

Battlefield of the Mind Introduction

Intro:

Our minds are powerful. Within it our imaginations are shaped, and our ideas become reality. This teaching is not an effort to build your self-esteem, or tell you, "If you think it you can achieve it!" Many a young boy has broken some bones trying that logic believing he could fly. This teaching is however an effort to show you the importance of our thoughts, and building our mind. Tim Jones is going to be teaching us what builds and destroys our minds in a few weeks. He is going to approach it from the field of science, and show us how scripture and science agree on the study of the mind.

The fact is, our mind is the cornerstone of who we are, and we determine how it is shaped. Our minds can be shaped and renewed, or destroyed depending on how we choose to use it. Our minds are a tool, and when placed in the hands of the God who created it and made it powerful we can accomplish great things. While whoever said, "you can do whatever you set your mind to" wasn't completely right, they did understand that whatever we set our minds to can shape who we are and what we do. What you choose to think and dwell on in this life will have a major impact of what type of person you become, and what type of life you live. This is why our worship of God is not complete without our minds!

Matthew 22:37-40 (NIV)

36 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" 37 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour as yourself." 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

It is interesting to note that Jesus is quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 here and it says to "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." The word "mind" doesn't appear in the English translation. Why is that? I will leave that nugget in the capable hands of Dr. Robinson. Jesus made it clear that the verse he was quoting in Deuteronomy included the mind. Dr. Robinson will later be teaching us about the mind, more specifically how the Jewish people viewed the mind, its power, and how it was shaped; especially from an Old Testament point of view. She will also be sharing with us the impact of education and learning on the mind.

What is the power of negative thoughts?

What is the power of positive thoughts?

Philippians 4:6-9 (NIV)

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right,

whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-- think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

In this text, Paul shows us to keep our minds on positive things if we want to have peace in our lives. This is not a “mind over matter” teaching this is a “mind shapes the man” teaching. We are not trying to trick reality through mind games and positive thinking; we are simply trying to show you that the Scripture teaches that while you can try to be one thing on the outside, it is what is inside of you that shows who you really are! Paul is saying here, if you want to be a person with peace, dwell on peaceful things! This begins with bringing the things on our minds to the Lord in prayer. Prayer leads to peace in our minds because it causes our minds to focus on Him. Paul told the church in Colossia “Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.” (Colossians 3:23) The Prophet Isaiah said, “You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.” (Isaiah 26:3)

Are we what we think or what we do?

Proverbs 23:5-7 (KJV)

6 Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats: 7 For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee. 8 The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words.

Proverbs 23:5-7 (NIV)

6 Do not eat the food of a stingy man, do not crave his delicacies; 7 for he is the kind of man who is always thinking about the cost. "Eat and drink," he says to you, but his heart is not with you. 8 You will vomit up the little you have eaten and will have wasted your compliments.

This proverb is talking about someone who is internally stingy, but outwardly shows generosity. While he is telling you to eat and drink, on the inside he is thinking about how much money you are costing him. His words say one thing, but his heart is not with you. The King James does a beautiful job on laying out the meaning of this text by saying, “as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” The word “thinketh” here means “to act as gatekeeper.” In other words what you think in your mind, acts as the gatekeeper to everything about you! While you may be saying “eat up and enjoy” if you are thinking, “he is eating me out of house and home” the gatekeeper is being dishonest!

How many times have you done this?

Since our thoughts act as a gatekeeper to everything else, you can easily see the power of negative thoughts and positive thoughts. Positive thinking may not make you rich, powerful, or even influential, but they will give you a more positive outlook! This is why renewing our minds is very important!

Romans 12:1-2 (NIV)

1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. 2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will. 3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

Daily renewing our minds is one of the more important things we can do. We have to daily flush the garbage that tries to overtake the gatekeeper and turn it into a feasting ground for negativity and gloom. How do we renew our minds? Well, you are also going to have to wait on that. Brother Donnie Blair will be teaching us how to renew our minds, and what that means in a few weeks.

Can we do right if we are not thinking right?

If we are constantly dumping garbage into our minds (the gatekeeper) it has a deep impact on what we think. What we think has a deep impact on how we behave. We often hear pastors and teachers harping, "do right!" I believe our efforts would be better served by teaching people to think right. When we begin to worship God with our minds, we take better care of what we allow in it. Scripture teaches us that we can control what enters our thoughts.

1 Corinthians 10:3-5 (NIV)

3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Paul is letting us know in this text that the battle is won and lost in our minds! While the world fights with outward weapons on an outward battlefield, our greatest weapon is inward, and the battle takes place in it! Our minds!

If our minds are corrupted everything we do will be corrupted!

Titus 1:15-16 (NIV)

15 To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. 16 They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

Notice Paul is saying the because their minds are corrupted, everything they do is corrupted! Whatever a man thinketh in his heart so is he! So, in order to fix our behavior our minds have to be fixed! The only way to fix our minds is surrender ourselves, mind, soul, heart, body, and strength to Jesus! His death on the cross purchased our redemption and His redemption is COMPLETE! He redeems the whole man, and that includes his thoughts. Now we just have the job of taking those thoughts captive and making them obedient! If we make the thoughts obey, the man will follow! It is also interesting to note that Jesus said that the sin of adultery begins in

the heart before the act is actually carried out! (Matthew 5:28)It starts in the mind, and once it penetrates the heart, sin is already conceived! The heart and minds are very difficult to separate in the Scripture; hopefully Dr. Robinson will be able to give us more insight there during her portion of the teaching. (hint hint)

James 1:13-15 (NIV)

13 When tempted, no-one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

In this text, James also points out that sin begins in the heart. This is why the mind acts as a gatekeeper. Our mind can stop things from entering our hearts and giving birth to sin.

1 Corinthians 2:11-16 (NIV)

11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no-one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. 13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. 14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: 16 "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

Paul is telling the Corinthian church here that there is only one way to understand the mind of God, and that is through a mind transformed by the Spirit of God. Because we have the Spirit of God living inside of us we can have the mind of Christ! Our minds have been redeemed along with our soul, heart, and strength. Everything we do can now be pleasing to Him because we have been fully redeemed! That is the beauty of the cross. It doesn't just tell us to do right; it helps us to think right! Right thinking leads to right living! Folks, if we do not submit our minds to the Lord, then He has no say over the gatekeeper. When the devil is allowed to have a field day in our minds, our minds can begin to play tricks on us; causing us to overreact and even perceive realities that only exist in our minds.

Other verses that will come up throughout this study:

James 1:5-7 (NIV)

*5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. 6 But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a **double-minded** man, unstable in all he does.*

Romans 7:19-25 (NIV)

19 For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. 21 So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. 22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law; 23 but I see another law at work in the members of my body, **waging war against the law of my mind** and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Philippians 2:5-13 (NIV)

5 **Your attitude (mind) should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:** 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death--even death on a cross! 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed-- not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence-- continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

Ephesians 4:22-27 (NIV)

22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be **made new in the attitude of your minds**; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. 25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbour, for we are all members of one body. 26 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold.

2 Corinthians 4:4 (NIV)

4 The god of this age has **blinded the minds of unbelievers**, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Next week:

My Mind is Playing Tricks on Me!

We will journey into the lives of men like Elijah whose mind had convinced him after an incredible victory that he was alone and doomed to certain death!

We will also look at men like Hezekiah and David who refused to let their minds trick them into believe the boasts of those opposed to God. (King of Assyria, and the Philistines)

Our minds are a battlefield, and the Devil is like a roaring lion trying to intimidate, tempt, and trick us. If we win the battle of the mind, we can walk in victory over everything the enemy throws our way!