

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

29. Are You the Most Positive Person You Know?

You are listening to episode 29 of the Encouragement for Real Life podcast, titled, "Are You the Most Positive Person You Know?" Welcome back to the podcast today. I'm glad you're here! Would you describe yourself as optimistic, hopeful, forward-looking, or positive? Do you tend to see the brighter side of life or the silver lining in most situations? Are you the most positive person you know?

Well, in this episode we're taking a look at our attitudes. We are examining our perspectives, and doing what I call, "a checkup from the neck up." Because I believe God has a lot to say about our attitudes. And I say it's a good time of year to pause and reflect on how we are doing, because sometimes it's right now in this season when we most need an attitude adjustment. When we're in the last half of winter. So, hang with me here for this next short while and together we'll find help, hope, and a whole lot of encouragement along the way.

Be the most positive and enthusiastic person you know.

H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

H. Jackson Brown, Jr., that's a tall order, sir. It is for me anyway.

Especially during a worldwide pandemic. Especially during the last half of winter, when it feels like it's going to hang on forever. The pandemic feels like that too, doesn't it? I mean, I *want* to be the most positive and enthusiastic person I know. Really, I do. It sounds lovely. It sounds like a great goal. But, in all reality, I know I'm not.

Thinking about this today, however, reminded me how I used to be. I used to be the most positive person I knew. I always saw the glass half-full. My attitude was optimistic and uplifting. I always saw the sunny side of life.

But lately? That's not the case. Some days I struggle with my attitude. Some days my thinkin' is stinkin'. And some days I am far from the most positive person I know. My attitude has been a bit more pessimistic and gloomy than it has been in the past. And let me tell you, I don't like it. Not one bit.

But I don't think I'm the only one struggling with this.

I think many of us are struggling to keep a positive attitude and a hopeful outlook lately. At least that's what I hear from others. Because life as we've known it for so long has been altered rather quickly and drastically. Not only have we faced unexpected circumstances, we are now adjusting to a "new normal," whatever "normal" is.

Because I believe we've all experienced trauma in one form or another during these last two years with this virus. Some of us, whether we realize it or not, are dealing with various forms of PTSD, and we're struggling to land on solid ground. Our minds, emotions, and physical bodies keep the score when it

comes to trauma and stress. And we've had lots of experience with both in the last couple years, haven't we?

So, it's no wonder I'm not the most positive person I know. It's no wonder we as a society have waned a bit in our enthusiasm. But I'm thinking it's time to make a change. I'm thinking today is a good day to begin making some adjustments to our attitudes. Because our attitudes matter.

So, what is an attitude anyway?

Dictionary.com defines attitude as: *manner, disposition, feeling, position, etc., with regard to a person or thing; tendency or orientation, especially of the mind.* Thesaurus.com added: *mental outlook, belief, mindset, perspective, and point of view.*

I think of our attitudes as kind of like filters with how we see the world, life, and our situations. We either see things through this filter, our attitudes, as bright and shiny or as gloomy and dark. It all depends on our filters, our attitudes! I think lately my filter has gotten a bit dirty and cloudy.

It's time to wash my filter off and clean it up a bit.

Because I know I can do better.

I know I want to do better. I want to see life through a much cleaner filter! As I think more about this, I wonder if I have let this pandemic get the best of me. Or maybe I haven't filled my mind with enough positive / uplifting / inspiring things lately. Maybe I haven't prayed about this (I know I haven't). Or maybe I just needed a wake up call today. To make some changes and shake things up.

We become what we think about.

Earl Nightingale

I've also heard it said, "What we think about, we bring about." We all know our thoughts impact our lives in tremendous ways. We discussed this in greater detail in episode 24. Yes, our thoughts are powerful. Our mindset determines much. So, I believe it's wise of us to reflect and check our thoughts every now and then. And then to take it one step further and make adjustments when and where needed.

It all begins with reflection.

The thing is, I might not have noticed my attitude if I wouldn't have paused to reflect today. Because the slide happens so gradually, doesn't it? We may not even realize we are no longer the most positive person we once were. I say it's a good day to do a check.

How are you doing with this, friend? Are you the most positive person you know? I hope you are. How do you remain positive and enthusiastic? What's your secret to keeping your attitude bright and sunny? Or are you struggling a bit with this, too? Has your attitude been more pessimistic than optimistic lately?

Think about the most positive person you know (besides yourself). What stands out to you about him or her? What makes him or her the most positive person you know? Is it because of a stress-free life? Probably not. Who doesn't have at least a little stress? Is it because he or she never has a bad day or discouraging seasons? Probably not either. Does life always go his or her way? Um, that's unlikely, too. Because we know we are each dealing with something in this life, this person is dealing with something

(or many things) too. Just like you and me. So, how does this person do it? How do the most positive people we know stay so positive? What's their secret?

The positive person I'm thinking of fills her mind with the things of God. She has a generous heart and is always about giving and serving. She trusts God with her life, and her life is not easy by any means. And she prays often and journals a lot. She's quite the inspiration to me. It's clear to me, this person's secret is her connection with God through her faith.

So, what about you and me?

If our optimism has been clouded recently, how can you and I become more positive and enthusiastic?

For starters, I say we clean our lenses. Our filters. I'm at the age where I'm forced to wear reading glasses, and my reading glasses get dirty often, probably because of how much I use them. Not only are they sometimes filled with my fingerprints, but with little Nolan's (my grandson's) as well. Cleaning our lenses or filters helps us see clearer. It helps brighten our view. And just like one swipe of a lens cleaner, sometimes just one simple prayer can clean up our filters and clear up our attitudes. "Please adjust my attitude today, God. Replace my cloudy attitude with Your sunshiny one." Or "God, I know my attitude stinks today. I'm really struggling here. Please help me shift my attitude to an attitude like Yours."

After cleaning our lenses, it's usually not a "one and done" kind of thing. Just like my reading glasses need cleaned daily from all the smudges, so might our attitudes. We might need to continue cleaning our lenses often throughout the day. "Here I am again, Lord. Please change my attitude in this moment. I can't have a good attitude without You."

The more we ask God to help us with our attitudes, the more we get in the habit of doing so. The more we do it, the more it will be natural to just turn to God for assistance. It just becomes a habit.

Asking God for help keeps our attitudes in check.

It's kind of like with my teeth aligners. Since August I've been straightening my teeth with teeth aligners, which are clear braces that fit over my teeth, kind of like retainers. They are guides for my teeth and are straightening them as I wear them. They are correcting my crooked teeth. Kind of like God straightening our attitudes each time we ask for help. On their own, my teeth want to go back to how they used to be. And when I've forgotten to put my aligners in for a stretch of time, well, I can tell they've already begun to move. To move back to what they've known for so long. Same goes with us. If we go days without seeking God's assistance in helping us with our attitudes, our attitudes can naturally go back to with what they are familiar. And for me, that means a less than positive attitude.

Sometimes it takes hard work and effort to keep our attitudes in alignment.

But when we partner with God, giving Him permission to guide our attitudes, we do this in His strength and not our own. Because God never thinks a negative thought. He never has a bad attitude. So, doesn't it make sense to go to God for help with our attitudes? To ask Him to influence our attitudes? And to give our attitudes to the One who can impact them?

This reminds me of Ephesians 4:23:

to take a fresh breath and to let God renew your attitude and spirit.

Ephesians 4:23 VOICE

God can renew our attitudes anytime we ask. He won't force His way on us, but when we ask, He's there, ready to help. And did you catch the wording in this verse? "... let God renew your attitude and spirit." We must allow Him, to give Him permission, to renew our attitudes. He will help us when we ask.

The thing is, though, I don't just desire to be the most positive person I know and have a positive attitude, I also want the second part of H. Jackson Brown, Jr.'s quote. I also desire to be the most enthusiastic person I know. I know for sure I'm not that. But I want to be.

How about you? Are you the most enthusiastic person you know?

In talking with God each day I'm adding my request for His help in equipping me to be a more enthusiastic person. And who better to ask for help, as the source of enthusiasm?

The word "enthusiasm" comes from the Greek word "entheos" which means "the God within" or "full of God." And the happiest, most interesting people are those who have found the secret of maintaining their enthusiasm, that God within. Because God is within us, we have every reason and ability to be enthusiastic people!

The secret to maintaining that enthusiasm is staying plugged into our source, God.

Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you. Romans 12:2 MSG

We could all use a little more enthusiasm these days, couldn't we?

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm."

Because God is within me, that gives me every reason and ability to be a more enthusiastic person. Not for my sake, but for His and for those around me. Enthusiasm is contagious, and so is lack of enthusiasm. Let's be people of enthusiasm.

I believe God calls us to be positive and enthusiastic people. I believe because He is, we are to be. May we take the steps necessary to become the most positive and enthusiastic people we know by pausing to reflect, by cleaning our lenses and asking God for His equipping, and by drawing near to Him for strength in improving our attitudes. Before we know it, we may just find how God has transformed you and me in this way to influence the world around us with positive and enthusiastic attitudes. I'm ready, aren't you?

And sometimes God works through others to help us get back on track with our attitudes. If you're finding yourself in the place where you could benefit from the professional help of someone like a trained Christian counselor, or a pastor, or a trusted friend, please take the step forward with that. I do this almost monthly and find it extremely helpful and beneficial for every area of my life.

Looking for an encouraging place to connect with others in a positive, uplifting community? I personally invite you over to our Encouragement for Real Life Community on Facebook. This week we are

discussing this idea of being the most positive and people on the planet, and ways to achieve that. Know you are welcome there! The link for this group is in the show notes.

If you found encouragement and hope in this episode, I invite you to subscribe to this podcast so you don't miss a single episode. Please rate it and review it so others can find this encouragement too.

Thank you for joining me here today. I appreciate you. God bless you!

Julie Lefebvre