



Food for Life

BOOKLET SERIES

POWER PLUS ATTITUDE EQUALS PERFORMANCE

BY ROBERT A. FRENCH

Many years ago, while pastoring in Sierra Vista Arizona, I decided to take flying lessons. At that time, it was not as expensive as it is today, and I thought it might be advantages to me as much as I traveled. I was fortunate to have an exceptionally good instructor who gave lessons at the local airport. Out of the many things he would say to me every time we flew together, one stood out more than any of the others. It was this, Power + Attitude = Performance. He explained what that meant as it pertained to flying an airplane and it made complete sense, but as time went by, I began to be intrigued by the statement as to how it might apply to more than just airplanes. One day as I was pondering this statement once again, it dawned on me, it applies to life in how we exist every day. It applies to our success or failure in the things we endeavor to accomplish in the time the Father has allotted us on this earth.

Let me explain the equation as it pertains to flying an airplane. Power is of course the engine, whether it be a reciprocating engine or a jet, it provides the power necessary to keep the plane in flight. However, power by itself is not the only factor for a safe and stable flight. Power can be offset or completely cancelled out by other forces if allowed, one of them being the attitude of the aircraft. Attitude is the position of the aircraft in relation to the flow of air across the wings' surface, created by the nose being up or down. If the nose is too high then it will eventually stall, causing a dangerous situation for the pilot and, if any, passengers. If the nose is in a downward position, it is not going to stall, but if not corrected the result is not good, as you can imagine. So, these two things are especially important to the performance of the aircraft. There are other factors as well but these two are the most critical. So, you ask, what has that got to do with life or how I exist? What does it have to do with success or failure?

“Power”

The question that kept going over and over in my mind was this, what is the power source of my existence. To be sure the Lord is the power of all existence, but how does that relate to me as a being? How does the Lord give me that power? Is it some intangible thing that I cannot understand? Do I just have to take it by faith and be done with it or is it something tangible that I can understand and learn to use to the advantage of my existence? I am convinced the latter is true, so I continued my search. As I was reading the scripture, I came across a verse that jumped out at me, it was Jesus doing the speaking. It is John chapter fourteen, verse ten: “Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.” Also, John chapter six, verse sixty-three: “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” These verses denote the power that is embodied in the word of God. As I thought about this it became clear to me that in the knowledge of the word of the Father there is power. That knowledge is the power of our existence. The words He speaks to us are from the mind of Jehovah, and they give life. So, knowledge is power. I believe this principle is true in every area of existence. How can we truly exist if we do not know the foundation upon which to build our existence? The Psalmist echoed this very truth when he wrote: “Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore, I hate every false way.” Psalm 119:104. This word precepts, according to Benner’s Hebrew Lexicon has this meaning: “Statute: The orders and commands of the overseer. [freq. 24] [kjv: precept, commandment, statute] {str: 6490}” So, from the words that come from the overseer, Jehovah, I gain understanding on how to exist in the earth.

Solomon had much to say on this subject and I will include three of them here. “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.” Pro_4:7 “How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!” Pro_16:16 “How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!” Pro_16:16 I will also include an often quoted and one of the most familiar verses on this subject: “Pro 1:7 Respect and obey the LORD! This is the beginning of knowledge. Only a fool rejects wisdom and good advice.” (CEV) And lastly: “Let instruction and knowledge mean more to you than silver or the finest gold.” Pro 8:10 (CEV) From Job to Ecclesiastes the word knowledge is mentioned seventy times in sixty-nine verses, and almost all of these are in respect to this subject. However, having said all of that, knowledge alone is not enough to give us a stable foundation for our existence. It must be balanced by another factor.

“Attitude”

When flying an airplane, unless in a controlled ascent or decent, you want to fly straight and level. The attitude we have about our knowledge, or what we know, brings balance to our life. Throughout my early life as a believer, I heard fellow believers and ministers always talk about being on the mountain top or in the valley. The mountain top was preferred because it represented the victory of the person over the trials of life. The valley experience represented the trials, testing, and tribulation of the believer. As I read the word, I came across scripture after scripture about how we are the Lord’s sheep. The most well-known, of course, is the twenty-third Psalm. I read, He makes me lie down in green pastures and restores my soul. I thought, there are no green pastures on any mountain top I have ever seen. Those who climbed Mt. Everest did not bring back pictures of green pastures, or anything like it. There is nothing there but snow, rocks, and ice. You must even carry oxygen with you because it is so high you cannot breathe because the air is so thin. Then tell me, how could sheep survive at such altitude, let alone, lie down in rest. The Psalm continues, and He leads me beside the still waters. There are no rivers or streams at that altitude, so where would the still waters be? David further states, even if I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will not be afraid, because you are with me. I observed those on the mountain top were always under siege by something trying to knock them off into the valley, and those in the valley were trying to claw their way back to the mountain top. It was like a roller coaster ride, up one hill and down the next, this is not how the Lord intended us to live. The knowledge these people were being given determined their attitude, causing this up and down lifestyle. If you were flying in an airplane going up and down, most people would become airsick, that is why pilots do not do it. I have seen people get sick because of severe turbulence. Conclusion, there is nothing wrong with being in the valley where we find the pastures and streams.

Solomon told us: “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.” Proverbs 16:18 (KJV) I relate this to a nose up attitude, but what did Solomon mean by pride? Is it just thinking too much of ourselves? That may be one type or definition of the word but what is meant here in this reference is worse than that. Solomon is speaking of pride in the sense of when men begin to think they are sufficient in themselves and have no need of the Lord Jehovah.

This condition is illustrated in the Book of Amos, chapter six. Verse one states: “Do you rulers in Jerusalem and in the city of Samaria feel safe and at ease? Everyone bows down to you, and you think you are better than any other nation. But you are in for trouble!” Amos 6:1 (CEV) Adam Clarke, in his commentary on this verse, gives this insight: “They call themselves not after their ancestors, but after the chief of the idolatrous nations with whom they intermarry contrary to the law.” They had cut themselves off, even from their ancestors, giving no recognition to the Lord who had established them as a people and a nation. Their attitude had become so “nose up” they were bound to stall, and they did. There is nothing wrong with knowledge, it is a necessity if we are to live and progress as we should, but when we get to the point, we think we invented it, or we initiated it, that’s pride. If we are the creators of all knowledge, then why don’t we know it all? Why are we still searching for it? Why cannot we cure all diseases, solve all the problems we face, etc. Because we do not know enough to do it? When men stop trusting in the Lord, as they are doing increasingly as time goes by, they get closer to the stalling point created by their nose up attitude.



Having dealt with the foregoing, there is an application of this same principle in the everyday life of each one of us. Many of the children of the Lord think humility is thinking nothing of yourself. I have known many that believed that having self-respect was a sin. Paul deals with this in his letter to the Romans, chapter twelve, verse three. I will give two examples of this verse here. The first from the KJV and the other from the GW translation. “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.” This next example is in more modern English. “Because of the kindness that God has shown me, I ask you not to think of yourselves more highly than you should. Instead, your thoughts should lead you to use good judgment based on what God has given each of you as believers.” It is not wrong to have confidence in your abilities, or to have self-respect, as long as you, as the verse says, use good judgement, and do not use what you have been given to abuse, or treat your fellow human beings with disdain. I always use this example when speaking on this subject: if you were to go to a job interview and were asked if you had the skill to do the job, what would you answer, no, thinking it would be proudful or braggadocios to answer yes. You may think that is an extreme example, but I have known many people who would have a problem with answering yes. It is not wrong to think as highly as you should, just not more highly. To think more highly is to leave God out of the equation. To elevate man to the point he thinks he can create his own existence and sustain it for all time. This kind of thinking is what the serpent used to beguile the first humans saying, you can be like God.

The opposite of the nose-up attitude is in a nose-down attitude. This is almost self-explanatory, in that, we all know what happens if we nose the airplane down. If it is not a controlled decent, it will result in a crash, which none of us want to happen. In life, a nose down attitude creates the same result, a crash. People who are constantly pessimistic about their life. They think nothing will ever work out right, and because of that attitude, it usually does not. This is a problem, not only with Christians, but with a large majority on people. Why do you think there are so many self-help books, and seminars, on this subject? Anti depression drugs are advertised in every kind of media there is all the time. Fortunes are spent on them, and the problem still exists. Thinking less highly of yourself will create more problems in your life, and unless dealt with in a positive way, will eventually cause a crash of one degree or another, sometimes fatal. The best way to deal with attitude is to believe in the only God, Jehovah, and his son Jesus the Christ, and let his knowledge guide you all your days.

“Performance”

So, the equation is simply this, if we use the power (knowledge) given us by Jehovah and combine it with the proper attitude we will have the performance we desire out of life. The idea is to fly straight and level, without all the ups and downs that can make us life sick and arrive at the end of our journey safe in the arms of our Father. Faith in Jehovah and his son Jesus the Christ produces a nose level attitude that will not only get you to your destination safely, but it will also cause your life to be blessed and productive and a blessing to all that you encounter on your journey. The preferred answer to the question, how was your flight is, it was without incident. Power (the knowledge of God) plus attitude equals our performance in life.

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