

I KNOW: “How To Think Like Jesus” 12.4.11

Scripture: Romans 8:5-8 NIV84

Intro: I grew up infused with PMA - Positive Mental Attitude. I read and reread Napoleon Hill’s *Think and Grow Rich* - which had the idea that how I thought about things - either positively or negatively - was the most important determining factor for achievement. I regularly listened to audio tapes by Earl Nightingale telling me about the *Acres of Diamonds* that were in my own backyard if I only developed my mind and my skills to recognize them. Zig Ziglar told me in his seminars that my attitude in life determined my altitude in life.

As a mature Christ-follower and pastor I think all this actually has great value - but like all things in this life - is only a poor copy of the truth of God’s Word. It’s good as far as it goes, but God’s plan for us - and for our minds - is so much more powerful and rich.

How I think is vitally important to *how I feel* about my faith in Christ. We often get this backwards, allowing our feelings to inform our minds. It should be the other way around. Thinking... setting my mind... has purpose, intention, deliberate. My mind is not some neutral territory where I allow any thought to come in. ***I set my mind according to the Spirit of Christ.*** What does that mean? What does that look like?

As a Christ-follower I need to know MY MINDSET MATTERS!

We see this over and over again in the NT:

“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.” Colossians 3:2 NIV84

“Therefore, prepare your minds for action.” 1 Peter 1:13 NIV84

“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.” Philippians 4:8 NIV84

State it again: “How I think” about my faith in Christ and my life informs my feelings and my actions. This should be priority #1 for us as Christians. We know that our bodies need to be fed with food. We should also know that our minds need to be fed with a proper diet. Why is this so vitally important? Because, we’re told, our mind is our connection to God’s Holy Spirit.

Story of WWJD Bracelets: Early 1990s the WWJD bracelets became popular. When faced with a moral question or encountering the poor, hungry or homeless, we simply needed to look at the bracelet and ask ourselves, “What would Jesus do?” Problem with this is that we filter the answer through our own perception of Jesus - religious, social, education, family all shape our view of Christ and what he would do. When the 2nd person of the Godhead walked this earth, He surprised people all the time. He did the unexpected. Jesus anticipated our need for a bracelet, but he gave us something so much better: **HIS OWN HOLY SPIRIT!** Today we learn that we have choice:

MY CHOICE: Think according to the SPIRIT OF GOD
or think according to WHAT COMES NATURALLY.

In fact, not only is this a choice, *but it is one of the definitive ways to know* if we are true, living, Christ-followers or not! Let’s read Rom

“Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.” Romans 8:5 NIV84

You want to know whether you are living a God-centered, God-focused, God-pleasing life or not? Look to where your mind is set. Is it set on whatever comes naturally? Or is it deliberate, purposeful, intentional thinking according to the Spirit of Christ? Jesus had another way of saying the same thing: “Where your treasure is, there you will find your heart.” (Matt. 6:21) Is your treasure the things of God or not? **How can you know? Paul gives us 4 clues.**

Thinking What Comes Naturally

Thinking Purposely By Spirit

DEATH

LIFE

I saw something this week for the first time. Not that our thinking *leads* to death or life, but that it actually IS DEATH OR LIFE.

“The mind of sinful man is death but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life.”
Rom. 8:6a NIV84

In the original Biblical language it reads like this: Mind of sinful man DEATH. Mind controlled by the Spirit LIFE. **We also learn...**

HOSTILE TO GOD

PEACE WITH GOD

This isn't surprising when we remember that earlier Paul had described us as “enemies” of God (Rom. 5:10). In that same chapter Paul tells us that God has made peace with us! (Rom. 5:1). It's our possession. We have it! **The question we face today is, what about our minds?**

“The sinful mind is hostile to God.” Romans 8:7a NIV84

“The mind controlled by the Spirit is... peace.” Rom. 8:6b NIV84

Is your mind thinking thoughts that are at peace with God or thoughts that are hostile to Him? Hostile to His wishes? Hostile to His will? **This is not accidental, but purposeful and deliberate... submissive!**

DOES NOT SUBMIT

SUBMITS TO GOD

Is your thinking done in a way that submits to God's will? This is why Jesus spent so much time on the “heart of the matter” in his Sermon on the Mount. He told us that it was out of the heart that sin flowed. The source of our rebellion is in our thought life.

“The sinful mind ... does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.”
Romans 8:7b NIV84

The implication is that the sinful mind cannot submit to God's law, only the mind controlled by the Holy Spirit... in other words only the mind controlled by God in 3rd person, can submit to God. We don't have the ability to do this ourselves. This is why God's Spirit is a gift to us. And why we can live out James...

“Submit yourselves, then, to God.” James 4:7a NIV84

DOES NOT PLEASE GOD

PLEASES GOD

“Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.” Rom. 8:8 NIV84

“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.” Romans 12:2 NIV84

Even if you desired to please God (which you wouldn't as God's natural enemy), you COULDN'T please God because your mind would always be bent away from him. Bent toward death, hostile and non-submissive to God. Do you see what Paul tells us in 12:2? [Be transformed by the renewing of your mind!](#) IOW, this isn't just a matter of sitting back in a non-participatory way and saying, OK God - go to it. Change my thinking! No! This growth in God's Spirit cannot be done without God's Spirit, but it also cannot be accomplished without your involvement, your deliberate, intentional, purposeful effort to change your thinking into the kind of thinking that brings life, peace with God, submission to God, and ultimately pleases God.

Transition: How does this happen? Not in church for one hour a week! It happens in real life situations where your faith is put into action! I challenge you to begin asking these 4 questions about your thinking when you come up against real issues in your life. Does this decision bring life? Can I remain at peace with God if I do this? Am I being submissive to God or hard hearted and selfish? Would God be pleased?

FAITH IN ACTION: How does "thinking according to God's Spirit" impact

- my relationships? Do I think about my relationships in this way? Do my choices bring life? Or filled with corruption. Does this relationship blossom into God moments?... or do I find myself often embarrassed to think that God is actually present?
- my finances? Do I think about my finances as being submissive to God? Are they first HIS finances and I am just the steward, taking care of what He has entrusted to me? Do I even consider other investments in other people - giving to alleviate poverty or hunger?
- my patience? All our attitudes ultimately are determined by our thinking. Am I thinking with the thoughts of the eternal Holy Spirit WHO doesn't know time or hurry or restraints?
- my acts of love? Do I reflect the thoughts of God and His plan for the world and the people around me? Do I do what I do because "I have to?" or because God's Spirit breathes love out of me?
- my sacrifices? Jesus showed the ultimate sacrifice. He gave himself and his Heaven up so that we might know God and have a relationship with Him. This same God-Spirit, THE Holy Spirit that was in Jesus while He walked the Earth is now available to you! If you submit to Him, you'll find yourself doing things and thinking things you never would on your own.
- my? I left you a blank for you to fill in yourself What about your work? your family? your decisions? your retirement? your service? your involvement with Church Requel? Whatever it is that is on your mind right now - THATS what God wants you to think about.

Conclusion: I challenge you to take this list and stick it someplace where you will see it often this week. Then ask yourself and Spirit in you these 4 questions about whatever comes up. See if you don't discover God's Spirit alive and well in your life (so much better than a bracelet!) ... or whether you need a "checkup from the neck up." **Let's pray!**