

Summary

- a) This session is the seventh of ten sessions that looks at a vital principle that fosters Spirit-led living. The seventh principle that we will examine is this: Renewing your mind comes from meditation, and meditation always determines your orientation, whether you live from the spirit, soul, or body.
- b) This session looks at four principles of faith so that your heart beliefs can be more aligned with the truth of God's Word, enabling you to live from Christ's indwelling life in a much greater way.

Review: Changing States

- a) Romans 12:2 states, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."
- b) Renewing the mind changes your state (metamorphosizes you), from the old self corrupted by the lusts of deceit to the new self created in righteousness, holiness, and Christlikeness (Eph. 4:22-24).
- c) Like a caterpillar changes into a beautiful butterfly, meditation changes you into a different state. It shifts you from living by self-life in your soul to living from Christ's life in your spirit.
- d) Renewing your mind is not trying in your own effort to produce transformation. Rather, it is aligning your mind with the truth of who you already are in your spirit.
- e) Meditation is believing what the Word says about your new spiritual condition. It is looking in the water and seeing the reflection of Christ in you. You realize you are not a caterpillar trying to become a butterfly. You are a butterfly trapped in a caterpillar's body.
- f) Your spirit has already been transformed into a Christlike state, and this great work of God must be released outward into every facet of your being.
- g) Since you already have everything you need pertaining to life and godliness in your spirit, acknowledging and agreeing with this finished work activates your faith and releases Christ's life from your spirit.

Review: The Power of Biblical Meditation

- a) Your meditation always determines your orientation, whether you live from your spirit, soul, or body (Rom. 8:5-8).
- b) When you meditate by the Spirit, you take what is written on a page and ponder it until it's inscribed on your heart. Until you own a truth, and you have the same revelation that Paul, John, or Peter had when they wrote the Scripture.
- c) When the Word is successfully implanted, the Word itself has the inherent power to save your soul—to conform your mind, will, and emotions into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ (James 1:21).
- d) Learning to meditate upon your position in Christ, your condition in Christ, and who Christ is in you will activate your faith, shift you from the flesh to the spirit, and transform your life.

Review: Activating Faith

- a) In Philemon 1:6, Paul prayed, "That the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake."
- b) Faith is how you experience Christ's life in you.
- c) Faith comes by renewing the mind by meditation.

- d) Faith in God's facts—what Jesus has already accomplished for you on the cross and what the Spirit has already accomplished in your spirit—allows the indwelling Spirit to make it real in your experience.
- e) Faith is the conduit through which God's inward grace (power) flows.
- f) Without faith, Christ cannot dwell in your heart and live His life through you (Eph. 3:17). If your heart is filled with doubt and unbelief, even though Christ dwells in your spirit, His life will remain suppressed and dormant within you.
- g) Jesus said, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts" (Mark 7:21-23). This statement reveals there is a *heart-mind connection*.
- h) As Jesus said, thoughts proceed from the heart. If your mind is bombarded with thoughts of pride, doubt, anxiety, coveting, lust, bitterness, guilt, shame, or condemnation, it likely means you have a heart issue. If you can't stop thinking about something, it usually means a belief has been forged in your heart and the fruit of this belief is an onslaught of thoughts in your mind.

Four Principles of Faith

- a) Because faith is vital to living by Christ's indwelling life, I want to explain four principles of faith in this session.
- b) The four principles of faith that we will look at are:
 - 1. Faith is an issue of the heart.
 - 2. We live by what we believe will bring us the most pleasure.
 - 3. Right believing leads to right living.
 - 4. What you believe shapes your destiny.
- c) As I explain these four principles of faith, keep in mind that faith is the key that unlocks the Spirit-led life, helping to release the Spirit like a river from within your spirit.

1. Faith Is an Issue of the Heart

- a) In this age, where the human brain is idolized, many believe intellectually that Jesus is the Messiah, but they are not born again. Why? Because faith is not mental agreement.
- b) Even if one believes facts about Jesus, such as His virgin birth, His astonishing miracles, His resurrection, and His divinity, but they don't believe in Him with their hearts, they will not be born again. Though their mind assents to the truth, their heart does not believe, leaving them in a state of spiritual death.
- c) Paul made it clear: "With the heart a person believes" (Rom. 10:10). Take note that faith and belief are issues of the heart.
- d) When the Ethiopian eunuch asked to be baptized, Philip said to him, "If you believe with all your heart, you may" (Acts 8:37). This further confirms faith and belief stem from the heart.
- e) Not only are faith and belief matters of the heart, but doubt and unbelief also spring forth from the heart.
- f) Jesus rebuked some of His followers, saying to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!" (Luke 24:25). He went on to ask them, "Why do doubts arise in your hearts?" (Luke 24:38).
- g) The writer of Hebrews said, "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God" (Heb. 3:12).

- h) The heart—not the mind—is the place deep within you where both faith and unbelief originate.

2. You Live by What You Believe Will Bring You the Most Pleasure.

- a) God designed the human heart to be driven by desire—what you believe will bring you the most pleasure.
- b) Just as your physical heart continuously pumps out blood to your veins and arteries, your heart is constantly pumping out desires. What blood is to your physical heart, desires are to your immaterial heart.
- c) What is desire? It is the drive towards what you believe will bring you the most pleasure. The dictionary defines desire as the “conscious impulse toward something that promises enjoyment or satisfaction in its attainment.”
- d) Blaise Pascal, a French mathematician, physicist, inventor, writer, and Christian philosopher in the 1600s, said,

All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. The cause of some going to war, and of others avoiding it, is the same desire in both, attended with different views. The will never takes the least step but to this object. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves.

- e) God designed the human heart to be driven by desire. To chase after what you believe will bring you the most pleasure. It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to realize this. Just think about your own life. From the time you start to walk and talk, you pursue what you believe will eventually bring you the greatest joy.
- f) Many religious Christians try to avoid pleasure altogether, wrongly believing pleasure is evil. But pleasure is not evil, only finding pleasure in what God forbids.
- g) Many Christians try to obey God externally, but internally, it’s like they are taking cough medicine or eating spam. This type of behavior modification will only last for a season before you burn out. If you want to live a Spirit-led life by faith, you must leverage God’s design of the human heart rather than work against it.
- h) Speaking of Jesus, Hebrews 12:2 states, “Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Because Jesus was driven by “the joy set before Him,” He endured the sacrifice and pain of the cross.

Deconstructing Sin

- a) Have you ever deconstructed the anatomy of sin? This might sound strange, but dissecting the reasons why you are tempted to sin actually helps you understand the way God designed the human heart to function. And if you will align yourself with God’s design of the heart, you can live by Christ’s indwelling life with great joy.
- b) Jesus said, “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness” (Mark 7:21-22).
- c) Think about these sins which issue from the heart. Take, for example, fornication and adultery. These two sins originate in the heart belief that illicit sexual gratification will bring pleasure.
- d) Consider theft. This is the heart belief that taking what belongs to another meets one’s needs and will make them happier.

- e) Think about coveting. The heart belief that if you had bigger and better things like someone else, then you would have greater happiness.
- f) Consider pride. The heart belief that you would experience greater pleasure if your gifts, talents, opinions, resources, or qualities were rejoiced in and praised by others.
- g) I won't go through the entire list, but you get the idea. We sin because we believe it will bring us pleasure. I'm sure, if you really think it through, you will discover how accurate this is in your life.

Holiness is Rooted in Pleasure in God

- a) If sin is rooted in heart beliefs promising pleasure, then so is righteousness. When your heart is persuaded that God's commandments don't keep you from happiness but are actually the prescription for both earthly and eternal joy, then you will give yourself to wholehearted obedience.
- b) This was the paradigm Jesus established in the eight beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount. He began each one saying, "Blessed." This Greek word means *happy*. Jesus showed the pathway to true righteousness is believing God's commandments are the recipe for experiencing everlasting joy.
- c) Until you believe obedience to God's Word will ultimately bring you the greatest joy and pleasure—even if it contradicts human reasoning and involves temporary sacrifice—you have no hope of living by Christ's indwelling life.
- d) Think about Jesus—the happiest man who ever lived. He loved righteousness and hated lawlessness and was therefore anointed with the oil of gladness far above his companions (Heb. 1:9). This type of inward passion for righteousness is rooted in a heart belief that knows obedience to the Lord is the pathway to the fullness of joy and pleasures evermore (Ps. 16:11).

3. Right Believing Leads to Right Living.

- a) When you believe right, you will live right. When you believe wrong, you will live wrong. That's why Solomon said, "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life" (Prov. 4:23).
- b) Everyone is driven by what they believe, from the missionary in the Middle East to the atheist in a liberal university.
- c) Since God designed the human heart to be driven by what you believe will bring you the most pleasure, believing the truth is crucial. If you don't believe the truth, but cling to lies instead, you will be defeated, depressed, and enslaved to sin.
- d) Jesus said, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:31-32).
- e) Believing the truth in your heart leads to victory, freedom, and righteousness, for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness (Rom. 10:10).
- f) The law of faith is as simple as this: If you believe the truth, you will obey the truth and live a righteous life. Conversely, the opposite is also true. If you believe a lie, you will obey the lie and live an unrighteous life.
- g) Faith is the key which unlocks the door to God's grace, giving you the ability to be who God calls you to be and to do what God calls you to do. Therefore, living by Christ's indwelling life and receiving an abundant supply of His grace is not about you trying harder to obey. It is about believing better what Christ finished for you on the cross, what the Spirit finished for you in your spirit, and what He is now finishing in your heart, soul, and body.

Faith Before Obedience

- a) Here is the challenge. You can't obey your way into faith. That's what the Pharisees tried to do. You have to believe your way into obedience. Your obedience can't *precede* your faith but must *proceed* from your faith. Paul called it the obedience of faith (Rom. 1:5; 16:26).
- b) Jesus said, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36). Notice carefully how belief is contrasted with unbelief and disobedience. If you believe you will obey. If you don't believe you won't obey.
- c) A.W. Tozer said, "The man that believes will obey; failure to obey is convincing proof that there is no true faith present."
- d) Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "Only he who believes is obedient and only he who is obedient believes."
- e) When your heart has been fully persuaded by the truth, obedience is the natural result, for what the heart trusts, the mind justifies, the emotions desire, and the will executes.
- f) Right believing, therefore, produces right doing and right living. Everything in your life follows your heart.

Change Your Beliefs

- a) If you are struggling with sin, don't focus on the sinful behavior that needs to change. Instead, identify the lies you are believing in your heart and change the heart beliefs producing sinful behavior.
- b) Behavior modification does not produce righteousness in your heart.
- c) External compliance to God's commandments through teeth-gritting determination does not transform you into Christ's image.
- d) If you want to change your behavior, you have to start by changing your beliefs.
- e) Dallas Willard said, "You can live opposite of what you profess, but you cannot live opposite of what you believe."
- f) George Macdonald, a Scottish minister in the 1800s, said, "A man's real belief is that which he lives by. What a man believes is the thing he does, not the thing he thinks."

4. What You Believe Shapes Your Destiny.

- a) Everything about you hinges on what you believe in your heart. Proverbs 23:7 states, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he" (NKJV). Who you are, who you become, and what you do all stem from what you believe in your heart.
- b) Always remember: Beliefs inspire thoughts; thoughts inspire actions; actions establish habits; habits produce character; and character determines destiny.
- c) Stated slightly differently, faith produces obedience; obedience produces Christlikeness; and Christlikeness determines your earthly and eternal destiny.
- d) If you have read my book *The Eternal Blueprint*, you know what I mean by eternal destiny. Namely, your calling to be a mature, Christ-like son for the Father, an equally yoked bride for the Son, and a temple, house, and body for the Spirit. And as I stressed in *The Eternal Blueprint*, your eternal destiny also includes eternal intimacy with the Lord, eternal authority over nations, and eternal glory radiating like the sun in its strength.

- e) To fulfill your eternal destiny, to become who God has called you to be, begins in the heart. As you form heart beliefs rooted in the truth of God's Word, it changes your thinking, actions, character, and ultimately, your destiny.

Faulty Heart Beliefs

- a) You are what you believe. If you are having trouble controlling your thoughts, it is likely due to a faulty belief in your heart.
- b) If you struggle with low self-esteem and your mind is constantly bombarded by thoughts of inferiority—*I am not attractive, I am unlovable, I have all these issues, I will never amount to anything, or I am a hopeless hypocrite*—this likely means you don't know and believe God's overwhelming love for you, which drives out fear (1 John 4:18).
- c) If you struggle with low self-esteem or unworthiness, you have not yet experienced God's endless waves of love crashing over your heart and soul, washing away rejection, self-hatred, and intimidation. Your heart is not rooted in a belief that the God of heaven and earth is madly in love with you, likes you, and enjoys you—the real you, just the way you are.
- d) If you struggle with anxiety and your mind is always assaulted with thoughts of worry—*will I have enough money to make ends meet, what will happen in the world and in my country, will my children grow up to love God, will I live to see my grandchildren, or will I pass my exams at school*—this likely means you don't trust that God is good and that He is a loving Father who will take care of you and your family.
- e) In the deepest places of your heart, you don't believe in God's providential care, so you fret, because you believe you are solely responsible for meeting your own needs. Your heart is not rooted in a belief that the God of heaven and earth is your provider, caretaker, and shepherd, who watches over every detail of your life and will take care of you until your last breath.
- f) You don't believe that God is for you so who can be against you—that nothing can separate you from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:35-39).

Change Your Heart Beliefs by Mediation

- a) The list of mental struggles is virtually endless. But the point to grasp is this: You can't change your thinking until the heart beliefs producing the thinking change. And the only way to correct this is by meditation on the Word of God.
- b) I know life is complex and your struggles are not simple. Even so, most struggle to control their behavior and actions because they don't have control over their emotions and feelings. And they don't have control over their emotions and feelings because they don't have control over their thoughts.
- c) But as I have stressed repeatedly in this session, you can't change your thinking until you first target the heart beliefs producing the toxic thoughts.
- d) If you believe lies, you will struggle with destructive thoughts. These pernicious thoughts will produce unhealthy emotions, leading to toxic feelings of guilt, shame, condemnation, fear, anxiety, and depression. And these wrong feelings will ultimately produce wrong behaviors, actions, and painful addictions.
- e) Try as you may to change, your emotions and thought patterns will not be transformed by trying harder.
- f) The only way to lasting change is to believe better who God is, what He has done for you in Christ, and what He has done and is doing in you by His Spirit.