

## Attitude Is Everything

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It's more contagious than any known virus, with the ability to transcend time and space. It's dangerously subtle, impacting our thoughts, feelings and behavior. I'm not talking about a new COVID strain, mind you; I'm talking about our attitudes. The B.L.O.T.: Attitude is everything. Either we control it or it controls us.

Simply put, our attitude is our underlying way of thinking or feeling. It's a combination of thoughts and emotions that create a predisposition to a positive or negative response to future events.

Each of our underlying attitudes is learned through our individual life experiences. We can't control the circumstances in life but we can control our attitude and response. Again, our attitudes are something that we can consciously think about and change. We can choose our attitude. But unfortunately, most of us never really take the time, or apply the discipline that it takes to control and change our attitude. As a result, our attitudes are deeply entrenched, driving uncontrolled thoughts, emotions and behaviors in the majority of our life. This is often the challenge to overcoming a sin that has plagued us our entire life. As an example (I don't know many people with this problem): If we're impatient by nature, it's because we have a bad underlying attitude—a predisposition of pride and a lack of forbearance that needs to be fixed. (I'm a bit surprised my editor did not bold that sentence.)

Impatient responses come from an attitude that my time is precious and more valuable. It comes from and an attitude that is void of proper love to forbear and not get angry (as we just heard about ["Be Angry and Do Not Sin"]) or frustrated.

In II Cor 10, Paul reminds us that our battle here on earth is not a physical battle in the flesh. It is a spiritual battle—spiritual warfare in our minds. We have bring into captivity, he says, our every thought to control our attitudes

and ensure they remain in alignment to God's will. Our attitudes are contagious and influenced by the people we spend time with in both work and leisure and church. Every day, our attitudes are being conditioned by Satan's world.

In his 1928 book on propaganda, Edward Bernard warned about propaganda's impact on attitudes: "Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism control the true ruling power of our country." Jacques Elul wrote in his 1962 book, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's attitudes*, "Propaganda does not aim to elevate man but to make him serve." And in the recent book, *A Century of Spin*, co-authors Miller and Dinan write, "Of all the transcendent powers that shape our modern lives, propaganda is the most powerful and insidious."

It's all about controlling the narrative, brethren. That is, it is all about telling your side of the story and repeating it enough to influence people's attitude. We know advertisers have done this for years. They control the narrative and repeat it over and over again with that slogan because they know, over time, it influences our behavior as we choose products and services. We know governments worldwide spend enormous money to control the narrative. (Mark spoke about this a few weeks back.)

Have we in God's church made Satan's job easier by not working harder to examine and control our attitudes? Have we not worked hard enough to control the narrative? Are we unconsciously propagating his hopelessness narrative? How much of our conversations are negative, reciting the evils in this world? How much time do we spend researching and talking about conspiracy theories and the latest doom-and-gloom economic outlook? Have we become negative nellys?

Without doubt, the world we live in is evil and getting worse. It is not getting any better, and I'm not suggesting that we turn a blind eye, either. But I am suggesting that we be super careful that we don't allow our thoughts and words to over focus on the evil around us, because doing so is to the detriment of spreading the incredible love of God and our hope in His awesome plan. Remember, Jesus Christ came to spread the gospel—the *good* news, not the bad news!

We know positive people are more successful in just about everything. According to a recent study by John Hopkins, people with a family history of heart disease who maintain a positive outlook are 33% less likely to have a heart attack. The only difference is the positive outlook. The correlation between positivity and health is irrefutable: stronger immune systems, less risk of disease, lower stress, and longer life. And did you know the Bible tells us that positive people have a much higher probability of spiritual success?

**Proverbs 15:13** A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.

**Proverbs 17:22** A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones.

How do we maintain a positive outlook in such a negative world? It is not easy, but we must control the narrative and reframe our thoughts as Paul says in Romans 12. We should be conformed to this world but rather transformed into His likeness through the renewing of our mind.

We find God's instruction for controlling our attitude throughout His written word. As God commissions Joshua, He tells him,

**Joshua 1:8-9** This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.

Joshua's conversation was to remain focused on reciting aspects of God's inspired words. He's told to meditate on these words day and night and to do them. If he does, God will make his way prosperous and he will have good success. God commands, then: "Be positive, be strong; do not afraid, nor dismayed - for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go!"

As we go into battle with Satan's world, we must follow suit. We should not be discouraged or overly negative in our thoughts or our words. We're the children of God! He is right here with us wherever we go! Knowing this, our conversations should be overwhelmingly positive, hopeful, and optimistic as we wait eagerly for our citizenship in God's Kingdom!

**Philippians 4:6-8** Be anxious for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

To control our attitude, we must take back control the narrative, as Paul says, and "think on these things." Our minds, attitudes and conversation should stay focused on the positive, brethren—things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report. When we do, our attitude is transformed and the peace of God transcends human understanding and protects our hearts and minds through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We're reminded of God's incredible promises and faithfulness when we meditate on His written words. When we focus our thoughts on His thoughts, when we speak about the things that are pleasing to Him, we grow in His likeness and reframe our attitudes as we change the narrative from hopeless to hopeful and from victim to victor! As Paul tells us in Romans 8, *all things* (not some things) work together for the good of His chosen people who love Him. When we walk in God's powerful spirit of love, we indeed can bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, and endure all things as that positive attitude shines brightly in this evil world.

Let's not allow the negativity and evil in this world to drag us down. We need to be aware of the times, but we should not become proclaimers of the bad news for we have way too much good news in the gospel that needs to be repeated! A positive attitude is contagious, and we can all change our attitude to be more God-like, to be hopeful.

As members of God's family, let's take back control of the narrative, reframe our attitude, and focus our thoughts and conversation on 'these things' that glorify God. Let's share our faith-building stories of God's active hand in our lives. Let's talk more about our incredible eternal future in God's Kingdom with Him, with no more sin, sorrow, death or darkness. What an incredible future we have to look forward to! Let's spend more time reflecting and talking about the two, infinitely most powerful beings that are creating us in their awesome image! They really love us and they deserve all of our attention.

As Jesus tells us in John 16, we are going to have tribulation in this world. But be of good cheer—be positive—for He has overcome the world! And let's remember: We've read the end of the book, and God wins, and we are part of His family, so we win too! If God is for us, who can be against us?