

Hi. This is Wayne Rivers at the Family Business Institute. Thanks for tuning in. We hope you'll leave your comments and your thoughts and feelings about our presentations in our blogs. Just let us know what you're thinking. If you'd like to see some things in particular that we're not covering, let us know and we'll work them into the queue.

So, I want to talk about choices today. The choices we make reveal who we are as people, so I think maybe I told the story one time years ago about when I was 17. I was in a car accident and I was in the hospital for six weeks and I was wondering why the staff reacted to the kids. I was in this pediatric ward. I was 17, so they take all the teenagers and put them together. They thought that's better than just having you in the general population of sick people in the hospital. In this kind of ward room and there's other kids my age, plus or minus a few years and lots of different people from different places and different backgrounds and all that stuff.

So, I remember this kid beside me and the staff, the doctors treated everybody impersonally. It was a teaching hospital. The doctors just didn't have much time, but the nursing staff, obviously, that's the people you came in contact with the most. The nursing staff treated this kid next to me and he was in the bed right next to me and they treated him really different from how they treated me. I was trying to figure out why that was and some of the nurses, later on after he had moved on and moved onto a different hospital, actually, they told me it was because of his attitude. He treated them poorly. He sort of was dictatorial with them, treated them like the help, so to speak, versus treating them like human beings. Anybody wants to be respected in their jobs. Anyway, but it came down to his attitude. He was negative. He was negative and one of the nurses in particular heard him tell me a story. I had this bolt through my leg and an open wound and all this other stuff.

So anyway, he told me a story about how a relative of his got this horrible staph infection and lost a limb. Well, this nurse, her name was Jane, went berserk. I mean, she went off on him for telling me such a story. Heck, I didn't care. I didn't think it was gonna happen to me. When you're 17, I'm already in the hospital. What's worse? What else could happen to me? But she went off and just told the guy, really read him the riot act. So, that's the kind of thing that informed their sense of who he was. It was his attitude, this negative stuff.

There was another young woman that they introduced me to. I was injured. She was grievously injured. She had actually been in a car accident. I mean, what else can happen to a 17 year old? She had been sitting in the backseat, not wearing a seatbelt. Nobody wore seatbelts in the '70s and she was actually ejected through the front windshield of the car. I mean, she was grievously injured and just, I mean, cut from head to toe. She was a delightful young woman named Margaret. She chose to come around and talk to the other kids who had been in car accidents, me in particular in this case.

You think about the different attitudes. You've got this one kid over here that's sour, negative and, "Your leg's gonna fall off because of an infection." You've got this other girl, Margaret, who was injured even worse than I was. Yet, she's a ray of sunshine and everything's gonna be fine and, "Look at me. I'm better now and the doctors and nurses here do a terrific job." So, it was all about attitude.

Now to bring this point home as it relates to your family business, I got caught with a sour attitude a few years ago. Our client, Don Woodruff from Woodruff Construction in Fort Dodge, Iowa, we're on the phone and I'm crying in my beer about the lousy economy of 2009 or 10 or 11 or whatever it was. Don figuratively, not literally, but we're on the phone together and he kind of grabbed me by my lapels and gave me a good shake, which is what I needed.

He said, "Wayne, it's your job as the leader to find a way to make sure your company prospers in good times or bad. That's what we do," and thank God for that two by four upside the head. Don's good at that. But it really shook me up and it got me going in the right direction so attitude is everything. It's your job, irrespective of economic conditions or the people on your team or just losing a big client, it's your job to find a way to make your family business prosper in good times or bad. A great component of that is the attitude with which you choose to live.

This is Wayne Rivers at The Family Business Institute. Thank you.