

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

WEEK 3: DISCIPLINE OF THE MIND

INTRODUCTION

- Discipline of the mind means many different things to many different people.
- A general definition, “*The practice of training oneself or others to follow rules, maintain order, and build self-control to achieve goals.*”
- The world and the Lord approach this very differently
 - The Lord and Creator changes our nature, gives us His Word, and the indwelling Holy Spirit to transform our lives and character in Christlikeness.
 - The world attempts this through education, self-help, psychology, and to the extent that some recognize a higher power, its own religious systems (based on powerless dogma or the pursuit of experiences).
 - None of which changes the indwelling nature of a person let alone pleases the Lord and Creator.
 - As I prayed and thought through how to best define and communicate the discipline of the mind, one verse best represents this discipline, *1 Peter 1:13, “Therefore, having girded your minds for action, being sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ”.*
 - A disciplined mind is one that has set its hope on the return of Christ for His people, rewarding them and glorifying them. This hope is with the realization that we are utterly unworthy for the grace lavished on us at Jesus’ return.
 - In response to this blessed hope, what kind of lives shall we live? Holy and pleasing to God.
 - Therefore, we prepare our minds for action: we discipline our thoughts, we align our priorities with biblical priorities, and we remove ourselves from the world’s sinful hinderances living holy self-disciplined lives.
 - A transformed life through the renewing of our minds.

REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE

- We have been delivered from the present evil age (World)

Galatians 1:4, Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father

- The price of our salvation

1 Peter 1:18-19, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

- We are to put off the old self and put on the new self

1 Peter 1:14-16, As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

- a. *2 Corinthians 5:17, Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

Paul identifies the new creation as the "new man, which is made in the likeness of God", *Ephesians 4:24, and to put on the new man, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.*

As those who confess Christ as Lord we are to put on the new self; this putting on of the new self requires consistent repeated transformation by the renewal of our minds by the Holy Spirit through the Word.

- Christians have the indwelling Holy Spirit who illuminates and instructs us in God's Word (1 Cor. 2:12-16)

1 Cor. 2:12-16, Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the depths graciously given to us by God, of which depths we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual depths with spiritual words.

But a natural man does not accept the depths of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually examined. But he who is spiritual examines all things, yet he himself is examined by no one. For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL DIRECT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.

- and empowers us in our obedience (Ephesians 5:18-20; Colossians 3:16-17)

Eph. 5:18-20, And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father

Col. 3:16-17, Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with gratefulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

REMEMBER WHO YOU WERE

- **Remember Who You Were – the foothold of the flesh**
 - *Romans 1:21-23, For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.*
 - *Ephesians 2:1-3, And you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all also formerly conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.*
 - Why should we be mindful of who we were? It is the mind of our flesh; that part of us that is unredeemed and lusts after disobedience and the world, it is in conflict with our “new self”.
 - It is here where the battle is fought for our minds; our thoughts, decisions, and bent.
 - Where discipline to renew our minds each and every day is critical.

DISCIPLINE THE MIND

- “Gird up your minds for action, being sober in spirit...”
 - Peter in 1 Peter 1:14-15 identifies this discipline as not conforming to the old self but to live holy lives (put on the new self)
 - Similarly, in Romans 12:2a Paul identifies it as not conforming to the world but to be transformed by the renewal of your mind. In effect, put off the old self and put on the new self.
 - Putting off the old self and putting on the new self requires transformation from a renewed mind.
 - It is in the mind that our new self and our old self (flesh) are intermixed.
 - It is in the mind that we make decisions whether to “put on” or express our new self in holiness or allow our old nature to act in unholiness.
 - A disciplined mind is a mind that is trained by the Holy Spirit through the Word to make choices to put on the new self, to allow the Spirit to transform and control our thoughts, actions, attitudes and words to those of Christ.
 - It is this transformation that Paul identifies in Romans 12:2a, “*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind*”
 - Peter makes a similar statement when describing obedient children of God in 1 Peter 1:14, “*As obedient children, not being conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance*”

Be conformed (same Greek word used in both, Romans 12:2 and 1 Peter 1:14) refers to an outward expression that does not reflect what is within.

- It is something we allow to be done to us. As one Biblical translator describes, “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould”. Or don’t let your old self squeeze you into its mold.

World, is best translated “age”, referring to the present sinful age, the world system now dominated by Satan. i.e. false religions, counter biblical culture, attitudes, thoughts and ideals, opinions, hopes, speculations, impulses, goals, entertainment...

- Instead of allowing ourselves to be fashioned like the world or our old sinful nature, we are to be transformed.

Transformed, refers to change in outward appearance and is the term from which we get our English word, metamorphosis.

- Matthew used this word to describe Jesus’ transfiguration where His inner glory and divine nature were revealed (Matthew 17:2).
- Similarly, our new self is to be manifested as completely and continually as humanly possible each day (Ephesians 4:22-24; 2 Corinthians 3:18).
- Although we are to deeply desire this transformation from the old self to the new self, it can only be accomplished by giving increasing control of ourselves to the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).
- The Holy Spirit achieves the transformation through the “renewing of the mind”.
- This outward change is affected by an inward change in the mind.
- The means by which the Holy Spirit uses to bring about this change of our living is the Word of God.

PRACTICAL WISDOM AND GROWTH IN THIS DISCIPLINE

Let the Word of the Lord Dwell in You Richly

- The transformed and renewed mind is the mind saturated with and controlled by the Word of God¹.
- It is the mind that lets the Word of the Lord dwell in it richly¹.
- It is a mind that is set “on the things above, not on the things that are on earth” (Colossians 3:2) ¹.
- Whether good or bad, when anything happens in our lives, our immediate, almost reflexive response should be biblical¹.
- Only the mind that is constantly being renewed by God’s Spirit working through God’s Word is pleasing to God¹.
- Only such a mind is able to make our lives a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is our spiritual service of worship¹.

Pray without Ceasing

- Pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17)
- Be watchful in your prayers (Col. 4:2), “*Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving*”

¹ McArthur New Testament Commentary, Romans 9-16