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your
day

6 Keys to Maximizing Your Success
and Accelerating Your Dreams

JOEL OSTEEN



New York Nashville

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CHAPTER ONE

Rule Your Day

You have a space that belongs only to you. It's your thoughts, your attitudes, and your emotions. It's who you spend time with. It's what you watch and listen to. That's your atmosphere. That's what you have control over. The reason some people live worried, offended, and negative is because they let everything in. They listen to the news all day, they dwell on the medical report, and they go to lunch with people who are critical. Somebody cuts them off in traffic, and that sours the rest of their morning. The problem is that they're not ruling their atmosphere. You have to be careful what you allow in. You can't stop every negative thing from coming, but you can stop it from getting down in your spirit.

You need to keep your atmosphere full of faith,

full of praise, full of hope, full of victory. It's up to you to say to anything that tries to poison that atmosphere, "No, thanks. You're not welcome here." If somebody leaves you out at work and doesn't invite you to a meeting, the offense will come, saying, "Be angry, be bitter. That's not right." You can let that offense in and live upset, or you can say, "Sorry, offense. You're not welcome here. Sorry, bitterness. There's no place for you. I'm going to stay in peace. I'm going to enjoy this day." You don't have control over what other people do, but you have control over your thoughts, your attitudes, and how you respond.

The writer of Proverbs says, "A person who doesn't rule his spirit is like a city with broken down walls." In King Solomon's time, the walls were what protected the city. If the walls were down, the opposition could come in and take the city. In the same way, if you don't keep some walls up around your spirit, if you don't rule your atmosphere and put up some boundaries, then everything is going to get in. If your child is off course, instead of trusting that God has him in the palms of His hands, worry will get in and you won't be able to sleep at night. If your business slows down or you lose a client, instead of knowing that God is your source and that He's going to provide,

stress will come and anxious thoughts will say, *What am I going to do?* If someone is talking about you, trying to make you look bad, instead of letting God fight your battles, you will let the offense in. You'll live defensive, trying to prove to them that you're okay, which is wasting valuable time on what doesn't matter. You don't need their approval; God has already approved you. Now keep your walls up. Quit allowing all that negativity into your spirit. Your time is too valuable, your assignment too important, to let everything in. Be selective. If it's not positive, hopeful, and of a good report, don't dwell on it. You can't control the whole world, but you can control your atmosphere.

If you don't keep some walls up around your spirit, if you don't rule your atmosphere and put up some boundaries, then everything is going to get in.

Rule over Your Kingdom

The Scripture says that God has made you to be a king, that you are to reign in life. Negative things

will come, but you have to remember that you're the ruler. You have the authority to decide what you allow in. *Am I going to dwell on this offense? Am I going to hang around this person who's pulling me down? Am I going to stay focused on this bad break and live in self-pity?* It's up to you. You rule over your kingdom with your attitudes and with what you choose to focus on.

When we turn on the news, there's so much that's negative. We hear about natural disasters, the divisiveness in politics, the unrest in our society. If you allow that division to get into your spirit, if you allow the disrespect and the anger to get in, it's going

*What are you watching
and what are you
listening to?*

to pollute your thoughts, steal your joy, and make you sour. You have to be proactive. What are you watching and what are

you listening to? Is it building you up, making you more positive and more hopeful, or is it tearing you down, stressing you out, making you angry and upset? You don't need that in your atmosphere. Life is hard enough without adding all these negative things that make it more difficult.

A man told me that as he drove to work he listened to talk radio for an hour every day. It was

about news and politics, with people calling in to argue and debate. He would get so riled up, so upset, that by the time he got to work he was angry and on edge. He said, “Joel, I didn’t like who I had become. Nobody wanted to be around me. I was so hard to get along with.” One day he happened to come across our SiriusXM station and started to listen. Instead of putting in all the negativity that was contaminating him hour after hour, he started putting in uplifting words of faith, hope, and victory. He said, “I’m a different person now. I’m positive. I’m grateful. I look forward to work. I enjoy the other people.” His coworker even asked him what happened to him, why he was so much happier and friendlier. It was because he got rid of the poison in his atmosphere.

I like to watch the news, and it’s good to stay informed, but you can’t listen to the news for hours a day and stay in faith. You can’t take that into your spirit and have the energy, the focus, and the creativity to be your best. “Well, Joel, I wish God would help me do better.” God has done His part. He made you a king. He’s given you the authority and the power to rule

You can’t control all that’s around you, but you can control what gets in you.

your atmosphere. You can't control all that's around you, but you can control what gets in you. Are your walls up? Are you ruling your spirit?

Who Are You Sitting With?

It's also important who you're spending time with. Evaluate your friendships. Are your friends making you better, inspiring you, and challenging you to go further? Or are they pulling you down, causing you to compromise, and bringing out the worst in you? That's contaminating your atmosphere. You're going to become like the people you hang around. If your friends don't have what you want, if they're not rising to new levels, if they don't have good attitudes, if they're not faithful and trustworthy, you need to make a change. Life is short, and you don't have time to waste with people who are not adding to your life. Yes, we need to help others come up higher, but you need a few friends who help

Spirits are transferable.

you come up higher. This is one of the main things that holds people back. If you stop spending time with the wrong people, your life will go to a new level. You shouldn't go to lunch with

people from the office who are jealous, who talk about the boss, who complain about the company. Spirits are transferable. If you hang around jealous people, you're going to become jealous. If you hang around unfaithful people, you're going to become unfaithful.

The Scripture says, "Don't sit inactive in the path of the ungodly." That means you can't be passive when it comes to people polluting your life. "Joel, I've been friends with them for years. If I don't eat lunch with them, they may get their feelings hurt." What if you miss your destiny? What if they keep you from the awesome future God has in store? Don't sit inactive and let them poison your atmosphere. Your ears are not garbage cans to hear gossip. You weren't created to take in the latest rumors. You have greatness in you. God has called you to leave your mark, to take your family to a new level. Don't waste your valuable time on petty things, with small-minded people who are not moving you forward.

The less time you spend with some people the better off you're going to be. Some people are dream stealers. They'll tell you all the reasons why you can't accomplish your goal, or why you can't get well, or

Some people are dream stealers.

how you'll never break the addiction. You don't need that poison in your atmosphere. Don't sit inactive with people who don't believe in you, with people who don't come into agreement with your dream.

You Need Some Eagles

When we were trying to acquire the Compaq Center, we first met with a group of attorneys. One of those attorneys said, "Joel, I'll help you, but I don't think you'll get it. It's too big a battle. The city is not going to sell it to a church." That went in one ear and out the other. He might as well have been talking to the wall. I thought, *Sorry, doubt. You're not welcome here. Sorry, limited thinking. You don't belong in this atmosphere. You don't know who my God is. I'm staying full of faith, full of hope, full of expectancy.* After we left that meeting, I told our staff that I didn't want that man on our team. He was experienced, respected, and knowledgeable, but if someone is not for you, if you have to talk them into what God put in your heart, you don't need them. Don't let them poison your spirit and convince you that you can't accomplish your dream. Rule your atmosphere.

Get rid of the naysayers. Quit spending time with people who don't see your greatness, who don't value what you have to offer, and who don't recognize the calling on your life. I've learned that if you get rid of the wrong people, God will bring you the right people. He'll bring divine connections, people who will come into agreement with you, people who will thrust you forward and help you reach your destiny.

The only thing that's holding some people back is who they're spending time with. Life is too short for you to spend with negative, can't-do-it, jealous, critical, small-minded people. You need some eagles in your life. You need some people who soar, people who are doing great things, people who have a great attitude. But here's the key: You can't soar with the eagles if you're hanging around with the chickens. Chickens are people who have their heads down, focused on the ground, focused on what they can't do. "This problem is too big." You can't reach new levels hanging out with turkeys, with people who compromise, who take the easy way out, who are mediocre. You won't see your greatness hanging around with crows, with people who complain,

You can't soar with the eagles if you're hanging around with the chickens.

who find fault, who always see the worst. You're an eagle. God created you to soar. Now you need to associate with other eagles, with people who inspire you to rise higher, not with people who drag you down.

When you're around certain people, they drain all your energy. They're always having a problem, telling you what's wrong and how bad life is. They're energy suckers. When you leave them, you feel as though you just ran a marathon. You can't take that in on a regular basis and reach your potential. Yes, it's fine to help and to encourage them, but if you're doing all the giving and never receiving, that's out of balance. You need someone who encourages you, someone who speaks life into you. Don't sit inactive around people who you know are limiting you, who are not bringing the best out of you. "Joel, if I don't hang around them, I won't have any friends. I'll be lonely." You may be lonely for a season, but God will bring you new friends, better friends, friends who push you up and do not tear you down.

Rule Your Atmosphere

In Psalm 59, David was on the run from King Saul, hiding in the desert. He had been good to Saul, but

Saul was jealous of him. Saul couldn't stand people celebrating David more than him. Saul and his army were tracking David down, making his life miserable. David said, "I have done them no wrong, but they have set an ambush for me. They come at me at night, snarling like vicious dogs." David went on and on describing how bad it was. He could have been panicked and gotten upset. But in the middle of all this turmoil, David went on to say to God, "But as for me, I will sing about Your power. I will shout for joy each morning. For You are my refuge, a place of safety in my time of distress." David understood this principle. He couldn't control Saul. He couldn't make Saul not be jealous. He couldn't change the minds of his enemies, but he could rule his atmosphere. He didn't let the worry in, the fear in, the bitterness in, the panic in. His attitude was, *I'm going to stay in peace. I'm not going to think about how unfair it is. I'm not going to dwell on what didn't work out. God, I'm going to praise You in the middle of this storm. I'm going to shout for joy despite what's coming against me.* You can't rule other people's atmosphere, and you can't make them do what's right, but you can rule your atmosphere.

The Scripture says, "Hold your peace, remain at

rest, and God will fight your battles.” You may be in a situation that’s unfair—somebody did you wrong, you’re dealing with an illness, you went through a loss. You could be worried, bitter, and upset. You can’t control what happened, and you can’t make that go away. This is where you have to dig down deep as David did and say, “I’m keeping my walls up. I’m not letting that negative into my spirit. I’m going to keep singing praises. I’m going to keep thanking God. I’m going to keep speaking the victory.” When you remain

Don’t be controlled by what you don’t have control over.

at rest, God will fight your battles. He’ll take care of your enemies. He’ll pay you back for the unfair things. He’ll

bring beauty out of those ashes. Don’t be controlled by what you don’t have control over. You can’t stop the Sauls from coming after you. You can’t stop people from being jealous. You can’t stop the bad breaks. What you can control is what you allow in.

A lady told me about how opinionated one of her husband’s relatives was. Soon after this couple had been married, this relative started making cutting, demeaning remarks about her viewpoints. Every time they were at a family get-together, this man would

say something that offended her. She would get upset, and it would ruin their whole trip. Just like clockwork, it happened time and time again. She got to the place where she dreaded going to their family events. Finally, she told her husband, “You have to do something about that man. He’s your relative.” She expected him to say, “You’re right. Nobody should talk to you like that. I’m going to set him straight.” But the husband said, “I love you, but I can’t control him. He has every right to have his opinion. He can say what he wants to say, but you have every right to not let it offend you.” He was saying, “You have to rule your atmosphere. You have to put your walls up. You can’t keep the offenses from coming, but you can keep them from getting in.”

That day was a turning point for this lady. The relative didn’t change, but she changed. She quit letting him upset her. When you allow other people to contaminate your atmosphere, you’re giving away your power. You’re letting them control you. Sometimes we’re waiting for the circumstances to change. “When this financial crisis is over, I’ll quit being so stressed.” “When my boss treats me better, I’ll quit dreading going to work.” “When I get through this illness, I’ll quit being so worried.” No, start ruling your

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atmosphere. You have the authority to allow in only what you want in. You don't have to let the offense in, the worry, the self-pity. Quit dwelling on it. When it comes up in your mind, turn it around and say, "Father, thank You that You're fighting my battles. Thank You that Your being for me is more than the world being against me."

Power to Remain Calm

The Scripture says, "God has given you the power to remain calm in times of adversity." When trouble comes, you don't have to get upset. When your plans don't work out, you don't have to fall apart. When someone is rude, you don't have to get offended. You have the power to remain calm. It's because you're a king. God has given you the authority to rule over your kingdom—over your mind, your attitude, and your response. You can't rule over someone else. You can't rule over all your circumstances. That's not up to you. That's in God's hands. You control what you

can control, and you have to trust God to take care of what you can't control.

In 2003, the Houston City Council voted for us to have the Compaq Center for our facility. It had been a two-year battle. We had worked hard, convinced different council members, and God caused it to all fall into place. It was a great victory. The vote was on a Wednesday, and that night we had a big celebration at the church. The next day, Victoria and I and our children went out of town to take a few days off. We were on cloud nine, so excited. After we arrived at the hotel and started unpacking, my brother-in-law Kevin, our church administrator, called and said, "Joel, a large company just filed a federal lawsuit to try to keep us from moving into the Compaq Center. They say we are in violation of the deed restrictions." I asked him what that meant. He said, "It means we can't move in because it's in the legal system, and it could take years to work out." The attorneys said there was no guarantee that we would win. This was less than twenty-four hours after one of the greatest victories of our lives.

Victoria overheard the whole conversation. She stopped unpacking and said, "Joel, what are you going to do?" I said, "I'm going down to the beach." She

asked, “What are you going to do there?” I responded, “I’m going to swim.” She looked me in the eyes and said, “Aren’t you worried?” I answered, “No, we did our part; now it’s in God’s hands. I’m not going to worry about something that I can’t change. I’m going to stay at rest, and I’m going to trust God to fight my battles.” Yes, worry came, disappointment came, and frustration came, but I kept my walls up. I didn’t allow that in my atmosphere.

When you’ve had a setback, when you’re facing difficulties, that’s a very important time. The enemy is going to bombard your space—your mind, your emotions—and even use other people to try to discourage you and get you worried and full of doubt. “Why did this happen?” That’s when you have to take your authority and say, “No, I am not allowing that

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in my atmosphere. I’m not dwelling on it. I’m not reliving my hurts. I’m not thinking about what didn’t work out. I’m staying in faith. I know that God is still on the throne. I know that He didn’t bring me this

far to leave me. I know that the enemy wouldn't be trying to stop me if there wasn't something awesome in my future." If you do your part and control what you can control, if you rule your atmosphere, your thoughts, and your attitudes, then God will do His part. He'll make things happen that you couldn't make happen.

Rule the Day

There's a juice bar franchise that has as its motto: "Rule the Day." They encourage you to eat the right foods and take the right vitamins so you can have a healthy day. I like that phrase, *Rule the Day*. When you get up in the morning, make the decision: "I'm going to rule my thoughts today. I'm not just going to think about whatever comes to mind. I'm going to think thoughts that are positive, hopeful, and encouraging, on purpose. I'm not going to spend time with just anyone today. I'm going to rule my day and be selective. I'm going to associate with eagles. I'm going to rule my attitude today. I'm going to see the best, I'm going to be grateful, and I'm going to stay in peace. I'm going to rule my emotions today. I'm

going to forgive the wrongs, I'm going to overlook insults, and I'm going to give people the benefit of the doubt." Before you leave the house in the morning, it's important to make this decision that nothing that happens is going to upset you. You're going to stay in peace. Then when difficulties come—traffic is bad, your boss is rude, your child has a problem—you've already decided you're going to rule your day. You have your walls up. You're not going to live upset.

We should go out every day expecting the best, but knowing that everything may not be perfect. There may be delays, interruptions, and people who are hard to deal with. Don't let that ruin your day. Rule your day. Keep the negative out of your atmosphere. God is directing your steps. Whatever happens is not a surprise to Him. He's given you the power to remain calm in times of adversity. God never promised that you would have the power to avoid adversity, or to not have challenges, or to have a perfect day. The fact is that every day can be a good day if you rule your atmosphere. David had a good day even when Saul was chasing him. I had a good day at the beach when that company filed a lawsuit. Quit waiting for all the circumstances to be perfect. You can have a

good day in the middle of a crisis. You can have a good day even though you have challenges at

Keep the negative out of your atmosphere.

work, even though you're dealing with an illness, even though some people don't like you. Stay calm, stay in faith, and rule your day. Make the decision as David did and say, "This is the day the Lord has made. I'm going to live it in faith. I'm going to be happy today. I'm going to be good to others. I'm going to make the most of this day."

One evening I called to order a pizza, which I have done for many years. The first thing they always ask for is your phone number. When a young lady answered the phone, I said hello very politely and started to give her my number. You would have thought I had just committed a major crime. She practically screamed in my ear, "Sir, I am not ready for your phone number! When I want your phone number, I will ask you for your phone number!" At that moment, I suddenly didn't feel like a pastor. I felt some other things rising up. I had to make a decision: *Am I going to rule my atmosphere, or am I going to let her poison my atmosphere? Am I going to keep my*

People are always trying to bring their atmosphere into your atmosphere.

walls up, or am I going to be offended? People are always trying to bring their atmosphere into your atmosphere. People

who are hurting, who have issues and are dealing with things, will try to put their poison on you. They're not bad people; they're just hurting. The mistake we make too often is to take the bait. We let the offense in, get upset, and do to them what they did to us. But you don't overcome evil with more evil; you overcome evil with good. I thought to myself, *I've already made the decision that I'm going to stay in peace today. I'm not going to get upset. I'm going to rule this day.*

You've heard the phrase *Kill them with kindness*. That's what I decided to do. I thought of anything that I could possibly compliment her on. God knows that I had to use my imagination. I said, "I sure appreciate you answering the phone so quickly and taking my order, being so efficient. You guys always make the best pizzas, and you're always on time." I went on and on lying...I mean encouraging. By the time I was finished, she was throwing in hot wings, sodas, and coupons. She was my best friend.

Be Calm, Cool, and Steady

The apostle Paul told Timothy, “As for you, be calm, cool, and steady.” Some people let things upset them way too easily, whether it’s the traffic, the weather, or a grumpy clerk. I wonder how much more you would enjoy life and how much higher you would go if you start ruling the day. Keep your walls up. Don’t let everything get in your spirit. You can’t stop the negative from coming, but you can keep it from getting down in you. You’re a king. You have a kingdom. You’re in charge of your thoughts and your attitude. Start ruling your atmosphere. At the beginning of the day, make the decision that you’re going to stay in peace. You’re not going to let things upset you. You’re going to be calm, cool, and steady. If you do this, I believe and declare that you’re not only going to enjoy your life more, but you’re going to see more of God’s favor. He’s going to fight your battles and take care of what’s trying to stop you. You’re going to rise higher, overcome obstacles, and see new levels of your destiny.