

HOW DO I DEVELOP A GOD-HONOURING MIND AND THOUGHT LIFE?

This is a good question. The Christian is being bombarded every day by the real and electronic social and mass media, with worldly influences through the eye and ear gate. This provided the data for our thought life – and we are to be careful and disciplined with what we think or ponder over. The main battlefield is the mind of the people today. Satan is attacking every believer by influencing him or her with subtle and insidious tempting thoughts to draw him or her away from the Lord. Solomon says, “*as a man thinketh, so is he*”. How then can the believer regulate and manage his mental life in an edifying and healthy manner?

When a person is regenerated in his heart by the Holy Spirit, one of the faculties of his life that will be changed subsequently is his mind. In Romans 12:1-2, Paul speaks of believers being transformed by the renewing of their minds. God effectually sanctifies the mind. We are told by Jesus in Matthew 22:37-38, that we are to “*love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind*” (emphasis added). This is a vital theme that is often sadly neglected today. What constitutes the Christian mind? The bizarre holy laughter phenomenon of the 1990s is a good example of something that is devoid of the Christian mind, engaged in senseless, godless jesting and laughter totally unbecoming of a believer. Consider the following to developing a Christian mind according to the Word of God.

Firstly, consider Philippians 2:5, “*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*” What is the mind of Jesus? Read verses 6-8. It is a **mind of humility and lowliness**. It is a servant’s (slave’s) mind. Philippians 2:3 reads, “*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*” One supreme example of lowliness is in our Lord Jesus Christ, who condescended to earth to die for the sins of many. In describing this, Paul uses a word in Philippians 2:7, *kenow* which means “to empty oneself.” Christ emptied Himself of His divine prerogatives (not His deity) during His public ministry on earth. It is not a haughty or arrogant mindset but one that is meek and lowly that will revere God and respect His word. Paul exhorts the same in Romans 12:3, “*not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*” A humble mind is befitting of a redeemed sinner who acknowledges his Almighty God and sees the depravity of his own soul and seek God for his pardoning grace and mercy.

Secondly, it is a disciplined **mind that honours and put God first in one’s life**. In Colossians 3:2, we are admonished to set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth. The verb here is *phroneo* which can be rendered to be “minded of” or “to think.” It is a mindset that is fixed on eternal things not on earthly temporary enjoyments and rewards. The matter of priorities in our life will determine what occupies our hearts and minds (Matthew 6:21, 33). It is a most needful thing today in a world of materialism and fleshy pursuits. What comes first to you? Money? Work? Self? Pleasure? Do you have this kind of a God centred mindset? Strive to cultivate a heavenly mindset to seek God and His kingdom (Matthew 6:33; 2 Corinthians 4:18) in your life clearly and be not enthralled and enamoured by the enticing things of this fleeting and ephemeral world.

Thirdly, it is a **mind that had the peace with God and the peace of God** (Romans 5:1-8). Look at Philippians 4:7, “*And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*” The same is said in Isaiah 26:3, “*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.*” Do you have a mind of tranquillity, peace and joy in the Lord or is your mind full of turmoil, paralysed with irrational doubts and neurotic anxiety? The Christian mind is a mind of peace (John 14:27), love, contentment in whatever state we are in. The mind is stayed on Christ as taught in Isaiah 26:3, 4. A life of constant depression and great disturbance in our mind is not the will of God for us. A mind of serenity and peace even in the midst of trials and testings comes from a trusting and Christ centred heart in the word of the Lord, walking in the will of God and seeking to please

Him always. A sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7) and a mind of peace, joy, trust in the Lord, despite capricious circumstances (like Paul) is what God would have us to develop and cultivate .

Fourthly, it is a zealous **mind of active service and readiness to the word and work of God**. The Apostle Peter exhorts us in 1 Peter 1:13, *“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”* It is a mind of action and preparedness. The imagery here refers to the ancient oriental customs of tying one’s loose flowing robes in the process of getting ready for hard work. An equivalent contemporary metaphor will be “let us roll up our sleeves and get ready to work in the business of the Lord.” In Romans 12:11, it said, *“Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.”* Are you always prepared and willing to serve the Lord with a ready mind? It is a mind of diligence, discipline and industry to read, meditate and study the word of God (2 Timothy 2:15). With what speed do you carry out the work of the Lord daily in evangelism or exhortation? Is it with an idle, indolent mind, or an alert, vigilant and enthusiastic mind? Remember an idle or lazy mind is the devil’s workshop and do not be deceived by the evil one again.

Finally, remember what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 10:5, *“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”* Bringing *“into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ”* means “an undistracted mind,” no vain thoughts, worldly or otherwise, no wandering thoughts. A subjection to Christ in our thought life is absolutely necessary for holiness and godly living (2 Corinthians 7:1). The process of Christian sanctification includes that of the cultivation of a sanctified mind focused In Christ and his word; not a mind of positive thinking or self-esteem as taught by Norman Vincent Peale, or possibility thinking by Robert Schuller, but a humble and lowly mind, a mind of peace, a mind that honours God first and a ready mind for active service. Serve to cultivate and engender such a sanctified mind in your lives with the help of the Holy Spirit. Do not let unedifying thoughts occupy your mind but rather *“be renewed in the spirit of your mind”* daily (Ephesians 4:23).

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