

## All things begin and end with you

Written by Timothy Houston  
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*I am the master of my fate; I am captain of my soul (William Ernest Henley)*

This week, I would like to share some insight from chapter two of my book: Men are Dirt. The title of this chapter is “*All things begin and end with you.*” This chapter reminds us that we are the principle part of our relationships and that all things begin and end with us. Before you can be true to others, you must first be true to yourself. You serve as the numerator in your relationship equation and the people in your life serve as the denominator. When others bring spiritual, emotional, and financial value equal to yours, the relationship becomes one or whole. On the other hand, when they bring emotional, financial, and spiritual baggage that is greater than you and your resources, the relationship becomes a fraction of what it should be. Because there is so much at stake, it is necessary to take ownership of your relationships.

I still can recall my personal paradigm shift. Although it has been over 30 years, I remember as a young man reading women’s magazines trying to get insight on how women thought men should behave. I was pretty convinced that none of their writers were men, but despite this conviction, over time, I begin to model the image they projected. In the process, I hid the real me. I later realized the error of my ways, and I begin to look inward for my change. Shakespeare wrote in Hamlet, “To thy own self be true.” The Bible says, “As a man thinks, so he becomes.” These were profound statements that I took to heart. Self knowledge changes you. It is the vehicle that allows you to redirect your course in life. The people in your life will always be on the fringes of your core being, and you will always be at the center of your change. This self-awareness gives new perspective thereby giving a new point-of view. You have the most power to change your situation.

Although, life constantly adds and takes away from you, it is never wise to measure your life’s worth by any single period in it. William Ernest Henley wrote the poem “Invictus” from his hospital bed. Although he had survived tuberculosis at age twelve, in the process, he had one foot amputated. He later resisted the doctor’s assurance that the only way to save his life was to amputate the other leg; as a result, Henley was discharged from the hospital in 1835 with one foot intact. Because he was able to encourage himself, Henley went on to live an active life for thirty years, despite his disability. The things you think and say about yourself will always supersede the words spoken by others. This is the type of self confidence that produces true greatness.

Greatness in life requires personal responsibility. No one can truly make another person happy. If a person is not content within themselves, changing everything around them still will not make them happy. Individually, we must take responsibility for our lives. Your life will be different because you are different. This year, as you reflect on your life and the people in it, ask yourself the question, “Are they adding value to me?” If not, it is time to make some changes. William Henley knew that he was the master of his fate and the captain of his soul. Each of us must learn this lesson for ourselves. To live your best life today, you must take responsibility for the success and failure in your life and live out the principle that all things begin and end with you!

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*Timothy Houston is an author, minister, and motivational speaker who is committed to guiding positive life changes in families and communities. For questions, comments or more information, go to [www.tlhouston.com](http://www.tlhouston.com).*