordance to God's desires.
 - a. Give it away (to Him) - through the tithe.
 - b. Give it away (to Him) - in offerings such as Missions or Building Fund.
 - c. Give it away (to Him) - by giving alms or anonymous donations to individuals.

ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING

Lesson #4: "THE ATTITUDE TOWARD OPPOSITION"

Part 1

INTRODUCTION:

1. Frank Serpico was a plain-clothes police officer working in Brooklyn, New York in the late 1960s. Serpico was creating a lot of internal turmoil in the police department. His problem was that he was honest.
 - a. He began documenting the corruption and eventually got his story into the *New York Times*, which created such a stir that the mayor was forced to appoint a special committee to look into the allegations. That was when things became unbelievably slow and seemed to be returning back to normal: corruption as usual.
 - b. In 1971, Serpico was again back in the news, but this time it was because he had been set up by fellow police officers, shot in the face, and left for dead. A resident of the apartment building where Serpico was thrown into the hallway and left to bleed to death, called for an ambulance, something his fellow officers failed to do.
 - c. By the end of the year, he had healed enough to testify before a special committee on corruption within the police force, and publicly, he was hailed as a hero. But in private, he was despised and hated within the department.
 - d. That was when he decided to retire. He was deaf in one ear; bone fragments had penetrated his brain and would cause him pain for the rest of his life. (He was thirty-one when he was shot, but is still alive at age eighty-one.)
 - e. Upon retiring, he was so disenchanted with the system, as well as the country, that he moved to Switzerland for ten years before moving back to the mountains of upstate New York.
2. While uncertain as to whether he ever became a Christian, his life as a cop serves as a great reminder of what every Christian will face when trying to live a godly life: opposition! Satan will not tolerate anyone who is trying to please and serve the Lord, nor any church that is trying to do the same.
3. It is for this reason we must develop a right and proper attitude to be able to *face the music*, while remaining steadfast and unmoveable.
4. What will it take to stop us?

I. FOR SOME IT IS A FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN!

- A. (Neh. 2:1-2) - “And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence.
2 Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? **this is nothing else but sorrow of heart**. Then I was very sore afraid,”
- B. The details or background to this passage have to do with the time when kings were always facing threats of a rebellion or even assassination.
 - 1. Many times, it came from within the royal family, which is why historically one of the first acts of a king was to have his siblings arrested and executed on trumped-up charges to eliminate a well-known potential threat.
 - 2. Additionally, many would employ a cupbearer to sample all food and drink before given to the king. If it was poisoned, at least the king would survive the attempt, and would then hire another cupbearer. You can see why the cupbearer was always watching out for the welfare of the king, because his own life depended upon the safety of the king.
 - 3. All that has an enormous bearing upon why Nehemiah was questioned by the king.
 - a. The king was close enough to Nehemiah, his cupbearer, to know when something was wrong.
 - b. Therefore, when Nehemiah was asked by the king why he was sorrowful, it was a frightening question because it was not asked by a worried father or a friend. It was asked by a king whose life was at risk, perhaps multiple times, in a single day.
 - c. The king had survived up to this point, and he wanted to ensure that Nehemiah had not become part of an attempt to steal the throne by assassinating the king.
 - 4. What would the king do? Would he have him imprisoned and tortured to find out any secrets?
 - 5. Would he simply have him executed, believing he would not talk?
- C. All these feelings must have flooded Nehemiah’s mind in a matter of seconds.

Satan loves to torment us with the fear of the unknown.

1. It could be a fear of being fired, a fear of a child running away, or perhaps being gay!
2. The fears are too innumerable to try to list. The truth is the fear really does not matter.
3. The question is whether or not we are willing to trust God with the unknown.

II. FOR SOME IT IS DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES!

- A. (Neh. 2:12-13) - “And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon.
13 And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were **broken down**, and the gates thereof were **consumed with fire**.”
- B. When Nehemiah first arrived in Jerusalem, he decided to make a secret journey around the city to inspect the walls. What he saw was worse than anticipated.
 1. The people were discouraged because of the violence caused by bandits who were able to come and go as they pleased.
 2. Security for the people was nonexistent, and Nehemiah could easily understand their discouragement.
 3. How could they live for God when they were worried sick about the safety of their families?
 4. During difficult times, most people will come to the place where they throw up their hands and quit, simply because their circumstances are so wretched that they see no other solution.
 5. While God used Nehemiah to accomplish so much, one important thing he did was to bring hope to these people!
 6. A miracle took place in which the people saw that God helped them complete the rebuilding of the walls and gates in an amazing fifty-two days. The result was a huge boost of confidence in God.

III. FOR SOME IT IS BEING INTIMIDATED!

- A. (Neh. 2:19) - “But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, **What is this** thing that ye do? will ye **rebel** against the king?”
- B. While God was doing a work in the hearts of these people, the devil was stirring up his own crowd to use them to stop God’s progress.
 - 1. What was one of Satan’s primary tools that has been so successful for him in the past? Intimidation! This is the art of using nothing more than words and threats to cause a person to cave in to the accuser.
 - 2. God’s people were accused of having a part in a rebellion against the king! Sanballat and Tobiah knew Nehemiah had come with the authority of the king, and yet they were trying to portray him as a traitor to the crown and an opportunist hoping to start up his own kingdom.
 - 3. A false accusation against Nehemiah, if believed by the king, could have resulted in his being killed for treason. It was a big deal!
- C. If we strip away all the smoke and mirrors and get rid of the emotional baggage, what do we have left when examining these false accusations?
 - 1. Words; nothing but words are left.
 - 2. The interesting thing is that nothing came out of those words. The work continued, progress was made, and God blessed them with a miracle.

IV. FOR SOME IT IS BEING RIDICULED!

- A. (Neh. 4:1-3) - “But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and **mocked** the Jews.
2 And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?
3 Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, **if a fox go up**, he shall even break down their stone wall.”

- B. As we come to this passage, the enemy has moved on, searching for yet another way to disrupt the work. That was when Sanballat and Tobiah started trying to hurt the peoples' feelings by making fun of them.
1. As lame as this may sound, it would shock us if we really knew why some people quit church was because a comment was made about their shoes, their hair, or something personal.
 2. It sounds petty, and yet the reason the devil loves to use it is because it works!

ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING

Lesson #5: “THE ATTITUDE TOWARD OPPOSITION”

Part 2

INTRODUCTION:

1. Opposition must be realized as a very natural part of life, and even more so for the Christian. What happens to the person who thinks it can somehow be avoided by being clever or smart? Bitterness!
 - a. When not expecting it, people can become so disgusted by opposition that they feel life is unfair and the world and God are against them.
 - b. Stanley Adams worked for a large pharmaceutical company in Switzerland when he discovered the company had been involved in price fixing. He reported his findings to a watchdog group that accidentally released his name as the whistle blower. The company then pressed charges against him for industrial sabotage. He was arrested and spent six months in jail, the first three of which were in solitary confinement. It was during this time that his wife, depressed from what had taken place, committed suicide. When he was finally released from jail, he sued the company, and after a twelve-year legal battle, he was awarded an amount that only paid forty percent of his legal fees.
 - c. For everyone, life is unfair, but for some, it is a nightmare. Therefore, it is in everyone’s best interest to grasp all that is possible about opposition in this life, because we are going to see plenty of it.
2. When Nehemiah heard of the pitiful conditions of his Jewish brethren back in Jerusalem, his heart broke and he immediately began praying for God to not just do something for them, but to use him as part of His solution. As soon as he took that first step of getting involved to do something for God, he immediately began facing all sorts of opposition.
3. He was forced to deal with his fear of the king’s reaction, the horrible conditions of the city walls that he saw upon his arrival, the attempts of the enemy to intimidate him, and their continued mockery.
4. But the devil had even more in store for Nehemiah for one reason: he viewed him as a threat!

I. SATAN WILL OPPOSE US WITH THREATS!

- A. (Neh. 4:7-8) - “But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth,
8 And **conspired** all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.”
- B. The devil is a master of playing mind games.
 - 1. When the enemies of Nehemiah realized he was not going to be a pushover and go back to the palace, they began holding meetings to discuss how to get rid of him.
 - 2. What came of these secret meetings that were not all that secret? Nothing more than a lot of hot air and threats as to what somebody might do.
- C. The truth is that the vast majority of what we worry about never becomes reality! We certainly need to prepare ourselves for what might take place, but there is all the difference in the world between preparing and worrying. To prepare is wise, but to worry is sin.

II. SATAN WILL OPPOSE US WITH COMPROMISE!

- A. (Neh. 6:1-2) - “Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;)
2 That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, **let us meet** together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief.”
- B. This is a perfect illustration of the problems with compromise.
 - 1. It is appealing for the simple reason that it removes a future battle.
 - a. Typically, people do not enjoy fighting and would rather use their time and resources to do something more constructive.
 - b. This is the reason so many parents tend to give up and allow their teens to do as they please with little parental oversight or

input. They are wanting to avoid the constant battles with teens who are trying to gain too much freedom too quickly.

2. The downside to compromise, and there always is one, is best seen in the proposed meeting with Nehemiah.
 - a. The hope of the enemy was that Nehemiah would meet with them to avoid more conflicts.
 - b. Their plan was to kill Nehemiah. That is always the aim of compromise. It is designed and used by the devil, not to change a person, as much as to simply get rid of him.

III. SATAN WILL OPPOSE US WITH LIBEL AND SLANDER!

- A. (Neh. 6:5-7) - "Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open **letter** in his hand;
6 Wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to **rebel**: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words.
7 And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together."
- B. When Nehemiah's steadfastness and resolve became apparent, the enemy stepped up their attacks against him and forged a letter that gave indication that it was Nehemiah's plan and intent to rebel against the very king who sent him to Jerusalem and to create a new kingdom.
 1. That was a very serious accusation and one, if believed, could have resulted in his death. To share his lies to as many people as he could, Sanballat used this letter not only to put Nehemiah in fear, but also to have it widely circulated to as many as possible.
 2. Why is slander such a great way to destroy people? The reason is people tend to believe the worst. They love to talk, and the juicier the gossip, the faster it will spread.

IV. SATAN WILL OPPOSE US WITH WORLDLINESS!

- A. (Neh. 13:23-25) - "In those days also saw I Jews that had married **wives of**

Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab:

24 And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and **could not speak in the Jews' language**, but according to the language of each people.

25 And I **contended** with them, and **cursed** them, and **smote** certain of them, and **plucked off** their hair, and **made them swear** by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves.”

- B. In order to appreciate the full extent of this confrontation, we need to keep in mind that this took place perhaps ten years after the miraculous rebuilding of the wall and gates.
 - 1. Nehemiah had been their governor for about a decade. They knew him and had supported him, but a problem developed among the people while Nehemiah was gone.
 - 2. When Nehemiah was forced to return to the palace to check in with the king, it was in his absence that *the mice began to play when the cat was away*.
 - 3. Nehemiah was out of sight and, therefore, out of mind. The problem was simply that they were willing to follow for as long as they could see him. When left to themselves, they were a lot like the Hebrews who wanted a golden calf to worship while Moses was conveniently absent.
- C. Upon Nehemiah's return back to Jerusalem after being gone a number of years, he discovered that many of the Jewish men had married heathen women and produced children who now had no Jewish heritage. They could not speak Hebrew, and yet the Scriptures were in Hebrew!
- D. That was when Nehemiah was forced to once again put on his battle garments and arm himself for yet another battle. This time, it was against his own people.
- E. Fighting the Lord's battles is never an easy thing to do. It is a heartache when we must fight against our own kind.
 - 1. Churches are continuing to embrace worldly music. The question is, why is no one fighting against it?
 - 2. The King James Bible is continually criticized and abandoned as a relic of the past, and somebody should be willing to fight for it while also using it.

3. The family has taken a huge hit over the years with a permissive attitude by the parents, and the children are speaking like, looking like, and acting like the world more than ever before.
- F. How can all these things be successfully fought and stopped? The answer is found in a good church that is still conservative and led by a no-nonsense pastor who is willing to tell it like it is and a congregation who welcomes it!

ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING

Lesson #6: “OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD CRITICISM”

Part 1

INTRODUCTION:

1. As Baptists, we take pride in taking the Bible as literally as possible, and yet there are certain things or topics we struggle with and tend to look the other way.
2. Unfortunately, a critical spirit is one of those topics we accept. The problem, however, is God is very clear on how He feels about it. (1 Cor. 10:10) - “**Neither murmur** ye, as some of them also murmured, and were **destroyed** of the destroyer.”
3. Does God hate murmuring and a critical spirit? Yes!
 - a. Will He actually destroy a person who refuses to stop murmuring? We may think maybe He will, and maybe He will not.
 - b. This verse clearly states that God will not tolerate it in our lives and will take steps to stop it, which will include a premature death if we refuse to take heed.

I. A CRITICAL SPIRIT MIGHT BE DUE TO CONVICTION!

- A. (John 7:1-7, 12) - “After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because **the Jews sought to kill him**.
2 Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand.
3 His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest.
4 For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world.
5 For **neither did his brethren believe in him**.
6 Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready.
7 The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.
12 And there was much **murmuring** among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people.”
- B. This is one of the most enlightening passages in the Bible in relation to the Lord's earthly life and ministry.
 1. We are told that the Jews as a whole, His own people, wanted the Lord dead.

2. Additionally, we are told He was hated so intensely that His own half brothers (including James who wrote the epistle of James and who also pastored the church in Jerusalem) were actually daring Him to go to Jerusalem to prove He was the Messiah.
 3. Why did His own people and siblings hate Him?
 4. The answer is found in John 7:5 where it states that His half brothers were lost, just as the Jewish people who sought to kill Him were lost.
- C. The Lord's lifestyle, His teaching, and preaching, all combined to convict these people of their sins. When conviction sets in, there are only three options.
1. We can try to ignore it, but the Holy Spirit will not let it be ignored.
 2. We can get it fixed. Lost people can get saved, and saved people can get right with the Lord.
 3. We can remove the source of conviction. The primary reason a person will not remain in a good church is because of conviction, by the godly people and by the preaching.
- D. The key to understanding why people are willing to criticize and condemn others is because they are convicted.

II. A CRITICAL SPIRIT MIGHT BE DUE TO AN HONEST MISTAKE!

- A. (Acts 6:1) - "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a **murmuring** of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration."
- B. We all know how God feels about widows and how precious and important they are to Him.
1. In this passage, we find something that is unfortunate, at best. As the church was growing by leaps and bounds, there was one group of people who had accidentally been neglected: the Greek widows.
 2. The church was primarily made up of Jewish converts, and all of the pastors in the Jerusalem church were the Lord's apostles, all Jewish.
 3. Over time, it came to be known that some of the Gentile widows had been neglected and had *fallen through the cracks*. No one was

checking on them, and if they were in need of food, they were going hungry.

4. What did the Gentile church members do? They complained about the apostles not caring for the Greek widows, and by doing so, they were attacking God's leadership.
- C. Who was wrong in this matter? Was it the apostles who had accidentally neglected these dear women or was it those who were deliberately criticizing the preachers?
- D. Mistakes will always be made by good people, but woe to those who are willing to embrace a critical spirit to attack the faults of good people simply to make them look bad or to make themselves look better.

III. A CRITICAL SPIRIT MIGHT BE DUE TO A DISTRUST OF LEADERSHIP!

- A. (Ex. 16:1-3) - "And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt.
2 And the whole congregation of the children of Israel **murmured against Moses and Aaron** in the wilderness:
3 And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, **to kill** this whole assembly with hunger."
- B. This must have been a major heartache for Moses.
 1. He had given up being the heir to the throne of Egypt.
 2. He had identified himself with the Hebrew people, thus ruining his reputation among the Egyptians.
 3. After four decades of peaceful solitude, he answered God's call at the burning bush to return to Egypt, thus putting his life at risk.
 4. He stood before Pharaoh through the ten plagues, demanding on God's behalf that Pharaoh release the two million Hebrew slaves.
 5. He obeyed God and led His people to the brink of the Red Sea, uncertain of what God might do, but trusting Him implicitly until a

miracle was delivered.

6. After all these personal sacrifices, when the people ran into a problem that forced them to rely upon both Moses and God, they openly and severely criticized Moses and accused him of trying to kill them! That hurt!
- C. The reason the Holy Spirit recorded this event is that people today still criticize the leaders who are trying to help them.
- D. God will deliberately put His people in a position where things might not make sense on a logical, human level, and the reason, many times, will be to force us to trust not just in God, but in His leaders, as well.

IV. A CRITICAL SPIRIT MIGHT BE DUE TO GOSSIP!

- A. (Num. 14:32-37) - “But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness.
33 And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness.
34 After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.
35 I the LORD have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.
36 And **the men**, which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and **made all the congregation to murmur against him**, by bringing up a slander upon the land,
37 Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the LORD.”
- B. It is one thing to carry your concerns in the privacy of your heart, but it is an entirely different matter when you choose to share those concerns with others, thereby using gossip to change the opinions of others to coincide with your own opinions.
- C. Moses sent out the spies to slip into the Promised Land to assess it and to bring him a report. That report was to be a confidential report given to Moses.
 1. The spies entered the Promised Land, and because most of them were frightened, they returned and deliberately began spreading horror stories of what they saw.

2. Sure, there was a lot of fruit and good farming land, but those giants were huge and could never be defeated!
3. Most of these men began spreading their concerns and fears, cranking up the gossip mills to sway the people from entering into the Promised Land.
 - a. The result was that they were successful! Their gossip was powerful and effective, and created a critical spirit in the people.
 - b. They were responsible for the people distrusting Moses and refusing to enter the Promised Land! The problem, however, was that it was going to cost them forty years of wandering in the wilderness and death in the desert.

V. A CRITICAL SPIRIT MIGHT BE DUE TO JEALOUSY!

- A. (Num. 16:8-11) - “And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi:
 9 Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them?
 10 And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and **seek ye the priesthood also?**
 11 For which cause both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the LORD: and **what is Aaron**, that ye murmur against him?”
- B. The rebellion led by Korah is identified as being fueled by the resentment and jealousy toward Aaron.
 1. Moses was used to being criticized by many of the people, but why Aaron?
 2. The reason was the priesthood. Everyone in the camp was required to bring his offering to Aaron! He was the high priest and was to accept the offering on God’s behalf.
 3. Why was that a problem? Jealousy. Aaron was almost viewed as being sinless, and everyone else was a wicked sinner. Korah did not like having to bring his offering to Aaron. Therefore, when the opportunity arose, he attacked Aaron’s place of leadership, as if the

choice belonged to Moses instead of God.

- C. When we find ourselves jealous of another Christian, we need to instantly do two things.
 - 1. First, we need to realize that jealousy created a critical spirit in our lives.
 - 2. Second, we need to confess the jealousy and critical spirit as sin.

ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING

Lesson #7: “OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD CRITICISM”

Part 2

INTRODUCTION:

1. Two years after the Civil War ended, Russia approached our country to see if we would be interested in purchasing a frozen frontier called Alaska. The price was right, in that we could purchase it for only two cents per acre. But the question raised by a lot of people was, “What good is it?” It was called Seward’s folly, since he was the man who was responsible for the purchase. More than one hundred years later, it is very evident it was an extremely wise purchase as it is one of the richest deposits of minerals in the world.
2. Criticism is a lot like the purchase of Alaska. Its value all hinges upon what we are willing to do with it. If we only view it as a source of irritation that leads to our anger and frustration, then it is counter-productive. But if we are willing to use it to our spiritual benefit, then it can become a tool greatly used by God to bring about our spiritual maturity.
3. What if we are the one with the critical spirit? What if we are guilty of being negative or engaging in gossip? In order to deal with it properly, we need to be able to identify how and where it comes from.

I. A CRITICAL SPIRIT MIGHT BE DUE TO SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS!

- A. (John 6:40-42) - “And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.
41 The Jews then **murmured** at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.
42 And they said, **Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph**, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?”
- B. To gain an appreciation for what was taking place, we must remember that Israel had been chosen by God, for a purpose.
 1. The Jews were the guardians of the Scriptures! No other nation on earth had been given this privilege, which is why God chose to use the Jewish people and the nation of Israel as the place where the Scriptures would be maintained and painstakingly copied for centuries.
 2. Additionally, they were to provide the lineage through which the Messiah would come. He was to be a Jew of the tribe of Judah.

- C. How could the Jews have missed Him when Messiah came in the Person of Jesus? Their religion was already dead, with the result that the vast majority of their religious experts were blind to the Scriptures, as well as to the Messiah Himself.
 - 1. It was that blindness which caused them to criticize the Lord.
 - 2. Likewise, we must understand that lost people will often criticize Christians for the same reason: they are blind. If we are the one doing the criticizing, perhaps we need to check out our own salvation.

II. A CRITICAL SPIRIT MIGHT BE DUE TO AN UNMET NEED!

- A. (Ex. 17:1-3) - "And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and **there was no water** for the people to drink.
2 Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?
3 And the people thirsted there for water; and the people **murmured** against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?"
- B. This can easily become a trap for a good person.
 - 1. When the Hebrews found themselves with no water and at the point where they could die in the desert, they immediately turned on Moses and blamed him because he was their leader.
 - 2. It was not personal. It was simply because they had a major need, and if they did not get a solution, they would die.
- C. The same kind of un-Christian response can be found in any church among good people who find themselves in dire straits.
 - 1. If people are having marital problems, they will many times lash out at the pastor by criticizing him, not because of anything he has done, but because of the people's circumstances.
 - 2. By understanding this, a person who is having a car repossessed, going through a divorce, or who has just lost a job can avoid making the situation worse by refusing to add a critical spirit to his problems.

III. A CRITICAL SPIRIT MIGHT BE DUE TO REBELLION!

- A. (Deut. 1:22-27) - “And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come.
23 And the saying pleased me well: and I took twelve men of you, one of a tribe:
24 And they turned and went up into the mountain, and came unto the valley of Eshcol, and searched it out.
25 And they took of the fruit of the land in their hands, and brought it down unto us, and brought us word again, and said, It is a good land which the LORD our God doth give us.
26 Notwithstanding ye would not go up, but **rebelled** against the commandment of the LORD your God:
27 And ye **murmured** in your tents, and said, Because the LORD hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us.”
- B. In preparing the people to enter the Promised Land, Moses reminded them of what had caused their original problem forty years earlier.
1. They had been told to trust God to take care of the giants and to protect them, but instead of entering in, they rebelled against Him. When they rebelled, they murmured and criticized God, actually accusing Him of hating them.
 2. This shows the power of a single act of rebellion. They placed their opinions above God’s command, and when they did, they then began to criticize God for things that were not true.
- C. We need to be careful, as well, for if we deliberately and willfully rebel against a very clear command in the Bible, we are setting ourselves up for being affected by a critical spirit.

IV. A CRITICAL SPIRIT MIGHT BE DUE TO IGNORANCE OF THE BIBLE!

- A. (Isa. 29:22-24) - “Therefore thus saith the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall **not now be ashamed**, neither shall his face now wax pale.
23 But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel.

24 They also that **erred in spirit** shall come to understanding, and they that **murmured** shall learn doctrine.”

B. Isaiah is mentioning an interesting condition of God’s people.

1. They were wrong in their understanding of the Bible (v.24 - “erred in spirit”), and yet in spite of being wrong, they were totally unashamed (v.22).
2. The reason was that they assumed they were right!
3. Their attitude was of great confidence in their knowledge of the Bible, and because of their misplaced confidence, they acquired a critical attitude toward those who dared to differ with them.
4. Unfortunately, there is a type of church member who fits this description very closely. It is the self-taught Bible scholar who views himself as more informed than the pastor.
 - a. He nearly always has a pet doctrine he has studied intently for years. He has read books, developed strong opinions on the matter, and views himself as an expert.
 - b. Many have chosen their pet doctrine to be prophecy, with some going so far as having a detailed, fool-proof formula for determining the when the Rapture will take place or knowing who is the anti-christ.
 - c. Woe be to the person who tries to pry these wrong beliefs from their hands, for they are in for the fight of their lives.

V. **A CRITICAL SPIRIT MIGHT BE DUE TO BEING IN THE WRONG CROWD!**

- A. (John 6:57-61) - “As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.
58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.
59 These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.

60 Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?
61 When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?”

- B. As the Lord attempted to teach His many disciples the spiritual truths about the Lord's Supper, His followers began to complain about His teachings. The more He taught, the more His followers decided it was time to walk away from Him and to distance themselves from His ministry.
1. But where did this decision take place?
 2. It occurred in a synagogue! That was not a place that was sympathetic to the Lord, but was rather more akin to a lion's den! The Jews were already plotting His death, and so when He began teaching about eating His flesh and drinking His blood, the Lord was in the midst of a group of hard-hearted Jews who wished Him dead.
 3. What kind of an effect did that have on His followers? Peer pressure was causing them to criticize the Lord's teachings, and quickly led to their walking away from Him.
- C. For this reason, Christians need to ensure they remain in the right crowd, or they, too, will come to the place when they are forced to choose sides, and they will prefer to be popular (with the world), rather than right (with the Lord).

ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING

Lesson #8: “OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD FRIENDS”

INTRODUCTION:

1. One of the biggest game changers in a person’s life is going to be an individual who is referred to as a friend.
 - a. Jonadab was the friend of Amnon, the son of David. As his friend, Jonadab was in a very powerful position to influence the young prince.
 - b. When Jonadab discovered that Amnon was infatuated with a half-sister, he encouraged Amnon to have his way with her and fulfil his carnal desires. The result of this encouragement was tragic, to say the least.
 - c. Amnon raped the young woman and then despised her. Instead of marrying her, which is what he had originally considered, he treated her like a tramp and had her thrown out of his room.
 - d. By doing so, he brought upon himself the wrath of her older brother, Absalom. Two years later, Amnon was killed by Absalom, and yet Jonadab lived on.
2. As you can tell, friends carry a lot of influence in a person’s life. It is for that reason, we all need to know how to prioritize our relationships by identifying and recognizing the five different levels of friendship. By doing so, we are able to limit the amount of influence some of these people exert on us, while opening ourselves up to others who are being used by God to help us.

I. Level #1 - OUR BEST FRIEND!

- A. (Pro. 18:24) - “A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh **closer than a brother**.”
- B. When a person has just experienced the worst time of his life, whether it be a divorce, a bankruptcy, or being told that he has a terminal illness, he will then make a painful discovery.
 1. He will find out very quickly how many friends he really has.
 2. When he has nothing to offer but has a variety of needs, he will learn

his list of friends is a much shorter list than he realized.

- C. It will also be at that same time that he is blessed to know that the Lord is the one Best Friend on which he can always count.
 - 1. Hopefully, his list will also include parents, a pastor, and a spouse.
 - 2. But with some, the list might not even be that long.
 - 3. Because this is such an elite list, we need to be cautious about including additional people. The people on our best-friend list are the ones who should be given an enormous amount of influence in our lives.

II. Level #2 - A CLOSE FRIEND!

- A. (Dan. 3:8-13) - “Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews.
9 They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever.
10 Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, shall fall down and worship the golden image:
11 And whoso falleth not down and worshippingeth, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.
12 There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego**; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: **they serve not thy gods**, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.
13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Then they brought these men before the king.”
- B. These three young men were from the same hometown as Daniel. They probably knew each other growing up. They shared many of the same circumstances in captivity and also shared the same religious upbringing.
 - 1. Were they best of friends? Similar backgrounds and circumstances do not necessarily make best friends.
 - 2. These good men were close enough to encourage one another spiritually.
 - 3. (Pro. 27:17) - “Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.”

4. This is the kind of friend God will send into a person's life as a spiritual gift! He will allow himself to become a tool in God's hand and will use his influence to help others to become even godlier.
5. This was the relationship that David's mighty men had with him. They were not just his bodyguards, but they were his spiritual cheerleaders, as well.

III. Level 3 - OUR NEIGHBOR!

- A. (Acts 18:24-26) - "And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.
25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.
26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly."
- B. Neighbors are people who are special, not because they are like us, but because they are near to us.
 1. Because they are close to us geographically, they need to be treated properly.
 2. Their close proximity gives them the opportunity to hurt us if they choose. Likewise, we could cause them harm.
 3. Because they will see us up close, we need to guard this relationship with great care and caution so we do not hurt or offend them.
- C. Internationally, this relationship would be similar to our country's relationships with Canada and Mexico.
 1. We have usually had good relations with Canada, while we currently have strained relations with Mexico because of the illegal immigrants and the drug cartels.
 2. Because of our proximity to these neighboring countries, we should strive to build as strong a relationship as possible, while also ensuring we are not being hurt or injured by being so close.

IV. Level #4 - AN ACQUAINTANCE!

- A. (1 Kings 10:4-7) - “And when the **queen of Sheba** had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built,
5 And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the LORD; there was no more spirit in her.
6 And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom.
7 Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard.”
- B. When the queen of Sheba heard of Solomon's wisdom and wealth, she wanted to meet him personally to see if the reports were true as well as to glean from his wisdom and hopefully become a better ruler herself.
1. When she met him, the queen was very impressed by how he handled his servants and how he exercised his power. She allowed her brief meeting with him to benefit herself personally as well as her kingdom. Though their time together was brief, it was profitable.
 2. This is an excellent portrayal of how we should use our acquaintances. They should be viewed as potential helpers in our lives. Will they have negative qualities that we will not want to influence us? Certainly. Because our interaction with them is limited, so should these negative qualities be limited.

V. Level #5 - AN OLD FRIEND!

- A. (2 Sam. 15:10-12) - “But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron.
11 And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were called; and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing.
12 And Absalom sent for **Ahithophel** the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.”
- B. Of all the relationships, this is the one that has the greatest potential for harm. Ahithophel, at one time, was David's most cherished friend and counselor. He knew David better than most and was very influential in times past. He was the grandfather of Bathsheba, and when David had an affair with her, he more than likely infuriated his old friend. Because of that strained

relationship, an old friend chose to become one of his worst enemies. That is the problem with an old friend.

- C. An old friend must be handled with great care and discernment, for they, too, can readily become a lifelong enemy who can be used by the devil to complicate a person's life. This could include an ex-spouse, an estranged grown child, or a former best friend who is now severely backslidden.

ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING

Lesson #9: “OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THOSE WHO HAVE HELPED US”

INTRODUCTION:

1. Halfway through the 1938 baseball season, Lou Gehrig could tell something was not right.
 - a. He had played for fifteen consecutive seasons with the New York Yankees, many times choosing to play hurt.
 - b. He was once hit in the head by a wild pitch (before batters wore helmets) and continued to play.
 - c. X-rays taken at the end of his career revealed that he had endured sixteen broken bones in his hands while playing ball, and yet he continued to play in game after game.
 - d. He came to be known as the Iron Horse because of his durability, and he set a record for consecutive games played that stood for fifty-six years.
 - e. He hit more grand slams in his career than anyone, which is a record that still stands.
 - f. When his playing ability began to mysteriously decline due to the incurable disease which would eventually claim his life, manager Joe McCarthy was being pressured to bench Gehrig and use him only part time, but McCarthy refused.
 - g. In one game, when Gehrig was slowed down so much by his crippling disease, the pitcher caught a ground ball and had to wait for Gehrig to reach first base before throwing it to him. Instead of being frustrated with him, the pitcher simply said, “Nice play, Lou.”
2. In a business that thrived on making money, Lou Gehrig found himself surrounded by people who cared about him and not just his statistics. After he removed himself from the lineup, he went to Mayo Clinic and was told that he had an incurable disease that would take his life.
3. Soon after, he chose to retire from baseball, which was when he gave one of the most stirring speeches ever recorded. He humbly thanked the Yankees and the fans for their many years of support, summing up his career with the words “... for the past two weeks you have been reading about a bad break I got. Yet today I consider

myself the luckiest man on the face of the earth.”

4. How could a dying man whose life was being cut short in his prime offer such humble words of gratitude? His manager was also a friend. His teammates were more than just co-workers. His wife was his best friend. It was a combination of a lot of great people who were responsible for helping Lou Gehrig to display an exceptional amount of grace at the lowest point of his life.
5. Likewise, God will use a wide variety of people and unusual circumstances in our lives to teach us some of life’s greatest lessons.

I. RACHEL’S DEATH HELPED JOSEPH TO TRUST GOD MORE!

- A. (Gen. 35:16-19, 24) - “And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour.
17 And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also.
18 And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Ben-oni: but his father called him Benjamin.
19 And **Rachel died**, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem.
24 The sons of Rachel; **Joseph**, and Benjamin:”
- B. When Rachel died, Joseph was around fourteen years old. It was only three years later when his brothers threw him into a well and then sold him into slavery where he was forced to remain for the next twelve years.
 1. While we all know God used those years of slavery to prepare Joseph spiritually for the time when he would be promoted to the position of Egypt’s Prime Minister, we should also realize God was already at work before Joseph became a slave.
 2. When Rachel died, Joseph was forced to experience the heartache of losing a mother, and it was through this loss he learned how to lean on God as never before.
- C. One of the biggest problems we have is that we fail to see things the same way God does. God chose to use a mother’s death to prepare a teenager for spiritual greatness.

II. THE PHILISTINES HELPED SAMSON TO CHANGE FOR THE GOOD!

- A. (Judg. 16:21-22) - “But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and

brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.

22 Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven.”

B. We sometimes make the mistake of grouping the entire world as *friend* or *foe* and viewing everyone as *good* or *bad*.

1. The problem with doing this is that we then discount certain people as being an undesirable in our lives, while in reality, God might have used them to help us more than we dared to imagine.
2. In Samson’s life, the Philistines were always viewed as the enemy and as a threat to God’s people.
3. However, in looking at what was accomplished in Samson’s life, it would seem that God used the Philistines to make the biggest and greatest changes of all.
4. His parents taught him right from wrong. His friends encouraged him to serve God by being one of Israel’s judges.
5. However, when it came to transforming Samson into a God-honoring hero, it was the cruelty of the Philistines who brought him to the place where he was willing to give himself to God without reserve.
6. The Philistines blinded him and then treated him like a circus animal, humiliating him before crowds of thousands of people who mocked him. Whatever spiritual greatness Samson finally enjoyed, it was only because of the Philistines that he finally became the kind of man God had desired all along.

III. JOB’S THREE FRIENDS HELPED JOB TO REALIZE THAT LIFE IS NOT FAIR!

- A. (Job 16:1-5) - “Then Job answered and said,
2 I have heard many such things: **miserable comforters** are ye all.
3 Shall vain words have an end? or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest?
4 I also could speak as ye do: if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you.

5 **But I would strengthen you** with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief.”

- B. The lessons we gather from the life of Job are valuable and fairly obvious.
1. One lesson is that God is sovereign. He can do as He pleases and does not owe us an explanation.
 2. Another lesson is that flesh and blood will always let you down. Though Job's friends came to comfort him initially, they eventually became a source of contention and heartache.
 3. Another less obvious lesson is that life is not fair. Job was a good man who certainly deserved better than what he was experiencing, and yet that was one of the greatest lessons of all.
 - a. Life is not fair. Good people are not always allowed to enjoy a life that equals their goodness.
 - b. In this world, there is no perfect justice, for it is ruled by Satan. We must, therefore, wait until heaven to be able to enjoy a full reward for the good things found in the life of a good person.

IV. SOLOMON'S WIVES HELPED SOLOMON TO LEARN THE VALUE OF SAYING "NO"!

- A. (1 Kings 11:4-6) - "For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.
5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.
6 And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father."
- B. It is one thing for a person to be deceived and then make a costly but foolish decision.
1. But as the wisest man in the world, Solomon entered into each of his many marriages with these pagan women with his eyes wide open.
 2. He knew better than to join himself to people who were not believers in Jehovah-God, and yet he chose to do so, anyway. With each new wife came a new temptation to compromise his beliefs.
 3. Sadly, Solomon came to the place where he not only allowed his many

wives to bring their false gods with them, he also even supported them and built altars to these false gods, some of which involved human sacrifices.

- C. It was only years later when he regained his spiritual senses and wrote the book of Ecclesiastes, that Solomon learned how far he had fallen spiritually, and how it could all have been avoided by learning how to tell himself, “No.”

V. JESUS HELPED JOHN THE BAPTIST TO DISCOVER THAT HE WAS NOT AS STRONG AS HE THOUGHT!

- A. (Mt. 11:2-6) - “Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples,
3 And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?
4 Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:
5 The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.
6 And **blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.**”
- B. John the Baptist was an exceptional man of God who was fearless, yet humble. He was comfortable with a harsh existence and was equally at home in the solitude of the desert or preaching to crowds of thousands who turned out to hear him.
 - 1. When John was arrested for taking a position against the king’s adulterous relationship, things became complicated in his thinking.
 - 2. If his cousin Jesus was really the Messiah, then why had He not set John free?
 - 3. Had he made a mistake when he introduced his cousin as the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world?
- C. It was during this time of soul searching that John felt compelled to send his disciples to find the Lord and to ask Him directly if He was in fact the Messiah.
 - 1. It was the Lord’s response that must have shaken John the most.
 - 2. The Lord informed the godly John the Baptist that he had allowed himself to become offended.

3. There was no one who was John's equal, other than the Lord Himself, and yet John the Baptist had allowed himself to get his feelings hurt and was offended, as an ordinary man of flesh.
4. Just before he was put to death, John the Baptist was forced to learn the same lesson as the rest of us: we are not as strong as we think!

THE *Author*

FROM THE COCKPIT TO THE PULPIT

In 1976, I graduated from Indiana State University with a degree in Aerospace Technology and a goal of becoming an airline pilot. After learning that over 80% of all airline pilots had been pilots in the military, I applied for and was accepted into the Navy's flight program. Two years later, I received my wings as a Naval Aviator and was assigned to an A-7E squadron based near Jacksonville, Florida.



As attack pilots trained to drop nuclear weapons, my squadron was assigned to the aircraft carrier CV-59, the USS Forrestal, and completed two tours to the Mediterranean. During this time, I completed over 300 carrier landings, 100 of which were at night. In between my cruises to the Mediterranean, I got saved; and God began working in my heart about serving Him in the ministry instead of becoming an airline pilot. Following my fulfillment to the Navy, I resigned my commission and was hired as an Assistant Pastor in a Baptist church that my wife and I had joined after I got saved. After almost six years on staff, I was asked to become the pastor of Temple Baptist Church in Kokomo, IN, and began my pastorate there in 1988.

THE *College*

WHY A CORRESPONDENCE COLLEGE?

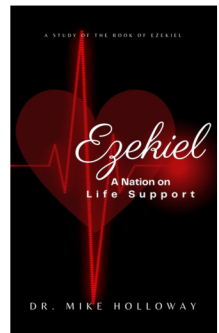
After five years of pastoring, I began Baptist College of America with two goals in mind. First, it was created purely as a correspondence college. This was the intention from the beginning because while I was in the Navy preparing to become a pilot, my training was conducted in two different phases. The first phase was Ground School where I studied various aspects of jet aircraft with most of those studies using correspondence courses. Books were provided with minimal classroom instruction. It was up to each pilot to read, study, and absorb the information with tests being administered. The second phase was actually flying an aircraft with an instructor pilot. Baptist College of America was created along those same lines with two separate phases involved for each student. The first is a biblical ground school with courses being used along with correspondence teaching materials completed at each student's pace which are then submitted for grading. The second phase is being involved in a solid local church under the leadership of that church's pastor. The second phase is not graded but is vital for a BCA student to become properly trained in and for the ministry. As such, it is not necessary to attend a resident Bible college which means that a complete biblical education can be accomplished while remaining in one's own local church. As of this writing, BCA has over 1,000 students with students in every state of the country and in thirty-three countries around the world.

THE *Publications*

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Dr. Holloway has authored over 50 adult Bible study series and five books. If you enjoyed this Adult Bible Study, we recommend these other titles by Dr. Holloway. [The Fog of War](#) is a study on the book of Ecclesiastes and focuses on the downfall and recovery of King Solomon. [The Keys to the Kingdom](#) is a three-volume series studying the advice given by King Solomon at the peak of his spirituality as found in the book of Proverbs. [Ezekiel - A Nation on Life Support](#) is a two-volume series that relates the judgment of the nation of Israel to the current issues of today.

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