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# Words of Truth

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## Should We Be Optimists, Pessimists, Or Realists?

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Optimism is: "hopefulness and confidence about the future or the successful outcome of something" (New Oxford American Dictionary). Pessimism is: "a tendency to see the worst aspect of things or believe that the worst will happen; a lack of hope or confidence in the future" (New Oxford American Dictionary). Realism is: "the attitude or practice of accepting a situation as it is and being prepared to deal with it accordingly" (New Oxford American Dictionary).

All three of the terms above are things defined by the studies of psychology. I posed the question in this article to make us think about some things. When we look at the world around us we can choose to see the best in people, worst in people, or people for what they really are. When we face a situation in life we can assume the best outcome, assume the worst outcome, or deal with the outcome when it arrives.

I find the need to place a term on something foolish for the most part. The Scriptures warn us regarding this. Notice: "*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ*" (Colossians 2:8). We need to be cautious in not getting into discussions about what psychological category we fit into. If you allow your mind to be under subjection to Christ (II Corinthians 10:5), you will not fit into things this world defines (Romans 12:1-3). Such thinking of man, though it may seem wise to those of this world, is foolishness with God (I Corinthians 3:18-19).

Our study is titled after the terms of men for the purpose of getting our minds headed in a certain direction. This study is going to be about how we should view bad situations in life, the evil we see in this world, and how we should prepare for the outcome of negative things. What we will not be doing is try to fit ourselves into any one of the three terms this article is titled after. In fact, we will find that we should not fit exactly into any three of the terms we read about above. One reason for this is that our focus and concerns are not centered so much on the outcome of things of this world.

### Our Focus Doesn't Fit The Premise Of Man's Psychology

The premise of optimism, pessimism, and realism is an assumption that our main concern is about fleshly matters. How people of this world deal with tragedy is different than how we deal with those things because our focus is different. Our minds are settled on things beyond this world (Colossians 3:1-4). Our citizenship [conversation] is in heaven (Philippians 3:20-21). We are strangers and pilgrims (I Peter 1:17 and I Peter 2:11) passing through this life, not anchoring to it (II Corinthians 4:18-5:1). Thus, we see things happening in this world differently. We are concerned about the

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outcome of certain events for different reasons. We are concerned about how our spiritual lives are impacted by things more than how our carnal lives are impacted by those events.

An example of this can be seen in how one of the world relates to someone dying and how a Christian sees such an event. Some of the world will view the death of a sinner by saying that person is in a better place. This would be the worldly optimist. Some others would just deal with the physical side of death and the consequences. This would be the realist. The pessimist would focus on all the negative things. The Christian would mourn the loss of a soul. We would feel much worse about the death of a sinner than one of our very own brethren (Psalms 116:15 and I Thessalonians 4:13-18). The Christian would want to use that death as a warning to others (Ecclesiastes 7:2) as we know sinners do not want their families and friends to be where they are (Luke 16:19-31). Our focus would not be so much on the person's property issues, family issues, financial matters, etc.; our focus would be mainly on the spiritual things relative to the death of a sinner.

Back in December children in an elementary school were gunned down. It was a horrific crime. The gunman killed himself as well. Young children cannot sin in that they do not have the ability to reason enough to sin (James 4:17; cf. I John 3:4). Children are the models of innocence we all must convert back to (Matthew 18:3). Children do not bear sin passed on from one generation to the next (Ezekiel 18:20). Thus, I rejoiced that children who may have grown up to walk away from God would not have the opportunity to be lost. I sorrowed for the gunman who took his own life before he had the chance to repent and be converted to have his sins forgiven (Acts 3:19). I felt the same for the adults that were murdered. People of the world, on the other hand, fit into one of the three categories that psychologists say we must fit into. The focus of this world was on how these events impact this world and how to respond. We, who see things spiritually more than carnally, understand the positives, negatives, and realities of situations all in the same thought.

### **Reality Is Both Negative And Positive**

When you think of Heaven, you have to consider Hell (Matthew 25:31-46). When you think of being saved, you have to think about damnation (Mark 16:15-16). I cannot rejoice about my salvation without being sad over the damnation of others (Philippians 3:16-20). We could draw from many more examples, but every positive there is a negative. You cannot ignore one or the other. In fact, you cannot have one without the other. Why would I joy in my salvation if I weren't being saved from damnation? The balanced spiritual mind doesn't ignore reality. The balanced spiritual mind doesn't put some spin on something to make it worse than it is or better than it is. A spiritually minded person can hate life in this world (Ecclesiastes 2:17) and at the same time love life in this world (I Peter 3:8-10).

### **Conclusion**

When one comes to God he or she must forsake his or her way of thinking (Isaiah 55:7). Upon conversion, we are supposed to become new creatures in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17). Upon conversion to Christ and continuation in His word, we are His disciples (John 8:31). That means we are Christians (Acts 11:26). We will not allow this world to dictate anything about how we should act or think. That was our past, not our present or future (Ephesians 2:1-2). Thus, we are not optimists, pessimists, realists, or any other term that the world may use to describe classes of people.