

## STUDY 42 – LETTING GOD SHAPE YOUR MIND

### ❖ WHAT ACTUALLY IMPACTS AND SHAPES YOUR MIND AND BRAIN

*The daily wars that you face in your mind are very, very real, and there is no way to shortchange the many actual ways that this happens to most people. For instance, just think of how the television industry parades everything in life that is an abomination to God – adultery, promiscuity, homosexuality, violence, the occult, lying, cheating, cursing, the undermining of the traditional family, and anything else that is able to appeal to the fleshly and carnal desires of its audience. In all of this, there is a very conscious and intentional assault on Christian values and at the same time on Christian minds.<sup>1</sup> If you do not understand this and have no discernment about how something like both television and social media are undermining parts of your life, then you become fair game to the enemy where he can easily exploit you in your mind.*

I did some minimal research on what just television alone does to people, not to mention the social media platforms that are so prevalent and easy to watch. This is an extremely short list, but it is a very realistic list of just a handful of effects that television can have on someone's life, and it begins in their mind. Each of these are the result of research in the area of television's powerful influence on people.

1. **Television shapes people's values, and very seldom for the good.** The more that television programs are watched, the greater the neural pathways become for accepting the values that are being displayed in the program. For undiscerning children and young people, this can become a very dangerous beginning to their life.
2. **Television makes people more inclined to anger and ultimately violence.** The more stressful a situation that you may face will generally cause you to react more violently if you are inclined to watch violent shows on TV. Children become much more disrespectful of their parents. In simple terms, the more violent and ungodly television programs that you watch, the more "**desensitized**" you become to anger, violence, lack of respect, and immorality, and especially that which occurs in your own life. Think of becoming "desensitized" as simply building a negative neural pathway in your brain. There have been many studies performed that conclude that when young people are exposed to television violence that that is a predictor of aggressive behavior later on in life. In our study, people are always building neural pathways that are very difficult to change. What goes in is what comes out.
3. **Television negatively impacts marriages.** The more shows that someone watches where there is adultery and people having affairs creates an acceptance of and a neural pathway that that kind of lifestyle is okay, and could actually be exciting and adventurous. The result is that people become less committed to their marriages and more prone to adultery.
4. **Television makes people less informed because what is being communicated is calculated to what other people want you to hear.** We hear how our nation is severely divided, but the 24/7 news broadcasting of different social and political perspectives is a major culprit in the war for your mind.

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<sup>1</sup> Hughes, 74-75.

5. **Television increases acceptance of unbiblical values, especially in the area of biblical morality.** Seeing gay and lesbian couples on television has become very normal, and now much more prevalent among young people. Even shows on the HGTV channel have gay and lesbian couples getting a home renovated.
6. **Television decreases quality family time.** I read one statistic that said that families spend on average 31 hours per week watching television, but only 38 minutes of the entire week interacting with each other.<sup>2</sup>

Now, this is a very minimal snapshot of what watching a lot of television will do to someone and their family, not to mention the impact it has on their mind and their brain. So, anyone who is going to win these daily wars in their mind must learn how to focus on what is important and valuable for their life and to intentionally discard that which is obviously ungodly and will eventually lead to ungodly behaviors and results. This is a very intentional effort and simply does not come naturally or even easily because television has been described as the “opiate of the people”.

Now, what is important to appreciate is that your mind and your life are influenced by many different things, but sitting in front of a television for over 30 hours per week as a part of your “down time” can have a devastating impact on both you and your family – and you not even know it. What you want to happen is to determine what you want to place into your mind and your heart. Listen very carefully. **You will never be influenced by something that you know nothing about.** I.e., you must spend time in God’s Word to be influenced by God’s Word. Right here, right now, at this very moment, you know how much time you devote to reading the Scriptures and to studying the Scriptures. You can make your own assessment of the ratio of time spent in the Word absorbing its values or time spent in the world absorbing its values.

**The Scriptures are God’s primary means of directing your life, your decisions, and creating your values. So, if you ignore this one area of your life, the world and the enemy will be directing your life, your decisions, and creating your values.**

Just think of all of the areas where people need divine help – marital relationships, jobs, finances, raising a family, morals, friendships, worry, a lack of faith, a lack of commitment to God, and anything else that hinders someone’s life. The sad part is that much too often they are much more influenced by the world’s values than they are God’s values. The result is that the enemy has created strongholds in their minds that they do not even recognize. Television is just one tool that he uses. However, there are many other social media platforms that are just as dangerous. Something like having the wrong friends is often a major contributor. For instance, Scripture declares the following in [1 Corinthians 15:33](#) (NASB),

1Co 15:33 (NASB) **Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."**

The NIV says,

1Co 15:33 (NIV) **Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."**

Paul said in [Galatians 5:9](#) that just “a little leaven leavens the whole lump”.

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<sup>2</sup> How Stuff Works, ep.

So, if you do not understand spiritual intentionality and determination, then it will be virtually impossible to change how you think. Listen carefully.

**KEY PRINCIPLE 148: YOUR THINKING WILL ALWAYS GRAVITATE TO WHAT YOU WANT TO DO.**

Let me give you a small hint to help.

**You can know that you are making significant spiritual progress when you are not doing what you may really want to do and when you are not saying what you may really want to say.**

That is generally the evidence of having finally learned godly self-control. Trust me, but that is real spiritual progress that will produce in your life what God wants to produce. You MUST learn to intentionally focus your mind on certain biblical attributes and spiritual qualities. They are all well-defined in the Scriptures, but until you believe that they are God's best for your life, you will not be motivated to intentionally develop those qualities in your life.

One of the greatest problems that the institutional church faces is that it is filled with people who verbally confess that they believe in God, but they literally live as if He does not actually exist. [Titus 1:15-16](#), speaking of this very issue, says the following,

**Tit 1:15 (NKJV) To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. <sup>16</sup> They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.**

The church at large is for all practical purposes filled with many people who say that they believe in God, but if the truth were known, they actually do not know God at all. They may have made a so-called "public profession of faith", and then later they were "baptized" and then they "joined the church", and all of those are good, but none of them are genuine evidences of salvation. They are simply how the modern church culture has often defined salvation, but certainly not how God defines salvation. The word "**profess**" in v16 clearly indicates that the individual says the right thing, and because it is in the present tense and active voice, it means that they are constantly professing that they know God. I like the NIV translation when it says "**they claim to know God**". The problem, however, is that God says that what they profess and how they live are two completely different realities. On the one hand, what they profess or claim may sound right, but there is nothing in their life to actually substantiate what they are professing. They think like this: "*I believe that there is a God, and I know plenty of people who do not believe in God, so surely I am saved because I say that I believe in God.*" It may seem logical and reasonable to them, but in reality that way of thinking can be spiritually deadly. [James 2:14-20](#) says,

**Jas 2:14 (NKJV) What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? <sup>15</sup> If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, <sup>16</sup> and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? <sup>17</sup> Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. <sup>18</sup> But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. <sup>19</sup> You believe that**

**there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe--and tremble! <sup>20</sup> But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?**

Now, just to clarify what this passage is saying, James is NOT addressing the issue of faith and works BEFORE salvation, but the relationship between faith and works AFTER salvation. All James is communicating is that a mere profession of faith in God that cannot be substantiated by a person's life is actually worthless. James says that they have a faith that is “**dead**”. I think we could simply call this “cultural Christianity” – professing Christ, but not really knowing Christ in a personal way. In some ways, this could probably be considered a spiritual pandemic within many churches that is not even recognized. Why is that? It is because many churches are so infatuated with membership and size and programs and budgets that they have completely forgotten about conversion. Being a member of a church without ever having been converted is a spiritual tragedy at best. Here is what we know theologically – it is that everyone whom God justifies (saves), the Holy Spirit sanctifies (changes).

**When God saves someone, the Holy Spirit's work guarantees that they will bear spiritual fruit in their life that confirms their salvation.**

**1 John 2:3-4** clearly speaks to this when it declares,

**1Jn 2:3 (NKJV) Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. <sup>4</sup> He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.**

Dr. Zodhiates says that the word “**if**”, which is the Greek word “*ean*” translated here, “*implies a condition which experience must confirm*”.<sup>3</sup> These are two incredibly strong and emphatic verses by John that cannot just be casually ignored. Obviously, John does not want anyone to be “confused” about salvation because that would not benefit them at all. In fact, that may be considered the greatest tragedy someone could suffer – to think that they are saved when in reality they are extremely lost. **Matthew 7:21-23** is clear that this will be the lot of many people.

**Mt 7:21 (NKJV) "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' <sup>23</sup> And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'**

I.e., people will say to Jesus “*I know you*” and He will say to them “*No - you do not know Me at all.*”

Okay, let us restate the problem and restate the solution. If the greatest weapon that Satan uses against you is his lies, then the greatest weapon that God uses to counter those lies is His truth. This is always a war in your mind between God's truth and Satan's lies. If Satan can simply get you to unknowingly believe his lies, then those lies will operate in your life as if they are true.<sup>4</sup> **Romans 12:2** that we have used so many times has to be one of the greatest truths that God has given to the believer. It says,

<sup>3</sup> Zodhiates, *ean*, ep.

<sup>4</sup> Groeschel, *Winning*, 44-45.

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.**

What is really interesting about the word “**renewing**” is that it is in the passive voice which simply means that someone else is acting on you. I.e., as you give yourself to understanding and applying the Word of God to your life, the Holy Spirit is working on you and in you in an even deeper way. How is He doing that? Well, for starters,

1. He is giving you precious **insight and wisdom** that you need for your life. You cannot be successful without God’s wisdom operating in your life.
2. He is giving you **strength** that you need every day.
3. He is giving you **hope** that you need as life unfolds for you. Life at times can become very discouraging and overwhelming if your mind and heart are not anchored in the Word of God.
4. He is giving you daily **direction** that you desperately need. If you try to navigate life without biblical direction, you will always find yourself in the wrong place.

Now, some of this may seem a little strange when you first become committed to being engaged in this kind of spiritual warfare. At first, anything new has the potential to seem strange to us. However, this has to become a very normal part of your life – this resisting the devil in your mind. Just think of it in the same way that you think of daily brushing your teeth or taking a shower. Those two things are very normal to you because you have disciplined yourself to do them every day of your life. So, let me give you four really practical bits of wisdom in this area of the spiritual warfare you may be facing.

1. **Never talk directly to the devil.** Rather, make sure that you are always talking to God. Even the archangel Michael, who was on the same par as the devil, left the rebuking of the devil up to God. **Jude 1:9** says,

Jude 1:9 (NKJV) **Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"**

Michael did not say “*I rebuke you*”, because he knew that only God can prevent the devil from doing what he may want to do. Michael knew from where the authority and power to rebuke the devil comes – and it was not him. Here is what you do. Just thank God, praise God, pray to God, trust God, but never find yourself talking to and/or rebuking the devil – NEVER! There are so many people who are literally obsessed with “*rebuking the devil*”, and the devil loves it. In reality, the devil could care less about what you say to him. If you think that what you say to him actually matters, then you have believed another one of his stupid lies. Because he is a created being, he can only be at one place at one time, and you can be assured that he is not going to be spending his time worrying too much about you and what you decide he cannot do to you. He would just laugh at you.

2. **Resist the devil.** **James 4:7** says,

Jas 4:7 (NKJV) **Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.**

So, what does this mean? Listen very carefully. This is not a verse that is telling you to get engaged in some kind of actual battle with the devil – not at all. He is much smarter and craftier

than you may give him credit, and he would love to see that happen because he will always win. Besides, you cannot even see him. The only thing he lets you see is the damage and hurt he may create in your life, but it is always after the fact, and always too late.

**KEY PRINCIPLE 149: WHEN YOU TRY TO OUTWIT AND OUTSMART THE DEVIL,  
YOU LOSE!**

Here is the key to [James 4:7](#), so listen very carefully. **Where is the battlefield?** **The battlefield is in your mind!** That is where you win the battle. You resist his lies in your mind and you replace them with God's truth. When you do that, when you have that neural pathway in your brain, he has nothing to work with to hurt you, so why hang around for a long time? He does not have a free reign to hurt you unless God gives him permission to do – such as with Job. **You literally give the devil permission to hurt you through your willfully wrong and unbiblical choices.** He will always try to hurt you through others words, through difficult circumstances, or through just a plain unwillingness to submit yourself to what you know is the clear will of God - guaranteed. You never have to buy into his schemes – never. His legion of principalities, powers, and demons are working overtime to hurt you by **engaging your mind in NOT thinking like God thinks.** That is always how they win. So, when you are tempted to do the wrong thing in your mind, **STOP**, and **resist those wrong thoughts** in your mind and replace them with God's truth and godly affirmations. Just remember that the more wrong thoughts that you willingly allow in your mind, the stronger the neural pathways become to do the wrong thing the next time.

3. **Make biblical affirmations.** The affirmations should relate directly to the struggle in which you are engaged. Use Scripture as the basis of your affirmations. Become relentless in your affirmations so that your mind keeps building strong, neural pathways in the right direction.
4. **Listen to what God is saying to you in His Word.** Why? It is because He is constantly speaking to you through His Word so that you can see His hand and His goodness in everything that happens in your life. God is always for you in your battles and struggles. He is never against you. He may have to discipline you at different times in your life to get you back on track, but that is not what He desires to do. Your wrong choices force Him to do that. His desire is to bless when you think like He thinks.

Listen. Please let these four simple life principles always be on your mind everywhere that you go and in everything that you do. (1) Never talk to the devil, (2) resist the devil, (3) make biblical affirmations, and (4) listen to what God says to you in His Word. Make these four principles a mindset and a spiritual trench in your brain that is always causing you to see life from God's perspective in every area of your life.

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