

“Recognize Negative, Dwell on Positive”

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BIG SANDY, Texas—Since I did not give the Bible study on Wednesday evening, I did not continue with my recent pattern of writing about my Wednesday-night presentations for the next weekend article.

Rather, I decided to write about the two presentations that I gave at our church service last Saturday (May 25). The titles of those oral presentations were “Recognize Negative, Dwell on Positive,” parts 1 and 2. I combined the material for those two presentations into this one article.

Importance of order

I want to begin this article by citing Numbers 13:17-33 to focus upon an important concept—the order of recognizing negative and of dwelling upon positive is crucial.

In fact, it is the key.

Some seem to espouse that believers should always be positive. You might be surprised to learn that there is an important role for recognizing negative.

Some believers actually say that, if believers have enough faith, they will never face anything negative and they will never feel negatively. That is ridiculous and even dangerous.

The truth is: We should recognize negative and then dwell on positive. And it should be done in that order.

Notice how Numbers 13:17-33 makes that point.

■ Numbers 13:17-20—The chosen spies were sent to evaluate—how many people were there, whether the people were strong or weak, whether the cities were strongholds, what the land was like (rich or poor), were there forests, what was the fruit like, etc.

■ Numbers 13:25—The spies evaluated (recognizing negative and positive) for 40 days.

- Numbers 13:26-27—The spies began talking about the positive.
- Numbers 13:28-29—Then, the spies became consumed with the negative.
- Numbers 13:30—Caleb saw the folly of their reporting, and he encouraged them to focus on the expected success.
- Number 13:31-33—But the people remained focus upon the negative.
- Numbers 14:6-9—Two spies (Joshua and Caleb) continued to focus upon the positive.
- Numbers 14:24—Caleb was mentioned as a person with a different spirit.
- Numbers 14:30—Joshua and Caleb were mentioned as having the correct approach.
- Numbers 14:38—Joshua and Caleb were blessed for their approach.

Recognize negative and dwell on positive.

Old Testament

- Genesis 50:20—Joseph recognized evil done against him, but he dwelled upon God’s positive involvement.
- 1 Samuel 20:33—David recognized Saul’s intent toward him when he recognized Saul throwing a spear at him.
- 1 Samuel 22:1—David recognized that he should hide from Saul in a cave.
- 1 Samuel 26:21-24—When Saul offered to have David “return” to a relationship with him, David remembered the evil that Saul had consistently shown toward him and continued to keep his distance from Saul.
- Proverbs 14:15—The simple believe every word, but the prudent consider their steps.
- Proverbs 27:12—The prudent foresee the evil and hide when necessary.
- Jeremiah 6:11-14—The Lord was upset when the prophets promised peace, when that message was inaccurate.
- Jeremiah 14:11-12—The Lord instructed the people that there were times when a positive approach was not available.
- Exodus 14:10-14—When people have a reason to be afraid, they should turn to God.
- 2 Kings 20:1-3—Hezekiah recognized that God intended to let him die, but he turned to God.
- Daniel 3:17-18—Shadrach, Meshack and Abed-Nego recognized that God could let them die, but they trusted Him.

Count the cost

- Luke 14:26—The Lord taught disciples to put Him above everything—even family.
- Luke 14:27—The Lord taught disciples to bear their cross (deal with negative).
- Luke 14:28-30—The Lord used the example of a building project to teach disciples to “count the cost” (recognize negative).
- Luke 14:31-32—The Lord used the example of going to war to teach disciples to “count the cost” (recognize negative).
- 1 Thessalonians 5:3—Paul said a positive message about peace can be misleading to the actual truth.

Recognize traps

- Matthew 4:3-4—The Son of God recognized the attempted trap and followed the plan of God.
- Matthew 4:5-7—The Son of God recognized the attempted trap and followed the plan of God.
- Matthew 4:8-10—The Son of God recognized the attempted trap and followed the plan of God.
- 2 Timothy 4:14-15—Paul recognized the danger of Alexander the copper-smith, wanted the Lord to correct him and was willing to beware of him.
- Acts 9:23-25—When the disciples recognized the plot of the Jews to kill Paul, they protected him (by letting him down the wall in a basket).
- Romans 12:17-21—When disciples recognize evil against them, they should seek to let God deal with the evil people.

Trust in the Father

- 2 Corinthians 1:3-7—Disciples recognize suffering, but they look to the Father for comfort.
- 2 Corinthians 1:8-10—Disciples recognize hardship, but they seek to trust in God who delivers them.
- Matthew 26:37-46—In the Garden of Gethsemane the Son of God recognized the challenging circumstances, expressed His feelings openly to His Father and continued to follow the plan of the Father.