

PART 19 - CONNECTING MY MIND WITH MY LIFE

❖ GATEWAYS

*Everyone knows what a gateway is. It is a place where you enter something. It could be a city, a stadium, or your home. If thieves wanted to break into your house, they would use what they considered to be the simplest point of entry – a back door, maybe a window. We live out in the country, and it is about a quarter of a mile from the dirt road we live on to our actual house. Before my daughter’s family moved several hundred yards from where we live, some thieves scoped us out and when they saw that we were gone, they broke into our house **at the back door** and just ravaged everything in the house. All they did was simply kick the door in, and they got everything they wanted. My backdoor was their gateway.*

KEY PRINCIPLE 53: YOUR MIND IS THE ENEMY’S GATEWAY INTO YOUR LIFE.

From a spiritual perspective, I want you to think of a “gateway” as a **MENTAL** point of entry, as an opening, as a point of access into your mind by someone else. You always have to be guarding what you are letting into your mind. If you thought that someone was planning on breaking into your home, I can assure you that you would be on guard. However, when it comes to guarding their mind, it is almost as if people are oblivious to “**HOW**” the enemy enters their mind without them actually knowing it. Your mind is the battlefield. He will use anything that he can to just get **one small, almost insignificant thought** into your mind that he can hook you on. Ultimately he wants to build a stronghold in your brain, but initially, he will be satisfied with what I call a “**weakhold**”.

A “weakhold” is the neural pathway to a “stronghold”.

For example, the enemy can easily put thoughts into your mind from the following “gateways” (and I am sure there are many more):

1. Books you read
2. Movies you attend
3. Internet sites
4. Social media sites
5. Television programs you watch
6. Music that you listen to
7. Friends that you have
8. Occultic interests
9. Horoscopes
10. Ouija boards
11. Palm readers
12. Workplace conversations
13. Schools you attend
14. Simple daydreaming
15. Your imagination

The gateways where the enemy can place thoughts into your mind is endless. Satan knows that he has to penetrate your thought life and get you to believe his lies before he can exercise any real influence over your life. Let me just take one of these areas – your “imagination”. This certainly seems harmless enough, but inevitably it can be very dangerous. The Old Testament word for “**imagination**” comes from the root word “**image**” and it means “*a picture of the thought*”.¹ I.e., someone begins to develop a mental picture of what they are thinking. Just as an example, if I start talking to you about getting a “*big old hot fudge sundae*” after church today, what I have done is that I have placed a seed, a simple thought into your mind. Right now, you are getting a mental picture of what a “*big old hot fudge sundae*” actually looks like, and the more that I mention it, the worse it actually gets. I would almost bet that someone will end up getting a “*big old hot fudge sundae*” sometime this week. You can get them at Sonic’s relatively cheap. Right now, you may actually be imagining what it looks like and how good it will taste, and if you imagine that enough, then eventually you will get one. The word “**imagination**” is the same word that is used in [Genesis 6:5 \(KJV\)](#).

Ge 6:5 (KJV) **And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**

Many of the translations say “**every intent of the thoughts**”, or “**every scheme his mind thought**” or “**every inclination of the thoughts**”. This verse is so revealing because it says that the continuing evil thoughts that these people were having were a by-product of their “**imagination**”. Do not miss that God is connecting their evil thoughts with their imagination. They were just sitting around picturing in their mind what they wanted to do.

If you think about something enough, that is exactly what you will end up doing.

We know that very soon after this passage that God sent a worldwide flood and destroyed all but eight people. Why? It was because these people had reached the pinnacle of evil in their imagination and it became their point of no return. How do we know that? It is because God sent the flood.

Just as an example of how someone’s imagination can work, I have counseled with individuals who had an unfaithful marriage partner. The pattern seems to always be the same for the one who is unfaithful.

1. First comes **just a thought** of being with someone other than their marriage partner. At first the thought seems very harmless and naïvely innocent. However, nothing could be any further from the truth. When any repeated ungodly thought is not cast down, what happens is that it begins to physically grow in that person’s brain. It creates a neural pathway, and the more they think about it, the larger the neural pathway becomes. You must understand that **the larger a neural pathway becomes, the greater the influence it will have on the choices you make**. This can be either good or bad. In this case of being unfaithful, it is the inevitable result of someone not controlling their thought life. Their **imagination** was the “gateway” the enemy used to deceive this individual.

¹ Turner, 93.

KEY PRINCIPLE 54: THE MORE YOU DWELL ON A THOUGHT, THE MORE IT WILL INFLUENCE YOUR DECISIONS.

2. The second step is that the individual develops an image where being with that other person is **played out in their mind**. It is a fantasy that the person enjoys, and the more they think about it, the more exciting the idea becomes to them. It actually begins to seem real to them. It is just make-believe – right? Wrong! Why? It is because their so-called harmless imaginations have now literally become something physical that is growing in their mind. You need to think of all of this as “**mental cancer**”. Something very, very powerful is growing in your brain and you do not even know it. This fantasizing can go on for weeks and months at a time. When Satan is able to get people to fantasize about something forbidden by God, then those mental images create an “intoxicating” impact on their brain. These images are growing in their brain. Their neural pathway is actually intensified by their imagination.
3. The third step of progression is that if they do not deal with their imagination in this area, then sooner or later they will find themselves acting on their thoughts.

The stronger your thoughts become, the stronger will be your resolve to act on them.

Your thought life always governs and controls what you choose to do. Once again, [Proverbs 23:7](#) says that “**As a man thinks in his heart, so is he**”, and this would be a perfect example of the negative side of that reality. For this unfaithful person, their harmless imagination **has become** a very strong neural pathway and it is constantly tempting them to do something that they intuitively know that God does not want them to do. Eventually, though, they may very well choose to act on it unless they begin to think like God thinks. That is their only hope.

You always become and act on what you think about the most. Please accept that the law of sowing and reaping in [Galatians 6:7-8](#) is very much in play here. **What you sow in your mind is what you reap in your life**. In very simple terms, what was this person’s problem? They simply did not think like God thinks, and the trajectory of their thoughts eventually created their landing zone.

So, if you do not learn how to “**cast down**” and rid yourself of ungodly imaginations, then they will grow and grow and just keep growing in your brain and eventually become a mental and spiritual stronghold in your brain. You must understand that **a mental stronghold is a physical reality in your brain**. This should be so instructive to you – the idea that what you are thinking is creating a physical entity in your brain. If you are thinking the wrong thoughts, then you are literally creating a mental prison in your brain.

Once you are under the influence of an ungodly stronghold, you then become imprisoned by the desires and urges that the stronghold creates in your mind.

Think of the stronghold as becoming the lens and the filter through which you begin to see and feel everything. The stronghold causes everything in your life to become distorted and misleading.

1. Your **emotions** become distorted.
2. Your **will** becomes distorted.
3. Your **choices** become distorted.

4. Your **decisions** become distorted.
5. Your **thought life** becomes distorted.
6. Your **relationship to God** becomes distorted.
7. Your **relationship to other people** becomes distorted.

This is a lose, lose. Before you know it, you have **no desire** to think like God thinks or to live like God wants you to live. What happens is inevitable and happens all the time.

1. You lose your commitment to Christ.
2. You lose your interest in His Word.
3. You withdraw from other Christians.
4. You compromise your faith.
5. You forsake those you love.
6. You abandon your spiritual convictions.

Your neural pathway has become a mental stronghold and a mental prison that holds you in spiritual captivity. Please appreciate that your battle is against more than just the devil. Your battle is often times with just yourself. It is with how you make decisions. It is with the choices that you personally make that ignore God, dismiss Scripture, and cause you to neglect simple obedience to God's Word. You have to personally take responsibility for your thoughts, your words, your attitudes, and your actions before God will actually bless your life. So, what kind of thoughts are we talking about? Well, there are -

1. Lustful thoughts
2. Negative thoughts
3. Doubting thoughts
4. Anxious thoughts
5. Condemning thoughts
6. Angry thoughts
7. Fearful thoughts
8. Ugly thoughts
9. Faithless thoughts
10. Demonic thoughts
11. Suicidal thoughts
12. Discouraging thoughts
13. Judgmental thoughts
14. Suspicious thoughts

The list is endless. These are not good thoughts, so you have to take control of your mental gateway so that you do not dwell on and allow these thoughts to control your life. No wonder [1 Peter 1:13](#) says the following,

1Pe 1:13 (NKJV) Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest *your* hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

Your thought life is where the spiritual war is fought and won or lost. Several of the other translations say "**prepare your minds for action**" (NASB, NIV, ISV, NRSV), or "**brace up your minds**" (AMP).

If you consciously choose to live for the world which you cannot see, then you must understand that it requires a great mental battle to do so.

You always win or lose your spiritual battles in your mind, and not primarily in your heart. [Romans 7:23](#) identifies the actual battlefield on which you fight and struggle,

Ro 7:23 (NKJV) **But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.**

It does not say “warring against the law of my heart”. Your mind is the battlefield. [Colossians 3:2](#) says,

Col 3:2 (NKJV) **Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.**

It does not say to “set your heart on things above”. Once again, your battle is always a mental battle. What you think and how you think will always govern what you do and how you live. So, you have to take Peter’s exhortation seriously. You have to think biblically, **you have to think strong**.

KEY PRINCIPLE 55: YOU MUST MENTALLY PREPARE YOURSELF TO LIVE OUT THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

You have to mentally prepare yourself for the kind of life that God actually wants you to live. This takes thought, time, resolve, prayer. God never said that the Christian life would be easy – not one single time. If what you want is a nice, easy, comfortable, cozy kind of Christianity, then your life will probably never make much of a spiritual impact. That simply is not New Testament Christianity.

Let us assume that something is taking place in your life that does not seem very good to you, and at the moment it may not be good. We would be dishonest with both ourselves and God if we said that something bad was good. However, what we know is that God is ALWAYS able to bring good out of something that is bad. Ask Joseph, right? Ask Paul, right? Ask Peter and John when they were thrown into prison and the angel just opened the doors and they walked out and no one even knew it. Listen to God’s promise to you in [Romans 8:28](#),

Ro 8:28 (NKJV) **And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.**

So, how would you take that word and make it your prayer if you were going through a difficult and stressful circumstance in your life?. Well, you would say,

Ro 8:28 (NKJV) **I know that when something unpleasant and upsetting happens to me, that God is able to make that bad thing work for my good because I love Him and I trust Him. I know He will use what is unpleasant to work in me and to ultimately fulfill His purpose for my life.**

This is how you are to think because this is exactly how God thinks. Do you see that? You are taking God’s Word and you are personalizing it for your life. The goal is to let the truth of God become your neural pathway. David knew this full well when he wrote the following in [Psalm 119:11](#),

Ps 119:11 (NKJV) **Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You!**

Just assume that you are struggling in a specific area of your life and you are not doing well in that area. What you want to do is to “rewire” your brain, or what [Romans 12:2](#) calls “renewing your mind”. Think of “renewing your mind” as **flooding** your mind with **specific biblical truth** related to your problem. Once you gather the appropriate verses, then make a statement with them like I just did with [Romans 8:28](#). Personalize it for your life.

Assert and affirm to yourself what you believe that God will do when you embrace His Word into your mind and heart.

Write it on a card, put it on your phone, carry it with you, say it to yourself and convince yourself of the power of God’s truth being understood and applied in your life. This affirmation, this declaration becomes your new neural pathway, and I want you to see the neural pathway as something that physically is going to get bigger and stronger in your brain as you keep affirming God’s truth in your mind. Please remember that a neural pathway grows through repetition. The greater your faith in God to help you do what He has told you to do, the sooner God will change the negative direction of your life to what honors Him.²

KEY PRINCIPLE 56: AS YOU CONSISTENTLY RENEW YOUR MIND TO GOD’S TRUTH, YOUR FAITH IN GOD WILL GROW.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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

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

² Groeschel, *Winning*, 92.