Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God

Summary

The mind is the control tower of life.

What we think not only directs what we do but also determines who we are (Prov. 23:7). Our thoughts affect our perception of other people, God, our situations, and ourselves. They determine the direction of our lives, the quality of our relationships, and even our accomplishments or failures. Although we can’t control people or all our circumstances, we can choose what to think about them, which in turn directs how we respond. With so much at stake, it’s important that we guard what comes into our minds because everything we see, hear, and feel programs our thoughts. Our goal as believers is to understand God’s Word so His thoughts can fill our minds, enabling us to live in a fashion that is pleasing and honoring to Him.

Sermon Points

Colossians 3:1-8 advises us to set our minds on things above and remember that through salvation, we have died to our old way of life. When Jesus comes into our lives, He changes us. We can’t simply add Him to our former lifestyle and keep living as we did in the past. It’s time to put away the things that no longer fit our new identity in Christ—and this includes our old thought patterns.

The pathway to controlling our thoughts begins with an understanding of our relationship to Jesus Christ.

When we were saved, a change took place—we were “raised up with Christ” (Col. 3:1). We now have a new position in Him, and God desires that we also have a new way of thinking and responding to situations and people in our lives. Past experiences and feelings can produce inaccurate thoughts about ourselves. For instance, we could think we’re ugly, when in reality we’re beautiful. Although these faulty perceptions may start very early in life, God wants to give us a new way of thinking which is based on reality.

There are challenges to controlling our thoughts.

Salvation changes our lives and eternal destiny, but it doesn’t instantly alter how we think.

- Our environment is still the same. In fact, sometimes our situation gets worse, yet we are called to live a righteous life in an ungodly society. To accomplish this, we must learn how to think right.

- Satan blinds the minds of unbelievers. The gospel is veiled to those who are perishing because their minds are blinded by the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:3-4).

- Satan deceives believers. His battlefield is our minds, and his plan is to lead us astray from devotion to Christ (2 Cor. 11:3). He brings up old memories of hurts and mistreatment so we will dwell on them and experience the suffering again. The only way to protect ourselves from his deception is to fill our minds with God’s Word.

- Willful disobedience results in a reprobate mind. If we think about a sin and deliberately give ourselves over to it, we can suffer the consequences for many years. Even if we later forsake our sin and return to God, the memories may haunt us until we allow Jesus to deliver us from them.

We have the Holy Spirit to help us think right.

We never have to be defeated by our old ways because God has given us His Spirit to empower us to think differently. He helps us remember Scripture and replace old, recurring thought patterns with His truth.
Unseen thoughts produce visible consequences.
Although no one else knows our thoughts, they are eventually revealed in our faces, our actions, and ultimately in our destinies.
- We sow a thought and reap an action.
- We sow an action and reap a habit.
- We sow a habit and reap a character.
- We sow a character and reap a destiny.

When a thought comes into our minds, we have several options regarding what to do with it.
- Accept the thought and express it in some manner.
- Wrestle with it for a while.
- Deny it.
- Control it.

One of the ways to evaluate thoughts is by asking ourselves impacting questions.
- Where does this thought come from?
- Where will these thoughts lead me?
- Will these thoughts get me where I want to go?
- Are these thoughts scripturally acceptable?
- Will these thoughts build me up or tear me down?
- Could I share these thoughts with someone else?
- Where did these thoughts originate?
- Do these thoughts make me feel guilty?
- Do these thoughts show me as a follower of Jesus?

Worldly thinking always leads to sin.
History has proven what happens to a society when people are drawn away by ungodly thoughts. The progression is always toward immorality and sensuality. Whenever a country or empire heads down this path, destruction is sure to follow.

Right thinking requires an understanding of the difference between love and lust.
- Love is from God; lust is from the world.
- Love can wait; lust has to have it now.
- Love is selfless; lust is selfish.
- Love is giving; lust is taking.
- Love is purity; lust is sin.
- Love develops; lust destroys.
- Love is peaceful; lust is full of anxiety.

We must choose to obey the commands of Christ.
This is the only way to make sure we are thinking as God desires.
- Keep seeking the things above (Col. 3:1). The verb tense in this verse signifies continual action. God’s Word must be a habitual part of our diet. What God thinks should be a large part of what we think.
- Set your mind on things above (v. 2). This too should be a habitual practice. We must focus on those things that are pleasing to the Father.
- Remember that you have died to your old life (v. 3). Lusts and evil desires should no longer control us. The Holy Spirit empowers us to resist temptations.
- Consider the members of your earthly body as dead to sin (v. 5). Count this as true in your mind and let your actions follow—put sin to death.
- Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you (v. 16). Our minds should be so filled with Scripture that verses quickly come to mind in every situation. They overflow in our hearts guarding our way and giving us wisdom and strength.

RESPONSE
- Think of a life event and how you responded. How did your thoughts influence your response? If you didn’t react in a godly manner, can you discern what thoughts led you down that path? Did God’s Word come to mind to influence your behavior or words?
- Read Psalm 119:9-11. How will God’s Word protect your mind? How can you treasure it in your heart?