

3. Whatever is Right This means, 'what is upright, just or fair', conformable to God's standards and worthy of his approval. Often we speak of giving people a fair go and "doing the right thing".

Christians should focus on how they can love and help their fellow neighbours, not 'rip them off'. We are to be people known for right, just and fair actions.

4. Whatever is Pure This emphasises moral purity. This world is full of things which are sordid and shabby, soiled and smutty. Many people get their minds into such a state that it soils everything they think about. The Christian's mind is to be set on the things which are pure; his thoughts are to be so clean that they can stand even the scrutiny of God.

5. Whatever is Lovely This has in mind what is pleasing, agreeable, amiable. Modern society has an infatuation with wild behaviour, violence and degradation. Christians still believe there is beauty in God's world. There are those whose minds are so set on vengeance and punishment that they call forth bitterness and fear in others. There are those whose minds are given to criticism and rebuke and they call forth resentment in others. The mind of the Christian is to be set on the lovely things like: God's creation, good things in the world; acts of kindness, sympathy, forbearance, patience, and grace. The Christian is to be a winsome person, pleasing to be around!

6. Whatever is Admirable Here Paul uses a 'secular' word to describe what is attractive and what rings true to the highest standards. There are far too many ugly words, false words and impure words in this world. In the mind and on the lips and of the Christian there are to be only the words which are fit for God to hear.

7. Whatever is Excellent This describes every kind of excellence - the excellence of the ground in a field, the excellence of a work tool for its purpose, the physical excellence of an animal, the excellence of the courage of a soldier, and the virtue of a man. The world has its impurities and its degradations,

but it also has its nobilities and its heroes, and it is on these good things, that the Christian must think.

8. Whatever is Praiseworthy This means to give honour where honour is due. We are to focus on the best things in life that are worthy of praise. It has in mind deeds and achievements that are good and worthwhile. When we continually center our minds on such thoughts as these, we will be better Christians.

JUST DO IT - Finally, we are instructed to '*put these things into practice*'. Positive thinking should end in actions. Paul provides a living example for us in his own life - Philippians 4:9. Many people think high moral thoughts, but don't live them. If we are to experience God's peace, then we must work on our thought life. We need to spend less time evaluating and criticising others and work on changing ourselves. Christians can ask God for his help to change their thought patterns to become more positive, pleasant and peaceful.

In these restless times, please read over these eight qualities, think on them often and you will begin to feel the Peace of God. Ask God to renew your mind and help your thought-life.

Remember, 'You Are What You Think!'

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**You Are What
You Think**
Philippians 4:8-9



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YOU ARE WHAT YOU THINK

Philippians 4:8-9

Whenever life acts we respond. If you win the lottery you might be happy. If you lose your job you may be angry. How you react will depend upon your attitude. Our attitude is the key that controls how we face life. You are not responsible for everything that happens to you, but you are responsible for how you react to what does happen to you. The formula is that, "Life acts - you react." Your reaction is under your control. In any life situation you are always responsible for at least one thing. You are always responsible for the attitude towards the situation in which you find yourself. Your attitude is your reaction to what life hands you. You can have either a more positive or a more negative attitude. Your attitude is under your control and can be changed. With the right attitude you can be a resilient person.

WE ARE WHAT WE THINK

Mental attitude is the single most important factor concerning physical health and emotional happiness. I read a Hospital study where skin cancer patients who were proactive and positive were more likely to recover. Mental attitude is a factor in 90% of illness. Negative, bitter people get sick more often and more severely.

A woman in hospital was so bitter her digestive track wouldn't work. She cursed at every nurse and orderly who came within shouting distance. She didn't mumble, either. Every curse was carefully articulated so that the entire hospital wing could benefit from her bile. In the whole time she was there, she never said a kind word to anyone. Not even once. Her attitude did more than make her sick, it ended up alienating her from the ones who could help her the most. The nurses flipped coins to see who would be stuck with her. Attitudes greatly affect us and others. How is your thought life?

a. The downward spiral. Anger, resentment and self-pity set us up for failure. Psychologists call it a downward spiral. By dwelling on negative thoughts, you start to feel crummy, then you act crummy, which makes people treat you crummy, so now you have a valid reason to be negative, and you feel even crummier.

The downward spiral also applies to spirituality. Being a Christian is not so much doing religious things, as it is a matter of the heart. Mark 7:21 records Jesus words about this. He says the first corrupting thing out of the heart is evil thoughts. All other sins follow from it. The thoughts take concrete form as sins. It is said that sooner or later what you think about will be revealed in your life.

Psychologist, Dr. Dan Johnston writes: *"An attitude is a point of view about a situation. An attitude has three components. a) What you think. b) What you do. c) What you feel.*

No matter what situation you are in you always have certain thoughts about it. You also have an emotional response to it, and you behave a certain way in it. To begin changing your attitude you either change your thinking, the way you act, or the way you feel. Two of these choices are easier to influence than the third. It is easier to change the way you think or behave than to change your emotions.

However, it is usually our emotions that get our attention in regard to the situation. It is our emotions that we most want to change. When we feel sad, angry, anxious, or frustrated we don't like it. We want the feeling to quickly go away. So we start trying to change the emotion. We often begin by trying to change others so we can feel better. It doesn't work. We engage in behaviours like alcohol and drug abuse to numb the feelings. It doesn't work. Working all the time or excessive shopping are attempts at avoiding emotional distress. They don't work.

Our first tendency is to focus on our feelings and to try to change them. Feelings or emotions, however, are the most difficult part of our attitude to work on. You can't "grasp" a feeling and force it to change. Feelings are powerful but vague. You cannot get a grip on a feeling.

If you want to change your feelings you must start elsewhere. You must begin with either your thinking or your behaviour over which you have more control.

The secret in effectively changing your emotions is knowing that feelings, thoughts, and behaviours are all related. When you change one of them (for example, thinking) the other two (feelings and behaviour) will change as well.

Since it is easier to get a "grasp" on thoughts and behaviour this is the place to begin your work of staying resilient. Change what you think! Change what you do! And the emotions will change!" © Daniel H. Johnston, Ph.D. is a clinical psychologist and former Director of Psychological Services at the Medical Center of Central Georgia in Macon, Georgia, USA.

b. There is what is called an upward spiral.

The Bible speaks of a new attitude in Christ (Ephesians 4:22-27), that leads to actions. As Dr. John Stott says, "Self-control is primarily mind-control." As Christians our minds are to be renewed - (Romans 12:1-2).

So what are most of your thoughts like? God gives us great counsel about positive thinking in Philippians 4:8-9. Note the positive thrust of these eight qualities.

EIGHT QUALITIES OF POSITIVE THINKING

Philippians 4:8-9

1. Whatever is True This has the sense of being valid, reliable, and honest. The opposite of false. It characterises God (1Thess. 1:9) and Jesus, (John 14:6); the gospel (2Thess. 2:12-13) and should also characterise believers (Eph. 4:24).

Many things in this world are deceptive and illusory, promising what they can never perform; offering a false peace and happiness, which they can never supply. Don't dwell on things that let you down and lead to doubt, distrust, and discouragement. Turn away from these things to honesty and truth.

2. Whatever is Noble This word is used only by Paul. In 1 Tim 3:8,11; Tit 2:2 it refers to the character of church leaders. It is the quality that makes them worthy of respect, people who have integrity. For the Christian it means he is to live and act knowing that all he says and does is in the sight of God.