

Thoughts of a Winner

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Many coaches and motivational speakers emphasize the power of the mind as a means of achieving success and reaching goals. There are books, tapes, and seminars that focus on the power of positive thinking and the ability we have to succeed if we can just convince ourselves that we can do it. Industrial pioneer Henry Ford, in one of his most famous quotes, said, "Whether you think you can or whether you think you can't, you're right!"

No doubt, our thoughts and attitudes are important as we strive to accomplish all we can in wrestling or any other venture. But is simply thinking positively the answer? Well, does thinking positively make you work harder in practice? Does it make you drill technique more precisely? Does it make you do all the little things inside and outside the wrestling room that make a champion?

Positive thinking, while beneficial, does not provide the affirmative answer to these questions. Success depends on more from our minds than simply thinking positively. Henry Ford was only partly right: Whether you think you can or whether you think you can't, you most likely won't - *if you haven't done all you can to prepare*. Legendary college football coach Joe Paterno said, "The will to win is important, but the will to prepare is vital."

The real question is: What should our mindset be to properly prepare? *What are the thoughts of a winner?*

The Bible has much to say about attitudes, thoughts, and the mind. Psalm 10 reveals the thoughts of a loser. Reverse the loser's thoughts, and a winner can emerge. Consider these three winning thoughts:

1. I CAN DO MORE TO PREPARE

He has said in his heart, I shall not be moved; for I will never be in adversity. –Psalm 10:6

A loser thinks he can handle any situation he faces. He doesn't think he needs help or more preparation. He has "arrived" and is content where he remains. The winner, on the contrary, knows he may face new problems and must prepare for them.

Wrestling legend Dan Gable typified a winner's attitude as he compiled his high school and college record of 181-1. He knew that any day someone was capable of beating him. So he trained to meet every possible situation. His motto for practice was: get into as many positions possible as many times as possible. Through comprehensive training, Dan knew what to do if someone got him in a bad spot. This same approach has helped Dan to win 9 consecutive NCAA team titles as coach of University of Iowa.

Dan sums up his attitude in this quote: "When I'd get tired and want to stop, I'd wonder what my next opponent was doing. I'd wonder if he was still working out. I tried to visualize him. When I could see him still working, I'd start pushing myself. When I could see him in the shower, I'd push myself harder."

Don't be content with where you are. Do better. Push harder. Ask God for strength. He is ready and able to help you. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" -Philippians 4:13.

2. SOMEONE WILL SEE THIS

He has said in his heart; God has forgotten; He hides His face; He will never see it. –Psalm 10:11

The loser thinks no one will see what he does, maybe not even God. Details are not important to the loser. Sloppiness is his style. But careless training means careless competition. A slipshod practice may indicate that the athlete doesn't think the sport is important and exactness isn't necessary. Quality competitors strive for precision and perfection, knowing others will see.

If you want perfection when people are watching, you have to expect perfection from yourself when people aren't watching. Vince Lombardi, another football coaching legend, illustrated this point when he corrected an old saying: "Practice does not make perfect. Only perfect practice makes perfect."

A parent understands how intently children observe what adults do and say. Someone is always watching you, too. And even when no one else is around, God still sees. The details *are* important. "O Lord, You have searched me, and known me." –Psalm 139:1.

3. I WILL ANSWER FOR MY ACTIONS

Wherefore does the wicked condemn God? He has said in his heart, You will not require it. –Psalm 10:13.

The loser proudly places himself above everyone else and feels he answers to no one. The winner knows the day of accountability will come, as it does for all:

- Child answers to parent
- Student answers to teacher
- Athlete answers to coach
- Employee answers to employer
- We all will answer to God!

We all must answer to someone in authority over us. That authority wants us to succeed and can show us how. Therefore, we should be humble and obediently accept the instruction of that authority. Robert E. Lee, the great Confederate General of the Civil War, said, "Obedience to lawful authority is the foundation of manly character."

Have an attitude that admits your weakness and finds help from others. Don't convince yourself that you can stand alone. When you ultimately answer to God, you must depend upon God and His righteousness. God offers you the gift of eternal life in His Son, Jesus Christ (Romans 6:23). If you have trusted Him for forgiveness of your sin, you can stand before Him unashamed when the day of accountability comes. Likewise, doing what your coach requires of you and seeking his help will allow you to stand before him at the end of your career, unashamed of your accomplishments, no matter how great or small they may be.

Becoming a winner means first thinking like a winner. Winners always want to do more to prepare, strive for perfection at all times, and humbly seek the help of those in position to help them. Look inside. What are you thinking? Are they the thoughts of a winner?