

**Bloom Where You're Quarantined**

***Get Your Mind Right***

**April 19, 2020**

Wasn't that just so ... peaceful ... and relaxing ...  
and uplifting?

Maybe we should watch it again.

Nah. Just kidding.

Hey everybody. Thanks for tuning in today as  
we begin talking about how to “bloom where  
we've been quarantined.”

And I know we're technically not *quarantined*;  
we're just under a “stay at home” order. But,  
functionally speaking, that's what it *feels like* for  
most of us.

- From where we *eat* these days – which is “home” ...
- To where we *work* – which is also “home” ...
- To where we *socialize* – which, again, is also “home” ...

... the domain in which we conduct our lives has been greatly narrowed by the coronavirus pandemic.

And even though our national, state and local leaders are finally beginning to talk about loosening some of the restrictions, it's still not clear ....

- *When* that will happen
- The *extent* to which that will happen
- And the *pace* at which it will *continue* to happen.

Furthermore, there's always the chance (some would say *likelihood*) that when it does happen, the noose or restrictions could be tightened again if there is a flareup in cases.

In fact, [a recent ABC News/Ipsos poll](#) found that among the 9 in 10 Americans whose daily routines have been disrupted by the coronavirus, 69% do not expect to get back to that routine until *after* July 1.

So, we're all pretty much stuck here for the

foreseeable future.

The question is – how do we make the most of it? How can we bloom where we've been unfortunately, unexpectedly and, quite frankly, *unhappily* quarantined?

That's what I want to talk to you about for the next three weeks.

And I think there's some urgency about this because ...

**In another [poll taken three weeks ago](#), nearly half of respondents said their mental health was being harmed by the coronavirus pandemic.**

Furthermore, in younger populations, [nearly half display symptoms of severe anxiety](#).

Add to that the fact that [4 in 10 Americans say](#) they lost a job or income due to the coronavirus and ...

- It's no wonder that so many of us are feeling at least a little depressed, bored, and useless.
- It's no wonder we're struggling to sleep through the night, and just generally "on edge."
- It's no wonder we're beginning to suffer from "Zoom fatigue."

Psychologically and emotionally, this situation is not easy.

And that's because, at least from a Christian

point of view, *this situation is not natural*. This is not the way God created us to live.

We'll go into this in a lot more detail in the next two weeks, but I want to point this out today just to get it in your mind and to say "if you're struggling right now, it's OK. You're *normal* because *this* – what we're having to do right now isn't."

**Two of the main purposes for which God created us are productivity ...**

... which includes things like work, being physically, intellectually and artistically creative and, through those activities, adding value to the world at large.

**... and community ...**

... which primarily means *interpersonal relationships* beginning with our family and extending outward to include face-to-face, shoulder-to-shoulder physical interaction within a social network.

Those two inborn motivations are a big part of what distinguishes us from all other living things on the planet, which is, again, why this quarantine (or whatever you want to call it) feels like such a big deal.

Because it *is* a big deal. It severely limits two of the fundamental purposes for which we exist.

## **The One Thing**

Again, we'll get into that over the next couple of weeks but, for today, I want to talk to you about

*the one thing* that, more than anything else, will help you (and me) get through this situation.

Because when you find yourself in a situation which is unpleasant, unexpected, unwanted and abnormal, *this one thing* can make all the difference in whether or not you emerge better or bitter.

Now, I'm sure *all of you* know what the one thing is because you all are so smart.

But, as for me, I didn't learn about this until later in life. No one told me about it when I was in high school or college. Looking back, I sure wish they had.

I never heard about it in church as a teenager and a young adult.



I didn't even hear about it in seminary.

In fact, I didn't learn about this "one thing" until I was in my mid-30s – right before we started this church – at a John Maxwell workshop called, appropriately enough, *Four Skills Seminary Never Taught Me*.<sup>i</sup>

*The one thing* that, more than anything else, will help you (and me) get through this situation ... and I'm sure you know this ...

*Is your attitude.*

**Your attitude about your circumstances is what will keep you from being overcome by your circumstances.**

Over the next month or two or three (or

however long it turns out to be), your attitude about the things you *have to do* and the things you don't *get to do*, will make all the difference in what this experience does to you.

Your attitude, more than anything else, will determine your mental and emotional health *during* this experience and *after* it.

**And the good news where that is concerned is that attitude is a *choice*.**

You may not be able to choose which problems come into your life, but there is one thing you can always choose: *the way you react to those problems*.

You can choose your attitude.

Now, this is not a “Christian thing.” This is an

“everyone thing.” This applies to all of us, Christian or not.

However, I *do* think being a Christian – someone who believes that Jesus of Nazareth was God in the flesh and that He died for their sins on a Roman cross and was raised from the dead on Easter Sunday ...

I *do* think that being a Christian gives you an advantage in this (which we’ll see a bit later), but attitude is a choice regardless of where we are spiritually.

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Now, having said all of *that*, I want to be clear that this is not going to be a message about “the power of positive thinking.” We’re not talking

about *The Little Engine That Could* this morning:  
“I think I can, I think I can.”

And we’re not talking about pretending that things are better than they really are. We’re not talking about ignoring the reality of how this pandemic is affecting us.

One the best descriptions I’ve ever heard of what it means to choose a positive attitude comes from a book called *Good to Great* which was written by Jim Collins.

I’m sure some of you have read it. It was a pretty big deal in the business world for a long time.

In fact, in our formative years as a church, it had a big influence on our leadership team.

Anyway ... in the book, Collins presents the critical characteristics that enabled the highly successful companies he studied to not only survive but thrive over the long-haul and become world-class organizations.

One of those characteristics was how they thought about difficult circumstances.

And, instead of me trying to explain it, I'm going to show you a short video of *Collins* explaining it.

It was taken a while back, so the picture quality isn't the greatest, but, as we watch, I think you'll see some immediate applications to our current situation.

Here we go.

(B) Collins: “I would like to give you a way of thinking ...”

(E) Collins: “... and we’re not getting out of here by Christmas.”

Wow.

“Never confuse the need for unwavering faith that *you will* find a way to prevail in the end with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts you actually face.”

Though Collins never uses the word, *that*, my friends, is the definition of a positive attitude. It never *minimizes* the reality of the situation, but it also never *gives in* to that reality.

And even though Collins goes on to apply

Stockdale's paradox to businesses, as I said before, I think it applies personally to all of us in this current crisis.

So, let me put it like this:

**To get through this crisis without being overcome by it, you and I must have an unwavering faith that we *will* find a way to prevail in the end, along with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of our reality.**

Let me say that again.

To get through this COVID-19 crisis without being overcome by it psychologically and emotionally, you and I must have an unwavering faith that we'll find a way to prevail in the end, while still confronting the most brutal facts of our reality.

Obviously, the question is ... where does that come from? How does someone develop that kind of attitude?

And, in the time that remains for this message, I'm going to talk about that.

But first, I need to ask you to help me out with *next week's message* ... because, next week, we're going to deal with some of the brutal facts concerning where we are as individuals.

And what I need you to do is to answer three questions about your specific circumstances. I'll explain how to do that at the end of the service today, but since I've raised the issue, I want to let you know about it right now.



## Testing Positive

So, let's talk about where someone gets that "unwavering faith that they will prevail in the end" in spite of their circumstances. How does that happen?

One answer might be that some of us are just born that way. We're blessed with a naturally positive personality or we're just headstrong by nature.

However, even for the happy-go-lucky types and the strong-willed types, there is a point where personality fails.

For instance, Stockdale wrote that as he floated down to the little village street in North Vietnam, [he whispered to himself](#), "Five years

down there, at least.” (Turned out to be seven)

In the 30 seconds before he landed and was pounced on by more than a dozen waiting enemy soldiers, he realized that soon nearly everything would be outside of his control — even his own body.

In that kind of a situation, personality won't carry you very far.

And *the same is true in our situation* which, obviously, isn't as dramatic as Stockdale's ... but it's still hard because it's not normal. It's not what we're designed for.

So, let me give tell you another story that illustrates a positive attitude – the faith that, in spite of the most brutal facts about our

circumstance, we will prevail – and where it comes from.

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It had been two long years since God had miraculously delivered the nation of Israel from Egyptian slavery.

And now, finally, it was time for them to leave the desert where they had been living and enter the Promised Land. Their “quarantine,” so to speak, was over.

In preparation, their leader, Moses, had appointed a team of 12 men – spies – to go on a secret 40-day mission to check out the land and the people living there.

That mission had been completed, which meant it was time to hear their report.

So, Moses calls the entire nation together for a massive town-hall meeting and invites the 12 to the front of the assembly.

“Gentlemen,” he says, “tell us all about the wonderful land which God has provided for us.”

The first spy starts out: “Well, it is a magnificent country: a land ‘flowing with milk and honey’ as God said. *But ...*”

And, as he pauses, another of the spies jumps in and says, “The people living there are very powerful. They’re not going to leave without a fight.”

Another one adds, “And that fight won’t be easy, because their cities are well-fortified and well-guarded.”

And a fourth one chimes in with, “and you should see those guards. Some of them look like giants compared to us.”

And then another one says, “But that’s not the worst of it. There are more of them than there are of us.”

Now, as you might imagine, this is not the report everyone was expecting to hear.

At first there is stunned silence. And then someone yells out, “So, Moses, this is your precious promised land? Sounds like the only promise is that we’re all going to die!”

And, at that point, everyone else joins in. The massive crowd begins to mumble and groan and to shout all kinds of negative comments.

And just as Moses is about to lose control of the situation, another spy by the name of Caleb jumps to the front of the scene and says, “Wait a minute! Wait a minute!”

And when the crowd grows quiet, Caleb continues ...

**“I say ...”**

*“Let us go up at once and possess it,” he said, “for we are well able to conquer it!” Numbers 13:30 (TLB)*

And then he sits down.

Notice that he doesn't deny the report of the other spies. He doesn't deny the reality of the situation, which is that entering the Promised Land is going to be difficult.

But, in spite of the brutal facts of the challenge, he says: "Let us go up at once. Let's get on with it. We are well able to do what needs to be done. It's not impossible."

He had an unwavering faith that, in the end, they would prevail.

But the other spies did not.

"Are you crazy Caleb?" they responded. "Did you go to a different place than we did? We are *not*

able to do it.”

*“Not against people as strong as they are!” the other spies said.  
“They would crush us!”  
Numbers 13:31 (TLB)*

And, so, the Bible says ...

*The majority report of the spies was ... negative.*

And they repeated it.

*“The land is full of warriors, the people are powerfully built, and we saw some of the Anakim there, descendants of the ancient race of giants. We felt like grasshoppers before them, they were so tall!” Numbers 13:32-33 (TLB)*



## And with that ...

*All the people began weeping aloud, and they carried on all night long. Their voices rose in a great chorus of complaint against Moses and [his brother] Aaron. Numbers 14:1-2 (TLB)*

*“We wish we had died in Egypt,” they wailed, “or even here in the wilderness, rather than be taken into this country ahead of us.*

*“Jehovah [meaning ‘God’] will kill us there, and our wives and little ones will become slaves. Let’s get out of here and return to Egypt!” Numbers 14:3 (TLB)*

*The idea swept the camp. "Let's elect a new leader to take us back to Egypt!" they shouted.*  
*Numbers 14:4 (TLB)*

Wow! Talk about a shocking turn of events. In fact, the Bible says that Moses and Aaron literally faceplanted in response to the whole scene.

Now, here's a question:

- Why was Caleb (and, as we'll see in a minute, Joshua) so positive while everyone else was so negative?
- What was going on inside that allowed them respond to the situation so differently?

The answer is found in the next part of the story.

After hours of listening to all the whining and complaining ...

**The Bible says that ...**

*Joshua and Caleb ripped their clothing [a sign of grief] and said to all the people, "It is a wonderful country ahead, and the Lord loves us. He will bring us safely into the land and give it to us." Numbers 14:6-7 (TLB)*

Now, if you compare what *they* said to what the whiners said, it becomes obvious why they were so positive.

What did the whiners say about God? "Jehovah will kill us."

But what did Joshua and Caleb say? “The Lord *loves* us.”

**1. That’s the first key to developing a positive attitude: Certainty about God’s love for you.**

Make no mistake about it friends. Your ability to have a positive attitude right now is directly related to what you believe about God.

If you believe that God is basically against you, then you will react in the same way as the whiners in this story did.

“Well, Rick, why should I believe that God loves me and is for me? If He really *does* ...

- “Maybe I wouldn’t have lost my job.

- “Maybe I wouldn’t have lost so much of my retirement.
- “Maybe I wouldn’t be overwhelmed by having to homeschool my kids right now.”

So, why *should* you believe God loves you?

The Apostle Paul, writing to the first-century church at Rome puts it like this.

*When we have trouble or calamity, when we are hunted down or destroyed, is it because he doesn’t love us anymore?*

*And if we are hungry or penniless or in danger or threatened with death, has God deserted us?*  
*Romans 8:35 (TLB)*

Talk about confronting the most brutal facts of

your reality.

Trouble! Calamity! Hunted! Destroyed! Hungry!  
Penniless! Threatened!

**Does that mean we are unloved by God?**

*No, for the Scriptures tell us that for his sake we must be ready to face death at every moment of the day; we are like sheep awaiting slaughter.*

*Romans 8:36 (TLB)*

**However, Paul writes ...**

*But despite all this, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ who loved us enough to die for us. Romans 8:37 (TLB)*

Paul says, “if you want proof that God loves you, stop looking at your circumstances and start looking at the cross.”

Friends, I don’t know what perception of God you brought with you today, but if it’s anything other than “I matter to Him and He loves me,” it’s simply wrong.

Negative circumstances like whatever you’re going through right now are *not* “evidence” that God is against you. And until you become certain of that and certain that God loves you, your attitude will never be what it could be.

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**Alright, back to the story.**

“The Lord loves us,” Joshua and Caleb had said.

And then they said, “He will bring us safely into the land and give it to us.”

... which was very different from what the whiners predicted would happen.

Remember what they said? “Not only will *we* die, but our wives and children will become slaves.”

The difference? Joshua and Caleb chose to believe that God’s vision for the future – their future – would come to pass.

**2. And that’s the second key to a positive attitude: confidence in God’s vision for your life.**

You have to believe that God has things he



wants you to do and things he wants you to accomplish in this life. He has things he wants you to *become*.

And that vision for your life is not waylaid just because of a virus and its present effect on your life.

*“I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)*

It’s the vision and purpose of what God has called us to that gives us the confidence that God will work everything out – even the bad stuff like what’s happening now – for our good.

Joshua and Caleb were confident in God’s vision

for their life. Are you?

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Ok, after saying that “It is a wonderful country ahead, and the Lord loves us. He will bring us safely into the land and give it to us ...”

**Joshua and Caleb *literally plead* with the people:**

*“Oh, do not rebel against the Lord ...” Numbers 14:9 (TLB)*

Can you hear the intensity in that?

Whereas the whiners had said, “Let’s go back to Egypt” – in other words, “let’s go our own way. Let’s do our own thing. We’re smarter than Moses. We’re smarter than God” ...

Joshua and Caleb said, “No! Stay the course! Do what God has called us to do.”

**3. And that’s the third key to positive attitude: a commitment to trust God’s leadership.**

It’s not enough to be certain that God loves you and confident in his vision for your life. You’ve got to *live* in a way that puts that knowledge into practice. You have to be committed to trust that God is leading, even in the stuff you don’t really want to do in your current situation.

- Maybe that means you work more hours – or less – from home than you would like.
- Maybe that means you spend more time with family than you’re used to.

- Maybe that means you don't get to do what you want to do socially or professionally.
- Maybe that means you have to get by on less.

Not things you would have chosen for yourself, but trusting that God is leading *through those things* is another way of saying “I’m not in control. *God* is in control.”

“And, I don’t need to worry about how this is going to work out. God’s got this. I can relax and bloom where I’m quarantined ... because I have unwavering faith that *God is leading me* to prevail in the end in spite of these circumstances.”

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Ok, there's one more thing that Joshua and Caleb said.

After they plead with the people: "Do not rebel against the Lord ..."

**They add:**

*"Do not fear the people of the land ... the Lord is with us."  
Numbers 14:9 (TLB)*

And that's key #4 to a positive attitude ...

**4. Conviction that God's power can do what you cannot.**

As I said before, Joshua and Caleb weren't closing their eyes to the reality of the situation.

They knew that the people of the land were big and bad.

But they were also convinced that their God was bigger and badder. And what God was going to do on their behalf could not be stopped.

Our ability to be positive is directly related to our conviction that God's power can do what we cannot.

## **Decisions, Decisions**

There you have it. An explanation of what was inside of two men that gave them the ability to face difficult circumstances with a completely different attitude than everyone around them.

Now, I realize that for some of you, this whole

thing may sound a little too abstract, a little too spiritual. You're thinking, "Sounds really nice in church, Rick, but it won't work in the real world."

You know what? That's the same exact conclusion that the whiners came to.

**The Bible says that ...**

*... the only response of the people  
[to what Joshua and Caleb had  
said] was to talk of stoning them.  
Numbers 14:10 (TLB)*

Wow.

The Bible goes on to say that all of these people died off before God gave Israel another shot at the Promised Land.

But that's no surprise – people with a negative attitude never do reach the “promised land.”

So, again, the four keys to developing a positive attitude ...

- *Which is the one thing* that, more than anything else, will help you (and me) get through this situation
- *And the one thing* that, more than anything else, will protect and maintain our mental and emotional health *during* this experience and *after* it.

**The four keys are ...**

- Certainty about God's love for you



- Confidence in God's vision for your life.
- A commitment to trust God's leadership
- Conviction that God's power can do what you cannot.

And this is why I said earlier that Christians have an advantage in this.

If you're a Christian *and* you truly understand who God is and what Jesus has done for you, you ought to have – you *will* have – a positive attitude not only in this situation but in all challenging situations.

You will have an unwavering faith that you will find a way to prevail in the end, while still

embracing the most brutal facts of your reality.

But there's one more thing that I need to say about this and then we'll be done.

I said earlier that "attitude is a choice" and that's true. However, the ability to *make* that choice in a challenging situation is something we train for.

So often I hear people say – and I've often said it myself – "I'm trying my best to have a good attitude, but I can't do it."

But think about it. If you hoped to run a marathon at some point, you wouldn't wait until the day of the race and say, "Ok, now I'm going to *try* my best."

Instead, you'd start working out now, building up your strength and stamina. You'd *train* for it.

**In sports – and in attitude development – it's not about *trying*, it's about *training*.**

How do you do that?

The Apostle Paul, writing to the church at Philippi, has a really good suggestion.

*Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things.*

*Philippians 4:8NIV*

In other words, fill your mind with the right

thoughts.

Someone has said, “If you want to be distressed – look within. If you want to be defeated – look back. If you want to be distracted – look around. If you want to be dismayed – look ahead. But if you want to be delivered - look up!”<sup>ii</sup>

So, here’s a little experiment to try for the next two weeks:

Write these four keys we’ve talked about today on a 3x5 card and tape it to your mirror in the bathroom.

Begin every day by looking at the card and praying each one, a prayer that would sound something like this ...

<BAND GET INTO PLACE>

1) I am certain of your love for me because Jesus went to the cross for me.

2) And God, I know you have a vision for my life that's so much bigger than my circumstances and although I may not know all the details, I say "yes" to it.

3) Father, I am committed to trusting your leadership, especially in the areas in which I am struggling right now. Show me from your Word, the Bible, what I'm supposed to do.

4) And finally, Lord, even though I'm not sure I can handle everything that's coming at me, I know you can. And I give you permission to carry the load.

Fill me with peace and help me to be positive in my attitude as I go through the rest of this day.

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Alright, our band is going to do a song and then I'll come back and tell you about how you can help me with next week's message.

So, don't go away. Let the Lord speak to you during this song.

1. Helping with next week's message ... go to our webpage and under the "sign me up" tab look for the "Woulda, Coulda, Shoulda Survey" and answer three questions:

- What have you lost because of the

## coronavirus pandemic?

- What do you miss most since the stay-at-home order was issued?
- Looking back, what did you take for granted before all this happened?

## 2. Giving online

### Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> John Maxwell, Injoy Leadership Institute

ii. Maxwell, pg 185