

Your Attitude Makes a Difference

Lesson
31

Purpose	To help class members understand that much of their happiness depends on their attitude.
----------------	--

Preparation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Prayerfully study 1 Nephi 2:16; 3:4–7; Helaman 15:7.2. Make a copy of the “Attitude Indicator,” found at the end of the lesson (page 184), for each class member.3. Materials needed:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. A pen or pencil for each class member.b. A set of scriptures and a scripture marking pencil for each class member. Continue to encourage class members to bring their own scriptures to class each week.
--------------------	--

<i>Note to the teacher</i>	<i>Because we have a knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ and know that we are spirit children of God, we should be the most positive-thinking people in the world. We know that our loving Father in Heaven has put us on earth to succeed, not to fail. Help class members understand that living the gospel of Jesus Christ can help us develop a positive attitude and create happiness, peace, and contentment in our own and others’ lives.</i>
----------------------------	--

Suggested Lesson Development	Attitude Is a Powerful Influence
-------------------------------------	---

Chalkboard discussion	<p>Ask class members to think of two or three things they know they should do but do not always feel like doing. Ask one class member to list these items on the chalkboard as class members share their ideas. After class members have a chance to respond, ask the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why is it sometimes difficult to do these things? What blessings do you receive when you do these things?• What would help you do the things you know you should do?• How does your attitude about a task affect how well or how fast you do it? <p>Explain that when we choose to have a positive attitude, we usually perform our work better and faster, and we usually enjoy it more. A positive attitude can also help us as we strive to live the gospel of Jesus Christ.</p>
-----------------------	--

Quotation	<p>Have a class member read the following statement from President Spencer W. Kimball:</p> <p>“I remind you . . . that regardless of your present age, you are building your life; . . . it can be full of joy and happiness, or it can be full of misery. It all depends upon you and your attitudes, for your altitude, or the height you climb, is dependent upon your attitude or your response to situations” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1974, 112–13; or <i>Ensign</i>, Nov. 1974, 80).</p>
-----------	--

Story and discussion

Explain that today's lesson discusses the importance of attitude and how to develop a more positive attitude.

Relate in your own words the following story told by Elder Thomas S. Monson when he was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

"In the mission over which I presided, there was a small branch; it consisted of two families. I had been invited to be the speaker at one of the meetings. I was not accustomed to such small branches; the ward over which I presided had 1,050 people. That Sunday we went into the place where the Saints met. It was a rented hall. We didn't meet on the main floor; we met in a room [in] the basement, about nine people in all.

"After the meeting, the branch president asked if he could visit with me. He said, 'We would like to have a chapel in our branch.' I said, 'Someday.' Then he opened a copy of one of the Church magazines and showed me pictures of chapels of Australia and New Zealand. He said, 'This is the one we would like to build,' and he pointed to a building that would house maybe four hundred people, that would cost far more money than they had.

"I said, 'Oh, you will not be able to afford that until you have several hundred members.' He said, 'We intend to have many hundreds of members.' And then he asked me if I would send six missionaries into his branch. He indicated that his family would personally share the gospel with the city, and this he did.

"One day, with the missionaries in his little store, he said, 'Elders, let's pray.' And they got down upon their knees and prayed. This branch president then said, 'This is the greatest day in the city of St. Thomas. This is the day when the gospel shall really begin to be preached with effectiveness in this city. This is the day when we begin to build our new chapel.'

"The missionaries asked, 'Whom are we going to teach? We have no investigators.' The branch president said, 'Hand me the telephone directory.' And he turned to the back of the directory where men of all professions were listed. He said, 'If we are going to build a new chapel, we need an architect who is a Mormon. And since we don't have an architect who is a member of this branch, we must convert one.' Then he went down the list and said, 'Who shall be the first Mormon architect in St. Thomas?' And he identified a name. Then he continued with a contractor or builder, and a plumber, and an electrician, and a doctor, and a lawyer. Then he personally went to each and invited him into his home so that the missionaries might present the message and he and his family could bear testimony after the missionaries had given their message.

"What was the result of that sharing? I am God's witness that in the three years that I served in eastern Canada, I saw that branch grow from two families to a branch of almost three hundred members. They constructed their beautiful chapel. I attended the meeting where that building held perhaps four hundred persons. What was the secret? It was the attitude 'we can achieve our goal'" (in Conference Report, Amsterdam Area Conference, Aug. 1976, 8-9).

- How did this branch achieve such amazing growth?
- What would have happened if the branch president and his family had just chosen to think about how hard the job would be? How did their attitudes affect what they were able to accomplish?

Our Attitude Affects Our Happiness

Story and
discussion

Tell the following story:

Two friends were preparing to go to the same summer camp for a month. Steven thought that summer camp was a waste of time and that all the popular kids were staying home, sleeping in and playing video games. He did not see any point in going to the classes or participating in any of the activities, but his parents had paid for the camp and insisted that he go. Richard, on the other hand, had been saving up for camp, doing yard work and other jobs to earn money. He loved learning new things and making friends. He packed his entire suitcase three days before he left, and as he walked out the door he promised to send postcards to each member of his family.

- If you asked Steven and Richard about their camp experiences when they got home, what do you think they would say? How might their responses be different? Why?
- How can our attitude towards life affect how happy we are?

Activity

Distribute a pen or pencil and a copy of the “Attitude Indicator” to each class member. Explain that each section of the “Attitude Indicator” contains two opposite attitudes with three empty boxes between them. Ask class members to read the handout and decide which attitude of each pair best describes them.

For example, in the first section, if they frequently count their blessings, they should mark the box next to that side of the section. If the other side describes them more accurately (if they often think about things that they do not have), then they should mark that side instead. If they sometimes feel either way, they should put a mark in the middle box. (You may want to remind class members that we all have different attitudes from time to time. Emphasize that the boxes they mark do not make them a good or bad person.)

After class members have had time to complete the “Attitude Indicator,” discuss a few sections with them. Have class members explain why they can be happier if they have or develop the attitudes listed on the left side of the handout.

We Can Choose to Have a Positive Attitude

Discussion

- What challenges do you have right now that might be easier if you developed a positive attitude about them? (Answers might include doing homework, getting along with brothers and sisters, obeying parents, doing jobs around the house, attending Church meetings, and choosing good friends.)

Explain to class members that they can choose what their attitude will be. Each of us can develop a positive attitude that will bring us happiness and success.

Scripture and
chalkboard
discussion

Write *Ways to Change Your Attitude*: on the chalkboard.

Have class members read and mark 1 Nephi 3:4–7.

- What attitude did Laman and Lemuel have toward the instructions Lehi had received from the Lord? What was Nephi’s attitude?

- On what did Nephi base his positive attitude about obtaining the plates? (His faith that he would be successful because the Lord would not ask him to do an impossible thing; see 1 Nephi 3:7.)
- How did Nephi’s attitude help him? (He trusted the Lord and was able to obtain the brass plates.)

Write *Trust in the Lord* on the chalkboard under *Ways to Change Your Attitude*. Explain that having faith that the Lord will not ask us to do something impossible can help us maintain a good attitude while we seek a way to do what he has asked us to do.

- What are some other things you can do to develop a more positive attitude?

Discuss each answer briefly and add it to the list on the chalkboard. You may want to use the following answers to help class members get started:

1. Pray (see 1 Nephi 2:16).

- How does prayer help us keep a positive attitude?

2. Read the scriptures (see Helaman 15:7).

- If negative attitudes are influencing us, how can reading the scriptures bring a change in our lives?

As you finish this discussion, emphasize that a positive attitude does not always come to us naturally. We can use these suggestions as we work to improve our attitude.

Testimony

Testify to class members that they will be happier when they maintain a positive attitude. You may want to share a personal experience in which you were blessed for having or developing a positive attitude. Encourage class members to use the suggestions that have been discussed as they work for greater happiness.

Enrichment Activities

You may want to use one or more of these activities during the lesson.

1. Show the class several different kinds of seeds (from flowers, vegetables, weeds, and so on). Point out that the seeds are small but will grow into something much larger if they are planted and allowed to take root.

Explain that our attitudes are seeds from which our actions grow, and as with seeds, we harvest more than we plant. A positive attitude grows and produces more positive attitudes, for ourselves and those around us. A negative attitude produces more negative attitudes.

Set a blooming flower or another beautiful plant on the classroom table and place beside it an ugly weed (or show pictures of these plants).

- If your “attitude seeds” keep growing, what will they become—beautiful flowers or ugly weeds? How can we plant good seeds?

2. Sing with class members or read the words to “Scatter Sunshine” (*Hymns*, no. 230). Discuss the hymn’s message about how our attitudes can affect others.

3. Tell the following story:

Suzanne did not like gym class. She was tall and uncoordinated, and she felt like a failure in gym. One day the teacher asked for a volunteer to teach a younger boy to swim during gym class time. Suzanne thought nothing could be worse than playing basketball, so she volunteered.

Teaching Henry, a young mentally handicapped boy, turned out to be a real challenge. As the lessons progressed, Suzanne became very frustrated because Henry would not listen to her. She began to be rude and unkind to him. One night Suzanne prayed and asked Heavenly Father to soften Henry's heart so he would obey her. The next few days Henry acted just the same. However, Suzanne noticed that he had a nice smile. Then she laughed at something he did. Then she started talking with him instead of yelling at him. As Suzanne started being positive and kind to Henry, he became more willing to listen and follow her directions. By the end of the semester he had learned to swim the width of the pool. Suzanne realized that it wasn't Henry's heart that needed softening; it was her own. (See Suzanne C. Stewart, "Sink or Swim," *New Era*, Jan. 1994, 44–45.)

- How was Henry's behavior affected by Suzanne's attitude toward him?
- How can our attitude affect those around us?
- When has your attitude changed a negative situation in your life into a positive situation?

Attitude Indicator

I often count my blessings.				I often think about things that I do not have.
I am comfortable when I have enough money and possessions for necessities.				I often wish for great wealth and many possessions.
I am happy when I am busy.				I often complain that I have too much to do.
I treat everyone with respect.				I feel I am better than others.
I am willing to accept and follow through with responsibilities.				I would rather have others take responsibility.
I enjoy serving others.				I am too busy to help others.
I try to find good in others.				I often criticize others and find fault.
I try to develop my gifts and talents.				I often feel sorry for myself.
I have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.				I am not sure Jesus Christ is important to me personally.
The gospel of Jesus Christ guides my life.				I don't think the gospel of Jesus Christ has any effect on my life.