

CONNECTING MY MIND WITH MY LIFE

❖ A MIND IS A TERRIBLE THING TO WASTE

Have you ever met someone who was very wasteful. People waste so many things. They waste money, time, resources, talent, skills, energy, opportunities. As I have been developing this series on “Connecting My Mind With My Life”, one thing that I have realized is that unfortunately there have been too many times in my life when I wasted my time and my life on things that really did not spiritually count for much. It may have been too much television, too much recreation, too much work, too much worrying, or just too much spending time on things that were just wood, hay, or stubble. The unfortunate part of all of this, is that I cannot recover any of that. Those days and those opportunities are gone. All I have left is what is ahead of me. You name it, people waste it. For instance, as a Christian, it is a complete waste of time to be angry, to worry, to be critical, to be unforgiving, to be lazy, or to be confrontational. Why? Please tell me why? It is because God says that none of those attributes will help you or anyone else. It is because the enemy has brainwashed everyone with his stupid lies. What this series continues to reinforce for me, and I hope for you as well, is the old adage that “a mind is a terrible thing to waste”. I cannot tell you how much I wish that when I was a young Christian that I had someone to teach me the truths that God is teaching me now, and especially how to think like He thinks, and stated another way, to believe what He says.. It would have been a treasure for my life.

❖ SO WHAT KIND OF MIND DO YOU HAVE?

When you study the Scriptures, you will find that there are two kinds of minds, or what I want to call two different “mindsets”. Think of your mindset as your attitude, your outlook, your beliefs, and your convictions. You can have a worldly mindset or a godly mindset. **The Scriptures say that you can have a carnal mind or a spiritual mind.** However, what is important to understand is that you are the one who makes that choice – i.e., what kind of mindset you are going to have. Either choice will create certain results. Each mindset has a trajectory and each has a landing zone. One mindset is good, the other mindset is not good. [Romans 8:6](#) defines the mindsets and their inevitable landing zones as follows,

Ro 8:6 (NKJV) **For to be carnally minded (the mindset) is death (the landing zone), but to be spiritually minded (the mindset) is life and peace (the landing zone).**

A carnal mindset has nothing to offer and a spiritual mindset has everything to offer. One produces death, one produces life. So, the real question that you have to answer is simple – “*What kind of mindset do I have? Am I “**carnally minded**” or am I “**spiritually minded**”?* Today, you are one or the other. You may think that you can be both, but that is just another lie from the devil. The Greek Interlinear defines the “**carnal**” mind as a mind that **belongs to the flesh**, and the flesh will ALWAYS lead you in the wrong direction and give you the wrong results. The NASB translates it as “**the mind set on the flesh**”. What that interpretation is saying is that a “**mind set on the flesh**” is a mind that **does what it wants to do and not what God wants it to do**. It does not think like God thinks, nor does it want to think that way. The AMP Bible says “**the mind of the flesh...is sense and reason without the Holy Spirit.** That is not what you want – a mind operating without the Spirit of God.

What you want is a “spiritual” mindset. The Greek Interlinear defines the “**spiritual**” mind as the “**mind belonging to the Spirit**”. The NASB says “**the mind set on the Spirit**”. The NIV says the “**mind controlled by the Spirit**”. To be “**spiritually minded**” simply means that you think like the Spirit of God thinks. We find out how God thinks in His Word, so God CANNOT use someone who has a mind that does not honor His Word and His truth. You can give the Word of God all of the lip service that you want, but until you actually believe what God says and implement His truth and His ways into your life, it is still nothing but lip service. He knows that your life will always be headed in the wrong direction. Think of [Romans 8:6](#) this way. The result of allowing the Word of God and the Holy Spirit to control your thinking is that it gives you “**life and peace**”. Right now, you can know what kind of mindset that you have by just asking yourself one simple question – “*Today, am I experiencing life and peace? Yes or no?*” If your answer is no, then chances are excellent that you are not “**spiritually minded**” and you simply have not learned how to think like God thinks. You may be that person who blames everything on someone else. That is certainly not how God thinks.

You are going to say to me “*Gary, you have no idea what I am going through in my life.*” Sure I do. What do you think it means to be a pastor? I deal with Christians every day who are experiencing very real and difficult situations in their life. They may have rebellious children, financial issues, moral struggles, marriage strife, relational problems, be spiritually indifferent, be lazy, be a very angry person – anything really. I deal with pastors who are struggling immensely in their ministries. Every believer has problems. The difference is not that successful Christians have fewer problems than unsuccessful Christians – not at all. They just have a different mindset in how they will deal with their problems. If you keep looking for and even find a path for your life that has no problems, I doubt seriously it will lead you anywhere. The Scriptures are filled with verses on struggles and trials. Let me read you just four - [James 1:2](#) and [1 Peter 1:6](#), and [1 Peter 4:12](#). Here is what I want you to do. Everytime you hear me read the word “**you**”, I want you to replace “**you**” with you and your name – “you Gary”.

Jas 1:2 (NKJV) **My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,**

1Pe 1:6 (NKJV) **In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,**

1Pe 4:12 (NKJV) **Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;**

Jesus said in [John 16:33](#),

Jn 16:33 (NKJV) **These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."**

If your expectation is that your Christian life will not have any problems just because you come to church and occasionally read your Bible, then you really will be frustrated and confused. It is my deep conviction that **you can literally change your circumstances by changing how you think about your circumstances**. This is so super important.

1. If you think that you will have a bad day, you probably will.
2. If you think that you cannot get along with someone, you probably never will.
3. If you think that you cannot do something, I doubt that you will.

If you think the way God thinks, all of your problems will begin to look much differently to you than they do now. Let us assume that you know that you have a problem in your life and how you handle yourself under difficult circumstances. At that point there is something very strategic that must happen. **You must allow the Word of God to confront you regarding that problem.** This is a decision that you must make in your mind. John Stott wrote the following,

*“We must allow the Word of God to **confront** us, to **disturb** our security, to **undermine** our complacency, and to **overthrow** our patterns of thought and behavior.”¹*

You cannot correct what you are not willing to confront.² If you are not willing to confront the problems and shortcomings that you know you personally have, then those problems simply cannot be corrected. I know people who literally waste away their entire life because they are not willing to confront the spiritual problems that the Word of God clearly says they have. They are always blaming someone else and never taking responsibility for their own behavior and decisions. Please, never attack other people. Just find some meaningful ways to talk about behavioral issues so that it does not become an emotional personal issue. God will help you! I know that it takes work and struggles and striving to confront and challenge the inertia of how you have always done things in your life. Everyone is set in their ways and not prone to change – everyone. I am, you are. The problem is that until you confront those areas of your own life that need to change, you cannot move in the direction that God wants you to move.

When you deflect your responsibility and resist accountability for your own behavior, what will invariably happen is that you will contribute to the conflict. Rather than helping resolve the conflict, you are simply throwing wood on the fire. However, if you will simply stop worrying about what the other person is doing or not doing and just do what God wants you to do, then God will work mightily on your behalf. Until **your mind** embraces that reality, you will invariably be contributing to the conflict. **God’s ways are NOT your ways!** Drive that into your thinking. Tattoo that onto your brain. Constantly reinforce that into your mind – God does not think like you think, nor does He handle problems the way you want to handle problems.

You cannot expect others to change until you are willing to change. This is part and parcel of a spiritual mindset. What you most likely want is for other people to change, but not yourself. Here is what you must understand. First, you do not have the power to change other people. Only God can change a person’s heart and will. **The harder you try to change someone, the greater will be your frustration.** Secondly, you will be constantly challenged by God in multiple areas of your life to change how you think so that His Word can have spiritual precedence in your life. God wants your mind to **embrace** what you know He wants you to change. So, here is what you can have. **You can have a carnal mindset or a spiritual mindset.** A carnal mindset refuses to let you see anything from God’s perspective. It is concerned about itself. A spiritual mindset, however, has a different element that must be understood. It is the element called “**surrender**”. Surrender is when you intentionally and willingly yield your heart and your mind to the control of someone else. You wave the white flag. As a believer, it is when you

¹ Dyck, 134-135.

² Groeschel, Strengthening, Podcast Video.

surrender your heart, your will, and your mind to God – which is exactly what you should do. You ask God to take control of your life – not yourself. I can assure you that everything inside of you will resist.

KEY PRINCIPLE 24: A “SPIRITUAL MINDSET” IS WHAT GOD USES TO HELP YOU FLOURISH DURING THE MOST DIFFICULT TIMES IN YOUR LIFE.³

This is so important. When you know that you are spiritually thriving when life is really difficult, then you know that you are thinking like God thinks. That is what I want you to glean from these studies. I want you to be able to think in such a way that you know that “**Christ in you**” is much greater than any problem that you will ever face – much, much greater. That is one of my primary goals. Let us assume that you are having some struggles in your life that you want to change – something very normal for everyone. Well, those difficulties most likely will NOT change if you have a “carnal mindset”. A carnal mindset says “*I cannot believe this is happening to me. Why would God ever allow something like this in my life? I don’t deserve this. This is not what I agreed to. Oh boy, here we go again!*” On the other hand, a “spiritual mindset” is fixed on God’s Word and “**counts it all joy**” when you fall into difficult trials. It means that you have learned how to “**greatly rejoice**” when you “**have been grieved by various trials**”. You do not consider the “**fiery trial**” which is testing you as “**some strange thing**” that is happening to you. Why? It is because you have surrendered and trained your mind to think like God thinks. Do you see the difference between the two ways of thinking? One is self-centered, the other is God-centered. **When you train your mind to think like God thinks, He gives you knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.** That is why you can make good decisions and develop godly values.

Now, you may be thinking to yourself “*Why does Gary keep emphasizing the same thing over and over in different ways?*” It is because I am trying my best to convince you that chances are very good that you do not think like God thinks. You think that you do, but when a very difficult moment comes into your life, you simply do not think like God does.

- You lose your confidence in God and His ways.
- You blame other people for your struggles.
- You criticize and whine about why something is happening to you.
- You become discouraged, disgruntled, and irritated.
- You speak your mind.

None of those are what God wants you to do. None of those are how God thinks – not one of them. That is NOT living out the Christian life. That is not having the “**mind of Christ**”. That is a carnal mindset.

Your trials are what test you so that you can know exactly where you really are in your Christian life. **You cannot make spiritual progress without having earthly trials.** I can assure you that sometimes not getting what you want is a wonderful stroke of divine intervention to help you become what God wants you to become. If you are really serious about your Christian life, then it would be a really good thing for you to develop a mindset of gratitude when difficult circumstances surround your life. Just say “*Jesus, I thank you for these various trials in my life. I know that through them you are conforming me to be like you. What a privilege you are giving to me. Lord, I need this.*” That is a spiritual mindset.

³ Dweck, 7.

Unfortunately, the average Christian does not say that. Rather, they say “*Lord, why are you letting this happen to me?*” That is clearly the carnal mindset. Listen to these three verses which speak of spiritual gratitude. [2 Corinthians 2:14](#) says,

2Co 2:14 (NKJV) **Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.**

Wow! What a verse. God “**always leads you in triumph in Christ**” – always. [Ephesians 5:20](#) says,

Eph 5:20 (NKJV) **giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,**

[1 Thessalonians 5:18](#) says,

1Th 5:18 (NKJV) **in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.**

Between “**all things**” and “**in everything**”, nothing has been left out for which you should not give thanks to God for in your life. You are thinking to yourself “*This is way too hard for me.*” No, it is not too hard for you. Why can I say that? It is because God’s Word says that “**you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you**”. The question for you is simple – “*Is that verse just theoretical or do I really believe this verse and I am allowing it to change my life?*” You have to change the way that you think to live this way. If you keep thinking like you have always thought, you will keep getting the same results. Even as I teach this, I know that people will think that I am overbearing, arrogant, and unsympathetic. I am not any of those. My desire is that you rise above normal Christianity, that you begin to really trust God in every area of your life, in every decision, in every trial, and that you begin to think exactly like He wants you to think. Will you still have problems? You will, but when you have a spiritual mindset, those problems will draw you closer to God and conform you more to the image of Christ. Do not run from your problems, but rather embrace them.

Listen to my heart for just a moment. **Just start taking some small steps in the right direction.** Please, just do that. Just take some small steps of obedience. If you want your life to be different tomorrow, you must make some changes today. If you will begin to make small changes today, make the spiritual and mental adjustments that you have not been willing to make, then taking those small steps will yield great benefits to your future. Here is what you want to do. This is so super important.

KEY PRINCIPLE 25: DETERMINE THE RIGHT THINGS TO DO, THEN DO THE RIGHT THINGS RIGHT.

That is how God wants you to think. I have said it over and over, but you change your life by changing how you think. You change **what** you think and you change **how** you think.

1. Start believing God rather than trusting in your instincts.
2. Put your faith in God’s Word rather than your own ideas.
3. Give God the privilege and the time to work on your behalf.
4. Do not give God a deadline. Learn to be patient during a trial.
5. Learn to love the people who stress you out by seeing them the way that God sees them and not how you see them.

If you do these kind of things, here is what you will find. **Having a Christ-centered mindset will give you God's power over your circumstances rather than your circumstances having power over you.** Jesus is the ultimate example of someone who literally brought “every thought into captivity” to how His Father thought. Every decision He made was because He was “spiritually minded”. It was because He had the “mind of the Spirit” and because He thought like His Father thought. Did He have troubles and trials and pressures and really difficult moments in His life? You bet He did. In fact, they were a lot worse than anything that you have ever experienced. However, they never defeated Him – not one time. Listen to what Paul endured in [2 Corinthians 11:23-28](#),

2Co 11:23 (NKJV) **Are they ministers of Christ?--I speak as a fool--I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. ²⁴ From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; ²⁶ in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; ²⁷ in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness-- ²⁸ besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.**

When God spoke to Ananias after Paul had been saved, notice the first major thing that was spoken about Paul in [Acts 9:15-16](#),

Ac 9:15 (NKJV) **But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. ¹⁶ For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."**

Wow! How would you like to start out your ministry like that? Everywhere Paul went he had trouble. Do you think Paul was in the will of God when all of these things were afflicting His life? Yes or no? Sure He was. He was doing exactly what God wanted Him to do, and his life was a model of what it meant to trust God in the midst of very difficult moments. Why was that? It was because He had a “spiritual mindset”. He had learned how to think like God thinks, and He surrendered His life to God’s wisdom rather than his own.

So, what [Romans 8:6](#) is telling you is that your mind and your mindset are so powerful that when you fill it with God’s thoughts and with God’s Word that your life will be dramatically changed. To be “spiritually minded is life and peace”. It is exactly that, but the nominal Christian does not believe that. They have a bad day, a bad conversation, a bad experience, and the next thing you know their whole life seems to be falling apart. You have two choices: **(1) let God control your mind, or (2) let your mind control you.** The latter is not good. When you do not allow your mind to be controlled by the Word of God and the Spirit of God, you experience the opposite of “life and peace”. You experience frustration, depression, confusion, pain, and misery. In fact, the word “misery” is one of the meanings of what the word “death” refers to in [Romans 8:6](#).

KEY PRINCIPLE 26: ALLOW GOD TO CONTROL YOUR MIND SO THAT YOUR MIND DOES NOT CONTROL YOU.

Always let the Word of God control your values and your decisions. The Word of God is His tool to keep your life headed towards true “**life and peace**”. You can trust His Word when you cannot trust anything else, so put your faith in God’s Word. [Isaiah 26:3](#) says it this way,

Isa 26:3 (NKJV) You will keep *him* in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.

That is God’s promise to you. That is His Word to you, so stand on it, believe it, live by it. When your life lacks God’s peace, refocus your mind and your heart on how good God has been to you, what He has done for you in Christ, and how much He loves you. [Romans 8:38-39](#) is foundational to who you are in Christ when it says,

Ro 8:38 (NKJV) For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Rest your life in God’s love for you. It will give you perfect peace. Be anxious for nothing.

So what have we addressed today? What were the key points of this study today?

1. **The Scriptures say that you can have a carnal mind or a spiritual mind.**
2. **You can literally change your circumstances by changing how you think about your circumstances.**
3. **You cannot correct what you are not willing to confront.**
4. **KEY PRINCIPLE 24: A “SPIRITUAL MINDSET” IS WHAT GOD USES TO HELP YOU FLOURISH DURING THE MOST DIFFICULT TIMES IN YOUR LIFE.**
5. **When you train your mind to think like God thinks, He gives you knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.**
6. **You cannot make spiritual progress without having earthly trials.**
7. **Just start taking some small steps in the right direction.**
8. **KEY PRINCIPLE 25: DETERMINE THE RIGHT THINGS TO DO, THEN DO THE RIGHT THINGS RIGHT.**
9. **Having a Christ-centered mindset will give you God’s power over your circumstances rather than your circumstances having power over you.**
10. **KEY PRINCIPLE 25: ALLOW GOD TO CONTROL YOUR MIND SO THAT YOUR MIND DOES NOT CONTROL YOU.**

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