

How Good Can I Get?

By Ben Peterson
www.petersontrumpet.com

How good can you get? It depends! Specifically, it depends on three things: your general intelligence, your specific aptitude, and your motivational inclination. You really have no control over your intelligence or aptitude for certain things. Those traits can be identified even during the earliest stages of your life. The third component, though, can be changed over time and eventually determines how good you become. It is your willingness to work and the attitude that you bring to your study. The world is full of people who begin with few natural gifts, but who excel beyond their peers through hard work. The world is also full of gifted “naturals” who fall short of excellence despite their advantageous beginnings. Intelligence and aptitude provide a baseline of potential, but it is the variable of an attitude, a mindset, that determines what becomes of your initial potential.

“Attitude” is a complex term that can encompass and include many other concepts. Related ideas include: manner of behavior, mental demeanor, relative position or orientation towards something, or a posture or disposition that can communicate emotional meaning. We tend to characterize attitudes as either “good” or “bad,” but what we are really doing is identifying attitudes that produce good or bad results. Disrespect for others, inconsiderate actions, and a sense of personal entitlement are thought of as bad attitudes because they often result in isolation from others, hurt feelings, and failure to achieve goals. Helpfulness, a positive disposition, and concentrated effort are thought of as good attitudes because they often result in beneficial connection with others, encouraging results, and achievement of goals.

It is a person’s attitude towards their work that determines how much time they’re willing to commit, how much personal discomfort they are willing to endure, and how disciplined they are over time to achieve their goals. To put it another way, their attitude determines what kind of a work ethic they have. And that work ethic determines what they will ultimately be able to make of their personal potential. Charles Swindoll wrote: “The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace... We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude... I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it.” How good can you get? It depends.