

CONNECTING MY MIND WITH MY LIFE

❖ TRICKS OF THE TRADE

Anyone that is good at their trade has their own tricks of the trade. If you talk to anyone who is really skilled at a particular trade that you are trying to learn, they have learned some really cool shortcuts and insights along the way. Just think of all of the tricks of their trade that magicians have learned. When I was growing up we always heard about Harry Houdini or David Copperfield. They would appear to cut a woman in half, or levitate a person, or escape from underwater when chained and locked up, or pull live rabbits out of a hat. Even though it may have seemed real, everything was an illusion. At the end of the day, nothing was real, nothing was what it seemed. They had a trade and had learned a few tricks along the way.

Let us just assume that your life is not headed in the direction that you want it to be going. In fact, some areas of your life may actually seem unfixable, unresolvable, and hopeless. Now, the truth of the matter is that some things you can control, but there are many things that you cannot control. You cannot control how someone else treats you or what turns and twists the stock market may take. You cannot control the weather or the cost of gasoline. You cannot control the decisions of the company for which you are working. In reality, the idea of control is an illusion. In fact, if you believe that your decision making can control everything that happens to you, then the enemy has you exactly where he wants you. We all understand what “*sleight of hand*” means, but if we think that we can be in complete control of our life, then we could call that “*sleight of mind*”. Either way, we are being deceived by someone - someone who is a master of illusion where nothing is actually real. The devil has gotten us to believe his lies. The Bible says that he is the “**father of lies**”. That is one of the devil’s primary tricks of his trade – just lying a little bit to you. He is no fool. He knows how people think and what they want to hear. He knows where you are vulnerable and what you will believe, so he just comes along, whispers a little thought into your mind, and off you go with that idea. When you do not know how God thinks, it is like being alone in the dark and the enemy can make anything he tells you believable.

One minor insight here is that **the more time you spend with God, the quicker you will be able to discern when the enemy is lying to you.** The enemy has no intention whatsoever of releasing his grip on your mind. I know my wife’s voice. I would know it anywhere. You can blindfold me, and I will recognize her voice every time. If someone other than my wife called me and said “*Hey sweetheart, I need you to do something for me*”, I would immediately recognize that that person was not my wife. I have spent over 50 years with her and I know her voice. I hear it every day of my life. I know her moods by her voice. I know her heart by her voice. I know what she desires by her voice. I know how much she loves me by her voice. Well, it is no different when you spend time with God. You learn His voice and when He is speaking to you, you begin to learn when the enemy is trying to capture your mind about some issue. You have to remember that the devil does not play by your rules. **The only rule the devil has is that he has no rules.**

That is why it is so critical to yield your mind and how you think to the One who is sovereign over all things. **God created you to be completely dependent on Him.** That is your calling. That is your spiritual DNA – to trust God in every area of our life. He has said in **Proverbs 3:5,**

Pr 3:5 (NKJV) Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding;

The problem is that we always trust ourselves and our “**own understanding**” much more than we actually trust God. Some problem comes into your life, and immediately you devise some cute little plan to resolve it. It is not that God does not want you to actually think. That would be silly. **What God wants is for you to think like He thinks.** That would be wise. He has made your mind and your brain in such a way that you can become spiritually proficient in your life. That is your spiritual DNA given to you at the new birth, but it still requires learning how to think biblically, to think how God thinks. If you want to be independent and to think like you want to think, you will lose the spiritual battles that you will invariably face. Satan will win. **You cannot leave God out of your life and be spiritually successful.** It is a spiritual impossibility. You cannot leave God out of what and how you think. So, what does God want you to do with your mind? He wants you to constantly be “**renewing**” your mind. Why? It is so that your life can be “**transformed**”. Paul was clear when he stated the following in [**Romans 12:2**](#),

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.

The verb “**transformed**” is in the present tense, imperative mood, and the passive voice. What the passive voice implies, and this is critical, is that someone else is actually causing this transformation to be taking place in your life. The passive voice means that you are being acted upon by someone or something else – in this case God. **Spiritual transformation is an invisible process overseen by God that eventually has visible results.** If there are no meaningful visible results of spiritual transformation in your life, then you are being conformed to the world. It may mean that you are not really even a Christian, but a pseudo-Christian, one in name only. There are many people like that in the church. In [**Matthew 13**](#) Jesus called them “**tares**” and “**bad fish**”. In [**Matthew 25**](#) He called them “**goats**”. Most of the time the “**tares, bad fish**”, and “**goats**” all think that they are saved. They joined a church and believed that saved them. That is like going to a football game and believing you are now a football player. The institutional church is filled with “*believing unbelievers*” – “**tares, bad fish, goats**”. They made a decision, but were never converted, never truly “**born again**”. If they had been, then there would have been a visible and ongoing transformation of their life, but there never was.

KEY PRINCIPLE 16: WHEN YOU RENEW YOUR MIND WITH THE WORD OF GOD, GOD WILL TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE.

When you do your part, God does His part. You have to spend time in the Word of God, and the more time that you spend in it, the deeper will be the visible transformation. I know many Christians who at the very best only give God token amounts of time in His Word. They become much too distracted with the world and all its little gadgets and events that occupy their mind and their time. The problem with that scenario is that when trouble comes, when discomfort comes, when something unpleasant and unexpected happens, they have not been adequately transformed to handle those kinds of situations. They are still like babies in their thinking.

❖ ADULT BABIES

Have you ever met a special needs child who has grown into adulthood? Very often it can be very sad. The special needs person, at absolutely no fault of their own, is now an adult that still acts like

they are a child. They think like a child, they talk like a child, they act like a child. Very often someone has to feed them or help them going to the restroom. Sometimes they are very limited doing even the most remedial of activities. However, what would you think of someone if they were that way by choice. Well, in many ways, that is how many Christians have become. Spiritually, they are what we might call “adult babies”.

Babies and young children have no idea what to do or how to handle something difficult. However, the problem is that many Christians are still babies in their thinking. They have had plenty of time to grow by this point in their life, but they have not grown and matured spiritually. **Hebrews 5:12-14** gives us a picture of believers that we could identify as “adult babies” when it says the following,

Heb 5:12 (NKJV) **For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.**¹³ **For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.**¹⁴ **But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.**

The spiritual problem that “adult babies” have is really very simple. As soon as something difficult comes along, they have no idea what to do. If I can say it in a different way, they have no idea how God actually transforms their life, and they have never given themselves to it. So, they just remain adult babies. They have no idea how to think like God thinks and so they keep perpetuating one bad decision after another bad decision. They say what they want to say, they do what they want to do, they act how they want to act, they constantly lean unto their own understanding, they ignore God’s Word, they have no faith in God at all, and then they wonder why things are not going how they wanted them to go.

One of two things is happening in your life today. **Either you are being conformed to how the world thinks, or you are being transformed to how God thinks.** If all you think about are worldly things – what you can have, where you can go, how much you can acquire, what you can enjoy, what gives you pleasure, what you can do to have another rush, then you are being conformed to the world. Do you honestly think that Jesus ever tried to get His disciples to think like that? “*Hey guys, you only live once, so you need to go for all of the gusto that you can get! That’s what life is all about!*” Everything that Jesus taught His disciples was not living for this world, but for the one to come. I have said it often, but the world you cannot see is more real than the world you can see. The world you can see will pass away, but the world you cannot see will endure forever. The life that is to come is far greater than the life that now is. Jesus was clear that the person who sought to save his life would actually lose it, but the one who gave it away would find it. So you have a choice to make. Are you going to believe God and be transformed by His Word, or will you choose to think how you want to think and continue to ignore God’s life-transforming truth?

Let me ask you a question. “*Do you believe that the world has more to offer you than God has to offer you?*” Do you believe the world has more for you than God? You do not have to give me an answer. Why? It is because your life is your answer. To claim to be a Christian and yet believe that the world has more to offer you than God is to be living in a world of fantasy and make-believe. The enemy has greatly deceived you – and you do not even know it. There are many professing Christians who still have no idea what the Christian life is all about. It is always a thinking problem. It is the way that they

have trained their mind to think. They do not know how to think like God thinks because they do not know what He thinks. For many, they do not want to think like God thinks. To them the view is not worth the climb. Once they walk out of church on a Sunday morning, it is like they take their Christian hat off and put their worldly hat on – and they are completely satisfied with that approach. That is bad thinking. If you claim to be a Christian and you think like that, your mind is messed up. The enemy has completely deceived you. He has whispered his lies into your mind, and you have believed them and acted on them. You are in a really bad place and do not even know it.

Ask yourself these two simple questions – “*What do I want to do the most?*” and “*What drives me the most?*” If it is not living for Christ and abandoning your life for Him, then you have been deceived by the enemy. He has gotten into your head and into your mind and has deceived you. **If you want what the world offers, then you can be assured that the enemy will give it to you.** As he does, you will just want more and more of the world and less and less of Christ. It is very simple for you to quickly know the answer to these two questions. **It is whatever you think about the most, whatever you want the most.** If your answer is that I want to live life to the fullest and to enjoy everything I can do in life, then I doubt very seriously that you even have an inkling of how God thinks or what God wants for your life. I would say that you are NOT being transformed to how God thinks. I hate to burst your bubble, but there is no “heaven on earth”. Just look around – right? If you want the most bang for your buck, then fully commit your life to Jesus Christ and watch what He will do in your life. Here is what you will find. **The deeper your relationship with Christ, the less you will even care about what the world offers.** Listen very carefully. You **CANNOT** improve on what God will do in your life. It is impossible. If you think that you can, you have been greatly deceived.

How would you answer this question – “*What did the disciples think about the most after Jesus ascended?*” Well, I can guarantee you that it was not worldly things. They certainly were not out for what this world could offer to them or for some superficial joy ride. Listen to how Paul thought in **Philippians 3:8**.

Php 3:8 (NKJV) Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

This is how God thinks, and this is what must become your mindset – “*I count all that the world can give me as complete rubbish so that I can gain Christ.*” That is the essence of the Christian life. That is the essence of being a follower of Christ and nothing less. John the apostle said in **1 John 2:15**,

1Jn 2:15 (NKJV) Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

I want to say this in a strong way, so listen carefully. **The more you love the world, the less you will love God.** You can give me all of your reasons why you can have both, but Jesus will have nothing to do with it.

KEY PRINCIPLE 17: THE MORE YOU GIVE YOUR MIND TO THE THINGS OF THE WORLD, THE LESS YOU WILL GIVE YOUR MIND TO THE THINGS OF GOD.

❖ THAT WAS A REALLY DIFFICULT TEST

When I was in college studying to be an architect, I had some really difficult tests. At times they really taxed my poor brain. One of the things that I really love about being a professor is that I am giving the tests rather than taking the tests. I like that a lot better. Do you know what a test really does? It lets both you and other people know what you know or do not know. Well, you can be assured that God is going to allow you to have some really difficult tests in your life. If you do not believe that, then you simply do not think like God thinks. In the end, God's tests are what He uses to conform you to His image, so being tested is a really good place to find yourself.

Now, I want you to assume for the moment that in many uncomfortable moments in your life that you do NOT think like God thinks, and therefore you do not make godly decisions. Just remember back on some of those difficult moments and what you did. You reacted to words that were said, or you responded in a negative way and said things that you should not have said. You did what God did not want you to do – you spoke your mind. In reality, you had no self-control. You must remember those moments. Why? It is because they reflect how you think and it is NOT how God wants you to think. Every difficult person and every trying moment that God places before you is your opportunity to glorify Him at that moment. I want you to see every difficult trial that you face as a God-ordained test for your life. If God had been grading you, I wonder if you would have passed the test?

This is a mental battle that you will wage in your mind. Why is that? It is because your natural propensity is to not like trials, to actually complain about trials and struggles, and to want them to leave as quickly as possible. This is the mental warfare that you will always find yourself facing – “*Will I accept God's deeper work in my life or will I resist it?*” The average Christian will resist it. Why? It is because they do not think like God thinks. [1 Peter 4:12-13](#) says,

1Pe 4:12 (NKJV) Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;

Listen carefully. That is EXACTLY how God thinks. That is why it is in His Word. In the heat of every difficult moment, you have to make a mental choice – “*Who do I want to please? Is it me or is it God?*” How you answer or respond to those two questions reveals where you really are in your Christian life. The question is always the same. “*How would Christ want me to respond to this difficult situation in which I find myself?*” If you choose not to ask these questions when something difficult and unpleasant takes place in your life, then your automatic default position will always be what you think is the best thing to do. These kinds of questions have to become your new thought process, your new thought pattern that you develop. If you choose to go it alone and do what you “feel” like you need to do, in all likelihood, you will ultimately be very discouraged with the results.

Just assume for the sake of example that you are a difficult person to get along with late in the afternoon when you get home from work or because you have had a stressful day with the kids. It has been a long, stressful day and you find yourself being cranky, short, impatient, and maybe even verbally caustic at times. Is that the way that God wants you to live? Yes or no? Absolutely not. So, why would you not be willing to change that pattern? **For your behavior to change, what and how you think must change.** It has to change, or you will continue to be like this every day. If something similar to this is the unfortunate pattern of your life, then God wants you to change that pattern. It is destructive and hurts other people. To change that pattern, you have to change the way that you think. Listen carefully. God's

Word will not allow you to use stress or a difficult day or a difficult person as an excuse as to why you are not willing to honor Christ in your behavior. They are the tools that God uses to change your character.

**KEY PRINCIPLE 18: ONCE GOD HAS CHANGED YOUR CHARACTER THROUGH
YOUR DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES, THEN HE IS FREE TO CHANGE YOUR
CIRCUMSTANCES.**

So what have we addressed today? What were the key points of this study today?

- 1. The only rule the devil has is that he has no rules.**
- 2. You cannot leave God out of your life and be spiritually successful.**
- 3. Spiritual transformation is an invisible process overseen by God that eventually has visible results.**
- 4. KEY PRINCIPLE 16: WHEN YOU RENEW YOUR MIND WITH THE WORD OF GOD, GOD WILL TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE.**
- 5. Either you are being conformed to how the world thinks, or you are being transformed to how God thinks.**
- 6. If you want what the world offers, then you can be assured that the enemy will give it to you.**
- 7. The deeper your relationship with Christ, the less you will even care about what the world offers.**
- 8. The more you love the world, the less you will love God.**
- 9. KEY PRINCIPLE 17: THE MORE YOU GIVE YOUR MIND TO THE THINGS OF THE WORLD, THE LESS YOU WILL GIVE YOUR MIND TO THE THINGS OF GOD.**
- 10. For your behavior to change, what and how you think must change.**
- 11. KEY PRINCIPLE 18: ONCE GOD HAS CHANGED YOUR CHARACTER THROUGH YOUR DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES, THEN HE IS FREE TO CHANGE YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES.**