

Equipped to have a Jesus attitude

What do the following people have in common? Joe loves bacon and eggs for breakfast; Julie gets irritated when people talk too loudly on their cell phones in public places; Mark thinks it would be a good idea to increase the length of the government's term in office; and Sarah believes in the personal benefits of daily exercise. The common bond between all these people is they each hold attitudes.

Attitudes are made up of our beliefs and feelings and you would expect them to be good predictors of our behaviour. Surprisingly, perhaps, this isn't always the case. For example, someone might say she believes in the wisdom of saving money regularly and dislikes having little money in the bank, but she doesn't translate her attitude into action by opening a high interest-paying savings account.

Psychological research suggests that one way of maximizing the probability of an attitude-behaviour link is to have strongly held attitudes. This was true in the life of Jesus - He didn't hold attitudes half-heartedly - and, as a result, there was never a mismatch between his attitudes and his actions. The apostle Paul issued this challenge: "*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus*"¹ and he went on to state at least three types of attitude held by the Lord which correlated perfectly with His behaviour.

1. A servant attitude

A servant occupies a subordinate position. His job is not to call the shots, but to consider the interests of others. What the servant wants is not of prime importance. To serve well, he has to lay his own ambitions to one side and focus on how best he can serve other people. Jesus, committed to being the "suffering servant", displayed this attitude perfectly. He didn't just think or feel like a servant - he acted by "*taking the very nature of a servant*".² I don't know about you, but a servant attitude doesn't come naturally to me. I like to be in control, doing my own thing, pushing forward my own agenda. Then, I'm reminded that my attitude "*should be the same as that of Christ Jesus*" and I realize I have a long way to go...

2. A humble attitude

What do you think of when you hear the word "humble"? For some people, this word conjures up ideas of low-self esteem or being a doormat for others to walk all over. Real humility, however, is much more positive than this because it involves having a correct perspective of who we are. This means a truly humble person doesn't have too high, *or too low*, an opinion of herself. We see evidence of Jesus' humility in coming to our world in human form and then on numerous occasions throughout His earthly life. As Son of God and Son of Man, Jesus was able to display a humble attitude³ because He had a right view of who He was.

3. An obedient attitude

A few years ago we welcomed a new puppy into our home and it didn't take long before we realized he needed to have some obedience training. Fortunately, Rowan was very eager to please and soon reached an acceptable level of obedience. It was important that he learned to obey our commands for his own safety and for other people's enjoyment. Obedience is not just for animals, however. It's for humans as well, whether it's stopping at a red traffic light or heeding instructions given to us by someone in authority. Jesus recognized the need for obedience, too. He was primarily concerned about obeying His heavenly Father in His thoughts, words and actions, not selectively - as we're often guilty of doing - but all the time.

How would you rate your attitude on the Jesus scale? How closely do you imitate him by having a servant attitude; a humble attitude; and an obedient attitude? Searching questions, huh?

¹ Philippians 2:5 (NIV)

² Philippians 2:7 (NIV)

³ Philippians 2:8