

## What A Difference Attitude Makes!

This is a family thing –

As a group, we all agreed that the *attitude* we see in kids was most likely learned from their loving parents (so we can blame ours too). Regardless of how this happens, bad attitudes appear at various stages of our kid's life. During parenting this week, we were able to review some good ideas about how to keep our environmental conditions stable to lessen the chances of that “perfect storm” of bad attitudes:

1. **Be open to your kids** – ask questions that show you care what they think and how they feel, i.e.: "Tell me what you think." Minimize questioning them about every detail especially with the "why" question (yes, I know you feel it should be payback for the many questions you had to answer but maybe save that for another stage of life). If you do ask questions, ask questions to plant a seed, for example, "Can I get your input on..." Give everyone a chance to be part of the family. A good way to do this would be to give the kids an assignment, like helping pay the bills or planning a vacation. Also, allow kids to make choices about their world and pay more attention to their heart than how they dress or what they listen to (agree to disagree).
2. **Be your kid's best friend** - no, this doesn't mean you can't ever correct your kid (my closest friends are honest and help keep me in line or at least try) but it means your child always knows you will be there for them, you choose to spend time with them and you love them for who they are so... encourage relationships between you, your kids and their friends. Bring friends with you to do things. Have fun when you do things together. Make your home a place kids want to be. Bring kids into your home, feed them and - suggested in class - give them a little privacy when they have friends over and treat their friends like they are part of the family. Karen and I experienced a glimpse of this right after class as several kids congregated in Karen's office – all they needed were a few snacks (chips & pop tarts) and some places to sit (bean bags)! It made us chuckle!! Let your kid know you're the friend to call on when things aren't okay or when they are in trouble (and don't forget lesson #1 – no questions).
3. **Treat them like they have already become what you want them to be** - expect the best of your kids. With clear expectations, create an atmosphere that says, "I/we believe in you and expect you to use your head." An example of this is not having a curfew but allowing the child to come home “at a reasonable hour”. If their judgment needs help then discipline with an understanding that the person is more important than the problem. Decide if it is about rules or

relationships -pick relationship building above all else! Be predictable and consistent with your kids. Don't look for trouble like eye rolling or slamming doors. Kids, teenagers included, (actually it should just say, "people") will do dumb and stupid things – don't join them. When faced with an issue or problem, do you respond or react? You have to decide. James 1:26 says, "Anyone who says he's a Christian but doesn't control his sharp tongue is just fooling himself, and his religion isn't worth much." When we react to the situation we leave little room for learning because the child feels hurt or angry. In those moments when we are able to respond rather than react we create a better situation. We now have an opportunity to set boundaries while allowing the child to keep their sense of belonging. Remember, everyone is important. You have to continually make choices about how to respond. You have to be the straight line that flows with and through the crazy behavior. Proverbs 15:1 says, "A soft answer turns away wrath." Your attitude helps your kid (and you) survive the perfect storm.

**The perfect storm** conditions are set when things come together, like the physical, social and emotional development of our kids, the pressure of peers or expectations and our reactions... So here's how to react to fuel the "Perfect Storm":

- Avoid them
- Embarrass them, especially in front of their peers
- Bully them, constantly remind them who's boss
- Be rigid and critical
- Be close minded
- Have a "NO" face & attitude
- Speak with a harsh or degrading tone
- Be disrespectful to them, speak to your spouse with disrespect
- Don't apologize for anything
- Talk one way and walk another
- Question everything they do
- Be cheap and stingy
- Don't meet their needs without them asking for something
- Backslide spiritually

(We do not endorse trying to create the perfect storm because I know some of you are tempted)

A few notes on the parenting styles covered:

The Authoritarian parent: makes all choices for their kid, controls behavior with rewards and punishment, considers the parent as superior to the kid, “Do what I tell you to do because I said”... Kids typically rebel with this style. This style leaves little chance for the kid to learn self regulation or an understanding of how to make their own decisions.

The Permissive parent: makes sure the kid is happy at all costs and places priority on the kid rather than the spouse... The kid shouldn't be the center of the universe this robs them of self-respect and creates a “Disney Land” view of life.

The Authoritative parent – the best of both worlds! This parent gives kids choices, allows reality to be a teacher and sets clear guidelines with cooperation in mind.

Attitudes are a reflection of our thinking and reveal themselves in what we say, how we say it, and how we act. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. It is amazing to respond to a situation with only prayer and watch God work! In Romans 12:2, Paul advises to not copy the behavior and customs of the world but let God transform you by changing the way you think... What a difference attitude makes! Especially at home – where everybody is growing up together!

Thank you for allowing me to share in the Parenting group with you all this week! I love getting to hear from you about what works and what isn't working. I especially enjoyed hearing how important church is to you and your family and how important it was to you growing up! It encourages me as your kid's youth minister!

Staci Carey