



Renewing The Mind

Your Internal World

- The “thoughts and intentions of the heart” are our internalized beliefs,
- They include formal beliefs (such as theological beliefs)
- And informal and more personal beliefs such as “No-one could possibly love me”.
- These beliefs or thoughts of your heart are often reflected in what psychologists call your “self-talk” which is the “chatter” that goes on inside you as you are doing things “I wish Susan would call, I bet she won’t, ...”

Our Beliefs

- These beliefs are our idea about what is true or untrue, possible or impossible, plausible or implausible.
- They contain our conclusions about life and beliefs about God, others, and ourselves.
- Unlike perspectives, beliefs can generally be compressed into a single sentence such as “I believe that Jesus is God” or “I think I am totally unlovable”.

Thoughts & Intents

- The Bible has two categories here; “**thoughts**” which is fairly much all-embracing
- and “**intentions**” which are the movements of the will as we plan, vow and scheme our way through life.
- The picture we see in Scripture is that these thoughts and beliefs, desires, vows, and inner goals are **generally verbal**.



Inner Talk

- Each thought or intent can be summed up in a **single sentence**.
- When the prophets cry out “I know what you are thinking in your hearts it is X” it is always a statement, a sentence that encapsulates the heart attitude.
- This inner talk then becomes part of an inner story that the person is weaving about their life.
- This framework of thoughts, intents and inner stories forms a major part of the person’s belief system.



The Unrenewed Belief System

- Over time we weave these sentences into a sort of a bird’s nest of a structure inside us that we call our world-view.
- For most people it is a horrific jumble of things they learned at school, life lessons, Grandma’s sayings, the latest media opinions and a book they once read.
- This internal belief structure is more or less functional and gets people by for the seventy or so years they are on this earth. However for some people it can go horribly wrong and cause them a great deal of confusion and emotional pain.



The Heart Is Not A Pretty Place

- (Genesis 8:21 NKJV) ...Then the LORD said in His heart, “I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, **although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth**; ...
- (Jeremiah 17:9 NKJV) “The heart is **deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked**; Who can know it?”
- (Ecclesiastes 9:3 NKJV) This is an evil in all that is done under the sun: that one thing happens to all. **Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live**, and after that they go to the dead.
- (Mark 7:21-23 NKJV) “**For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts**, adulteries, fornications, murders, {22} “thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. {23} “All these evil things come from within and defile a man.”



Cleaning Up The Mess

- We need more than just “healing”, we need repentance and cleansing.
- Christians have the blood of Jesus and the help of God the Holy Spirit to help them clean up the mess that is in their hearts.
- We need to start with some of the huge contradictions that we live with in our belief systems.



Dithering Between Two Options

- It is quite possible to hold conflicting beliefs or inconsistent beliefs or even two entirely different frameworks of belief.
- Sunday Christians are a prime example. At Church they seem to truly believe the Bible. At work they operate under an entirely different belief system and operate largely without reference to God.
- Both are real belief systems for them. They choose which one to operate under depending on where they are and who they are with.



YHWH vs. Baal

- In the Old Testament they even had two distinct religions worshipping Baal when it came to farming and fertility and Yahweh when it came to war.
- Dual value systems such as this have been castigated by the prophets, Jesus and the apostles from one end of the Bible to the other.
- From Joshua's "choose which day who you will serve" (Joshua 24:15) -
 - to Elijah's "how long will you falter between two opinions" (1Kings 18:21)
 - to Jesus and "you cannot serve God and Mammon" (Matthew 6:21-24)
 - to James and his exhortations against double-mindedness and worldliness. (James 1:5-8, 4:1-7).



Tossed To And Fro....

- Such people have literally two belief systems and two minds - Scripture calls them "double-minded" and says that they are spiritually unstable. (James 1:5-8)
- This instability results from the fact that they are constantly choosing between two or more things they can believe at any one moment.
- One minute they choose to operate from the biblical belief, the next minute they choose to operate from greed, superstition or expediency.
- Up and down, tossed here and there like the waves of the sea.



Pathology Within Us

- In addition to having multiple belief systems people can decide to hold evil and wicked beliefs or beliefs that are illogical and insane.
- Some people honestly and truly believe that the entire world should be organized around their happiness. Others truly believe that they can take what they like and do what they like.
- A few believe that flying jet planes into buildings will give glory to God and bring them eternal life in Paradise.
- Yet others believe that worshipping an idol will give them spiritual power and good fortune.
- The birds nest of human beliefs inside us can become very toxic and result in pathological life choices.



Is It All Bad?

- The heart of the natural man can go badly and seriously wrong through adoption of a self-centered and toxic world-view which incorporates ungodly and illogical beliefs.
- This is not the total picture though. Even in the OT we find people described as being penitent in heart and having hearts set on the Lord.



The Learning Heart

- Christians do not necessarily believe what they think they believe.
- Christians are generally still learning to believe that which they think they believe. This is the difference between believing something as a notion or as a doctrine and really believing it so that it is operational for you under stress and pressure.
- A test of this is "How much pressure does it take before you start to doubt that which you are sure you believe?"



The Panic Point....

Ask yourself the following two questions:

- 1. "If I was out in a small boat on the Sea of Galilee and the waves were high and the boat was about to sink would I be calm or would I be afraid?" Would Jesus say to me "I have not seen such great faith in all Israel" or would He say to me "Why are you afraid O ye of little faith?"
- 2. "How low can the bank account go before I start getting anxious and doubting that God will provide? Where is the point at which I choose to panic?"



Learning To Believe

- The difference between the answers we put in the bible study booklet and the answer we give to the actual pressures of life can be startling.
- Our notional beliefs and our operational beliefs under pressure are different.
- This may not be due to double-mindedness but just to the need to mature, learn and grow.
- **As committed Christians we are continually learning to truly believe that which we think we already believe.**
- So we can see that the goal is to have a consistent and fully Christian belief system that is the sole one we operate from, and which is operating at the level of the thoughts and intentions of our heart and guiding our daily conduct and informing all our emotional responses.
- This belief system will fill us with joy and give us poise and calm in the middle of life's trials. It will be heart level, practical, biblical, strong and singular. Our lives will ring with faith and authenticity.



The Pure Heart Of Jesus

- When we look at the beliefs of Jesus we find there is no “birds nest”, but instead a purity and simplicity that is stunning. His thoughts were always pure and Scriptural and logical and right.
- Jesus is never for a single second, fearful or anxious or halting between two opinions. When the Devil offers Him all the kingdoms of the world He does not say “Let me think about that for five minutes.”
- Jesus heart was so fixed on God and so pure in its intentions that He did not hesitate or waver even under strong temptation.
- Jesus was pure in heart and did not sin even in His thoughts and intentions.



Blessed Are The Pure In Heart

- If we are to be like Jesus in all aspects then we must head towards purity of heart. At first this seems to be a long and impossible journey.
- Purity of thoughts and intentions seems both unsafe in a wicked world (unless we lock ourselves away in a monastery) and impractical to achieve in one lifetime.
- Yet the promise of Jesus in the Beatitudes is that “The pure in heart will see God”. (Matthew 5:8) and He seems to be calling us to the impossible journey of sorting out and cleaning up our birds nest, changing our beliefs and coming into fellowship with Him.



Scriptures On Purity of Heart

- (Matthew 5:8 NKJV) Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.
- (1 Timothy 1:5 NKJV) Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith,
- (2 Timothy 2:22 NKJV) Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.
- (Titus 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.
- (1 Peter 1:22 NKJV) Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,
- (1 John 3:2-3 NKJV) Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. {3} And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.



6 Good Reasons To Change

- **1. God cares about your beliefs** and weighs them up. He judges the thoughts and intentions of your heart. (Romans 2:15,16; Jeremiah 11:20; Hebrews 4:12).
- **2. Jesus expects us to be increasing in our faith** and in fact is quite demanding about it! The expectations He had of his disciples included being calm in storms (Matthew 8:26), walking on water (Matthew 14:31), believing in miraculous provision (Matthew 6:30), being able to understand parables (Matthew 16:8), and being able to cast out demons, heal the sick and raise the dead (Matthew 10:8). When they failed to do any of the above they were rebuked (Matthew 17:20). The phrase “O ye of little faith” (see the references in Matthew above) shows that the disciples were expected to learn to believe Jesus with ever-increasing faith. Jesus does not call us to have a static level of faith. Rather we are called to develop a growing “mountain-moving faith” that starts from small “mustard-seed” beginnings. (Matthew 17:20).



6 Reasons cont'd

- **3. Theology interpenetrates reality. Every belief is theological.** Carl Jung used to say that every human problem after the age of 35 was spiritual in nature. In a similar vein even the small voices, the dark mutterings of the human heart and the wretched small-minded beliefs that people have are a form of rebellion against God and a dwelling in darkness. For instance to believe in your heart that the world stinks is to malign the Creator. To vow that you will always play it safe and that you will never love again is to retreat into darkness and flee the love of God that He puts into people to reach you. Thus all your beliefs have a theological component and need to be brought into the light of the Word of God.
- **4. How we believe determines what we receive.** "According to your faith be it unto you". (Matthew 9:29, 15:28). Conversely having an unstable, worldly or double-minded faith means we will receive nothing from God (James 1:5-8, 4:1-8). Faith can bring healing (Matthew 9:22, James 5:15-18) is a prerequisite for receiving wisdom from God (James 1:5-8), for daily provision and reduction of anxiety (Matthew 6:30-34) and makes all things possible (Mark 9:23).



6 Reasons cont'd

- **5. Creedal faith is insufficient.** Even the demons have correct theology in the sense that they believe that God is one - and tremble (James 2:19). Thus merely creedal belief is insufficient for salvation. Belief must be authentic, loyal to God, of the heart and worked out in real life. (James chapter 2). The great men and women of God all had extraordinary personal belief systems that set them apart from their generation. (Hebrews 11)
- **6. Letting unbiblical and dysfunctional beliefs linger can cause them to become stronger, more dysfunctional and more painful.** Working on them now may take work, but leaving them will make it much worse later on. (*Proverbs 4:23 NKJV*) *Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.*



The Difference...

- Every church has miserable grumpy Christians alongside radiant faith-abounding Christians. Well what's the difference between the two groups?
- Both miserable and faith-abounding Christians have heard exactly the same sermons and been to exactly the same bible studies and mixed with exactly the same people in exactly the same neighborhood church and can tick exactly the same boxes theologically.
- But only the faith-abounding Christians have taken the time and effort to make sure their inner personal beliefs line up with God's Word.



Complaining Or Believing?

- Grumpy cynical Christians have decided not to really believe. They would much prefer to complain.
- Faith-abounding Christians have decided that with God's help they will interpret reality properly and have paid attention to their heart.
- They have decided that they will "truly believe" and have put effort into their faith.
- Now they reap joy and have much more successful Christian lives.



From The Marketplace

- Even the secular world has discovered the benefits of working on your belief system. The Dale Carnegie / Zig Ziglar "positive-thinking" movement with its affirmations and personal motivation demonstrated the power of working on personal beliefs.
- It turned lousy salesmen into better salesmen. It turned unhappy, unenthusiastic people into happy enthusiastic people. It caught a fragment of the Truth (taken incidentally from the founders' familiarity with the Bible) and applied it successfully to daily life.
- Why were salesmen so keen to systematically adopt a new belief system? What motivated them to try? Why wasn't it left in the "too hard basket?"



Why They Changed

1. They met other people who seemed successful and who said positive thinking was the key to success.
2. These other people demonstrated an alive and enthusiastic personality they wanted to possess.
3. They compared their personality and results with that of the positive thinkers and decided to change.
4. Positive thinking made intuitive sense and the short sayings had a "ring of truth" to them.
5. The system was skillfully presented.
6. The system was simple and easy to apply.
7. Initial success was swift and this reinforced the effort required to change their beliefs.



Kingdom Application

- If salesmen can diligently work on their belief system in order to sell insurance then surely we can work on our belief system in order to grow in the Kingdom and become mature in Christ?
- Our target is more than just being happy, positive and motivated.
- Our goal is to have a sanctified and transformational set of beliefs that give us the emotions that make us whole Christians and empower service in the Kingdom.



7 Steps To Changed Beliefs

1. We enter into a situation where we do not function as well as we would like emotionally.
2. We reflect and ask : "What beliefs are underlying these undesirable emotions"
3. We probe further and ask: Are these beliefs true and biblical and in accord with the facts?
4. We construct new better, more factual and more biblical beliefs about that situation.
5. We reinforce those beliefs to ourselves.
6. We then re-enter the situation and test our new beliefs to see if they help us function better.
7. We look at the results scientifically and objectively and decide whether to keep the new beliefs, modify the new beliefs or to stick with the old beliefs.



Frozen In Fear

- Incorrect beliefs can give rise to strong negative emotions such as fear, doubt and hesitancy.
- These emotions can hinder or even paralyze our ability to obey God.
- Faith is supposed to be expressed in works which are to be done in love.
- Incorrect inner beliefs can make us freeze up, not do the works, and shrink from expressing love.



Good Works – Good Beliefs

- Works are a guide to us as to whether or not our faith is truly alive, saving, living and productive.
- Our works indicate to the world which beliefs we hold that are strong enough for us to live by and act on.
- Works are a reliable guide to what we truly believe in our heart. In a sense our works are our true doctrine.
- Our works are the outworking of those beliefs, which we are prepared to act on, live by and stand for in daily life.
- Paul is very definite that we are not saved by works of the law. But he is also very definite that faith working through love (Galatians 5:6) should result in good works that God has prepared beforehand for us to do. (Ephesians 2:8-10).



Inner Conflict

- Inner conflict can stop us doing the good that we want to do.
- This inner conflict can be due to conflicting thoughts and intentions in the heart.
- I want to serve God vs. I must please my parents
- I want to be pure vs. I want to be sexy
- I will go to seminary vs. I will never be poor
- I want to forgive vs. I want justice
- Even childhood vows can even affect present actions.



How The Heart Works

- The heart runs by “event time”. “After I grow up, then I will get married” .
- The heart is binary – on/off, and issues are either resolved or unresolved.
- The heart often needs a signal to tell it that an issue is now resolved or no longer current. Issues remain “on” until they are switched “off”.
- There is little distinction between internal events and external events. A realistic fantasy can be “as real” as an event.
- The heart works by associations and similarities. If something is “like A” it may elicit the same response/fear as “A”.



Some Examples

- An old embarrassing memory is “just as fresh” now as it was twenty years ago. (Unresolved memory)
- People who “cannot relax” often over-use words like “always” e.g. “I must always study hard” rather than “I must start hard until the exams are over than I can relax”. (Needs to be “switched off”)
- A person vaguely similar to your old headmaster can still scare you. (Association)
- A nightmare can have physical symptoms just like a real event. (Fantasy can be as real as reality)



Intents – Inner Vows

- An inner heart vow, couched in absolute terms, such as “I will never let myself be hurt again” or “I will never be poor” can have amazing power.
- They will remain current until they are “switched off”.
- They can lead us into conflict with God’s will.
- Such vows often need to be altered or renounced. (On paper, with prayer)



Pablo

- Pablo the programmer has a very high IQ.
- He failed first year university due to personal problems.
- He made an inner vow “I must never fail again”
- So he has always played safe and been employed in dull government jobs that are well below his ability level.
- He only uses his ability around friends in contexts where he cannot fail.
- He cannot be convinced to complete his degree or aim for higher things.
- His vow has caused him to live well below his potential.



Revoking Vows

Revoke Personal Vows: Revoke old vows that are now contrary to the will of God. Your promises to yourself are not as important as Christian obedience. Even do something as formal as writing the old vow on a piece of paper and writing “revoked” across it and then burning the piece of paper. Sometimes you may have to revoke a foolish vow you made to God in which case you should tell Him the reason you are revoking it and ask His forgiveness. It is for good reason that oaths and vows are banned in the New Testament (Matthew 5:33-37, James 5:12).



Never Say Never...

- **Change Absolute Language:** If you say to yourself "I have always got to..." then its like fixing a mental switch in the "always on" position. You have told your mind that you have always got to do X and it will receive and record that instruction as a permanent injunction, a law of the Medes and Persians.
- **The mind is fairly literal:** It will take always to mean always and never to mean never. Words like "always", "never" "have to", "go to", "perfect" and "100%" jam our mental switches in the "on" position.
- **With enough absolutes we feel stuck, anxious and stressed** as we receive multiple simultaneous urgent instructions that we have programmed into ourselves. . It is much better to give yourself an "out" by using language like "generally I should" and reserving the absolute language for situations that are truly absolute.



Making Yourself Ill

- **Avoid Psychosomatic Language:** The repeated and emphatic-use of the language and metaphors of illness can sometimes make us ill.
- For instance men who often tell themselves that their wife is a "pain in the neck" tend to suffer from - you guessed it - a pain in the neck - and people who "can't stand it any more" get knee trouble!
- This is termed psychosomatic language, somatic metaphors or "conversion" depending on your school of thought and was first noted by Sigmund Freud.
- In extreme cases repeated self-talk such as "If that happened I would die.." can become like an internal vow.



Intents – Games & Life Scripts

- Eric Berne's best-seller "Games People Play" and transactional analysis explore the area of the intents of the heart.
- People play often quite complex "games" with others to get a "payoff".
- Some games are life-long and become "life-scripts".
- Playwrights and novelists are keen observers of these games.



Awareness!

- **Face Up To And Become Aware Of The Intentions Of Your Heart:** It can be difficult for some people to admit that they are complex and full of conflicting motivations. To admit to sneaky, dishonest, crafty or manipulative intentions is not easy for Christians. Many people are completely blind to this darker side of their character. Pray and ask God to reveal the thoughts and intentions of your heart to you so that you can bring them into the light and deal with them.



List Your Intentions

- **List The Various Conflicting Intentions:** This is sometimes all that is needed. For instance a teenager may find that he has two intentions:
 1. To be on fire for God and a powerful witness for Jesus .
 2. To still be popular with the cool, tough, non-Christians he knows.He can then work out what to do and resolve the tension. Perhaps he needs to accept that following Christ has a cost at times. Simply listing the various intentions of our heart then judging them biblically may be enough to resolve the dilemma.



Evil Intentions

- **Confess Them to God:** Confess your wrong motives and intentions to God and ask His forgiveness and cleansing.
- **Make No Provision For Evil Intentions:** Do not give yourself the means of carrying out your wrong intentions. Deny them what they need if they are to be implemented. If your wrong intention in your heart is murder - don't buy a gun. If the wrong intention in your heart is adultery - don't rent a hotel room. If the wrong intention is stealing from the church offering, make sure someone is with you when you count the money. This principle is what helped Augustine give up his loose living and become a Christian..



Make No Provision....

- *(Romans 13:12-14 NASB) The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. {13} Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. {14} But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.*



Inner Resistance

- By **externalizing our beliefs and intentions we sometimes can get a handle on them** and deal with them. This is often the real benefit of those management exercises such as setting priorities and doing mission statements. On a personal level if you start setting goals and priorities and coming up with a personal mission statement you will often run into **awkward uncomfortable feelings of resistance**. When you do get them try and identify them, and **write the feelings of resistance beside the goal or priority**. Bring the conflict to the surface and into the open.



Use Event Time When Planning

- **Prioritize and Schedule Good Intentions Using Event Time:** Sometimes the inner paralysis comes from a whole host of good intentions all wanting *urgent attention at once*.
- The resulting overload, confusion and stress can be stop us getting much done at all.
- Use the event time of the subconscious to prioritize them.
- First I will do A, then, after that's done I'll pay attention to B, then when that's completed to C and D.
- Jesus gives nearly all His instructions in event time "after you have" "when they" "wait in Jerusalem until" etc.
- Write all your tasks down on a sheet of paper and then group them first these, then after those then these here etc.
- Though the tasks are not done yet the issue of their urgency is resolved in terms your sub-conscious mind can understand and you will feel more at peace.



Solution-Focused

- The only way to fix a problem is to find a solution and to implement the solution in real time in the real world
- Reality only changes when you act upon it in an organized and definite way.
- All the ideas in the world will not move a single molecule!
- Thinking, analyzing and worrying do not change anything.
- Our beliefs must align with reality in constructive ways that help us to align with and then work upon reality.
- We must be solution-focused not problem-focused
- Faith sees the solution not the problem (12 spies)



Positive, Specific, & Concrete

- **Frame Thoughts and Intentions Concretely And Positively:** When you rework your thoughts and intentions it helps if they develop into a *concrete specific picture of a positive desirable future*.
- For instance a struggling student should frame the goal "I will pass in Mathematics" rather than "I will not fail in Mathematics".
- When we see the biblical healing commands they are *faith-filled, positive and have the desired end state in view*. E.g. "Peace be still", "Lazarus come forth", "Be made clean", or "Rise up and walk".
- We need to be solution-focused not problem focused. *The positive end result is what is to be put before the eyes of our heart*.
- Use CONCRETE terms: "They will beat their swords into ploughshares" has more power in our being than "weapons will be recycled into agricultural implements".
- When we state our goals and beliefs in concrete, positive, picture terms we seem to lay hold of them much more effectively.



Plausibility Structures

- **"Plausibility Structures":** Our beliefs about what is possible and impossible, probable and improbable, plausible and implausible. Peter Berger calls these "plausibility structures".
- Christians need to reworking their idea of limits *so that they line up with Scripture's view of what is possible and impossible, plausible and implausible*.
- Jesus says nine times in the gospels "nothing is impossible with God" or "all things are possible with God". His life and miracles reflect His commitment to this belief.
- The limits we place on our life are often really limits we have placed on God through having plausibility structures which are inherited from the world rather than from the Scriptures



Checklist...

- Identify a wrong belief that is causing you emotional pain
- Change it to a more biblical belief & reinforce this change
- Revoke wrong vows and intentions
- Resolve conflicts within your beliefs
- Don't overload your brain – plan calmly using event time
- Be solution-focused
- Make positive specific plans which are full of faith
- Believe that God can do all things on your behalf...



The Role Of The Mind

- (Romans 8:4-6 NKJV) that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. {5} For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. {6} For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.
- The decisive factor in Biblical EQ is the Mind of the believer. If it is set on the flesh and we are carnally minded the result is death. If it is set on the Spirit and we are spiritually minded the result is life and peace. Chapter after chapter of Biblical EQ has demonstrated the truth of those two statements in Romans.



Fight, Flight Or Mastery

- When we are faced with a challenging situation we have three possible emotional responses – fight, flight or mastery.
- “Fight OR Flight” is often an adrenaline based, un-thought-out response that gets us into trouble.
- Personal mastery is the Jesus response and the most effective way to live.



Fight OR Flight

- An adrenalin-based response that may be appropriate when dealing with a tiger.
- Not very useful in the daily lives most of us lead.
- Blood rushes to the muscles and the body gears up for action. Blood is thus diverted away from the brain.
- This makes us unable to think clearly or respond wisely.



Cain

(Genesis 4:3-8 NASB) So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. {4} And Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; {5} but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard.

So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. {6} Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? {7} "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must *master it*."

{8} And Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.



Road Rage & Agoraphobia

- Road Rage results when the "fight" response is triggered by a minor stimulus.
- Agoraphobia results when the "flight" response becomes over-activated and leads to panic attacks.
- Inappropriate aggression and inappropriate fears and "flight" responses are almost in epidemic proportions in many countries.
- Emotional self-control and mastery is needed.



Jesus & Mastery

- Jesus demonstrated mastery of any and every situation He was presented with. At no point in His life did Jesus give in to the adrenalin-filled panic of a fight or flight response.
- He neither fought the soldiers who arrested him or fled them. Throughout His entire trial demonstrated an amazing degree of personal mastery.
- His actions were masterful, strong, wise and spiritual.
- His Spirit-filled mind had total mastery over His flesh and His instincts.
- This gave Him power, poise and a degree of personal authority that seems to have been the main aspect of His personality that people admired and is frequently commented on in the gospels. (Matthew 7:29, 8:9, 21:23-27, 28:18-20, Mark 1:27, Luke 4:32, Luke 9:1, 10:19, John 5:27, 7:17, 12:49, 14:10, 16:13, 17:2)



Jesus vs. Satan

- Jesus was not thrown even by encountering the Devil in person.
- During the temptation in the wilderness Jesus met the Devil in a face-to-face spiritual encounter of incredible intensity.
- Jesus neither fled nor fought. Jesus mastered the situation, resisted the temptations and used His authority to deal with the problem.
- He mastered the temptation to avoid the encounter and thus preserve himself from possible spiritual harm. He faced the dangers of the Devil at full force. He stood His ground against pure evil.
- Also Jesus did not launch into an aggressive tirade against Satan. There was no raw and red-necked stream of spiritual vitriol directed against the Devil.
- Instead Jesus defeated Satan through the calm use of God's authority based on God's Word. Jesus mastered the situation.



Threatening Situations

- The biblical example of Jesus in the wilderness shows us how to react - even if we think a situation is utterly evil and threatens our health, identity and success (as the wilderness temptations did for Jesus).
- We do not need to get upset and become reactive.
- Nor do we need to pack our bags and run.
- We just need to calmly and authoritatively expose that situation to the truth of Scripture and the authority of God.
- We want to end up moving through life as Jesus moved through Israel, and cope with our pressures and threats as He did.



The Perfect Golf Shot

- Don't "bash" the ball.
- Don't "drop out" or run away from the situation.
- Think, select the right club, rehearse the trajectory and shot in your mind, then calmly hit the ball just where you want it.
- Mental mastery is like golf. Practicing situations over and over until we do not fear them but can move through them with poise and power.



Mastery Is Possible

- Mastery is not some elusive state like "sinless perfection".
- Mastery is a daily, practical emotional skill that you can practice and use in thousands of ways.
- You can see it in action every day.
- You can improve visibly in a few weeks of practice.
- You already have the skill within you.



The Telephone

- Imagine you are having an argument, a real shouting match, you are furious and your face is red and you are thumping the table.
- Then the telephone rings and you pick it up.
- As you do so you stop shouting, you become polite, you say "Good morning, how can I help you" etc.
- You have switched from "fight/flight" to self-mastery in a few seconds!
- You did this because you knew it was necessary.



The Red Button

- In trains in Australia there is a big red Emergency button behind Plexiglas.
- If you break the glass and press the button the train will come to a stop.
- You also have a "red button" that can stop the "train" of your fight / flight response.
- When you picked up the telephone and became nice you chose to press "the red button" and stop your adrenaline filled reaction.
- You need to become aware of your "red button" and how to use it to remain calm and masterful in all situations.



Excuses...

- But they deserve my anger....
- But I cannot help running away....
- How can I help it if I am surrounded by turkeys...
- It suddenly comes upon me and I cannot do anything about it....
- It feels so much better to "just let them have it".
- How else will stupid people learn...
- Its my nerves, I am fearful by nature...
- Retreat is so much safer...
- All of the above are LIES that you have believed.



Counting The Cost...

- How much have you **lost** by blowing up, running away, resigning, writing angry letters, avoiding situations you should face, being fearful etc?
- If instead you had mastered these situations where would you be today?
- Has giving into your adrenalin been worth it?



The Mind Gives Victory

- You need to switch ON the Spirit-filled mind.
- You need to switch OFF the adrenalin-filled responses of the flesh.
- If you focus your mind/attention on your rage, your anger, your fears or your feelings of being slighted you will keep activating the fight-flight response.
- If you reach for the Red Button and ask God the Holy Spirit to take control of your mind and focus your attention on things above you will find peace , calm and self-mastery



Standing In Line

- You are standing in a long line to pay a bill at a bank.
- You have been there for half an hour, the line is still long and the tellers do not seem very fast or very bright. You are beginning to get really frustrated.
- You can focus on your irritation and the tellers' inefficiency and get progressively more upset.
- Or you can ask the Holy Spirit to fill you and take charge of the situation. This will often flood you with feelings of calm.
- Take your attention off the irritation.
- Focus your attention on God.



Defining "The Mind"

By the Mind Paul does not mean various individual thoughts or mind as intellectual activity or a set of intellectual abstractions or the "Sub-conscious" or the dream world.

- Rather mind is the mental framework of the person. For those of you who enjoy Greek the **phren word family** phroneo, phronema and phronesis, phronimos is in view here. We use the word Mind this way in the phrases "single-minded" or "open-minded".
- ***The mind is controllable and can be focused by the believer. The mind is the only part of our consciousness that we can control, and therefore it is of vital importance.***



Defining The Mind cont'd...

- Paul asks us to **set our mind** on various things such as the Spirit, things above, and the pursuit of maturity.
- Thus the mind is that part of our total consciousness and awareness that we have some control over.
- **The mind is what thinks when you do some real thinking.**
- The mind is where you receive and mull over wisdom and where you make real choices about your actions.
- It is that part of your consciousness that you can control and exert and which bears a close relationship to the "real you".



"Phren" In The New Testament

- The mind in the sense of the **phren** word family generally means the wisdom and understanding especially of the righteous (Luke 1:17, Ephesians 1:8).
- This mind be set on various things.
- When Jesus rebuked Peter he said he was "not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men." (Matthew 16:23, Mark 8:33), the legalistic Romans nit-picking about food and drink were literally "rules-minded" in the Greek (Romans 14:6).
- The mind can be set on the flesh or the Spirit (Romans 8:5,6) and things above (Colossians 3:2) or on earthly things (Philippians 2:19), which caused Paul to weep.
- Due to the renewing and infilling of the Holy Spirit we can even have "the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:14-16) and when we are humble servants we have a mind like Christ's (Philippians 2:5). On the other hand we can have a childish mind (1 Corinthians 13:11, 14:20)
- Unity of mind is important and Christians are to be one-minded and like-minded. (Romans 12:16, 15:5, 2 Corinthians 13:11)
- This word family can also mean the careful, prudent mind, that which thinks of others, the mindful and thoughtful person (Philippians 1:7, 4:10).



Its Your Choice...

- Thus it is clear from the New Testament that the sort of mind we end up with is entirely our choice.
- We can focus our mind on God's interests or man's interests, the Spirit or the flesh, the things above or earthly things.
- We can choose to be humble, like-minded, unified and thoughtful of others or we can choose to be puffed up, childish, contentious, worldly and carnal.



Only The Mind...

- The mind is the only part of our consciousness that we can focus and direct therefore it is the only part of us that can give us mastery.
- A million dollars will not give you personal mastery. People who win the lottery often end up poor because of their lack of personal mastery. The money has not made them masterful.
- A strong body will not give you mastery except of certain physical skills. Athletes can be enslaved to alcohol or drugs.
- Education will not give you personal mastery, there are many well educated people who are small-minded and weak-willed.
- Willpower won't give you mastery as the will can simply become stubborn and inflexible, unable to adapt to changing situations and thus lead to inevitable defeat.
- Even religion won't give you mastery. Many people are enslaved by cults, caught up in bondage to religious guilt or overtaken by idolatry and superstition.
- ***Only the adaptable, flexible, trained, focused and disciplined mind can bring mastery.***



A Quick Clarification

- I am not advocating mentalist philosophies, mind science, Christian Science, or think and grow rich kinds of mental mastery. They are half-truths.
- The mind is not a terribly significant force in itself. The mind does not have the ability to create heaven or hell as Blake thought. God creates Heaven and Hell. Reality is His creation, not ours.
- The mind does not create the world but it does enable us to move through it with poise and power.
- The mind is not God. The mind works best when it is set on God.
- In biblical terms personal and emotional mastery is a product of the mind set on God and imbued with His Word and authority.
- The unaided mind operating alone by itself cannot produce mastery of the kind we see in the life of Jesus Christ.
- For that kind of mastery we need more than positive thinking. We need a direct connection to God and the mind must be resolutely set on God, on the Spirit, on things above, on the Kingdom, and the righteousness thereof.



Three Truths

- So we see that we are faced with three universal truths:
- Firstly that personal mastery is the only wise option.
- Secondly that such mastery is solely a product of the mind.
- Thirdly that the mind becomes masterful as it is disciplined and focused on something outside itself.
- This book maintains that the highest degree of mastery can only be attained when the 'something outside itself' is God.
- You can achieve a sense of mastery by focusing your mind on fencing or gymnastics or horse-riding but you won't end up like Jesus just by focusing on those things.
- The mind must be directed onto Christ. That is its proper place.



Directing The Mind Onto Christ

- This directing of the mind is a forceful and decisive activity.
- It is not speculating about Christ or studying or daydreaming about Christ.
- It is similar to standing outside yourself and directing yourself onto Christ.
- Like standing at the top of a high-dive tower and looking down and plunging in with total commitment.
- It's choosing where your life energies will be focused and your mental processes directed.
- The whole of the mind is fixed on Christ and directs the total life energies of the believer in that direction.
- As this focus is attained everything else is entrained, the emotions, the will and the responses.



Mastery Involves Rules

- A great writer still has to follow the rules of grammar.
- A great badminton player still has to follow the laws of the sport.
- Christians have to follow the commandments of Christ.
- Mastering the Christian life involves following the rules – but is much more than just merely following the rules.
- A great chess player follows the rules - but the game is much more than mere rule-keeping.
- Once the rules become internalized - then real living begins!



Pre-Requisites

The absolute prerequisites of spiritual progress are that you are:

- born-again with a new nature from God
- that you have the filling of the Holy Spirit and
- that you are single-mindedly devoted to God in obedience to His word.
- Unless you are born-again you do not have a new nature. Without the new nature it's an impossible job.
- If you are not Spirit-filled and led by the Spirit in your daily life then you will not have power over the flesh (see Galatians 5:16-18) and you will struggle continually and lose continually.
- If you are not single-minded you will be double-minded and double-minded people receive nothing from the Lord (James 1:5-8).



Practical Techniques - 1

- **Pay attention to your physical state.** If you realize that your fists are clenched and your neck is rigid and you are physically tensed up and alerted for danger then try to undo those physical states. Unclench your fists, rub your neck, relax your posture. The fight or flight response is partly a physical response and as we undo its physical correlates it will lose much of its power. Perhaps try and relax or use deep breathing if you are tense, guarded or explosive.
- **Be aware of the magnitude of your emotional responses** and the quick "zoom" to anger or anxiety that the fight or flight response produces. Learn to recognize when you are zooming to disaster and practice keeping a lid on it.
- **Take time to think.** Use your God-given right to choose your response. Do not just respond on auto-pilot. Once you stop and think you are far more likely to choose a good and much more optimal solution.
- **Disengage.** If you have started to move into attack mode pull back the troops! Go for a walk, cool down. Have a pray about it.



Practical Techniques - 2

- If you are going into a situation that you know aggravates you (such as dealing with an annoying person) try to **make a conscious decision about how you are going to react in that situation**. Then **rehearse your balanced and biblical reaction** over and over in your mind. Perhaps seven times or seventy times seven? (see Matthew 18) Train yourself mentally to react rightly just like professional golfers 'see the ball going in the hole' even before they make the shot. Use mental rehearsal to disarm potential conflict situations.
- In the converse of this - **don't mentally rehearse the wrong response**. Don't see in your mind's eye a picture of yourself strangling the boss of the phone company. It may be very satisfying but it is not helpful. It is educating yourself in the wrong direction.
- Use the '**what would Jesus do?**' question as a quick reference.



Practical Techniques - 3

- **Question your perceptions of threat**. Is this really a life or death issue? Am I getting tensed up over nothing? What does it say about me if I am so easily riled? Or on the flight response: Is it really that bad? Is the world going to end over this? Is this fear, anxiety and emotional reactivity helping me? Has running away from things helped or hindered my life?
- **Learn to find your emotional center** and to live from it and to know when it is in balance and out of balance. This is quite difficult for many people.
- **Some people will push you** wanting you to explode so they can take advantage of your immature reaction. Be alert to this and deliberately react the opposite way they are pushing you. (1 Corinthians 4:12) For instance when they revile you greet them with a blessing. (1 Peter 2:23 NKJV) who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;



Practical Techniques - 4

- Remember that when you react rightly to unjust treatment that "**great is your reward in heaven**". So rejoice and give yourself a pat on the back when you keep your cool. Positive reinforcement for good behavior. (Matthew 5:11)
- **Do not return evil for evil**. (Romans 12:17) Keep a lid on your desire to retaliate. Leave retaliation to the Lord. (Romans 12:19) If we return a blessing instead we will inherit blessing. (1 Peter 3:9).
- If people rip you off and insult you **don't escalate it into a life or death struggle** over honor and pride. This is what Jesus means when He says "do not resist him who is evil". (He does not mean that the police should not arrest robbers!) Rather it means "don't let the evil person push you into a full-scale, adrenalin packed, fight or flight response". Deny the natural man's urge to strike back. If he slaps you, turn the other cheek, if he takes your cloak, let him, if he makes you walk a mile, go two. If he says "give me money" let him have some. (Matthew 5:38-42). Deny your reactivity and show you are made of different stuff



Practical Techniques - 5

- **Don't let unkind, ungrateful, stingy, mean or small-minded people get to you**. God is merciful to the unkind and ungrateful and we have a great reward in heaven when we do likewise. (Luke 6:35) Brush their meanness to one side without taking it too personally and treat them as well as you can with reasonable safety (because some are quite toxic).
- **Do not get your ego hooked** into the game of "Christian comparisons", my church is bigger than your church etc. This only leads to fuming and fighting.
- **Do not let theology push you into fight or flight mode**. Only debate under circumstances that are harmless to the hearers (such as with good friends in the ministry) unless of course there is an urgent apologetic reason. Even then your speech should be seasoned with salt.



Practical Techniques - 6

- **Learn correct responses** by modeling mature Christians and by studying the heroes of the faith.
- Make a personal **commitment** to grow in this area.
- Have some friends keep you **accountable** for your reactions and encourage you to maturity.
- Enjoy the **feeling of grace** rather than the feeling of explosive emotional power.



Flight – Into Agoraphobia

- Life circumstances cause the person to reach, at some point in their life, a point of **nervous exhaustion** in which fear that already exists cannot be suppressed or controlled by the will and during which new fears can be easily implanted.
- **Strange frightening thoughts then appear in a tired mind.** The person worries about these thoughts. This further activates the fight or flight response and exhausts the person and so they have even less energy to control their fears with. More fears then surface, the person then worries, and so on in a vicious circle. The strange thoughts in the tired mind eventually reach such an intensity that they lead the person to the threshold of panic.
- A small incident then triggers a full-scale **panic attack**, which, if this spiral continues, may become the first of many.



Disengaging From Your Fears

- Mastering such fear means moving away from the fight or flight response.
- Instead of trying to fight the fears or run away from them they are just accepted.
- This position of not fighting and not running away disengages the fight or flight response, lowers the adrenalin levels and helps the person think.
- They are encouraged to go slowly because the need to “hurry” or take action activates the fight or flight response.
- They are encouraged to rest, eat properly and recover strength and get over their prior depletion. This enables them to get some perspective on their fears.



Floating Through...

- The only way to deal with fear is going through. “Even jelly legs will get you there”.
- Of great importance is “floating through” difficult experiences. The problem with fearful people is they engage life too tightly. When you grab life too tightly it bounces you round and you end up either struggling with it or fleeing from it.
- A bit of detachment can lead to peace of mind. “Floating through” can help people survive normally traumatic experiences such as shopping in a large mall. The person floats through the shop door, floats around the store, floats up to the counter, floats out the money and pays for the goods and floats out again.
- The person is slightly detached but not dissociated from reality and is able to do the task that was impossible before.



Four Key Concepts

- 1. Face, do not run away.
- 2. Accept, do not fight
- 3. Float, do not tense.
- 4. Let time pass – do not be impatient with time.



Reacting To Spiritual Experiences

- Powerful spiritual experiences often invoke the fight or flight response.
- We need to face them, not run away from them
- We need to accept them calmly – and evaluate them wisely.
- We should quietly move through them and not become threatened and aggressive.
- We should let time pass, weigh them up carefully, and not rush around in response.



An Intimidating Workload

- Face the workload, don't run from it.
- Simply accept that it has to be done, don't see it as a threat.
- Make a list, put it in order of priority and float through it one task at a time. Don't tense up and become hurried and nervy.
- Let time pass. Stop watching the clock, if you are working efficiently and doing the jobs in order of priority then time is not the problem.



Solution-Focussed Thinking

- Focus on finding the solution rather than analyzing the problem.
- When we **focus on the problem** we end up blaming, analyzing, and often activate the fight or flight response.
- When we **focus on the solution** we use our creativity and our sense of mastery and become constructive people.
- Paul Problema gets a flat tire, finds the nail, analyzes the nail, works out how the nail got on the road, is still stuck there two weeks later fuming in anger and crusading about nails on roads.
- Sam Solution gets a flat tire, gets the jack, takes off the wheel, puts on the spare and is driving home ten minutes later. Watches Paul Problema's campaign on TV and laughs.



S-F Thinking In Action

- Just find a solution. Don't ask why the stream is flooding or sit around analyzing the water quality – just find the bridge and walk across.
- Avoid the paralysis of analysis.
- Don't see problems everywhere. Learn to **see solutions everywhere**.
- Big problems sometimes have really simple solutions.
- If you do what you have always done you will get what you have always got.
- Ask what is working and do more of it.
- If it's not working stop doing it.
- Don't fix the blame – fix the problem.



Jesus & Solutions

- Jesus had an amazingly solution-focused approach to life.
- In the gospels Jesus says “nothing is impossible with God” or “all things are possible with God” a total of nine times.
- Jesus finds solutions for blind people, lepers, demon-possessed Legion, Lazarus in the grave, five thousand hungry listeners and a boat full of disciples on a stormy sea.
- Whatever the problem there was always a solution and the solution always gave glory to God. The faith of Jesus searched for, found and activated solutions.



12 Key Concepts

1. God can always get His way in the end – nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37) in fact all things are possible with God (Matthew 19:26) and to them that believe (Matthew 17:20)
2. God is always with you working all things for your good (in Christ) Romans 8:28
3. God is a God of solutions and of all comfort not of chaos, disorder, sin, sickness or pain (1 Corinthians 14:33, 2 Cor 3:3-5, Isaiah 53:4-6, Mark 3:15)
4. God wants to communicate these solutions to you (1 Corinthians 2:9-12)



12 Key Concepts cont'd

5. God's solutions are focused on you being found in the image of God at the resurrection of the dead to glory (Romans 8:29, 2 Cor 3:17,18; 1 John 3:1-3)
6. Its no use gaining the world and losing your soul (Mark 8:35-37)
7. Fear stops solutions (Peter walking on the water) faith activates solutions (Hebrews 11).
8. Mastery involves finding God's solution and implementing it in a definite and organized way in real time in the real world so that change occurs.



12 Key Concepts cont'd

9. "Be still and know that I am God (Ps. 46:10)" – the best solutions come when we rest in God and wait in God and refuse to be drawn into turmoil, fear and panic
10. God has not made us to be helpless but victorious (2 Timothy 1:7, 1 John 4:4, 5:4)
11. God wants us to rule and reign with Him and to have genuine spiritual authority that puts His solutions in place in the world "Thy Kingdom come, They will be done.."
(Revelation 5:10, 20:4-6, 22:5)
12. All the blessing, power and authority we need is already ours in Christ (Ephesians 1:3, 20,21, 2:6, 6:10-20)



Summary

- We are to move away from the visceral and self-defeating reactions of the fight or flight response to the noble, practical, solution-focused and faith-filled responses of the sanctified believer.
- Mastery is the balanced command of our consciousness in every situation so that we act according to the will of God.
- The instrument for doing this is the mind. The mind is the only part of our consciousness that we can focus and deploy.
- We can use it to stop automatic responses and to master our emotions.
- We can focus the mind on God and things above and be connected to His eternal power.
- We can use the mind to give us poise and power when we face our fears.
- We can search for positive faith-filled solutions to pressing needs so as to give glory to God.
- Mastery can be practiced and is greatly assisted by solution-focussed thinking.