

PART 24 – GOOD PATTERNS OR BAD PATTERNS

❖ YOUR PATHWAY TO SUCCESS

If you are ever going to be successful, then you need a way to get there. Success is not an accident. You need a very real path or pathway that will help lead you to being successful in whatever you want to do. I would say that if you find a path that has no obstacles, then it probably will not lead you anywhere. So, being on the right path is really a good thing. Please remember that for many people it seems much easier to fail than to succeed.

So, if you are ever going to become successful spiritually, then you have to know what it is that actually creates spiritual success. Obviously, it is the Word of God and the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit and the Word of God teach you what you should be thinking about in your life and what you do not need to be thinking about. [Psalm 119:15](#) says,

Ps 119:15 (NKJV) **I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways.**

Precepts are what God wants me to do, and His ways are how He wants me to do His precepts.

What we have seen over and over is that you cannot be successful without being intentional. Your worst enemy will be your inclination to make excuses when you do not want to change something in your life that you know God wants you to change. The excuses and rationalizations we come up with are endless.

1. I simply do not have time.
2. I have tried this before and it just does not work.
3. I do not know how.
4. It will take way too long.
5. The view is not worth the climb.
6. I have too much going on.
7. I'm too tired.
8. I have always done it another way and it seems to work fine.
9. I just do not have the will power.

God's remedy is different from how we often tend to think because He says in [Philippians 4:13](#) that,

Phil 4:13 (NKJV) **I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**

What Paul is clearly saying is simple,

In whatever God may want you to do, however God may want you to live, however God desires for you to speak, He will give you the strength to do it and to be successful at it.

This is a spiritual “**mindset**” and a way of thinking that has to be developed in your life. Why is this so important? It is because the enemy wants to gain access to everything that you think about – everything. He wants to get inside of your head so that he can plant very harmful thoughts into your mind.¹ If you allow that to happen, the enemy's thoughts can quickly become a neural pathway and you will not even know it. I read a great book called [Don't Give the Enemy a Seat At Your Table](#). If the enemy can get the victory over your mind, he will eventually get the victory over your life. That is not a good thing,

¹ Giglio, 47.

but it is often much too normal for many believers. [John 8:44](#) says that the devil was a “**murderer from the beginning**”. [2 Timothy 2:26](#) is very informative about what the enemy does in your life.

2 Tim 2:26 (NKJV) and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

The devil has traps that take people captive to do what he wants them to do, and he first plants those traps in your mind. It happens to believers every day. [1 Peter 5:8](#) sums it all up for us when it says,

1 Pet 5:8 (NKJV) Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

What if the devil is already sitting at your table, but you have not figured out that he is there? What if you have become so accustomed to his negative thoughts, his toxic emotions, and his sneaky and devious lies that you do not even realize that he is eating your lunch?²

Well, please appreciate that the key to spiritual success is many faceted, but it always involves two critical elements – **commitment + action**. You figure out what God wants you to do, and then you commit to implementing it into your life. For instance, figure out how God wants you to talk to other people. Get it settled in your mind as to what kind of speech God desires for your life, then start where you are and do what you know God wants you to do. God is NOT going to beg you to do this. In my mind, the biggest disability in life is ungodly thinking, not thinking like God thinks. Why? It is because if you do not think like God thinks, then you will not want to do what God wants you to do.

When you have a commitment to what you know you should do, then that commitment will help to eliminate all of your excuses. So, what this series is attempting to do is really very simple. It is trying to help you realign how you think to match and coincide with how God thinks. The goal is for you to put your thoughts besides God’s thoughts and see if they match. If they do not match, then you need to change your thinking. You can never make spiritual progress without making spiritual changes, and nothing will slow your spiritual progress like an unbiblical mindset.

KEY PRINCIPLE 73: SPIRITUAL SUCCESS BEGINS WITH A SPIRITUAL MINDSET.

You look at what God says, then you look at what you think, and you determine if they actually align in your practice, in how you live, in how you talk, in how you react. If they do not, then at that point you have a God given responsibility to realign how you think with God’s Word. The Biblical term for this process is “**renewing your mind**” ([Romans 12:2](#)).

Having a spiritual mindset is so critical to your success. Let us assume that you have a somewhat negative and fairly unbiblical mindset. The truth is that you can change that. You must understand how powerful your mind actually is. If you know that you are headed in the wrong direction, you can turn around. It is never as hard as you make it to be. Your excuses may make it hard, but if you will simply do what you know God wants you to do, He will give you the strength you need. For many people, the problem is that they have thought the wrong way for so long that they have created what neuroscientists call a “**fixed mindset**”. That is what you want to change and to reverse, and you do so by developing a

² Giglio, 48.

“**growth mindset**”. A growth mindset understands that your mind can be cultivated and that spiritual change is a very real asset for your life. The technical term is that your brain has “**neuroplasticity**”. It is malleable, pliable. Practically, it means that your wrong mindsets can easily be changed to godly mindsets. Think of it this way – spiritual success is first a mindset that you develop. You are not naturally born with a godly mindset, so it is something that you have to develop, something at which you have to work.

Once you change your way of thinking to a spiritual mindset, then everything that happens to you will be seen differently.

A godly mindset gives you power over your circumstances instead of your circumstances having power over you. For instance, a godly mind suffers without complaining, but an ungodly mind complains without suffering. It is all about perspective.

❖ NEURAL PATHWAYS

Now, the good part about all of this is that your brain is built in such a way that you can easily develop a godly and spiritual mindset. Your brain functions as it does because of what are called “**neural pathways**”.

BRAIN FACTS:

1. Your neural pathways are that part of your brain that govern and control what you do and how you behave.
2. One of the interesting facts about neural pathways is that when you are born, you have a clean slate. I.e., you do not have any neural pathways at your birth. However, as you grow, you hear words and you see things, you have experiences, and your brain begins to develop the neural pathways in your brain. Learning to walk would be an example of this. Your mom holds you up to walk, you fall down. You hold on to a couch, you fall down. You take your first step, you fall down. However, over a period of time, you learn how to balance yourself and how to walk so that now you never even think about what you are doing. It is like learning how to ride a bike. Once you learn to walk or how to ride a bike, it just becomes second nature to you. Technically what happened is that you developed neural pathways for walking and riding a bike. You started with nothing on either one of those efforts, and the more you kept trying, the greater the neural pathway became, and now you do not even think about it. Knowing how to tie your shoes laces or button your shirt or eating with a fork is actually a neural pathway. It is something that you learned to do, and now it is second nature for you.

Okay. Just make the jump spiritually. Whatever you should think and however you should think is an aspect of you being willing to develop the kind of thought life that you know God wants you to have. Every one of us think what we want to think and how we want to think. If we have a lifestyle of thinking the wrong way, it is only because that is how we want to think. Many Christians simply do not want to change. Not changing is their mindset. Please appreciate that God never forces His mind on us. That is why He says in [Philippians 2:5](#),

Phil 2:5 (NKJV) (You) Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

So, the term “neural pathway” is a neuroscientific term used to describe one particular aspect of how the human brain is actually built and functions. In laymen’s terms, however, I want you to think of a neural pathway as a “**pattern of thinking**” that you have physically developed in your brain over a period of time. The more you think a certain way, the stronger the neural pathway becomes, and in that process, it creates a physical neural pathway in your brain that knows what your inclinations and preferences actually are. I.e., you have thought a certain way for so long that your brain simply says “I get it”.

Practically, you can think of a neural pathway as a “**mindset**” you have developed. It has become your “**way of thinking**” that you have established in your mind over time. Once established, your mindset is not that easy to change. That way of thinking can be good or bad simply because each neural pathway is neutral. I.e., it does not know if what you are thinking is good or bad. It just knows that you are thinking a certain way, and it will help oblige you to keep thinking that way. So, you can develop good thought patterns or bad thought patterns. For instance,

1. You can read your Bible or you can ignore your Bible.
2. You can be kind to someone or you can be harsh with someone.
3. You can be patient or impatient.
4. You can be generous or you can be greedy.
5. You can be disciplined or you can be undisciplined.

Each one of these, good or bad, **will** quickly become an established pattern or pathway of thinking in your mind the more you choose to live and think a certain way. In any specific and particular pathway, you are creating a reservoir of information as to why you like something or do not like something, as to why you want to do something or why you do not want to do something. That is one reason why you literally become what you think. So, I want to give you some very simple, non-technical Brain Facts relative to your neural pathways. These are very interesting.

BRAIN FACTS:

1. Every new thought that you have that you have never had before creates a new neural pathway.
2. Neural pathways grow stronger based on the “**repetitive**” thoughts that you have – either good or bad, and those pathways that you create dramatically impact your behavior, the habits you develop, as well as your future choices. What you are thinking today is creating how you will act or behave tomorrow. This is inevitable because of the way that God has made your brain to work. Your brain always remembers what you program it to do and it physically builds that memory set into your brain.
3. Because a neural pathway stores both simple and complex levels of information, it is what allows you to think, to analyze, to question, to wonder, to debate, to examine, to consider, to probe, to memorize, to remember, to imagine, etc. The neural pathways are how God designed your brain to actually learn and then store that information in your brain.
4. The more that you think about or do something repetitively, the greater will be your neural pathway regarding that subject, idea, or action. We call this “memory”, but the effect of the neural pathway is much greater than just helping you to remember something.

5. Your neural pathways capture what are your propensities, your inclinations, your preferences, and your tendencies. So the neural pathway is that part of your brain that actually knows how you are generally going to respond or react in any given situation. I.e., it recognizes what makes you afraid, what makes you smile, what makes you irritable, what makes you calm, what makes you sensitive, and it already knows how you will probably react in each of those circumstance. Your neural pathway knows what and who you do not like and how you will most likely respond to either. In the same way, it knows what and who you do like and how you will most likely respond to either.
6. Through the neural pathways, your brain takes the information that you have learned and it processes that information for you so that in the future you can use it. Some pathways are shallow and moldable and are still being developed in your brain. Some are deep ruts from either a lifetime of toxic and ungodly thoughts or a lifetime of sound and godly thoughts.
7. Because of your neural pathways, your brain has the unique ability to **create patterns** in how you think. I want you to think of these patterns as what we call “mindsets”. I.e., the more that you think a certain way, the more that repetitive thinking will become the pattern of your life.

**KEY PRINCIPLE 74: THE THINKING PATTERNS THAT YOU CREATE IN YOUR MIND
MOLD THE DIRECTION OF YOUR LIFE.**

For instance, either you think biblically, or you do not think biblically. Either you have a biblical mindset or you do not have a biblical mindset. Either you are prone to spiritual obedience or you are not prone to spiritual obedience. Either you control your frustrations, or you do not control them. Everyone of these various aspects of your life is a well-established neural pathway that you have developed in your life because of how you think. Each one is a specific thinking pattern, and each aspect will have a great impact on the direction of your life. Proverbs is correct when it says “**As a man thinks in his heart, so is he**”. What Solomon was saying is that the more you think a certain way, then that will become the pattern of your life. Your life will become molded by what and how you think, and that will be your “mindset”.

I know how most of you actually think, and you know how I think. I have been your pastor for a long time and I already pretty much know how you will react or respond to events and circumstances that challenge your life. If I were to ask your opinion on something, I already have an idea of what that opinion will be. We all have developed patterns in our life that are observable. Some people are faithful and others are unfaithful. Some people are patient and some are very impatient. Some people are always negative, grumpy, and argumentative. They are never satisfied with anything that is happening in their life. If it is raining, they are complaining. If the sun is shining, they are complaining. In reality, they have developed this negative “**thought pattern**” in their brain, and it is repeatedly the way that they think, and ultimately how they live. Think of it as a bad “rut” that they have developed in their brain. On the other hand, some people are very positive, optimistic, and pleasant. They are always looking for the good in people. They do not feel threatened by some negative or unpleasant circumstance that happens in their life. They want to help you if you need help. If you speak ugly to them, they will

respond with kindness. They have developed really good habits in their life and very positive “**thought patterns**” in their brain, and that is repeatedly the way that they think.

So, in real life, the neural pathway is the physical means by which you both recognize and resolve simple or complex and difficult problems. It is why you can do simple things like walk or write or read or ride a bike. However, how effectively you are able to accomplish all of this is based on the “**input**” that you provide to your brain – what in biblical terms Paul called the “**renewing of your mind**”. So, the principle is simple - **your input is what determines your output**. You must understand this mental reality because you will be successful or unsuccessful based on how you comprehend this simple principle. The world calls it “*garbage in, garbage out*”. God says it differently. Jesus said these words in [John 6:63](#),

Jn 6:63 (NKJV) It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

God says “*Truth in, life out*”. I.e., if you will put my words which “**are life**” into your mind, the output will be “**life**”. Just think of “input” in a very simple way. **Input is what you put in**. It could not be any simpler than that, but it is so important because what you put into your mind is what comes out of your life.

PRINCIPLE 75: INPUT DETERMINES OUTCOME

Think of it this way:

The person who is always experiencing undesirable outcomes is generally doing so because of undesirable inputs. The person who is always experiencing desirable outcomes is generally doing so because of desirable inputs.

The problem that we have in our culture is that people are fixated and consumed with outcomes. However, I want you to see that Christians who are truly successful in their life are consumed with inputs. Once again, why? It is simply because what you **put into** your mind determines what **comes out** of your life.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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