

## Session 7

### Attitude: A Window into a Child's Heart

#### **Summary of the Video** (from the Leaders Guide, page 37)

“You see them. You don't like them. In fact, sometimes they make you angry. Bad attitudes bring a stormy climate into any family. It's much easier to get kids to do the right thing than it is to get them to do it with a good attitude. This session is an essential for any family where bad attitudes exist. You'll learn the three components of an attitude and then use these components to make deep and lasting changes.”

#### **Introduction**

The difference between attitude and mood is that attitude has a focus. There is some particular trigger that sparks the attitude. Mood, however, does not have a focus. Mood just comes on; it is hard to get out of a mood such as “nobody loves me”... Attitude and mood can be real challenges.

#### **An Attitude is a Prepackaged Response to a Trigger**

\*In the example of Karen...Karen gets angry when corrected. The parents used behavior modification on her, but this method only dealt with the outward behavior. Instead the parents need to adjust Karen's attitude. If a child obeys but does it with a bad attitude, resentment builds up in a child.

\*Attitude is not all bad-- in fact, we all have attitudes (see definition). We need an attitude and it is valuable in family life. But we need to change bad attitudes to good attitudes.

\*Test yourself on these “trigger” words: Dunkin Donuts, roller coaster, motorcycle gangs, teenagers, people of Stolvania—the last, fictional name of a country, evokes no attitude because you have no prepackaged response—it is unknown..

\*Prepared responses are based on our experiences and information we have.

\*Attitudes are bad when they are counterproductive in life:

- Lazy attitude leads to irresponsibility,
- Angry attitude leads to a lot of conflict,
- Prideful attitude makes us un-teachable.

\*We need to focus on these and make changes.

#### **Attitudes Have 3 Components**

\***Behavior**—we see the rolling of the eyes, a slouch, a look on their face, posture, tone of voice. This is the part of the attitude that we see. It is the “flag” to let us know that the parent needs to address the heart.

\***Emotion**—a lot of bad attitudes come from anger

Demanding attitude says, “I want it and I want it now.”

Inferior attitude says, “I will never get it right.”

Victim attitude says, “I always get the worst part.”

There is the “I hate school” attitude.

Another one is “My brother is less than human” attitude.

The emotions our children have feed the attitude. If you address it on the spot, remember that there is emotion going on and it is going to feed the attitude and you may have an explosion. Even little children have fully developed emotions.

**\*Thinking Errors**—Thinking errors or coming to the wrong conclusion happens because the child may have a limited amount of information. Their thinking is wrong and that causes them to have a bad attitude.

In Philippians 2:5, in the New International Version of Scripture, the verse says, “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:” In the King James version, the verse says, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

\*Attitude is a mindset. It has to do with what we believe. It is the information we have, the experiences we have and who we choose to believe—these aspects of thought influence our attitudes.

\*Remember that not only do children deal with bad attitude, so do the parents.

\*Skit: teaching daughter to drive... Daughter had a flippant, arrogant attitude. The child did not have enough information. Dad had a fearful attitude that resulted in sarcasm and unkindness.

## **Proactive Solutions**

**\*Evaluate the influences**—the parent needs to evaluate the influences feeding information to the child. (For example, Jesus warned his disciples about the influence of the Pharisees.) Jesus said to be careful about the heart. Don’t be so worried about the outside, as the Pharisees were.

\*Tell children about instances of bad influences you see happening in their lives. Ask children if they can “handle” that influence. Say, “Do we need to pull away for a little bit?”

\*Sometimes we can’t remove our kids from the influence, so we have to teach them how to handle those influences. Teachers, for example, or peers they must work with at school.

\*Electronic influences – media/tv/video games—challenge children to see negative responses/attitudes in themselves caused by these influences.

**\*Teach children about emotions**—equip the child to handle them. Help children sort out and distinguish among emotions—anger, fear, grief—develop an “emotional vocabulary”. Help them know how to express various emotions. Talk about emotions. Model appropriate emotional responses.

\*For young kids, start with three basic emotions: mad, sad, glad.

**\*Address thinking errors**—Children have incomplete or erroneous thinking about life. We need to identify those incomplete or erroneous ideas. We can give them more information, “What conclusion is my child jumping to, and what is missing or wrong in their thinking?”

\*Track their thinking—provide more experience or more information.

\*Example: Son wanted to be like older boy who worked two jobs at \$9 per hours. This older boy saved \$3000. This was the son’s goal, too. Dad knew this was short sighted compared to college. The dad took the son to a recruiting fair and asked, “How much does a teacher make in the first year out of college?...30K... What about an accountant?.40K... a web designer? 50K.”

\*Dad identified an area in son’s attitude with missing information and provided better, more complete information without directly confronting the son. The son saw the larger picture of how much one could earn with a college education.

\*When we see the bad attitude, develop a plan for addressing it.

**Corrective Solutions** (when we see a wrong attitude that we need to deal with right away.)

***\*Confront directly***

\*Mom saw disrespect. She confronted her son. You may not see immediate change in this situation due to strong emotions present. Maybe have child take a break. This settles the emotions, then you can discuss the situation.

***\*Make observations***

\*This is a less direct approach. You might simply say "That was unkind" and move on. It avoids conflict. It fills in information or gives a "mirror" reflection to the child. They may be disrespectful without knowing it.

***\*Consider the timing***

\*Come back later (after emotion) to deal with issue. However, another child may lack motivation and needs immediate correction.

***\*Teach children a better response***

\*Tell them what to do, not what not to do. Teach them what they should do differently next time. Practice a better response. Teach a more cooperative or respectful response.

**Summary**

\*The heart is not an easy thing to change, thus this can be a challenge for parents. It takes time. Evaluate your kid's attitude. See how others perceive them. Coordinate with other adults (teachers, etc.) Take thought about both proactive and corrective solutions.

**As Parents We Need to Look at Our Attitudes Too**

\*We have attitudes (pre-packaged response) that elicit bad attitudes from our children. We need to adjust our bad attitudes. We can decide to change our attitudes.

\*There are two reasons that people make changes: 1) When we become uncomfortable with the status quo and 2) When we get a vision for a better way. It is the parents job, sometimes, to make our children uncomfortable with their current attitudes and behaviors. We also need to give them a vision for a better way.