

CHOOSE  
YOUR  
ATTITUDE,  
CHANGE  
YOUR  
LIFE

DEBORAH  
SMITH PEGUES



HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS  
EUGENE, OREGON

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*Cover design by Koehel Peterson & Associates, Inc., Minneapolis, Minnesota*

Previously published under the title *30 Days to a Great Attitude*

## **CHOOSE YOUR ATTITUDE, CHANGE YOUR LIFE**

Copyright © 2009 by Deborah Smith Pegues

Published by Harvest House Publishers

Eugene, Oregon 97402

[www.harvesthousepublishers.com](http://www.harvesthousepublishers.com)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Pegues, Deborah Smith, 1950-

[30 days to a great attitude]

Choose your attitude, change your life / Deborah Smith Pegues.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-7369-5827-1 (pbk.)

ISBN 978-0-7369-5828-8 (eBook)

1. Attitude change—Religious aspects—Christianity. 2. Conduct of life.

I. Title.

BV4597.2.P44 2014

248.4—dc23

2013015779

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**Printed in the United States of America**

14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 / BP-JH / 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*This book is dedicated to every reader  
who would dare commit to displaying the right  
attitude in every situation.*

## *Acknowledgments*

Special thanks to all my friends—including cyber friends—who not only prayed for this project but also willingly shared their experiences and insights on the various attitudes discussed in this book.

I appreciate my entire Harvest House family for their flexibility and commitment to a quality product. Thanks especially to Bob Hawkins Jr., president, and Terry Glaspey, director of acquisitions, for always pushing me to the next level despite my protests. My editor, Rod Morris, is always a refreshing fount of wisdom as he hawks the spiritual integrity of all my biblical conclusions and assertions.

Finally, I'm eternally grateful to my husband, Darnell, for his unselfish support, his willingness to sacrifice our time together, and for being the most loving and self-sufficient husband in the world.

# Contents

Acknowledgments . . . . .	4
Prologue: Commit to Change . . . . .	7

## **Attitudes to Choose**

1. Choose to Connect. . . . .	11
2. Choose to Let Go of Anger . . . . .	15
3. Choose to Live Passionately . . . . .	19
4. Choose to Build Others Up . . . . .	25
5. Choose to Be Peaceable . . . . .	29
6. Choose to Value Others' Opinions . . . . .	33
7. Choose to Love Correction . . . . .	37
8. Choose to Value Others. . . . .	41
9. Choose Healthy Expectations. . . . .	45
10. Choose to Believe God Is in Control . . . . .	51
11. Choose to Be Pleasant . . . . .	55
12. Choose to Think Positively of Others . . . . .	59
13. Choose to Be Patient . . . . .	65
14. Choose to Be Happy for Other's Good Fortune. . . . .	69
15. Choose to Walk in Humility . . . . .	73
16. Choose Tolerance. . . . .	77
17. Choose to Embrace Racial Equality . . . . .	81
18. Choose Flexibility. . . . .	87

19. Choose to Serve with Gladness. . . . .	93
20. Choose to Avoid Sarcasm. . . . .	97
21. Choose to Leave Revenge to God. . . . .	101
22. Choose to Resist Scarcity Thinking . . . . .	105
23. Choose Not to Judge Others . . . . .	109
24. Choose to Be Amiable . . . . .	115
25. Choose to Reject Helplessness . . . . .	119
26. Choose to Be an Optimist . . . . .	123
27. Choose to Submit to Authority . . . . .	129
28. Choose to Focus on the Needs of Others. . . .	135
29. Choose to Pursue Excellence . . . . .	141
30. Choose to Relinquish Control . . . . .	147
 Epilogue: Your Attitude, Your Choice . . . . .	 153
Endnotes . . . . .	157
Appendix 1: Famous Attitude Quotes . . . . .	159
Appendix 2: Scriptures for Maintaining a Great Attitude . . . . .	161

# *Prologue:*

## Commit to Change

“Alice, I understand you were suspended from school today. What happened?” Ann quizzed her niece.

“My teacher disrespected me, and when people disrespect me, that’s what they’re going to get back from me,” Alice said.

Although only eleven years old, Alice’s attitude was already entrenched. How had she developed such a mindset? Ann knew that Alice was merely repeating her grandmother’s mantra: “People who don’t respect you don’t deserve your respect.”

Yes, our attitude programming starts early in life. We often learn the most destructive ones from our parents, grandparents, or other authority figures we trust implicitly but who often see themselves as victims of life’s inequities. Unfortunately, Granny failed to tell Alice that such an attitude would sabotage her relationship with her teachers, other people, and her career even though it seemed eons away. Besides her grandmother, Alice’s attitude will be shaped by how others respond to her, her friends, the books she reads, her job, and several

other factors. Every single day she will have to decide how to frame and respond to the inevitable negative experiences of life.

That's what this book is about. It is not a pep talk on maintaining a positive attitude. Volumes of good books have already been written on that. I will not subject you to another "think positively" general approach to the subject. Rather, I will explore 30 specific attitudes that can make or break our personal and professional relationships. For each one discussed, I will provide practical guidelines on how you can integrate it into your daily interactions. If you need a more exhaustive treatment of a particular attitude, be proactive and search the Internet and your local library for other resources.

In this book, you will meet modern-day and biblical examples of people who did or did not model the right attitude in their responses to given situations. From intolerance to an attitude of entitlement to a controlling attitude, I will show you how to conquer them all using Scripture-based principles, thought-provoking questions, healing prayers and affirmations, and practical strategies to put into action immediately. While the strategies are simple and doable, they may not always be easy. I will be painfully transparent as I share the various wrong attitudes that challenge me even to this day—despite the fact that I have had good spiritual leaders and mentors and have invested many years in Bible study learning God's way of living life to the fullest.

Yes, like me, you may know the way to victory. Unfortunately knowledge is not the single key to success. We



have to commit to change—beginning with a change in our thinking and the emotions that we choose to attach to our thoughts about the inevitable negative situations we encounter. Dr. Caroline Leaf, author and learning specialist, summed it up this way: “Behavior starts with a thought. Thoughts stimulate emotions which then result in attitude and finally produce behavior. This symphony of electrochemical reactions in the body affects the way we think and feel physically. Therefore, toxic thoughts produce toxic emotions, which produce toxic attitudes, resulting in toxic behaviors.”<sup>1</sup> Thoughts. Emotions. Attitude. Behavior. Yes, we can control every step of the process.

I finally understand that my attitude determines whether I will be mediocre or excellent, anxious or calm, intolerant or accepting, or whether I exhibit a host of other mindsets that will affect the quality of my life. Since the choice is mine, I’ve decided to choose wholeness in every aspect of my life—relationally, emotionally, financially, physically, and spiritually.

I invite you to join me on my attitude journey. My hope is that we will learn to display the right attitude in every situation and to be the shining light that dispels the darkness in a negative world.



## *Day 1*

# Choose to Connect

Each of us comes into this world alone and we will leave alone. However, God never intended for any man to become an island unto himself. Shortly after He created Adam, God acknowledged that His work was not yet complete. “And the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him’” (Genesis 2:18). So, He created Eve. While some like to cite this passage to convince single men to get married, the reality is that regardless of our gender or marital status, we were all created to be in meaningful relationships with other people. If you study the life of Jesus, you will find that He was very sociable and often attended weddings, dinners, and other social events.

The phrase “one another” appears 142 times in the New King James Version. It is clearly God’s divine plan that we connect and communicate with other people in a mutually beneficial, satisfying, and productive way. To behave otherwise is counter to God’s purpose for His

creation. And it is our responsibility to take the initiative in connecting with others. “A man who has friends must himself be friendly” (Proverbs 18:24).

To be aloof or emotionally detached is detrimental not only to your personal life but also to your career or business. In some professions, an aloof attitude can spell the death of a relationship. Have you ever been to a doctor or other medical service provider who treated you with cold indifference? Were you eager to see him again? What judgments did you make about him?

And what about emotionally distant people who provide other services? I was shopping at a store recently and the clerk was very aloof despite my attempts to draw her out with small talk. Knowing there were other vendors in the area who sold similar products, I silently vowed to strike that store off my list for future shopping. Rest assured, when you are aloof, people are likely making judgments about you.

Now before I get my rope to hang every aloof person I’ve ever met, I confess that at times I have pretended to be aloof to avoid having people engage me in conversation, such as when I’ve wanted to read on an airplane. I usually repented and struck up a conversation since the Holy Spirit was quick to convict me for not taking advantage of an opportunity to talk about the Lord and the status of the person’s soul.

Perhaps, for reasons that you justify, you have found yourself putting emotional distance between yourself and others. What were you trying to avoid or protect yourself

from? What message were you sending that you didn't have the courage to communicate with words?

As with most negative social behavior, aloofness is learned in childhood. An aloof person may have experienced a range of negativity in her family of origin or at the hands of unwise teachers, authority figures, or mean classmates. Such experiences include moving frequently to different schools or cities; abandonment; cold and emotionally detached parents; being bullied, teased, or ridiculed; and other negative interactions. All of these experiences shouted, "Connecting with people is painful!" Nevertheless, God does not want us to write off the human race as "unsafe"; rather He wants us to continue to seek connection with others. Once you begin to open up to safe people, the imbalance in your emotions toward aloofness will begin to shift.

Lest I oversimplify the solution to this problem, let me caution that a strong resolution to change is not enough. You need God's help. Luke 8:27-39 gives an account of a socially and spiritually disconnected man who was possessed with many demons. He was homeless, naked, and lived in a cemetery outside the town. Obviously, he did not engage in normal human interactions. But after his encounter with Jesus, who cast the demons out of him, he was ready to connect.

*Now the man from whom the demons had departed begged Him that he might be with Him. But Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you." And he went*

*his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him (LUKE 8:38-39).*

I am not saying that aloofness comes from the influence of an evil spirit; rather it is an emotional handicap that can be healed by our Lord.

Once you've sought God's help, put your faith in action by joining a small study group at your church or a support group. If you have been out of the social loop at your job, why not ask a few coworkers if you may join them as they head for lunch? Do you really think they'll say no? Listen to and chime in on various discussions. Share your knowledge and don't think that you have to agree with everybody's opinion to be accepted. Have the courage to say, "I have another perspective." Even if you have nothing to contribute, ask questions that show your interest. Resist the spirit of fear when it tells you to retreat into your shell or to avoid the intimacy of a small setting.

Stay the course. God wants you connected.

### **Prayer**

Father, help me to show myself friendly and to find safe people to interact with regularly so that I may give and receive the benefits of relating to those You have ordained to be in my life. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.