

THREE PICTURES OF HOW THE MIND WORKS

DATE: SUNDAY, 25TH OF OCTOBER 2020 | GRANT CRAWFORD

TALK
IT OVER

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9

"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. 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."

NOTE TO LEADERS:

- We're hosting an Intro Tea on Tuesday, the 3rd of November at 7pm. This is a great opportunity for members of your group who are not yet members of CityHill to find out more about our vision and becoming members.
- "Love in a Gift Bag" is a Nation Changers initiative which aims to provide 500 children with a school stationery pack for Christmas - for many of these children it will be the only gift they get. If you would like to donate towards the cost of a pack (R200), you can EFT to the Nation Changers bank account:
STANDARD BANK
BRANCH CODE 045726
ACCOUNT NUMBER 250805057
REFERENCE: LOVE

START TALKING

1. What was one thing from Sunday's message that challenged you?
2. What was a highlight from the past week that you can share with the group?

START THINKING

1. Read Philipians 4:8-9. According to these verses, should our thought life look like? How do we go about aligning our minds with that ideal image?
2. Can you think of any patterns of feeling or behaviour that might be a warning sign that all is not well in an area of our thinking? What might those warning signs be?
3. Read Philipians 4:6,7. Which part of this verse do you find most encouraging, and which do you find most challenging?

START SHARING

1. Grant used three pictures to illustrate how our mind works - a movie cinema, a courtroom, and a battleground. Which of these do you most relate to when considering the way your mind functions?
2. Read Romans 12:19. How does this verse help us to let go of grudges? Would anyone like to share a story of a time when you had to release a hurt and choose forgiveness, trusting God to be the Judge?
3. Which area(s) of your thinking do you find most difficult to surrender to God - where there are most likely to be "vigilante thoughts" refusing to surrender to His rule?

START PRAYING

Is someone in the group aware of "unhelpful movies" or "vigilante thoughts" - areas where you are just finding it incredibly difficult to surrender your thoughts to God? Why don't we take a moment to submit those areas to God now and ask for His help to equip you with the mind of Christ.

START DOING

Using a notebook or blank sheet of paper, take a moment to write down or draw images to represent the different areas of your mind that need to be surrendered to God - friendships, familial relationships, marriage or dating life, sexuality, finances, work, self-image, and anything else that comes to mind. Prayerfully submit each of these areas to God, asking Him to reveal any patterns of thought that are not submitted to Him. When He does, take a moment to repent and ask for His rule in those areas. God might highlight an area that has been a constant struggle for you - perhaps you would like to set a meeting with a trusted leader or counsellor who can walk with you through the process of transforming that area into a Christ-like way of thinking.

SUMMARY

OF SUNDAY'S MESSAGE

This Sunday, we were glad to host Grant Crawford, who preached powerfully about our minds. In Romans, we read that our minds should have the same attitude as Christ, in 1 Peter that we need to arm ourselves with Christ's attitude, and in Ephesians that our minds must be renewed. So why does God speak so strongly about the mind?

Our mind is like the gateway to our spirit and emotions - if it is malfunctioning, the impact on our lives is serious! It is essential to equip ourselves for right living, and this requires attention, not only to our heart motives but to the way we think. We have to examine the internal thoughts and attitudes of our minds constantly. This requires some understanding of how our minds work.

The Bible has quite a bit to say about how the minds, even of Christ-followers, can become corrupted or darkened. Paul says to Timothy, *"The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron."* - 1 Timothy 4:1-2

He later adds, *"People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power."* - 2 Timothy 3:2

In other words, it will be possible, even for those who live in Christian circles, to be thinking in ways that don't resemble the mind of Christ at all. We need to understand how our minds work in order that we can be on our guard regarding the way we are thinking and the attitudes of our minds.

Three pictures of how our minds work:

1. Our mind is like a movie cinema

Even those of us who would not label ourselves "creative" are constantly generating scenarios and storylines in our minds - we have an internal "movie" running all the time, and this internal vision generates stories which, like a cinema movie, create emotional responses and lead to certain actions on our part (This is why the advertising industry exists!) Proverbs 23:7 tells us, *"as a man thinks in his heart, so he is"* - our thoughts are a fore-runner of what we will do and how we will be!

When we know how thought influences action, we can be aware of how essential it is to monitor those thoughts. For this reason, Paul tells us, *"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. 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."* (Philippians 4:8-9) Paul is asking who or what is filling your mind and has access to your thought patterns - God desires that our lives and actions will be filled with Him - which means our thoughts must first be filled with Him and submitted to Him.

2. Our mind is like a courtroom

We make judgements all the time! The problem is that we are judge, jury, advocate and key witness! We are constantly passing judgement over our friends, family, and even ourselves. Unfortunately, this results in a misapplication of justice time after time! As Christians, we have access to a

far superior courtroom - to a Judge who presides over the entire universe, and an Advocate who is Jesus Christ. God's justice is supreme justice, and when we choose our justice over God's, we are choosing a far inferior courtroom. We have to submit our judgements to the supreme court for review! Otherwise, we are conforming to the world.

"Vengeance is mine, says the Lord" - and when we know this, we can release our judgments to God. A Croatian theologian named Miroslav Wolf made the point, that "the only means of prohibiting violence by us is to insist that violence is only legitimate when it comes from God. . . Violence thrives today, secretly nourished by the belief that God refuses to take the sword." Only when we know that vengeance belongs to God can we rest easy in the face of real or perceived injustice.

3. Our mind is like a battlefield

We fight all sorts of battles in our minds - sometimes with ourselves! The Bible tells us that the greatest battle we will ever fight is the battle for our soul - and the way to win that battle is actually to surrender our lives to Jesus, acknowledge Him as king, and invite Him into our lives. Unfortunately, historically, it has happened many times that the leader of the troops has surrendered, but somewhere there is a small battalion or outpost that refuses to give in! The same thing happens in our minds - we may have chosen to surrender to God, but there is one part of your mind that is saying "God can have everything, but not this!" This is referred to as a "stronghold," from 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 -

"The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 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."

A stronghold is a way of thinking that sets itself against God's rule, whether in the area of marriage, sexuality, finances, self-image, or something else! It's like a vigilante crew in your mind refusing to acknowledge the Lordship of Christ.

The weapons Paul refers to which have the power to demolish strongholds are confession and repentance. 1 John tells us, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." Confession and repentance can tear down every thought and pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God!

God's plan for our lives is that His government, His rule, His reign of peace are in our mind and the light of Jesus fills our lives. He wants to see flags of surrender in every part of our minds.

Phil 4:4-7 describes the state of a surrendered mind, *"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*