

# Positive Biblical Thinking And The Positive Cult

I believe strongly in *positive Biblical thinking*. Positive Biblical thinking means:

- thinking in agreement with the *teachings* and *promises* of the written Word of God about our *legal standing* in Christ, our *identification* with Him and the other wonderful *undeserved benefits* and *privileges* of *God's grace* through *Christ*.<sup>1</sup>
- thinking in obedience to the commands of the New Testament. This is part of what living in *integrity* and *righteousness* means.
- changing our thinking from what is sinful to what God defines as right, godly and holy. This changing is part of *repentance*.
- trusting and depending on God and the Lord Jesus Christ instead of on ourselves. This is part of what *faith* means.

## A summary of marvellous facts about God's grace towards believers

As a result of God's grace through Christ, some marvellous things have occurred in our lives as true believers. Say out aloud, think and ponder on the following absolute facts about you:

- God has given me every spiritual blessing in Christ (see Ephesians 1:3).
- God has made me His child through me being born again with His divine nature (see 2 Peter 1:4).
- God has spiritually united me to Himself (see 1 Corinthians 6:17).
- Jesus Christ lives in me by His Spirit (see Galatians 2:20 and Colossians 1:27).
- God the Holy Spirit lives in me (see John 14:17 and 1 Corinthians 3:16).
- I am totally accepted by God (see Ephesians 1:6).
- I have been sealed by the Holy Spirit as God's exclusive possession (see Ephesians 1:13-14).
- I am no longer one of God's enemies (see Romans 5:10-11).
- God has totally reconciled me to Himself despite my previous rejection of His rightful claims over me (see Colossians 1:21).
- God has written my name in His Book of Life (see Revelation 21:27).
- I have been made a citizen of heaven (see Philippians 3:20).

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to the section "The main wonderful benefits" in Chapter "The Gospel", to Chapter "Our legal standing in Christ", Chapter "Marvellous perfects", Chapter "You are God's treasured possession", the section "Enormous worth in terms of God's love" in Chapter "Worth and unworthiness" and to Chapter "Identification with Christ" for more details. Refer also to the above section "A summary of marvellous facts about God's grace towards believers".

- God will not reject or abandon me (see John 6:37 and Hebrews 13:5). He will always be faithful to me (see 1 Corinthians 1:9 and 2 Thessalonians 3:3) even when humans are not.
- God smiles when He looks at me (see Psalm 147:11).
- God is not angry with me. All His anger against me and my sin has been poured out on Jesus when He willingly acted as my substitute by dying on the Cross (see Romans 5:9 and 1 Thessalonians 1:10). 1 John 2:2 reveals Jesus Christ is my propitiation: “***And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.***” Propitiation refers to the total removal of God’s anger against me and my sin.
- I have been recreated to reflect God’s nature and character (see 2 Corinthians 3:16, Colossians 3:10).
- Jesus Christ has become my everything. I am *complete* not in myself but only in Him (see Colossians 2:10).
- God has sanctified me in Christ at conversion and this is having continuing effects and results in my life now. The perfect tenses of the words “***are sanctified***” in Acts 20:32, 26:18 and 1 Corinthians 1:2 refer to this fact. The passive voice in Greek of the words “***are sanctified***” in these three verses means Another – in this case God – has done the action of sanctifying us at conversion. (Note such sanctification must be outworked in our lives after conversion – see 2 Corinthians 7:1, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4, 5:23, 1 Timothy 2:15, Hebrews 12:10, 1 Peter 1:14-15 and 2 Peter 3:11).
- I have become God’s holy temple (see 1 Corinthians 3:16).
- I have continual access to God the Father through God the Holy Spirit living in me (see Ephesians 2:18).
- I have been made a servant or slave of God, the King of kings (see Romans 6:22).
- God rejoices over me (see Zephaniah 3:17).
- God puts His spiritual arms under and around me to protect and comfort me (see Deuteronomy 33:27).
- God has anointed me with His Holy Spirit (see 1 John 2:20).
- I have not been given a spirit of fear but of wonderful power, love and sound mindedness (see 2 Timothy 1:7 and Romans 8:15).
- I am the apple of God’s eye (see Deuteronomy 32:9-10).
- I am Jesus’ personal friend (see John 15:13-15).
- God has a warm gleam in His eyes whenever He looks at me (see Psalm 149:4, Isaiah 62:5).
- God is the potter and I am the clay He is moulding with perfect wisdom and care (see Isaiah 64:8).
- One day in future, God will resurrect and glorify my physical body with His presence so it is suitable for use in eternity (see Romans 8:30).
- I will one day see Jesus Christ face to face (see 1 John 3:2).
- I am a human vessel of God’s life and power to others (see 2 Corinthians 4:9-12 and 2 Timothy 1:7).
- God has recreated me in Jesus Christ to do certain good works He has preplanned and will empower me to do (see Ephesians 2:10).
- I am God’s instrument for sharing about Jesus Christ to others through my words and daily living in Him (see Acts 1:8, Philemon 6 and 1 Peter 2:12).
- I have God’s burden for lost perishing people welling up within me (see Romans 9:1-3).

- God is giving me His prayer intercessions for unsaved friends, relatives and acquaintances (see 1 Timothy 2:1 and Romans 8:26-27).
- God is helping me in relation to how and what to pray (see Romans 8:26-27).
- God speaks to me as I read His written Word (see Luke 24:45).
- God the Holy Spirit gives me frequent guidance and wisdom (see John 14:26, 16:13, Romans 8:14 and James 1:5).
- By His Spirit, I have Jesus Christ's glorious saving healing Presence within me (see Colossians 1:27).
- Satan and demons must obey me because of my union with God in Christ and His delegated authority given to me (see Mark 16:17 and Luke 10:19-20).
- As my loving Parent Who has adopted me, God disciplines me when I need it (see Hebrews 12:5-11).
- God is working everything for my long term good, despite the trials and problems I face (see Romans 8:28).
- God has given me His awesome power and strength (see Ephesians 1:19-20, 3:20 and Colossians 1:29).
- Greater is the Creator of the universe living in me than is any human or demon who is against me (see 1 John 4:4).
- I can do all things that are God's will through Jesus Christ Who strengthens me (see Philippians 4:13).
- God comforts me when I have troubles and problems (see Isaiah 66:13 and 2 Corinthians 1:3-7).
- God is empowering me to overcome my present trials, no matter how hard they are or how long it takes (see Psalm 34:17, 34:19 and Romans 8:35-37).
- I am freed from the rule of sin (see Romans 6:14).
- I have God's power and ability to overcome each temptation to sin that will confront me throughout my Christian walk (see 1 Corinthians 10:13, 2 Peter 1:3, Philippians 4:13 and 1 John 3:9).
- God has empowered me to be able to repent (see Acts 11:18, 2 Timothy 2:25), to turn from my known sins (see Acts 3:26) and to have dependent faith in Him (see Romans 12:3 and Hebrews 12:2).

We must believe with *certainty* what God says we are in Christ and what we can do through Him. Refer also to Chapter "Our legal standing in Christ" for details about the wonderful things God declares we are in Christ in the sense of our legal standing before God as Supreme Ruler and Judge.

God wants us to be *honest with Him* about our problems, difficulties, stresses, trials and how we feel. Exodus 5:22-6:8 records Moses told the Lord what he was thinking about God's workings among the Israelites. But note God did not rebuke him for this. Moses had not abandoned his trust in the Lord but he had questions.

In Psalm 6:6-7, 31:9-12, 38:3-10, 38:17, 88:3-18, 102:3-11 and 109:2-20, David and other Psalm-writers share with God exactly how they feel about their problems. But read the whole of each of these Psalms and see how words of *faith, praise* and *trust in God* are also spoken.

## The positive cult

As I said before, I believe strongly in positive Biblical thinking – thinking in agreement with the written Word of God. But I do not support what is called “the positive thinking movement” in the world or the Church. The “positive thinking movement” is *cultic* and is *based on humanism* and *non-Christian philosophies* and religions. Many New Age groups and Eastern religions such as Buddhism and Taoism teach forms of positive thinking.

Also in the Church, there are leaders who mix their humanistic and/or Eastern religious forms of positive thinking with Biblical truths. These church leaders have a good emphasis on God’s love, mercy and kindness. They rightly teach about resisting fear, worry, cares, depression, bitterness, anger and hatred. They commendably talk much about loving God, loving and forgiving others. But tragically they ignore or minimise the importance of many other key teachings in the New Testament.

### **They oppose telling unbelievers they are sinners and about God’s anger**

Those teaching this partly cultic form of positive thinking in the Church oppose telling unbelievers in preaching that the latter are sinners or unworthy of salvation. These teachers say that if an unbeliever thinks he is an unworthy sinner, he will not be able to accept the saving grace God offers through Jesus Christ.

Grace is *totally free*. To think we can be worthy of God’s grace is a form of *legalism*. Matthew 3:11, 11:11, 8:8-10 and Luke 18:10-14 reveal Christ praised John the Baptist, the Roman centurion and the publican for admitting how unworthy they were of God’s unmerited grace.

Cultic positive thinkers are *strongly against telling unbelievers* in preaching that God is *angry with them* about their sins and that He *will judge them* in future if they do not turn to Him. This is contrary to the practices of Jesus Christ, John the Baptist, the Apostles Peter and Paul.

Christ, John, Peter and Paul preached to the unsaved about God’s anger and future judgement. For example, read Matthew 6:22, 6:29-30, 11:21-24, 23:33, Luke 3:7-9, 3:17, John 3:36, 5:27-29, Acts 10:42, 17:30, 24:25, Romans 1:18 and 2:1-5. Also note Proverbs 24:25 promises a *wonderful blessing* on those who rebuke the wicked: **“But those who rebuke the wicked will have delight, and a good blessing will come upon them.”**

Church-going cultic positive thinkers *teach God does not send punishments* on *unrepentant unbelievers* in this *earthly life*. This is contrary to Acts 12:20-23 and 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16.

### **They oppose emphasizing repentance, rebuking and correcting**

Cultic positive thinkers oppose any emphasis in preaching on repenting from sin. They believe it is negative and wrong to tell unbelievers they need to have a changed heart attitude to their known sins and to abandon these sins in practice. They say such preaching prevents unbelievers from turning to Christ because it offends them. Read Chapter “Conversion”, Chapter “Repentance” and Chapter “The freedom of repentance” to see how contrary to the New Testament such worldly nonsense is.

All great revivals in the past have emphasised repentance. But modern positive cult thinkers try to con us into believing revival can be experienced by *substituting humanistic*

*positive mental attitudes for reformed repentant hearts.* They have led their followers into a little “*positive trip*” which outwardly appears good, but which *white-washes* their sins and produces a *new breed of hypocrites* ruled by *lawlessness*.

In Matthew 23:25-28, Christ accused many or all of the Pharisees of similarly using religion to whitewash their sins and of being lawless hypocrites. Some followers of the positive thinking movement claim to desire Holy Spirit revival but are actually themselves *hindrances* to real revival.

Churchgoing cultic positive thinkers are also against rebuking and correcting of believers in preaching and teaching. They say leaders should only encourage, motivate and comfort their people in their messages. It is very important to encourage, motivate and comfort. But the New Testament stresses that church leaders must also rebuke, correct and admonish their people when God leads (see 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 1 Timothy 5:19-21, 2 Timothy 3:16, 4:2, Titus 1:9, 1:13-14 and 2:15).

### **They neglect the fear of the Lord**

Those who teach a partly cultic type of positive thinking have little or no emphasis on the New Testament teaching on the reverential respectful fear of the Lord. They wrongly think that loving God and fearing Him are two opposites. They are similar to the heretical Marcionite Gnostics who grew rapidly in the 100's A.D. while opposing any emphasis on the fear of the Lord.

### **They have a New Age attitude to dreams and visions**

Cultic positive thinkers encourage a type of New Age attitude to dreams and visions. I firmly believe God gives dreams and visions to numerous believers today. I have written a book called “*Dreams and Visions*”. But the positive thinking cult movement exercises little Biblical discernment. It deceives churchgoers into regarding many types of natural dreams occurring in sleep, fleshly goals, mental impressions, carnal imaginations and fantasies as God-given dreams and visions.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Also at present, many churchgoers wrongly believe just because they can exercise the simple gift of prophecy (see 1 Corinthians 14:1 and 3-5) and the Holy Spirit gives them some revelations, this means they are prophets. In Numbers 12:6, God says He speaks to His prophets in dreams and visions. Many are deceived into thinking they are ascension gifted ministries of prophets because they are having all types of what are really “whacko” dreams and visions. I have spoken to numerous Pentecostal pastors who have been plagued by churchgoers deceived into thinking they were prophets. This is even though the latter constantly give predictions which do not come to pass and give so many revelations which are contrary to the written Word of God interpreted as a whole.

There are real prophets of God in the Church today. But real prophets do not make mistakes when claiming to predict things by the Holy Spirit. They can make mistakes in personal judgement (see Genesis 48:17-20) but not when claiming to speak a revelation of the Holy Spirit (see Deuteronomy 18:20-22).

It is extremely dangerous to claim to be a prophet of God when you are not. Jeremiah 23:32 says: “***Behold, I am against those who prophesy false dreams, says the Lord, and tell them, and cause My people to err by their lies and by their recklessness. Yet I did not send them or command them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all, says the Lord.***” Lamentations 2:14 declares: “***Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions; they have not uncovered your iniquity.***” Jeremiah 23:21-22 stresses: “***I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in My counsel, and had caused My people to hear My words, then they would have turned them from their evil way and from the evil of their doings.***”

## **They do not have a fully Biblical attitude to the Holy Spirit**

Cultic positive thinkers in the Church sometimes talk much about the Holy Spirit, but do not do this in a fully Biblical sense. Many of them rarely, if ever, emphasise the necessity and full practical implications of our continually being ruled by and submitted to the Holy Spirit. They treat the Holy Spirit as a *useful convenience* to fulfil their self-centred human goals and wants instead of as Someone to be fully relied on and surrendered to each day.

If they do refer to “being surrendered to the Holy Spirit”, they often mean this in the sense of following *strange unbiblical doctrines* and “*whacko fruitloop*” revelations. For example, I know a supposed “anointed prophetic” person who said the Holy Spirit was leading her to marry a second husband whom she would later divorce so she could return to her first husband.

Let us *return to positive Biblical thinking* and leave the cultic emphases of the positive thinking movement where they belong – in the garbage bin.

## **Often God and humans define positive and negative differently**

Many positive thinkers do not realise what humans regard as negative is not necessarily what God regards as negative. The same applies to what they regard as positive. The reason for these two facts is that God’s thoughts are higher than our thoughts. Isaiah 55:8-9 shows this: **“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.’”**

The limitations of positive cultic thinking can be seen in Matthew 16:21-23: **“From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, ‘far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!’ But He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.’”**

After Jesus had spoken the fact He was going to suffer and be killed, Peter rebuked Him for supposed “negative” thinking or a “negative” confession. Peter spoke out the “positive” statement **“Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You.”**

But note Jesus Christ’s supposed “negative” thinking or confession was not negative at all. Instead what He said was a statement of the *most positive* event in human history. Jesus’ death achieved the best results of any act by any human. So what seemed outwardly negative to Peter was awesomely positive in reality.

Observe also Jesus revealed in verse 16 that Peter’s “positive” thinking and confession was inspired by Satan.

Let us have positive Biblical thinking instead of positive cultic thinking.

## **Reinterpreting the Bible in terms of humanism**

At present because of such influences as the positive cult, many Christians are re-interpreting the Bible in terms of humanism and similar trendy pagan philosophies. A classical example of this is a book written by a pastor who leads a local church in the United States. I

prefer not to name this fellow. Many Evangelicals and Charismatics have been led astray by this and similar books which re-interpret the Bible in humanistic terms. Here are some quotes from this minister's book with my comments after each quote:

*"But our rebellion is a reaction, not our nature. By nature we are fearful, not bad. Original sin is not a mean streak; it is a non-trusting inclination. The core of original sin, then is LOT –Lack Of Trust. Or, it could be considered an innate inability to adequately value ourselves. Label it a 'negative self-image', but do not say that the central core of the human heart is wickedness. If this were so, then truly, the human being is totally depraved. But positive Christianity does not hold to human depravity, but to human inability."*

The above is written from the perspective of humanism and not Scripture. Verses such as Genesis 8:21, Psalm 51:5, Isaiah 64:6, Jeremiah 17:9, Mark 7:21-23, Ephesians 2:3 and 4:17-19 emphasise the badness or wickedness of fallen human hearts. Jeremiah 17:9 declares: **"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; Who can know it."** Genesis 8:21 states: **"...Then the Lord said in His heart, '...although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth...'"**<sup>3</sup>

Also, note a lack of trust is only one part of original sin. But this sinful lack of trust is in God and not in ourselves. Trusting in ourselves is another aspect of original sin and is condemned by God in Proverbs 3:5, 3:26, 28:26, Jeremiah 9:23-24, Daniel 4:28-32, 4:37, Luke 18:9, 1 Corinthians 1:28-29, 1:31, 2 Corinthians 1:8-9, 3:5 and 11:30.

The American pastor also wrote: *"Reformation theology failed to make clear that the core of sin is lack of self-esteem...The most serious sin is the one that causes me to say, 'I am unworthy. I may have no claim to divine sonship if you examine me at my worst.' For once a person believes he is an 'unworthy sinner', it is doubtful if he can really honestly accept the saving grace God offers in Jesus Christ."*

Lack of self-esteem is not the core of sin. Instead the *most serious sin* is a *lack of real faith in God and Jesus Christ*.

The pastor's above comments fail to draw a distinction between being unworthy in terms of God's perfect justice and holiness and being worth an enormous amount to Him in terms of His love. It is only people who accept they are sinners and unworthy of any reward or of anything good from God who will be able to receive His totally undeserved grace in Christ. Also the above talk of a "claim to divine sonship" involves *legalism* – the idea we can *deserve* in some way to be a son of God.

The same minister wrote: *"And we can pray, 'Our Father in heaven, honorable is our name.'" and... "Congregations of persons who have a strong 'I am' complex will become actively and positively involved in meeting social needs as well."* Matthew 6:9 teaches us to pray that God's Name be honoured. This verse mentions nothing about praying for our name to be glorified. Also, Exodus 3:14 shows God is the one and only "I AM". Part of the Fall of Adam and Eve involved them wanting to be equal to Him (see Genesis 3:5).

This pastor wrote we should say, *"I am somebody! I feel the greatness within me stirring as I believe in myself as Jesus Christ believes in me."* This is a typical example of humanism in which humans become the central focus. These words are contrary to Proverbs 28:26, 2 Corinthians 1:8-9, 3:5, 12:5 and Jeremiah 17:5. Proverbs 28:25-26 declares: **"...But he who trusts in the Lord will be prospered. He who trusts in his own heart is a fool..."** In 2 Corinthians 1:8-9, Paul says: **"For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us**

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<sup>3</sup> Refer Chapter "Sin" and to Chapter "The Flesh" for details about the rebellious sinful evil tendencies of human hearts.

*in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead.”*<sup>4</sup>

The same pastor wrote the following comments: “*All of the problems facing the church will find healing answers if we **start with** and do not get distracted at anytime from meeting **every person’s deepest need** – his hunger for self-esteem, self-worth and personal value. This means that human dignity becomes the **ultimate human value**...So I contend and plead for a full orbed theological system beginning with and based on a solid central core of religious truth – the dignity of man.*”

The above comments are very *humanistic* because they put *humans* and *not God* at the centre of things. The Word of God puts *God* and *Jesus Christ* in the *pre-eminent* or *central* place in everything (see Psalm 73:25).

Colossians 1:18 says that “*in all things*” Jesus Christ should “*have the pre-eminence*”. This verse does not say Christ should have pre-eminence in all things except in relation to our human dignity or worth. In Greek, the word “*pre-eminence*” in this verse is a form of the word “*proteuo*” which means “to be in the *first position* with the implication of high rank and prominence” (Louw and Nida, page 738).

I do not know about you, but I believe God the Father and Jesus Christ deserve to have first place in my life and not my desire for feeling valuable or precious. I worship God and Christ and not my desire for feeling worth or value. But a *fruit* of my worshipping God and putting Him and Christ first is He continually reveals more and more how enormously valuable and precious I am to Him.

Our deepest need is not self-esteem, self-worth or human dignity. Our deepest need is *God* and *Jesus Christ* and a *relationship with Them*. A secondary accompanying *result* of our coming into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ is He will through Christ show us how enormously valuable we are to Him, thereby fulfilling one of our God-created needs.

In Psalm 27:4, David reveals he did not put his human dignity or worth as being his main need: “*One thing I have desired of the Lord, that I will seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple.*”

2 Samuel 6:1-23 records that when David brought God’s Ark to Jerusalem, he danced before the Lord with all his might and wore only a linen ephod. Verse 16 reveals his wife Michal despised him when she saw him doing this. Verse 20 shows she made a sarcastic remark to him about this: “*Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, ‘How glorious was the king of Israel today, uncovering himself today in the eyes of the maids of his servants, as one of the base fellows shamelessly uncovers himself.’*”

But note verse 22 records part of David’s response to her criticism was, “*And I will be even more undignified than this and will be humble in my own sight.*” In Hebrew, the word “*undignified*” here is “*qalal*” which in this context means “be lightly esteemed” (Brown, Driver and Briggs, page 886) or “lowered” in “prestige” (Harris, Archer and Waltke, page 800). David was more interested in worshipping the Lord and putting God first on this occasion than in focussing on his own human dignity, prestige and esteem in the eyes of others.

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<sup>4</sup> Refer to Chapter “Let God be your confidence” for more teaching on the differences between confidence in God and self-confidence.

Michal put her own dignity and prestige first before God. 2 Samuel 6:23 records Michal was punished with barrenness as a result of her wrong attitude. I want to follow David's example, not Michal's. What about you?

But not only does God show believers how valuable or precious they are to Him. He also reveals to them they are totally accepted by Him into His Presence through Christ (see Ephesians 1:6). Even unbelievers who will be eternally punished in hell are enormously valuable or precious to God. So they need to be also accepted by Him through Christ. Being accepted by God into His Presence is different from being exceedingly precious or valuable to Him.

## **An exhortation**

Be a positive Biblical thinker and walk in God's glorious grace. But avoid the wicked humanistic and New Age tendencies of the positive cult like the plague if you wish to avoid Satanic bondage.

### **Bible Study Questions**

1. What does positive Biblical thinking mean?
2. List at least 10 marvellous facts about God's grace towards believers. Then say these aloud to yourself twice each.
3. Which verses in Psalms reveal God is pleased when we as His people are honest with Him about our problems, difficulties, trials and how we feel? But what else must we do besides being honest with Him about these things?
4. What are the errors of the humanistic positive cult?
5. Explain why Matthew 16:21-23 reveals the limitations of positive cult thinking.
6. Discuss what is Biblically wrong with the four humanistic quotes by the American author recorded in the section "Reinterpreting the Bible in terms of humanism."