

Renewing Our Minds

Introduction

Do you ever wish that God hadn't given us free will? That He would just control our minds? That we could be obedient to Him without all the struggles and temptations to do otherwise? However, that is not the way God in His wisdom decided to do things. Good relationships include freedom. God gives us free will, but He also gives us the tools we need to help us be obedient to Him.

The human mind or heart is one area of our lives that strongly resists God and His desire to transform us. The effects of sin make us capable of many evil characteristics and deeds. Let's see what Jesus had to say about this subject.

Our Study

The Scripture: Mark 7:20-23

"What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.' For from within, out of men's hearts (minds), come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'"

1. Describe the evils Jesus says come out of man's heart [mind]. _____

The Apostle Paul describes the unregenerate mind in much the same way.

The Scripture: Romans 1:29-31

"They [sinners] have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless."

2. What are some of the sins Paul says unsaved man is capable of? _____

What an ugly picture Jesus and Paul paint of the things our minds are capable of. But does this mean we are completely at the mercy of our thoughts? Not at all. As a matter of fact, when we first come to the Lord, we have already had a change of heart/mind. Our word repentance comes from the Greek word “metanoea”, which means to think differently. In other words, to have a change of heart or mind.

Before we can accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we must decide to live a different life. Repentance doesn’t just mean to be sorry about the life we’ve led; it’s a decision to live an entirely different life--to follow Jesus and live as directed by the Bible and the Holy Spirit.

Paul gives us some important insights on how to do this in the book of Romans.

The Scripture: Romans 8:5-8

"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. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God."

3. What are the characteristics of those controlled by the sinful nature? _____

Anyone not following the Lord is capable of all of these characteristics. However, it can be a different story for the Christian.

4. What are the characteristics of those controlled by the Spirit? _____

But that is not all. Listen to what the Apostle Peter has to say.

The Scripture: 2 Peter 1:3, 4

"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption of the world caused by evil desires."

5. What have we received through God's divine power? _____

6. How have we received this? _____

7. What does this knowledge give us? _____

8. What causes the corruption of the world? _____

9. What do God's promises enable us to do? _____

This is one of the most exciting passages of scripture in the Bible. It tells us that through our relationship to and our knowledge of Jesus, we can participate in His divine nature and escape the world's evils.

The process by which we are changed from being the victims of our carnal nature and transformed into people eager to please the Lord is called the renewing of our minds. It is a lifelong process, in which both God and we have a part to play.

To start us in the participation of this process, God gives us an unbelievable gift.

The Scripture: 1 Corinthians 2:16

"We have the mind of Christ."

10. What do we have? _____

What an incredible idea! We are no longer at the mercy of our own minds. Christ's mind, His thoughts, His desires, are available to us. As we grow in the Lord more and more, we can think His thoughts and know and understand His purposes and His will for our lives.

Let's look at one description of this mind given to us.

The Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:7 (The Amplified Bible)

"God did not give us a spirit of timidity (of cowardice, of craven and cringing and fawning fear), but [He has given us a spirit] of power and of love and of calm and well-balanced mind and discipline and self-control."

11. What has God not given us? _____

12. What has he given us instead? _____

We need to remember that when we are tormented by fears and anxieties of any kind, these do not come from God. They are part of the unregenerate mind and from the enemy. God has given us a well-balanced mind with a spirit of power to overcome these negative thoughts.

We have been looking at God's part in our renewing process. Now we need to look at ours. What does God want us to do?

The Scripture: Romans 12:1, 2

"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. 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."

13. What is our part in this transformation? _____

14. What will it enable us to do? _____

Paul has more to teach us in the book of Ephesians.

The Scripture: Ephesians 4: 22-24

"Put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ...put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."

15. What does this verse tell us to do? _____

16. How is the new self described? _____

Paul goes on in this same chapter, telling his readers we must be truthful and honest, to not be overcome by anger, bitterness and wrath, to use clean language, not to grieve the Holy Spirit and to treat one another in a godly way.

When we give in to our old mature, our cowardly, carnal minds are filled with all kinds of fears and anxieties. Let's look at one section of Scripture, commonly called The Sower and the Seed. In this parable, the Sower (anyone who shares the gospel with others) sows his seed on four types of soil.

We're only going to look at one type of soil.

The Scripture: Matthew 13:7

"Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants."

17. What happened to the seed sown among the thorns? _____

Later on in this same chapter of Matthew, Jesus explains to his disciples the meaning of the parable.

The Scripture: Matthew 13:22

"The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful."

18. What two things keep the seed from growing and bearing fruit? _____

Because worry is so hazardous to the attitude of our minds, let's take a look at what it does to us. All of us are sometimes (if not often) stressed out by the worry. What is going to happen to us? What if I lose my job? What if there's a depression? What if I get sick?

When we don't trust God to provide for us, our minds can become contaminated.

What is Jesus' solution to the problem?

The Scripture: Matthew 6:25-27, 31-33

"Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?.. Do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow."

19. What does Jesus tell us not to do? _____

20. Why? _____

21. What should we do instead? _____

22. What will happen to us when we do this? _____

Paul also has something important to say about worry.

The Scripture: Philippians 4:6, 7

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, 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."

23. What should we do instead of being anxious? _____

24. What is God's gift to us if we are obedient? _____

25. How does Paul describe this peace? _____

Anyone who has experienced God's peace knows it is different from the peace of the world. It is a peace that can be experienced in the midst of trials and tremendous problems.

Too often our minds are occupied with our personal problems and the conditions we face. Paul has more to say about how we can renew our minds by refocusing them.

The Scripture: Philippians 4:8

"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."

26. What should we be thinking about? _____

The Scripture: Philippians 4:9

"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."

27. What should we be doing? _____

28. What will be the result? _____

The Scripture: Isaiah 26:3

"You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast because he trusts in You."

29. How can we have perfect peace? _____

Paul gives us more important advice in an earlier chapter in Philippians.

The Scripture: Philippians 3:13

"One thing I do. Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

30. What else should we do? _____

If we will take Jesus at His word and practice what He and the Bible teach, we can do our part in renewing our minds and finding God's peace.

The Answers

1. Evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, folly
2. Depravity, every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice, gossip, slander, hating God, insolence, arrogance, boastfulness, inventing ways of doing evil, disobedient to parents, senseless, faithless
3. They have their minds set on what their nature desires; the mind is hostile to God. It won't and can't submit to God's law.
4. They have their minds set on what the Spirit desires; the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.
5. Everything we need for life and godliness
6. Through our knowledge of Jesus
7. God's very great and precious promises
8. Evil desires
9. Participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption of the world
10. The mind of Christ
11. spirit of timidity, cowardice, craven, cringing, fawning fear
12. A spirit of power, love, calm well-balanced mind, discipline, self-control
13. To offer our bodies as living sacrifices, not to conform any longer to the pattern of this world, be transformed by the renewing of our minds
14. To test and approve what God's good, pleasing, and perfect will is
15. Put off our old self and put on our new self; be made new in the attitude of our minds
16. Created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness
17. It was choked by the thorns
18. Worries and deceitfulness of wealth
19. Not to worry about what we are going to eat, drink, wear or about tomorrow
20. Our heavenly Father knows what we need.
21. Seek God's kingdom and his righteousness first
22. Everything we need will be given to us.
23. Pray, ask, and give thanksgiving
24. God's peace to guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus
25. It passes all understanding.
26. Whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, praiseworthy
27. Putting into practice what we have learned from our spiritual leaders and the Bible
28. The peace of God will be with us.
29. By keeping our minds concentrated on the Lord and trusting in Him.
30. Forget what is behind and concentrate on what is ahead and the Lord Jesus.

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