

PART 18 - CONNECTING MY MIND WITH MY LIFE

❖ PERSPECTIVE IS EVERYTHING

Let us assume that you are a student in college and you turned in a paper that you wrote and you received a B-. At that point you are extremely disappointed because you worked hard on it. On the way home, you get a speeding ticket because you were very frustrated with your grade and were simply not paying attention to your speed. You are now really irritated, so you call your best friend, but they just kind of ignore what you are going through. It has not been a good day for you. So, how do you cope with all of that? Do you go home and just get in bed? Do you start drinking? Do you binge on food, and eat a lot of chocolate? Do you just become a couch potato and pout? Do you break something in a fit of frustration and anger? How do you handle what you think was a bad day? Well, perspective is everything. A B- is better than an F. Besides, it was not your final grade, so you still have plenty of time to do better on future papers and tests. It was just a speeding ticket and not a head on collision. Your friend was just tired from a long day at work and they were not really brushing you off. They were just tired. Nothing catastrophic or irreversible happened. You can study harder for future papers, you can make sure you stay within the speed limit, and your best friend is still your best friend and really cares about you. Tomorrow is a new day. Perspective is everything.¹

In reality, a spiritual mindset changes the meaning of failure. God's Word clearly teaches that in the Christian life that struggles and failures are much more important than success. Why? It because they are God's tools to grow the believer into Christlikeness. So, from a biblical perspective your failures should never define you. What should define you is who and what you are in Christ. If you know who you are in Christ and what He has accomplished for you, then your struggles and difficult circumstances should motivate you. They can actually reveal where you may be in your Christian life. Think of them as a wake-up call.

From study to study, what we have been addressing is really very simple. **What you think and how you think is what you will ultimately become.**

1. We have seen that if you do not control your thoughts, that your thoughts will control you. That should be a huge reality check for every Christian.
2. We have seen that you can have a "**fixed mindset**" where you are more than satisfied with where you are spiritually, **OR** you can have a "**growth mindset**" where you are in a very good sense never satisfied with where you are spiritually. I certainly prefer the latter.
3. We have seen that a person's **mindset** is what separates a genuine follower of Christ from those who have no intention of following Christ.
4. We have seen that the battle for your life is won or lost in your mind.
5. We have seen that every action, decision, and choice **always** begins with a thought in your mind.
6. We have seen that Satan's primary weapon is his lies, and if he can get you to believe his lies, then your life will be affected as if that lie was actually the truth.²

¹ Dweck, 8-9.

² Groeschel, Winning, 44.

KEY PRINCIPLE 48: THE STRENGTH OF YOUR SPIRITUAL MINDSET ALLOWS YOU TO THRIVE DURING THE MOST DIFFICULT MOMENTS OF YOUR LIFE.

Listen to Paul's mindset in [2 Corinthians 12:9-10](#). God had given Paul what he called a "thorn in the flesh" that buffeted him. His mindset, however, was what sustained him.

2Co 12:9 (NKJV) **And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I WILL rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ Therefore I TAKE pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

❖ **SO HOW DO YOU REALLY THINK?**

When you read a verse like this, you quickly realize that spiritual perspective is everything in the Christian life. Paul's mindset was grounded on the truth that the strength of God was being accomplished in his weakness. That is difficult for many Christians to even accept. When it comes to how you think, it is always an either/or reality. You are one or you are the other. The Christian life has no middle of the road approach to living out your faith in Christ. For instance,

1. You can be self-centered or God-centered.
2. You can have a worldly focus or an eternal focus.
3. You can lay up treasures on earth or you can lay up treasures in heaven.
4. You can be anxious about everything or you can "**be anxious for nothing**".
5. You can choose to live in sin or you can choose to live above sin.
6. You can have a negative mindset or you can have a godly mindset.
7. You can be an angry person or you can be a gracious person.
8. You can complain about everything or you can give thanks in all things.
9. You can always want more or you can be content with what you have. [1 Timothy 6:6](#) says that "**godliness with contentment is great gain**".
10. You can lean unto your own understanding or you can trust in the Lord with all your heart.

The point is simple - the **either/or** choice is always yours. You **ALWAYS** choose which direction your life is going to take. God will encourage you to make the right choices in many different ways, but He will not make those choices for you. There is no arm twisting here. You have to choose and you must understand that reality if you are ever going to be successful in your Christian life. So, whatever paths you choose, whatever preferences you develop, and whatever directions you decide to take, it will always make its way back to what and how you think. **You are now and you will become in the future what you think.** For instance,

1. We know that an unhealthy mind will eventually destroy a healthy body.
2. We know that an ungodly mind will lead to an ungodly life.
3. We know that if you believe that you can disobey God and it turn out good for you, then you have been greatly deceived and will eventually suffer the consequences.
4. We know that negative thoughts make you a negative person.

All of these, and many more, are the inevitable result of not thinking the way that God wants you to think. You must understand that there is great power in what you believe or do not believe. The Bible calls it “**faith**”. **When you truly commit your life to thinking like God thinks, that mindset creates great power in your life that will have profound effects – not only in you, but also in others.** The power of the Bible to strengthen you is contained in your faith and confidence in what it says. Anyone can say that they have faith, but faith is not giving a casual nod to some biblical truth. [Hebrews 11:1](#) says,

Heb 11:1 (NKJV) Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Faith is much more than some fleeting idea that someone has. Faith is “**substance**” and it has “**evidence**” that it is real in your life. Faith is so much more than just casually agreeing with some biblical truth that you were taught in Sunday School. To the contrary, faith is having such a deep conviction about biblical truth that you are persistently applying those biblical truths to your life and not “just saying” that you “believe them”. Stated another way, faith is validated in your life by how you think and by how you live. [2 Corinthians 13:5](#) says that you must “**examine**” yourself and “**test**” yourself to see where you really are in your Christian life, to see “**whether you are in the faith**”.

2Co 13:5 (NKJV) Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?--unless indeed you are disqualified.

Let me suggest three simple steps you can take to change your life. These are important.

1. Define where you are in your Christian life. This is a reality check that you need to make.
2. Determine where you believe God wants you to be.
3. Develop a plan to get to where God wants you to be.³

Be assured that if you aim at nothing that you will hit nothing. I have said it often, but spiritual growth is **NEVER** an accident – never. It is always intentional and deliberate. Remember that every choice you make, good or bad, has a specific landing zone. Every choice you make creates a certain trajectory for your life, and the landing zone for that trajectory is fairly easy to define.

KEY PRINCIPLE 49: THE RESULTS YOU ARE GETTING OUT OF YOUR LIFE ARE A DIRECT RESULT OF THE THOUGHTS YOU ARE PUTTING INTO YOUR MIND.

You have to be willing to examine your thought life by the Word of God. If a certain thought does not align with God’s Word, then you are not to allow it to keep roaming around in our mind. I have already mentioned the issue of mental strongholds that you can have in your mind. A stronghold is a compulsion, a habit. It is a continual pattern of **thinking** a certain way that keeps you in a mental prison. It is important to understand that strongholds do not develop in your life quickly. It takes time to build a stronghold, a fortress, or a prison, but it ALWAYS begins with a thought. A stronghold is an area of your thinking where you have accepted the lies of the enemy over the truth of God’s Word. The result is that his lies have become so engrained in your mind and what you have chosen to believe that they now exert tremendous power over certain areas of your life. Your stronghold consistently prevents you

³ Gallaty, Replicate, 191.

from becoming what God wants you to become or living how God wants you to live. It prevents you from experiencing God's best for your life. However, the truth is that Satan does not have the authority to develop a stronghold in your mind at his will. He cannot just create a stronghold in your life any time that he pleases to do so.⁴ He has to keep putting the wrong thought into your mind, and you have to keep accepting his wrong thought into your mind. Just think about Ananias and Sapphira in [Acts 5:3-4](#),

Ac 5:3 (NKJV) But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back *part* of the price of the land for yourself? ⁴ While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

The word "**conceived**" is a word which speaks of thinking about something and pondering something in a very deliberate and intentional way. Anything that is in your heart has to first go through your mind.

KEY PRINCIPLE 50: IF SOMETHING IS NOT RIGHT IN YOUR HEART, IT IS BECAUSE SOMETHING IS NOT RIGHT IN YOUR MIND.

Look at [Hebrews 10:35-36](#),

Heb 10:35 (NKJV) Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. ³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.

Every believer needs "**endurance**". It is the Greek word "*hupomone*" which is also translated "**patience**". So, in v35 the writer talks about your faith, or "**your confidence**" in the Word of God, and then in v36 he talks about "**endurance**" or "**patience**" in allowing the work of God to be fulfilled in you. You will rarely, if ever, find that the answers of God come quickly. To the contrary, wisdom and understanding take time to develop and mature in your life. So, think of "**patience**" and "**endurance**" as being a working partner with faith. God rarely does anything suddenly. I have built my life around the reality that God is never in a hurry. You cannot just read a passage of Scripture, and all of a sudden you are enjoying the full benefits of that verse. It may happen that way sometimes, but that is the exception and not the norm. You keep planting the truth of God into your mind and then the spiritual growth begins. You can never get anything from your garden until you first plant the seeds in the garden. You have to always be "**renewing your mind**" to the Word of God so that God's truth and God's wisdom can actually grow in your brain.

We have already seen that whatever you think about the most is what physically grows in your brain. What is growing can be either good or bad.⁵ It is called a neural pathway. What this means spiritually is extremely important.

KEY PRINCIPLE 51: THE MORE YOU THINK ABOUT GOD'S TRUTH IN YOUR MIND, THE MORE GOD'S TRUTH ACTUALLY GROWS IN YOUR BRAIN.

⁴ Turner, 66.

⁵ Leaf, Think, 213.

If you think about trusting God in difficult situations, then the actual idea of trusting God begins to physically grow in your brain. You have to think about that for a moment. That is staggering to me. The greater the neural pathway you have built for trusting God, the more power and desire you will have to trust God in your difficult circumstances. This is how God has created your brain to work. If you do not keep placing God's Word into your mind, then when you need faith to help you overcome your struggles, there simply will be nothing in your brain to help you. Just having fleeting thoughts about faith in God will not build neural pathways.

❖ SO HOW OFTEN DO YOU ACTUALLY PUT GOD'S WORD INTO YOUR MIND?

Brain Facts:

1. A neural pathway grows through **repetition**.

I believe this is exactly why we are consistently encouraged in Scripture to “**meditate**” on the Word of God. It is the idea of repetition, repetition, repetition. As a teacher, I keep saying the same thing over and over in different ways until it seems to sink in. I teach, then repeat, repeat, repeat. When athletes want to perfect a skill, they repeat a process over and over and over until it just becomes second nature to them. Input determines output. **What goes into your mind is what comes out of your life**, and it takes time to consistently place the Word of God into your mind. I wish I had a shortcut to give you for this, but there are **NO** shortcuts. **If you never put God's truth into your mind, you can be fully assured it will never be in your heart.** No wonder so many Christians are struggling to wholeheartedly follow Christ in their life. They just never put God's Word into their mind, If you have your day jam packed with activities – going here, going there, doing this, and doing that, then I doubt that you will ever really grow much as a Christian. You may think that you are growing, but really you are not growing. Spiritual growth is directly related to the Word of God. Trust me, but just Sunday morning at 10:30am will not cut it if you are serious about growing in your Christian life. **Joshua 1:8** says,

Jos 1:8 (NKJV) This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Psalm 1:1-3 says,

Ps 1:1 (NKJV) Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; ² but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. ³ He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.

On the other side of this coin, listen to how God describes a wicked man in **Psalm 10:4**,

Ps 10:4 (NKJV) The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts.

A wicked man is simply someone who lives his life without any regard for God or His Word. When God wrote His Word, He fully knew how He made your brain to function, and He made it such that when you repeatedly put His truth into your mind that it builds a neural pathway for faith that is very

real. Neuroscientists finally have caught up with God and are in agreement with each other that faith occupies physical real estate in your brain. The neural pathway is that space. Biblical faith (and any other godly attribute) actually grows in your brain. Faith grows as you meditate on what God says about it in your mind. The following are just examples of what causes your personal faith in God to grow::

1. You meditate on Scriptures that speak about your faith in God and what it means for you.
2. You meditate on Scriptures that speak about trusting God when life is difficult.
3. You meditate on Scriptures that speak about believing God's Word when the world tells you differently.
4. You meditate on Scriptures that speak about how you can depend on God in your life.
5. You meditate on Scriptures that speak about how you can surrender your thought life to God.
6. You meditate on Scriptures that speak about how you can yield and commit your life to Christ and His Word.

Think of meditating on God's Word as deliberate thinking. Meditating is not casual thinking. When you meditate on these things, your neural pathways related to faith and trusting God are actually triggered to continue physically growing more and more in your brain. The result is that you will become much more inclined to trust God in your life. On the negative side, **if you leave faith in God out of your thought life, you will never be able to trust Him.**

KEY PRINCIPLE 52: WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT THE MOST TODAY WILL BECOME WHAT YOU SAY AND DO THE MOST TOMORROW.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Dweck, Carol. *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. Updated Edition. New York, New York: Ballentine Books, 2016.

Gallaty, Robby, and Chris Swain. *Replicate: How to Create A Culture of Disciple-Making Right Where You Are*. Edited by Connor Sterchi. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Publishers, 2020.

Groeschel, Craig. *Winning the War in Your Mind*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Books, 2021.

Leaf, Caroline. *Think, Learn, Succeed: Understanding and Using Your Mind to Thrive at School, the Workplace, and Life*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2018.

Turner, Eddie. *Conquering the Chaos In Your Mind*. Shippensburg, Pennsylvania: Harrison House Publishers, 2021.