If you woke up this morning, shout, “Hallelujah! This is going to be one grand day!”

You’re probably thinking *Wait until I have my coffee.* Nope, we need to keep the momentum rolling.

Remember the song “Don’t Worry—Be Happy”? The lyrics to this cute song imply that regardless of life’s circumstances, you can be happy. The problem? Even if you chant the lyrics fifty times, the words still lack substance. Have you ever tried saying, “Don’t worry—be happy” during a Texas-sized emotional meltdown? How about during the height of a family disaster? The reality of this cliché is that women everywhere—from the boardroom, gym, church, and family dinner table—buy into the concept that they can just flash a big grin and magically reveal a positive, bubbly attitude.

Yeah, right.

Let’s blame this superficial pop jargon on society. After all, the feel-good attitude yields instant gratification. But what else?

As a speaker, I often ask my audiences if they’ve ever attended a “rah-rah motivational-type” seminar. Nearly all the hands go up. Occasionally, the more rowdy participants even yell, “Yes!”

Then I ask, “Two days after that seminar, what concrete tools and principles are you still applying in your life?” Audience mem-
bers typically scratch their heads and glance at the person next to them. Silence fills the conference room. Oops. From the podium, I can see the “rowdies” already wishing they hadn’t shouted “Yes!” quite so loudly.

Why is motivation so fleeting? Stephen R. Covey, author of *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, put it best when he said, “Motivation is a fire from within. If someone else tries to light that fire under you, chances are it will burn very briefly.”

Want to keep that fire burning longer? Try stoking it yourself next time.

Changing your perspective from negative to positive sounds simple, doesn’t it? As a work-in-progress lady, I’m telling you that a positive attitude is certainly achievable, but it’s not simple. It requires a lifelong commitment to change the way you view everyday experiences as well as the many challenging opportunities you may encounter. You also need a sincere desire to experience a “new you.”

As I mentioned in the Introduction, I’m a woman with a past. My childhood lacked a positive, healthy atmosphere. I’ve made major bad decisions and wrong choices and lived with the consequences, including a stinky negative attitude for the first half of my life. Bitterness, anger, and envy hovered over me like a dark cloud.

During the second half of my life, God filled me with a desire and the power to transform and experience a new life. During this life-changing process, I’ve discovered the honest-to-goodness, power-filled benefits of a positive attitude from the inside out. And I’m not keeping them a secret. I want to share these secrets with you, because I want you to turn your pain, discouragement, and disappointment to positive passion as you discover and fine-tune your unique qualities—all of which help you truly realize a positive mental attitude.
Understand the Power of Attitude

The Value of Attitude

Did you know that your attitude is one of your most valuable personal assets? Perhaps you’ve never thought of it that way before. Few of us do. We’ve become so reliant on outside influences—mentors, experts, pundits, bosses, friends, family, teachers, support groups, the popular media—to the point we often wrongly believe attitude is something we’re given or born with. Let me say this loud and clear: A positive attitude is not something that goes on around you; rather, it resides within you.

A positive attitude begins with a decision to get off the spectator bench and participate fully in order to develop and maintain a lifelong positive perspective. It requires self-discipline, practice, patience, and persistence. With that in mind, it’s a good idea to discover why this commitment to a positive attitude is so valuable to you personally.

Chuck Swindoll, international speaker and best-selling author, writes,

Words can never adequately convey the incredible impact of our attitude toward life. The longer I live the more convinced I become that life is 10 percent what happens to us and 90 percent how we respond to it.

I believe the single most significant decision I can make on a day-to-day basis is my choice of attitude. It is more important than my past, my education, my bankroll, my successes or failures, fame or pain, what other people think of me or say about me, my circumstances, or my position. Attitude is that “single string” that keeps me going or cripples my progress. It alone fuels my fire or assaults my hope. When my attitudes are right, there’s no barrier too high, no valley too deep, no dream too extreme, no challenge too great for me. ²
During my motivational/inspirational presentations, I usually read Mr. Swindoll’s poignant words to the audience, reiterating that life is ten percent what happens to you and ninety percent how you respond. I’m deeply moved when I observe audience members unfold their arms, lean forward in their chairs, and nod their heads in agreement. Some individuals even do a verbal “aha” or “hmm.” Revelation? Inspiration? Motivation? Worth your investment of time?

Yes, your attitude is indeed one of your most valuable assets, and it’s connected to your thoughts, deeds, and words.

**The Heart and Soul of Your Attitude**

Have you ever said something brilliant—or even stupid—and wondered where on earth those words came from? Want to hear something amazing? Your heart is connected to your mouth. The Bible clearly says, “The things that come out of the mouth come from the heart” (Matthew 15:18, TM). Thoughts and experiences stored in your heart come out of your mouth and directly impact your life and the lives of others.

As a speaker and writer, I love words. In order to better understand the real meaning of words, I have more than a dozen dictionaries (without dust) on my desktop. My favorite is *The Complete New Testament Word Study*, edited by Spiros Zodhiates. This hefty dictionary is an excellent tool designed to help readers properly understand the full meaning of God’s Word (in the New Testament) as it was originally recorded in the Greek language. I often refer to this dictionary to help me grasp the depth and fullness of the Bible.

Case in point: the English word “heart” (from Matthew 15:18) translates to the Greek word *kardia*. Now you know where the word “cardiologist” originated. *Kardia* represents the heart as the soul—the focal point of human life. It denotes the heart, mind, body, and spirit as one, with the *kardia* (soul) as the controller.
In other words, *kardia* is the fountain seat of thoughts, passions, desires, appetites, affections, purposes, and endeavors. These components interrelate and produce—

- Positive or negative thoughts.
- Positive or negative words.
- Positive or negative actions.

This is great news. Now you can quit wondering, *Should I be negative or positive?* A positive, healthy attitude comes from within—your heart, mind, body, and spirit. It can’t be bought. It can’t be manufactured. You can’t inject it, transfer it, or swallow it, because you already possess it. Positive change involves not merely inventing an optimistic perspective but discovering it deep within. Based on your willingness to be transparent and honestly look into your heart—and then doing something about what you discover—you can transform your attitude. The old adage “Is your cup half full or half empty?” reflects the relevance of a negative or positive attitude. It’s all a matter of what you see.

**Perspective**

Want to enhance your life? Adjust your perspective. Author Katherine Mansfield writes, “Could we change our attitude, we should not only see life differently, but life itself would come to be different. Life would undergo a change of appearance because we ourselves had undergone a change of attitude.”

Think about it: What if you weren’t allowed to say, think, or do anything about a person or situation until you first caught them doing something right—or observed the incident from a positive perspective? Would this approach make a difference in what comes out of your mouth?

Carmen, a devoted mom raising three kids alone, grew tired of minimum wage jobs, living in near-poverty from paycheck to pay-
check. Ten years ago she started a yard maintenance business. She worked long hours to earn enough money to support her children. She clipped coupons to save money on every item she purchased, including groceries, clothing, and household items. For years, Carmen and her children lived in a small, overcrowded apartment while she scrimped to save money in hopes of someday owning a home.

She finally bought that home. Sadly, within two weeks of moving in, she found that nothing about the house was worthy of positive mention. First, a slight crack in the concrete walkway destroyed her joy. Next, the front door didn’t close properly. Later, water from the kitchen faucet dripped a couple of times. Carmen experienced what I call an “attitude-related meltdown.” In other words, her reactions to new-home ownership needed adjustment. Plus, she made it a point to tell everyone she came in contact with every negative aspect about her house. All that arduous labor, all that scrimping and saving, and in less than a couple of weeks it seemed—to Carmen, at least—all for naught.

I don’t know about you, but being an audience of one to a constant whiner is far worse than listening to a scratched music CD at warp speed—or mach ten! At least I can toss a CD into the trash.

By contrast, I have friends who live with painful chronic illness. These folks have real reason to complain—but they don’t. This tells us two things: (1) maintaining positive attitudes in difficult situations is possible, and (2) sometimes complainers subconsciously are just waiting for someone to intervene by asking the right questions.

After several months of observing Carmen’s negative attitude, I asked her if there were things about her home she liked. Her initial reaction was a bit haughty, but in her heart she knew I wasn’t being sarcastic. I truly cared.

“Mrs. Coates,” she replied, “are you thinking I don’t appreciate my new house?”
“No, I believe you do. But don’t you think you might feel better if you looked at the big picture, minimizing the negative and maximizing the positive aspects of your home that you worked so hard to get?”

Hesitantly, she nodded.

“Let’s talk about the spacious kitchen. How do you like having room enough in the kitchen for the kids to cook beside you?”

“Oh, the kids and I like it. Last week we prepared meals for the hurricane evacuees and then delivered them.”

“Well, how does it feel to have a family room big enough for you and the kids to read the Bible together as a family?”

“The room is cozy yet spacious, and it’s perfect for us.”

“How do the kids like having their own bedrooms?”

“They’re delighted! Allie decorated her bedroom walls with her soccer ribbons, band awards, and a Bible verse poster. The kids finally feel a sense of home.”

“Carmen,” I explained, “over the years I’ve built several homes and lived in a couple of pre-owned homes. Minor adjustments to sinks, toilets, doors, and that sort of thing just go with owning a home. It takes a few months to work out all the minor issues; every homeowner is responsible for basic maintenance. Your Creator motivated you to work hard to purchase this home. When you display a critical attitude, how do you think God views the gifts He has given you?”

Her warm brown eyes filled with tears.

“I’m so ashamed. I need to be thankful, don’t I?”

“Yes, my friend—you do. You also need to change your perspective regarding your dream home. Before criticizing your home, pause and envision the positive aspects so that negativity doesn’t become your focus.”

I noticed that my words penetrated her heart.
“Your life overflows with blessings. You enjoy good health. Your terrific kids are bright. You have a new home and a profitable business. By changing your attitude, you can alter your mood, influence the attitudes of your kids, and learn to cherish an attitude of gratitude.”

Carmen smiled. “Thank you for caring enough to be honest with me. You’re right—I need to count my blessings. Starting this very moment, I’m going to keep a mental checklist of the good things about my home and my life. I want to be a positive, appreciative example for my kids and others.”

Several weeks later while I worked from my home office, I leaned toward the window facing the front yard and identified a buzzing noise. *Oh, no—another uninvited wasp family,* I thought.

I walked outside with my trusty wasp zapper spray can and stopped in my tracks. There Carmen stooped, her back toward me, weeding my purple pansies just below my office window, singing praise songs in Spanish. She turned around, flashed me a big grin, and embraced me with a Panda-size hug.

“Lovely music to my ears,” I said.

“*Sí,* Mrs. Coates. I’ve replaced my complaining with a thankful heart and a joyful song.”

And so it is with each of us, including me. As we change our attitudes, we see life differently, making life itself different. There is nothing more hopeful to me than knowing that with a slight attitude adjustment I can literally change the outcome of my day. Ask yourself: what could your day be like if you began it positively?

Aren’t you finally ready to find out?

**The Perfect Role Model**

The *kardia* (or heart and soul) of Jesus Christ is the perfect role model for living life more positively. Ponder these words of wisdom:
1. Jesus faithfully prayed, continually seeking God’s direction, and then He obeyed.

2. Jesus came to serve others, share the gospel, and lead an exemplary life.

3. People were not an interruption to Jesus—they were His purpose in life.

4. Jesus passionately loved people from all walks of life—prostitutes, beggars, thieves, no-account fishermen.

5. Jesus didn’t find fault with people. He may have hated the sin, but He loved the sinner.

Jesus felt positively passionate about what He did and, equally important, who He did it for. If you follow Jesus’ actions, deeds, and prayer life and mirror His love for humanity, your *kardia* will become fragrant and pleasing to God in accordance with His plans and purposes for your life.

I hope these words encourage you and fill you with a hunger and desire to be all God created you to be while embracing the importance of your “work-in-progress” attitude.

Oh, my friend, let your heart become pure and clean so you can truly experience change from the inside out! “As a face is reflected in water, so the heart reflects the person” (Proverbs 27:19, NLT).

**Write your thoughts on what you’ve read.**

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________________________________________________________________________
Questions

1. What kind of attitude did you wake up with this morning?
________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

2. If you’ve tried to “don’t worry—be happy,” what were the results?
________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

3. Can your attitude become one of your most valuable assets? If you think it can, explain why.
________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

4. Please refer to Chuck Swindoll’s attitude quote in this chapter. What is the single most significant decision you can make on a day-to-day basis? Why?
________________________________________________________________________

“When my attitudes are right, there’s no barrier too high, no valley too deep, no dream too extreme, no challenge too great for me.” How can accepting this attitude principle help you strengthen a positive focus on life?
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5. Kardia represents the heart as the soul—the seat and center of human life. It denotes the heart, mind, body, and spirit as one, with the kardia (soul) as the controller. Are you ready to do some-
thing about your *kardia* in order to discover how to live with positive purpose? If yes, what actions come to mind?

6. How can your perspective affect your attitude?

7. Who is the perfect role model? Why?

8. “As a face is reflected in water, so the heart reflects the person” (Proverbs 27:19, NLT). How can this verse help you get to the heart of your attitude?