

How to stay “Up” when everyone else is down

Last week we examined the importance of encouraging yourself – by getting “up” on the inside. But how can you stay “up” when everyone around you is down? How can you keep your spirits high in a negative environment? God wants you to be an enthusiastic happy person. He purposed for you to be “up” (on top of every situation) all of the time.

But why should you be “up” all the time? **Deuteronomy 28:2** provides an obvious reason why, **“All these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you.”** When armed with the knowledge that all of God’s blessings are designed to overwhelm you, surely you have a good enough reason to be “up” (and stay up) – to be happy and enthusiastic about your life. Happiness is a choice. When you get up each morning you can choose to be happy or you can choose to be miserable and dissatisfied with everything. It’s entirely up to you. It’s your life – it’s your choice!

Happiness is a quality decision you choose to make, not an emotion you feel. If you are constantly listening to your emotions you will never stay “up.” You must make up your mind that you are going to be happy, in spite of your emotions. Many of you live in constant turmoil. You’re always upset at something or other; or you are always frustrated at not getting the results you desire, but your happiness is just a decision away! It’s as close to you as your thoughts are.

God wants you to be happy right where you are, right now. Even scientific research agrees that one of the healthiest things you can do is laugh. So why not start by learning to smile more often. You may be going through some tough times, and feel that you have good reason to be unhappy. Yet, being unhappy won’t change anything. Things only change when you agree with God’s word, and not with your circumstances. Laugh in the face of defeat, and in the face of potential disaster. For, *greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.*

There is something truly magnetic and attractive about a happy and enthusiastic person. Most of us are drawn to people who are consistently “up,” people that are stimulating and exhilarating. What they possess is contagious! I love the story of Tom Sawyer, who as a young boy was told to go outside and paint the fence. Like most young lads, Tom wasn’t that keen on working. He would rather go out and play with his friends. But instead of getting disgruntled he decided to make the best of that situation. So he went out and started to paint the fence with great enthusiasm and excitement (as though he was really enjoying it).

When Tom’s friends came round and saw that he was having so much fun painting the fence, they became envious of him. Their response was, “Hey, Tom! Would you let us try painting that fence also?” “Oh, no” Tom replied, “This is my fence. This is my project. You could never do what I am doing.” He played it up real big. And you probably know how the story ends.

When it was all done and dusted, Tom Sawyer was left sitting back watching his friends do all the work. Notice, because Tom had decided to approach the chore with excitement and enthusiasm, his friends couldn’t resist getting involved. Enthusiasm is like a magnet.

Some of you may be thinking, *“I don’t know what’s been wrong with me. I’ve lost my drive and my enthusiasm. I now feel like I’m just going through the motions.”* Well, believe me, regardless of your stressful situation, your financial status, past failures or how you’re feeling – you can remain “up” and enthusiastic.

This has been made possible because God provided a blueprint for life that will keep you in victory mode (spiritually, emotionally and materially).

Psalm 144:15 declares, ***“Happy are the people whose God is the Lord.”*** Notice, you can never be *happy* if you have any other focus in your life. Jesus said, ***“No one can’t serve two masters”*** [Matthew 6:24]. Therefore, happiness is following the right path towards your God given destiny. You cannot expect to stay enthusiastic about anything you’re involved in if it’s not God’s intended plan for you. So never stay where God has not assigned you, as you will eventually hit rock bottom. And always go where you’re celebrated – not tolerated! God’s favour must be noticeable in what you’ve chosen to do.

Here are three things you can do to keep yourself “up” (happy) and enthusiastic:

[1] Build a positive image of God

When the chips are down, and all hell has broken loose, what is your spontaneous view of God? Is He a harsh authoritarian taskmaster, or is He a loving Heavenly Father? In **Luke 15** we see a glimpse of the Father that Jesus knew. All three parables exemplify the great love and concern that God has for mankind. Jesus talks about the lost sheep, the lost coin and the prodigal son, illustrating the deep concern that God has for the lost. **Jeremiah 29: 11-14** reads, ***“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. When you call upon Me and go and pray to Me, I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you says the Lord...”***

A positive concept and image of God will cause total **trust** to permeate through every aspect of your life. The absolute obedience and profound respect that Jesus had for His Father suggests that His “God picture” resulted in complete **trust**. Remember, you cannot truly love someone and yet withhold your trust. Trust keeps drawing from love as a well keeps drawing from an underground stream. If Jesus didn’t trust His Father He would never have gone to the cross.

Regularly enlarge and expand your view of God. Spend time developing a sure and secure image of God. Build a mind photo that strengthens your faith. Remember, faith is an absolute trust in the faithfulness of God.

[2] Recognise the limitations of satan

No one has been a loser for long as the devil has been. To stay “up” there is certainly a need for you to understand spiritual warfare, and the need to grasp the restricted reach of demonic influence. Through God’s Word you can learn to understand, and identify, the range of limitations that the powers, principalities and rulers of darkness have. The devil does not possess unrestricted access into your life anymore. He may still be a liar, a deceiver and a manipulator but he’s been completely disarmed (put out of business). Satan has been crushed and has no weaponry. This severely limits his sphere of operation. Jesus displayed the devil’s defeat openly. So, to the heavenly host, he’s a real loser! In fact, look at his CV, he’s an ex-employee of heaven who got the boot and then bought himself a one way ticket to hell. The devil has a serious ‘destiny’ problem; you’d better believe it!

If you think that the devil has sovereign power over you, and your life, you will always be miserable. You are a joint-heir with Jesus Christ, ***“who has placed all things under His feet”*** [Ephesians 1:22]. The devil and all his demonic forces are in submission to you (not the other way round). Sit up and take note, you are in

control. It doesn't matter if you feel low, disheartened and discouraged, or if you are down and de-motivated, you are still positioned above all the demonic forces. Positionally, you're always "on top" and that's where you must choose to remain.

[3] Build a positive picture of yourself

How you view yourself, your personality and character, and your own accomplishments will determine your real sense of self worth and self value. Low self-esteem breeds low enthusiasm, and in turn, it brings about a loss of drive and produces much frustration. Such an attitude will keep you down and keep you bound up in negativity. Unless you have a positive picture of yourself no one else can see it or enjoy it. Others will always see you as you see yourself. So stop looking at what you think you are and start looking at who you are in Christ.

When you start to focus on what you can be, according to God's promises, you will start to feel good about yourself. Sometimes happiness is simply feeling good about yourself. And when you're struggling, constantly remind yourself that **"you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you"** [Phil. 4:13].

Over time, parents, schooling, work mates and friends have conditioned you to think a certain way and many of you are now *failure conscious*. Consequently, you have become more problem oriented than you are possibility oriented. You instinctively focus on your weaknesses (or failings) and have lost confidence and self respect. However, if you learn to manage around your weaknesses and strengthen your strengths, you will discover a lot of "plus factors" that you didn't know you had. This can start a reversal of negative attitudes, quickly moving you away from them and steering you toward positive self belief and enthusiasm.

A word of caution however! Sometimes what appears to be a weakness to you may in fact be a God given gift that He desires to use. For instance, if you are naturally a quiet reserved person, and are surrounded by loud people who find it easy to express themselves, you may feel intimidated and try to become more like them. But no matter how much you try you can't achieve this ambition, so you see it as a weakness. Big mistake! Your quiet reserved nature often reflects a sensitive heart, a heart that picks up on other people's hurts much faster than those shooting their mouths off. And this is exactly what God wants to use.

Alternatively, if you are a person who loves to talk and you see this as a weakness because you admire quiet, reserved, obliging people. The truth is, as long as your words are edifying and encouraging to the listener, it is a strong point, and something that God will use to His glory. So remind yourself that your natural gift was deposited in you by God Himself; with prior knowledge of all your peculiarities and failings.

You'll never rise above the image you have of yourself. Stop looking at your lacks, frailties and weaknesses and be thankful for all the gifts God has placed in you. Thank Him every day for the natural abilities you have – no matter how undeveloped they are. In this way you will focus on them all the more and produce a clear picture of a "successful you". By seeing yourself as being a success, you will keep your enthusiasm levels high. And this makes it easier to stay "up" all the time.

Why not ask yourself two important questions? What is my self-image? And, who do I think I am? These are questions that demand an answer. Why? Because a healthy self image is one of the key factors in establishing success and happiness. You are only able to speak, act and react as the person you *think* you are.

Low self esteem means a low level of motivation, and low motivation cannot pick you up or keep you up. To be “up” all the time you must generate energy through true happiness and genuine enthusiasm.

It's your life – it's your choice.