

Get In The Game

Drills For Disciples: Part 7

Attitude Adjustment

Written By

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When it comes to being a great baseball player, attitude is of paramount importance. Think for a moment about why the coach heads out to the mound during a game. What's his purpose? What's he attempting to do with the pitcher who has done well to this point, but is experiencing a rough patch as hitters are hitting his best stuff? He's attempting to help the man with his attitude by telling him to calm down, to focus on the catcher's glove, to take some time between pitches and focus, and so forth. If the coach can shift the pitcher's attitude from the negative to the positive, then perhaps he can throw with greater precision, thereby helping the team.

All great players understand the importance of attitude:

There may be people that have more talent than you, but there's no excuse for anyone to work harder than you do (Derek Jeter, New York Yankees).

Never let the fear of striking out get in your way (Babe Ruth, outfielder for the New York Yankees).

Good is not good when better is expected (Vin Scully, famous baseball game announcer).

The difference between the impossible and the possible lies in a person's determination (Tommy Lasorda, Coach for the L.A. Dodgers).

Stubbornness usually is considered a negative; but I think that trait has been a positive for me (Cal Ripken Jr., Baltimore Orioles ... He played in 2,632 consecutive games over his sixteen year career).

These men played well because they understood just how important the right attitude is in the sport of baseball. Their quotes, which match their lifestyles, clearly challenge other players to adjust their attitudes so they, too, can be champions.

Spiritually speaking, there is definitely a one-to-one correspondence here between the right attitude and one's growth and effectiveness as a player. Show me a player on the Lord's team who has a can-do, positive, no-pain-no-gain attitude and I'll show you someone who knows how to play to win ... despite the obstacles or skill of the opponents. Show me a player who leads God's local team to victories and I'll show you someone who evidences a positive attitude toward the drills of a disciple of Jesus Christ. He knows them and he practices them ... constantly.

One drill this type of stand-out player is deeply committed to is called generosity in giving to the team. He's generous with his resources because he loves the Team Owner. He's generous with his resources because he loves the main coach for laying his life down for the team's sin. He's generous with his resources because he knows that one day he'll give account to the Team Owner regarding how well and wisely he invested those resources to advance the team.

Maybe your attitude toward team generosity is nowhere near this level ... but you'd like it to be. How do you get there? Well, let's pretend that I'm the coach heading out to the mound and you're the pitcher. I have one main message I want you to embrace so you can help the team achieve another win. What's the message?

A Generous Player Has A Great Attitude

My father, a dyed-in-the-wool Dodger fan, had a black baseball hat I'll never forget. Emblazoned across the front in bright yellow letters it read: *Check Yourself*. Applied to baseball the message couldn't have been clearer: *Check your attitude*. If it needs adjusting so you can help the team win, then start adjusting. What attitudes should you adjust toward in order to be a generous player? Glad you asked. There are three main ones we need to consider.

He's A Content Player

What is he content with? His glove, cleats, uniform, hat, flip-down shades, and everything else in his life. Yeah, he's not always in the market to the next best glove. I had a Wilson A2002 outfielder's glove so I really didn't need another glove. (Thanks, Dad, for the investment. It sells on E-Bay for over \$100.00. Amazing.) He doesn't care if the black leather on his cleats is showing some wear. He's not one who has to have the latest and greatest pin striped uniform. No, he just loves to play the game. He also loves to support the team generously with his finances, and he's wise enough to know that the more content he is the better he's positioned to a giver of givers.

Where did this mature player get this type attitude inspiration? From another great player named Paul. Listen and learn:

⁶But godliness *actually* is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment (1 Timothy 6).

You can be a godly, maturing player and not have contentment with the resources in your life; however, as Paul, the spiritual Sultan of Swat (a nickname for Babe Ruth), says here godliness is more beneficial when wedded to contentment in the life of the player.¹ Why is this so?

- If you are content, you will be more apt to use the resources the Team Owner has entrusted to you for His glory and the advancement of the team.
- If you are content, you will actually have more resources to invest in the team's temporal and eternal goals because it's not squandered or tied up in sub-prime, secondary investments.
- If you are content, you'll have less things to worry about, resulting in more time to focus on developing drills for deeper discipleship.
- If you are content, you'll be able to better steer away from worldly temptations because they will hold little or no attraction for you.
- If you are content, you won't be out shopping all the time and spending your limited resources, giving you more time to invest those resources in things which echo in eternity.
- If you are content, you'll feel more relaxed and less stressed because you are not attempting to keep up with materialistic drive of your opposing team.
- If you are content, well, I'm sure you can finish the sentence with your own observations.

Godliness with contentment is, in fact, great gain.

Why else would you want to be content? The spiritual Sultan of Swat tells you in his ensuing words:

⁷For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either (1 Timothy 6).

His point should be affixed to every marquee in the world. We come into the world with no clothes, and the Team Owner will call us to our heavenly home without earthly clothes So .. why all the fuss, worry, fixation with the kind of clothes you have or how many clothes you have

¹ Question: How do you keep from just spending to spend? Martin Lindstrom's book *Brandwashed: Tricks Companies Use To Manipulate Minds & Persuade us To Buy* is a must read to help you. He gives numerous practical tips: (1) Don't bring your kids with you when you shop. You'll be prone to spend 29% more than normal; (2) Don't shop with your partner because you'll typically spend 19% more; (3) Don't use a shopping cart because you will spend more by filling the void. People who carry their purchased spend 8% less; (4) Carry \$100 bills People are less likely to break large bills when the shop; (5) Limit the size of the bag you carry because you will, again, naturally attempt to fill the void; (6) Don't rest on furniture provided by the store because it's strategically located near items they want to move; (7) Watch out for giant deals in big boxes. People who dive into these piles spend more because they think they are on some kind of treasure hunt or something, resulting in more expenditures.

hanging in your closet? Sure, it's nice to have nice team uniforms; however, when the Team Owner summons you to the Clubhouse, will it really matter that you bought all your clothes at Nordstrom, Lord & Taylor, Forever 21 or Lululemon? Will it matter you purchased all your uniforms at American Eagle, Urban Outfitters, Eastbay, Brandy Melville, or Jos. A. Banks? No. It won't matter at all. Will it matter when you get to the gate at the Clubhouse you only wore clothes from Hollister, PacSun, and Ralph Lauren? No. It won't even be a thought.

What will matter is how you played the spiritual game, how you lived and invested wisely with the financial resources entrusted to you in your personal player contract. And for those players who learned contentment, they will have helped the team because their resources weren't all tied up in earthly concerns. They will have helped to build stadiums for various teams where they lived by means of their generosity. They will have helped numerous local teams meet and exceed their budgets designed to reach players on the opposing team for the Team Owner, and to assist godly players in their quest to mature in their abilities on the field. They will, also, have touched countless lives outside the stadium, lives which needed to sense the love and care of the Team Owner, Jesus.

Paul was one of those stellar players. I know this is true from studying how he played, and from listening to his words which reflect his winning attitude. Here's some you just can't forget:

⁸If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content (1 Timothy 6).

What an attitude! Ostensibly, this statement means in our vernacular: If you have the basics to live comfortably, then enjoy what you have and stop wanting to upgrade all the time. Really, how many winter sweaters do you need? How many pairs of gloves? How many Jerry Garcia ties? How many apps on your iPhone? How many songs on your iTunes account? How many pairs of various shades of red pumps? How many Coach purses? How many sets of golf clubs?

At some point, you mature as a player and you start putting the brakes on always having to have more of what you've already got, of always having to have the newest electronic gizmo, of replacing what's working, of shopping with no real aim or purpose, of buying instead of mending and repairing, of having to have certain logos on your clothes, of having to have the newest fashionable whatever, of, well, I'm sure you can figure out the rest on your own. Yes, as you mature as a team player, you'll find yourself becoming more content with what you have. When this begins to occur, you'll be amazed at how much extra you have in your financial resources, and this amazement will move you to becoming more generous to team/ kingdom causes.

Perhaps the last couple of innings were tough for you because you've been wrapped up in you. Now's the time to listen to the coach and pitch better than you ever have before. Your next power pitch is called generosity and you deliver it with an attitude of total contentment. If you've not quite embraced that attitude yet, then I think there is time on the mound for a short prayer to the Team Owner: *Lord, forgive me for insatiably putting the temporal above the eternal, the physical above the spiritual, and the corruptible above the incorruptible.*

And if you need a little more insight in order to adjust your discontent attitude, then keep on reading from Paul the player of all players:

⁹But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have

wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. ¹¹But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance *and* gentleness (1 Timothy 6).

Discontentment places you on materialistic treadmill which only increases in speed. It will leave you unhappy, in debt, dissatisfied, disillusioned and with little to show as to how you advanced the team of God.

Counseling a Christian couple desiring to get married some twenty-five years ago, I realized quickly the young lady, with a great paying job, needed to quickly get off the treadmill called the love of money and things. Looking at their budget, it saw \$720 written on the credit card line. Initially, I thought this represented what she had on a credit card. She wasted no time correcting me, “Pastor, that’s my monthly payment to Visa.”

I about stopped breathing as I talked to this Christian twenty-seven-year-old bride-to-be.

Quickly and methodically, I described how they should go about eliminating this slavish debt. When I finished, the educated and bright young woman looked at me and said, “Pastor, do you mean you are telling me that when I go through Macy’s on my way into the mall I can’t purchase anything I see which I might like?”

You can probably guess my response.

I share this team story because it too readily represents how discontentment keeps you so tied up with the ever-changing cares of the world, you have little to invest in the kingdom through the local church.

May the Team Owner help you move toward adjusting your attitude in this crucial area. You’ll be amazed at how freed up you will be to be generous toward things which count for all eternity. Thank God for attitude adjustments.

A second great attitude from All-Star players is also recorded in our timeless, God-given playbook:

He’s A Joyous Player

When is this skilled player happy? He’s happy when he’s giving generously of his resources to advance the Team Owner’s team.² We appeal, again, to Paul because he knows so much about this topic. Writing to the players in ancient Corinth, listen to what he told them:

¹Now, brethren, we *wish* to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, ²that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. ³For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, *they gave* of their own accord, ⁴begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints ... (2 Corinthians 8).

Paul sought to collect a large, special offering from other churches for the needy mother church in Jerusalem. The churches in Macedonia, in places like Philippi and Thessalonica, gave generously with an attitude of abundant joy. Despite being persecuted for being team members, despite losing jobs because of their relationship with the Team Owner, despite living in poverty

² What a grumpy giver like? There usually overly cautious, overly questioning, overly critical, and overly fussy when the church moves up and out. Question: When’s the last time you gave generously and joyously?

themselves, despite having limited monies to support their own growing church, these mature players stepped up to the plate in a magnanimous fashion when Paul presented the need of the Jerusalem church. When most would have thought of a million reasons why it wasn't time to give, these players joyously begged for the opportunity to give because their eyes were focused on the Lord and not life.

Logically, these Macedonian players became a model to the wealthy Corinthian players. You see this in Paul's words to them as their coach:

¹For it is superfluous for me to write to you about this ministry to the saints; ²for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians, *namely*, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them. ³But I have sent the brethren, in order that our boasting about you may not be made empty in this case, so that, as I was saying, you may be prepared; ⁴otherwise if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to speak of you—will be put to shame by this confidence. ⁵So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, so that the same would be ready as a bountiful gift and not affected by covetousness (2 Corinthians 9).

How interesting. Paul motivated the Macedonians to give to this worthy financial cause by pointing them to the financial promise of the Corinthian players. Now that the time for financial commitment came down to the wire, Paul wanted to make sure they fulfilled their magnanimous pledge.

To prepare to collect that pledge, note how Paul instructed these maturing players:

⁶Now this *I say*, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷Each one *must do* just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9).

The investment principle can't be missed: The more we cheerfully invest in the Lord's team, the more return on investment we'll receive. And, no, he's not talking about receiving double or triple your money, as some prosperity preachers would lead you to believe. He's talking about blessing across the board in your life. Your family will be blessed. Your children will be blessed. Your job will be blessed. Yes, blessing we sprout up all over your life because you gave bountifully and with the right, joyous attitude. He's also talking about, as we will see in our study on the letter "E" from our acronym, the blessings God will bestow on us in eternity based our level of kingdom investment.

A third and final unique attitude of generous players on the Lord's team is this:

He's A Hopeful Player

Hopeful in what way? Hopeful in an eschatological fashion. What does this mean? To understand this important attitude we must turn to Jeremiah 32 for a moment.

¹The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. ²Now at that

time the army of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem, and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the guard, which *was in* the house of the king of Judah ...

The tenth year of King Zedekiah, king of Judah, was 587 B.C., exactly one year before the Babylonians sacked the city and carried everyone off into captivity. At the time of this writing, the enemy was literally outside the gates, preparing for the big and final assault. The King had Jeremiah imprisoned because he didn't like the message he gave him.

³because Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, "Why do you prophesy, saying, 'Thus says the LORD, "Behold, I am about to give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will take it; ⁴and Zedekiah king of Judah will not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but he will surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will speak with him face to face and see him eye to eye; ⁵and he will take Zedekiah to Babylon, and he will be there until I visit him," declares the LORD. "If you fight against the Chaldeans, you will not succeed" '?"

Zedekiah didn't like the message of gloom, doom, and defeat, so he had the pernicious prophet locked up so he didn't have to listen to him. Sounds like people in our world who don't want to hear what God has to say. They attempt to silence the voice of the godly so they can pretend things are going along just great when the opposite is true. Anyway, back to the text.

At this most dismal time in the life of the nation and in the life of Jeremiah, God had the prophet do the most illogical thing.

⁶And Jeremiah said, "The word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁷"Behold, Hanamel the son of Shallum your uncle is coming to you, saying, "Buy for yourself my field which is at Anathoth, for you have the right of redemption to buy *it*." ' ⁸"Then Hanamel my uncle's son came to me in the court of the guard according to the word of the LORD and said to me, 'Buy my field, please, that is at Anathoth, which is in the land of Benjamin; for you have the right of possession and the redemption is yours; buy *it* for yourself.' Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD. ⁹"I bought the field which was at Anathoth from Hanamel my uncle's son, and I weighed out the silver for him, seventeen shekels of silver. ¹⁰"I signed and sealed the deed, and called in witnesses, and weighed out the silver on the scales. ¹¹"Then I took the deeds of purchase, both the sealed *copy containing* the terms and conditions and the open *copy*;

Hold it right there. Jeremiah used his earthly resources, based on God's direction, to buy land in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin (just north of Jerusalem) ... land the foreign troops were already standing on. Now you know why I said this investment of generous giving was highly illogical. Such are the ways of God.

Why did Jeremiah buy land here? Why did he make this investment when the future of his people, God's people, looked bleak? Because God gave Jeremiah the promise, after he purchased the land, that He would, in fact, one day cause Israel to return to this land and become a blessed people:

³⁶“Now therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel concerning this city of which you say, ‘It is given into the hand of the king of Babylon by sword, by famine and by pestilence.’ ³⁷“Behold, I will gather them out of all the lands to which I have driven them in My anger, in My wrath and in great indignation; and I will bring them back to this place and make them dwell in safety. ³⁸“They shall be My people, and I will be their God; ...

God promised to bless his people in the future, really in the kingdom age, and Jeremiah’s generous and seemingly illogical investment merely underscored how God would use it to bless Israelites beyond the lifetime of the prophet. Imagine this. You’re in prison with no hope of release, your nation is about to fall to your dreaded enemies, and you step out in faith and trust that God will use your investment to definitively state how He would, and will, touch future lives. Talk about hope.

How does this apply to us as players on the team Jeremiah played on years ago? Since we



are in a high density military community, many of you might feel you are in “prison” at the Pentagon, or locked up at the CIA, or chained up at the DIA, or doing time at the National War College. And if you’re a typical government employee, you might be tempted to think, “Why in the world would I give generously to this local team called BCC to help them achieve their budget and building goals when I’m only going to be here for such a short time?” Good question. The answer to your

question is inscribed all over the pages of Jeremiah 32. Just as God called His team player to invest based on the hope of blessings which would come to future players, God calls you and me to invest in a new building for the benefit of people we probably will never know. Really, we are enjoying the obedience of Jeremiah-types who gave “illogically” many years ago. We are benefitting from all those other players who were only here for a brief moment but who generously invested so we might be blessed and take the team forward to newer, bigger spiritual victories.

During our building program for the youth building several years ago, one of our Army veteran’s stepped up to the plate and became Jeremiah. He had retired from the Army as an officer and was in a position to retire from his second job; however, God grabbed his heart and he decided to work an additional three years so he could give the income to the worthy project.

What sacrifice. What faith. What vision.

He, and his wife, gave that salary so countless teens, they would never meet, would be impacted with the gospel and Word of God for years to come. Sure, from a human standpoint, their decision looked financially illogical, but since they invested it in kingdom work it dripped of logic. Now, their financial investment, coupled with that of many others who also gave magnanimously to that program, pays dividends for eternity.

The question now is clear: Will you be the next Jeremiah to future generations?