

## INTRO

If you've dealt with humans before, you've probably encountered difficult ones. Maybe even perpetually unpleasant ones who make others' lives difficult. There are many names for these people – but a mostly understood one might be "jerk." Doesn't sound very Christian, right? Perhaps not. But let us explain.

This Brewed Theology is about dealing with bullies, creeps, jerks, tyrants, tormentors, despots, backstabbers, egomaniacs, and megalomaniacs in the workplace (admit it, we all have), while also avoiding being or becoming one. It has its origins in the book *The No Asshole Rule: Building a Civilized Workplace and Surviving One That Isn't* (2007, Balance publishing), a New York Times and Businessweek bestseller, written by Dr. Robert Sutton. Sutton served on the Graduate School of Business faculty at Stanford University from 1983-2023. Although you won't find the book in Christian bookstores, Sutton's research-driven analysis, helpful observations, and proactive recommendations surprisingly track with identifiable Christian principles. While we often say, "all are welcome," that doesn't mean "all behaviors are welcome." There are ways to be – and *not* to be – in community together.

The Crafted Conversation for this Brewed Theology doesn't explicitly use scripture for a guide to how we should handle "jerks," you should bring the lenses of Jesus, the Bible, church, and faith with you.

# Don't Be A [JERK] Working Together & Living Together

a Brewed Theology  
conversation starter\*

## QUESTIONS TO PONDER

Who are the most difficult people you've ever had to work (or play, learn, or live) with? Would you have called them an "jerk"? (or worse? even just in your head?) What about someone a family member or friend dealt with? What did you do about it? Why are some people so difficult? When have *you* been the difficult person? What sort of prayers have you prayed (or could you pray) for "jerks?" What or Who led you to recognize that? How do "good Christian people" balance forgiveness and justice with correcting bad behavior and not being a "doormat"? What Bible stories contain people who were...difficult? What happened to them? What would Jesus say about, to, or for "jerks"?

## BIBLE BASICS

Read these. Consider what each has to do with "divisions".

- **Proverbs 15:1-2** – A brief proverb on soft and harsh words, wisdom and folly.
- **1 Peter 3:9** – On repaying evil with evil, or blessing. What if this were
- **Romans 12:16-18** – Some exhortations to "live peaceably with all." Read more around this passage.

## ESSENTIAL READINGS and VIDEOS\* (click the **headings** for links to knowledge)

### A SYNOPSIS OF *THE NO A\*\*HOLE RULE* (pardon our language)

There are plenty of online synopses of *The No Asshole Rule*. Most lack detail and assume that the reader has either read the book or is trying to bluff their way through an easy Blue Book exam. We encourage you to read Brewed Theology's five-page book summary. It's just right—not too light, not too heavy, appropriately complete.

### LISTEN (OR READ): THE OFFICE WITHOUT A\*\*HOLES

This podcast infuses humor, personality, and hope into this topic. It's a 40-minute 2019 TED podcast hosted by organizational psychologist Adam Grant titled *The Office Without A\*\*holes*. A key guest on the podcast is Robert Sutton, whose book inspired this study. Sutton discusses the evolution of the no-[jerk] rule, particularly his complete rejection of the notion that organizations benefit from keeping at least one [jerk] on staff. Equally noteworthy are the other experts featured in the conversation—a linguist, a CEO of a highly rated company by *Inc.* and *Entrepreneur* magazines, a biographer who wrote the definitive book on Steve Jobs, and a Harvard Law School professor who co-authored *Difficult Conversations*. They provide valuable strategies for dealing with jerks in the workplace—and, on occasion, successfully modifying their behavior. They also discuss the interview processes and questions they use to avoid hiring jerks. If you're pressed for time, [here's a link to a transcript to read](#).

### MEET DR. ROBERT SUTTON, AND READ THE ACTUAL BOOK

Watch the above ~7min video by Dr. Sutton (noting especially the mention of Christian values at 4:39). And/or just read Sutton's book that started it all. It's an easy read; you don't need an MBA to understand it. Available at [Amazon.com](#) or used from hordes of booksellers, like on [eBay](#).

### RELATED: DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS AND HOW TO DISCUSS WHAT MATTERS MOST

*The Office Without A\*\*holes* podcast (above) and its transcript reference an interesting take on responding to jerks, as suggested by Sheila Heen, attorney, Harvard Law School professor, and co-author of *Difficult Conversations*. Browse a summary of that book's content, or just read [the book itself](#).

*We at Brewed Theology claim no authorship or ownership of suggested readings, the links provided, or their host websites. Links connect to their original sources. If a link is broken, please contact your facilitator or report it to [brewedtheology@gmail.com](mailto:brewedtheology@gmail.com). Homework readings are proven (at least in our minds) to boost thoughtfulness and conversation. While not required, they are highly suggested.*