



12

STRATEGIES to

WIN

THE BATTLE  
of the MIND

# POWER THOUGHTS

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WIN THE BATTLE OF THE MIND

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New York Boston Nashville

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## CHAPTER

# 1

### *The Power of a Positive You*

Olympic gold medalist Scott Hamilton has said, “The only disability in life is a bad attitude.” It’s true. Nothing will hinder or handicap you in life as severely as a bad attitude. When I use the word *attitude*, I am referring to the system of thoughts, the mental posture, the mind-set, or the way of thinking with which a person approaches life. For example, if a person has a bad attitude toward work, he will think thoughts such as these:

- *I have the most boring job on Earth.*
- *My boss is too demanding.*
- *This company needs to pay me more and treat me better.*
- *I should get more vacation time.*
- *I always have to do the “grunt work.”*
- *No one here appreciates me.*
- *I may have to work with these people around me, but I don’t have to be nice to them.*

All those thoughts combine to make one big bad attitude. How could a person with those thoughts running through his mind all day ever enjoy his work, become a positive employee, or make valuable contributions to his company? He can’t—unless he changes his thoughts and develops a better attitude. Even if your employer definitely needs to make changes and improve in several areas you

must realize that being negative about your job does not change your employer, but it does change your attitude into one that is “power-draining.”

Do you think the person I just described would be a good candidate for a raise or a promotion? Certainly not. But, what about a man whose attitude is built on thoughts like these?

- *I am so thankful to have a job.*
- *I am going to do my very best every day.*
- *I believe that God gives me favor every day with my boss.*
- *I am glad to be part of a team with my coworkers even though none of us are perfect.*
- *The work environment may not be ideal, but I will do my part to make it pleasant for myself and those around me.*
- *I am committed to be focused and diligent while I'm on company time.*
- *I would like a raise, so I will work hard to earn it.*

No doubt, this person's positive attitude will position him for promotion in his company, and if he has the same type of attitude in other areas, he will enjoy a happy and fulfilling life. Even if his employer never recognizes his attributes, God does and will either change the employer's heart or provide better employment. God always rewards openly what we do in secret for His honor and glory.

## It's Up to You

All of us have the privilege and responsibility of choosing our attitudes, no matter what circumstances or situations we find ourselves in. The key word here is *choosing*. Attitudes don't just happen; they are the products of our choices. Over time, the thought patterns established in our minds can put us on “autopilot,” which means that when certain types of situations occur, we are preprogrammed to think about them in certain ways. We have to interrupt this

autopilot function and learn to stop our minds from going in the directions they have gone for years if that direction is not producing good things in our lives. For example:

- You may have spent years dreading being with your family for holiday celebrations, but this year, you can choose to think, *Being with family may not be my favorite activity, but I am going to purposefully look for something good in each of my relatives.*
- You may have a habit of complaining of feeling overwhelmed when bills arrive in your mailbox every month, but you can begin to think, *I am going to pay as much as possible on this bill, and little by little I am getting out of debt.*

It is vital for you to understand that you can choose your own thinking. You may be in a habit of merely thinking whatever falls into your mind, but you are now in the process of retraining your mind one thought at a time. As you learn to think as God thinks it enables Him to partner with you in accomplishing whatever you need to accomplish.

## Think about It

What do you believe is the most important thought or attitude you need to change in your life?

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## An Attitude Adjustment

Winston Churchill noted that “Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference.” I couldn’t agree more. All of us need “attitude adjustments” at times, and an attitude adjustment is the result of changing the way we think.

If we keep our attitudes up and positive, we will continue to climb higher and higher in life and be able to soar. But if our attitudes are down and negative, we will fall and stay on the ground of life, never able to make the journeys God intends for us or reach the destinations He has planned for us.

You may have heard the saying: “Your attitude determines your altitude.” In other words, a positive attitude will cause you to “fly high” in life, while a negative attitude will keep you down. Just as pilots have certain rules to follow to keep planes oriented, with the right attitudes and altitudes, I want to share a few rules you can follow in life to help keep your attitude positive so you can keep your “altitude” where it should be.

***Rule #1: Maintain the right attitude when the going gets rough.***

No matter what happens to you, determine to go through it with the right attitude. In fact, determine *beforehand* that you will keep a positive attitude in the midst of every negative situation that presents itself to you. If you make this decision and meditate on it during a good time in your life, then when difficulty arises you will already be prepared to maintain a good attitude. For example, if an unexpected bill or major repair presents itself to you, make up your mind that you will not complain because you have to tighten your belt financially for a few months to make up for it. Instead, look at the challenge as an adventure and decide you will find creative ways to cut costs for a while and look for ways to enjoy life without spending money. I have witnessed over and over how God helps people who keep a good attitude in challenging times. I recently heard of a couple who were struggling financially but were also determined to keep a good, positive, and thankful attitude. The man, who we will call John, worked in a restaurant and one day a customer had a heart attack while eating lunch there. John had some medical training from being in the armed forces and was able to administer CPR to keep the man breathing and his heart beating until the paramedics arrived. As it turned out, the man whose life

was saved happened to be very wealthy and in appreciation he gave John a check for five thousand dollars as a way of saying, “Thank you for saving my life.” The good attitude the couple maintained in their financial struggle opened the door for God to work miraculously in their lives.

Throughout history, we have examples of people who have maintained good attitudes in the face of difficult times and thereby turned their problems into opportunities. Specifically, I think of various individuals who were imprisoned and composed some of the most influential writing the world has ever known, such as: “Letter from Birmingham Jail” by Martin Luther King Jr., *Pilgrim’s Progress* by John Bunyan, and Sir Walter Raleigh’s *The History of the World*. While the famous composer Ludwig van Beethoven was not literally imprisoned, he was almost totally deaf and suffered great sorrow during a period of his life—and that was when he wrote his greatest symphonies. No doubt, these people could have had terrible attitudes as they faced trouble, but they made a decision and maintained the best of attitudes through the worst of times and made contributions that are still read and heard in the world today.

I don’t think they were simply born as positive people—I believe they had to make a choice and decided to make one that would benefit themselves as well as the world. One of the worst mistakes we can make in our thinking is to believe we are just not like *those positive people* and we can’t help it. If you think you can’t do anything about your thinking and attitude then you’re defeated before you even begin to try.

No matter what difficulty you encounter, *maintaining* the right attitude will be much easier than *regaining* the right attitude, so as soon as you sense your attitude losing altitude, make an adjustment. Remember to resist the devil at his onset (see 1 Peter 5:8, 9). In other words, as soon as the enemy sends negative thoughts into your mind, stop them. Determine that you will not agree with them and decide that you will not listen to his voice anymore. Discipline yourself to stand strong with your positive attitude in every circumstance. Misery will always be an option; you can always choose to be unhappy and pessimistic, but you can also choose to be optimistic and happy.

## Think about It

How can you begin to make attitude adjustments now to help you maintain a good attitude the next time you find yourself up against a challenge? It may be as easy as saying, “I realize that life is not perfect but with God’s help I am going to be stable even during the storms of life.”

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### *Rule #2: Realize the rough times won’t last forever.*

I have heard many people who live in parts of the world where there are four distinct seasons talk about how much they enjoy winter, spring, summer, and fall. They like the variety and the unique beauty, qualities, and opportunities of each season. The Bible tells us God Himself changes times and seasons (see Daniel 2:21). Seasons change; this is true in the natural world and it is true in regard to the seasons of our lives. It means that difficult times do not last forever. We may have “off” days, tough weeks, bad months, or even a year that seems to have more than its share of troubles, but every negative experience does come to an end.

Some of the trying situations we find ourselves in seem to go on far too long. When this happens, we are usually tempted to complain or become discouraged. Instead, we need to promptly adjust our attitudes and ask God to teach us something valuable as we press through the situation at hand. According to James 1:2–3, God uses trials and pressure to produce good results in our lives. He always wants to bless us. Sometimes His blessings come through unexpected circumstances we may view as negative, but if we will keep positive attitudes in the midst of those situations, we will experience the positive results God desires to give us.

If you are going through a difficult time right now, let me remind you that this probably isn’t the first challenge you’ve ever faced.

You survived the last one (and probably learned some valuable lessons through it) and you will survive this one too. Your trials are temporary; they won't last forever. Better days are on their way. Just keep your attitude "up" instead of "down," and remember that this is just a season and it *will* pass.

## Think about It

Look back over the course of your life and remember some of the trials you have faced. How has God used them to bring something good into your life?

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Now, remind yourself He will also bring good out of the current situation and the next one too!

When David faced the giant Goliath, he remembered the lion and the bear he had already defeated and it gave him courage in his current situation.

### ***Rule #3: Don't make major decisions during a storm.***

No one's entire life is like one big, long sunny day. At some point, we all face storms—whether they come in the form of unexpected illness, job loss, financial crisis, marital difficulties, problems with children, or any number of other scenarios that are stressful, intense, and important. I have faced many storms in my life—some like the quick afternoon storms that are common in summertime and some that seemed like category four hurricanes. If I have learned anything about weathering the storms of life, I have learned that they don't last forever, as I mentioned in Rule #2, and that if at all possible, I do not need to make major decisions in the midst of them.

When the storms of life arise, it's best to keep your mind and

emotions as still as possible. Thoughts and feelings often run wild in the midst of crises, but those are exactly the times we need to be careful about making decisions. We must remain calm and discipline ourselves to focus on doing what we can do and trusting God to do what we cannot do.

Just as a pilot's bad decision can cause a plane to be diverted from its intended destination or even to make a dangerous emergency landing, a bad decision can divert or delay you from reaching your destiny. Next time you face a storm or crisis in your life, I hope you'll remember these words, which I often say: "Let emotions subside before you decide." Do your best to let things settle down before you make major decisions. You may not always have that choice, but as much as possible, put significant decisions on hold until your storm passes. Just as the wind blows about wildly during a storm, our thoughts can become quite wild and frantic, and that is not the best time to make major decisions.

## Think about It

What do you consider your biggest mental or emotional challenge when storms arise in your life? Is it fear, anxiety, impatience, over-reacting, or something else?

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Determine today to wait on wisdom and not respond emotionally or out of panic and fear.

***Rule #4: Stay in touch with the "control tower."***

Air traffic controllers are the only people on Earth who can see the "big picture" of what's going on in the sky and who have the knowledge and authority to tell planes to slow down or speed up, fly higher or fly lower, avoid or navigate through storms, or take alternate routes

to their destinations. According to the National Air Traffic Controllers Association, air traffic controllers in the United States handle about eighty-seven thousand flights every day, and sixty-four million takeoffs and landings per year. Interestingly, air traffic controllers manage not only commercial flights, but also private aviation, military, and cargo air traffic, as well as air taxis. If all the flights air traffic controllers handle at any given time were to be posted on monitors in airports, more than 460 monitors would be needed. With so many flights taking off and landing each day, pilots have to stay in touch with the control towers if they want to make safe, on-time flights.

Just as airplane pilots must maintain contact with air traffic control towers, you and I must stay in touch with God—the one who sees the big picture of our lives and who orchestrates everything that involves us. He makes sure everything that needs to happen in our lives happens at the right time, moves at the appropriate speed, and causes us to arrive safely at the “destinations” He has planned for us.

If we want to stay on track with God and do so with good attitudes, we have to make communication with Him a priority in our daily schedules. He will help you navigate the ups and downs of life, and find your way through the “cloudy” days when you can’t seem to see the next step you need to take. I can’t urge you strongly enough to communicate with Him frequently through prayer, reading His Word, worship, and simple acknowledgment of His presence and guidance throughout every day. If you want to learn more about how to stay in touch with God moment by moment and develop a close relationship of communication with Him, I recommend my books *The Power of Simple Prayer* and *Knowing God Intimately*.

## Think about It

How is your personal relationship with God? If it’s less satisfying than you would like, what adjustments can you make to improve it?

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***Rule #5: Try to keep things in perspective.***

One of the definitions for *perspective* in *Webster's Dictionary* is “the interrelation in which a subject or its parts are mentally viewed.” Interesting, isn't it? This definition makes a clear distinction. It implies that our mental capacities can cause us to see things in ways that may not be accurate.

When we lack proper perspective, we may consider minor situations to be major crises, or we may do the opposite and view significant situations as “no big deal.” Either tendency—exaggerating things or minimizing them—can lead to problems, so we need to do our best to see things as they really are and not allow them to be out of proportion.

I know a young man who spent many years of his life frequently trying to prove he was right in every disagreement. He habitually argued and became angry, and in fact that happened so often that he lost a lot of friends. He simply was not enjoyable to be with. After this continued for a period of years I finally began to notice a big change in him. He wasn't argumentative if someone had a different opinion from his or did not want to do something his way. I asked him what had made him change and he said, “I have discovered that being right is highly overrated.” When he looked at being right in proper perspective and compared it to the turmoil he experienced, he finally realized it just was not worth it.

Try to form a habit of looking at the whole of life instead of centering on one thing that may be upsetting you. Thinking excessively about the problems we encounter in life only makes them appear to be larger than they really are. When you are experiencing any issue that is upsetting to you take time to purposely recall the good things that you enjoy also. King David did this during times of depression and it helped him keep things in perspective (see Psalm 42).

## Think about It

Are you good at keeping things in perspective or is this an area in which you need to improve?

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### A Positive You Is a Powerful You

An organization once offered a bounty of five thousand dollars apiece for wolves that were captured alive. Enticed by the idea of such money, Sam and Jed eagerly set out through the forests and into the mountains in search of the animals that could secure their fortune.

They fell asleep under the stars one night, exhausted after days of enthusiastic hunting. Sam awoke in the middle of the night and saw about fifty wolves surrounding him and Jed—hungry wolves, baring their teeth, with their eyes glistening at the thought of easy human prey.

Realizing what was going on, Sam nudged his friend and said eagerly, “Jed, wake up! We’re rich!”<sup>1</sup>

A positive attitude enables you to make the best of every situation, and that gives you power over your circumstances instead of allowing your circumstances to have power over you. This was certainly true for Sam. While most people would be terrified when surrounded by a wolf pack, Sam saw the opportunity he’d been waiting for.

Make a commitment today to be a positive person. The more positive you are, the more powerful you’ll be.