

PART 26 – WHEN GOD IS DIRECTING YOUR LIFE

❖ HEY, THAT SOUNDS PRETTY NEAT

Whenever you think a “new” thought or have a “new” idea, at that moment your brain creates a neural pathway, a mental pathway for that thought or idea. It could be anything that is new to you. If you were a child and saw a banana for the first time and watched someone peel it and then eat it, your brain would create a neural pathway for bananas, and the more you thought about eating bananas, the stronger your neural pathway for bananas would become. Let us assume that you develop what you think is a really neat project to build, one that has never been thought of before. Immediately your brain develops a neural pathway for that new idea. However, in the process of building your project, it simply does not work as you had envisioned, so you completely discard the whole project, shut it down, and no longer think about it. Well, if you no longer think about that project, then the brain has a certain “eraser” cell that goes into your neural pathway and basically begins erasing what you had placed in it while you were thinking about it. You have to keep putting information into the pathway for it to remain functionally “active”. If you were telling someone about the project some 50 years later, you simply would not be able to remember everything that you did because much of it had literally been removed from that particular neural pathway.

The point is simple. **Every new thought that you have has a neural pathway, a new mental pathway that is developed for that thought.** If you think something new about the banana again, say its health benefits that you had not previously considered, then the new information you are thinking goes into the neural pathway that has already been developed for a banana. So, whenever you think about that idea later, your brain already has a place to store any new information about that thought and it will reinforce it in the neural pathway it created for that idea. We simply call this memory.

For instance, when you think about an apple, immediately a vision of an apple comes to mind – red, green, yellow, grown in North Carolina, rotten apples (yuk), worms in apples, in a bag at Publix, contains seeds, hangs on trees, peel the skin, eat the skin, wash the skin, apple jelly, apple trees. You get the picture. You have a neural pathway for an apple that you have developed over years of eating and seeing apples. In the same exact way, everything else you have ever thought about has a neural pathway. You have about 100 billion neurons to build with, and each individual neuron is capable of making 250,000 different connections. That is $100 \text{ billion} \times 250,000 = 25,000 \text{ trillion}$ connections that you can make in your mind.

BRAIN FACTS:

1. You can build a new neural pathway at any time in your life – anytime. This is one of the most fascinating brain facts because there is no neurological reason why a person cannot change their thinking to help make improvements in their life. The truth of the matter is that the average person does not want to change because they believe that it would be way too much trouble to make changes in their life. They are satisfied with where they are and with how they think, and as they keep reinforcing that mindset, they have developed and strengthened it as a neural pathway in their brain.
2. There are plenty of neurons in your brain to create new neural pathways.

Let us assume again that your life is simply not headed in the direction that you want it to be headed in, and you do not believe that you can change or that someone else is the fault and will not change. You feel trapped and feel like you are in a rut that you simply cannot change. Well, there is a reason for that, and it has to do with your thinking. Immediately, I know that thoughts are racing through your mind as to why that is not true. You will say to me, “*Pastor Gary, everything is more complicated than that and other people are involved that have helped create the negative areas that need correcting. It is not all my fault.*” Certainly, that may be true, and generally is, but the point is that **when the problem first started that you failed to build godly pathways in your mind about what was happening to you.** You just began to let the negative thoughts continue to linger and fester in your mind. You began to see everything as bad, as insurmountable, as negative, and when you think like that, that is the direction to which you will naturally gravitate.

KEY PRINCIPLE 80: YOUR LIFE IS ALWAYS HEADED IN THE DIRECTION OF YOUR STRONGEST THOUGHTS.¹

Key Principle 23 simply said that your life is always headed in the direction of your decisions and values. However, it is also headed in the direction of your strongest thoughts.

I want to give you a new thinking principle some call **YBH**. I love this principle and it is what this entire study is built around. **YBH** stands for “**Yes, but how?**” The entire focus of this kind of study is to help make the Christian life as practical as possible. For instance, I am not saying that you need to just think like God thinks, but I am trying to make that principle become a very practical reality for you as a lifestyle, a mindset. I have said it over and over, but if something in your life is not right, then something needs to change and you are the one who has to make the change.

So, what do you want to be your strongest thoughts, what do you want to be the strongest direction of your life? Whatever it is and whatever you know that it should be, then make that what you think about and just forget about all of the negative thinking that you have allowed to dominate your mindset. Why? It is because your life is ALWAYS headed in the direction of your strongest thoughts and your strongest inclinations. There was a time in my life when I wanted to play golf as often as I could, maybe twice a week if possible. Then one day I decided that it cost too much money and took too much time and that I would rather spend time in my organic garden. What did I do? I literally created a new neural pathway and I began to feed it, and I have not played golf since. That was probably eight years ago. I had to replace my very strong inclination to play golf with something else – which I did.

❖ **NEW SHOES**

For Christmas, someone bought me some really nice shoes, but when I put them on, they simply did not fit my foot. If I had worn those shoes for more than 15 minutes, they would have rubbed a blister on my foot. So, I took them back to the store and got some that fit me. Listen. If you put on some shoes and realize that they are way too small, you would not keep wearing them. You would take them off and get a size that fit your foot.

¹ Groeschel, *Winning*, 1

The point is simple. If you know that what you are thinking is not taking your life in the right direction, then get rid of the wrong thoughts that helped you get there and put some new ones into your mind. Start thinking like God thinks. Change your thinking so that you can change your life to be something that honors God.

Whatever is dominating and consuming your mind at any given time is the direction in which your life is going to be headed.

Let us assume that your job is not doing well and you are actually considering leaving your job. Well, that is exactly what will eventually happen. However, what if your dominant thought pattern was that you wanted to be the best employee your employer had ever hired? You know that mindset reflects the will of God for your life and so you are willing to earnestly pursue that option. Then that is where your life will head. So, if your life is not on God's track, you have to understand that God has designed your mind and brain so that you can build all the neural pathways you need to get your life back on track. If you are really struggling in an area of your life, then this should be a great encouragement to you, something to help you rebuild your life.

All of this should be obvious. If things in your life are not going right, then you simply cannot keep thinking the way you have always thought simply because you will keep getting the same results. Just remember that every thought that you have has a different neural pathway that stores up information, reactions, ideas, and what you see visually and hear audibly. It stores up the hurts, pains, and disappointments. It stores up the bitterness, love, mercy, and anything else associated with what you are thinking.² It stores up your inclinations, preferences, biases, prejudices, predispositions. So, if those thoughts do not reflect God's will for your life, then they will ultimately have a negative impact on your life and create a personal direction for your life that you will not like. **What** you think and **how** you think is always impacting your life. God's simple answer that we have looked at often is found in [Romans 12:2](#) which says,

Ro 12:2 (NKJV) **And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**

I.e., you have to constantly be placing **GOD'S TRUTH** into your mind. You take wrong thoughts, unbiblical thoughts, toxic thoughts, angry thoughts, hurtful thoughts, bitter thoughts, unreasonable thoughts and what do you do? You replace them with God's truth, with God's thoughts, with how God thinks. Listen very carefully. If you do not do that, then NOTHING will change! If you want to be spiritually successful in your life, then you have to realize that if you have spiritual problems and struggles in your life, neither the world's ideas will help you, now will your own solutions help you.

1. What marvelous insight do you have that God does not have?
2. What ideas do you have that God needs to know about?
3. Why would you be so naïve to think that you are smarter and wiser than God?
4. How much do you know about the future?

Now, this is what you need to know and what you need to think.

² Lifexchange, ep.

KEY PRINCIPLE 81: GOD'S WORD HAS GOD'S PERFECT SOLUTIONS FOR YOUR STRUGGLES.

Whatever is troubling you, God is always the answer. I know that is overly simplistic and probably not very satisfying to most people. **The issue, however, is not that God is the answer, but whether or not you actually believe that He is the answer.** If you do not believe that He is, then you will invariably come to a conclusion and a decision that satisfies what you want to achieve, but totally misses what God wants to achieve. You do not need to be anxious, fearful, distressed, or doubting about trusting God and His Word with your life. In fact, I would say the opposite - that you do need to be anxious, fearful, distressed, and doubting about **NOT** trusting God and His Word with your life.

Just think for a moment of all of the things that Paul suffered through in his life. Listen to how he described his life in [2 Corinthians 11:23-25](#),

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.**

Now, I wonder with all that was going on in Paul's life whether or not you think that he believed that God was the answer to his problems and struggles. I think he did, and that is why his life was able to make such an impact. He never saw what he was enduring as a problem, but simply as another opportunity to glorify God in his life. Whether you can accept that or not, that is always what the Christian life is about. What would we say that Paul was doing? Simple. He was thinking like God thinks, and that was exactly why God could use him. That is why he could look back over his life and have no complaints – because he saw everything from God's perspective.

If you are someone who is going to genuinely walk with God, then you must see God's hand in every facet of your life.

You must surrender your difficulties to Him so that He can achieve what He wants to achieve both in you and through you. I know that it sounds simple, but just trust Him with your life.

The amazing thing is that Paul learned to be content in whatever circumstance he found himself. He says in [Philippians 4:11-13](#) these amazing words,

Php 4:11 (NKJV) **Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: ¹² I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. ¹³ I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**

This is the testimony of a man who had “**learned**” how to think like God wanted him to think. This particular Greek word for “**learned**” implies that you understand something and perceive something much more fully in your mind than you did previously.³ I understand much more about God now than when I was first saved. I understand much more about God today than I did five years ago. For Paul, he had “**learned**” that God did not want his negative circumstances to disrupt and unsettle his life.

Most people do not think like this. To the contrary, the tendency is to see everything negative as bad. If there was ever anyone who had trials and could have become bitter and angry, it was Paul. If I can think about this verse in a different way, this was Paul’s neural pathway and his mindset that he had developed in his life. This was exactly how he thought, and because of how he thought, this is exactly how he lived and overcame the various trials and struggles that assaulted his life. If he had not thought the way that God wanted him to think, Paul would never have made it through these trials. He really could have become one of the most bitter people on the planet, but he deeply believed that whatever kind of trial that life presented to him that Christ would strengthen him to do what God wanted him to do. He kept reinforcing this in his mind to such an extent that it became a dominant and controlling influence and neural pathway for his life. Paul knew something that was very critical. He had thought about this, he had developed his neural pathway and thought pattern on this. **Paul both knew and believed that God was with him in every difficult circumstance of his life.** This was the lens through which Paul saw his life and it must become the lens through which you see your life – that God is right now, this very moment, with you. [Hebrews 13:5](#) says,

Heb 13:5 (NKJV) *Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

That was the simple reality that always controlled Paul’s life, and it has to be the same for you. This is how you must learn to think.

KEY PRINCIPLE 82: WHEN GOD IS DIRECTING YOUR LIFE, YOU CANNOT LOSE.

As long as God is with you and directing your life, you cannot lose. When you do not believe that you are enough to overcome what is happening, you must realize that God is enough.⁴ When you do not believe that you can, you must realize that God can. Your life, and the victory you experience in it, is always about perspective. You can look at your circumstances and become extremely agitated and worried, but the problem at that point is that you are looking at the wrong thing.

You must train your mind to look at God, to listen to God, and to know what God says about

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³ Zodiates, *manthano*, 942.

⁴ Groeschel, *Winning*, 162.

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