

JESUS STRONG IN MENTAL DISCIPLINE

Part 10 of Jesus Strong. Philippians 4:4-9.
Peter Foxwell. Cornerstone Church. November 24, 2024.

THE MIND-LIFE CONNECTION

How we think determines the quality of our lives.

Matthew 22:37 (CSB) “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and WITH ALL YOUR MIND.”

- We must use our minds, our thinking, to love God.
- This is how life works:
 - Negative thinking always leads to a negative life.
 - Godly thinking leads to a positive life.
- This principle is based on Philippians 4:4-9:

Philippians 4:2-9 (CSB) 2 I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to agree in the Lord. 3 Yes, I also ask you, true partner, to help these women who have contended for the gospel at my side, along with Clement and the rest of my coworkers whose names are in the book of life.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. 6 Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable — if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy — dwell on these things. 9 Do what you have learned and received and heard from me, and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

HOW TO THINK

We can choose how we think. We have power over our minds.

- The context: Two women in the church were having a disagreement.
- Paul outlines how to experience relational peace and personal peace.

Paul issues four rapid-power commands in verses 4-7.

- Rejoicing in the Lord is a way of thinking. The thought is: “God is always good to me. He has saved me. He loves me. He’s looking after me.”
- Graciousness or gentleness is a way of thinking. The thought is: “The Lord is near. He will never leave or forsake me. So I don’t have to control people or situations.”
- Not worrying is a way of thinking. The thought is: “Why worry when I can pray?” Jesus taught this in his Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 6:26-27 (CSB) Consider the birds of the sky: They don’t sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren’t you worth more than they? 27 Can any of you add one moment to his life span by worrying?

- Prayer with thanksgiving is also way of thinking. The thought is “Everything is a gift from the Lord, so I can give thanks for everything.”

Following Paul’s instructions on how to think results in peace which surpasses all understanding - verse 7.

- It’s peace in the storm and it does not depend on circumstances.
- It’s a strong, supernatural, inner calm or tranquility.
- God gives us his peace when we exercise mental discipline.
- This is the peace the Lord Jesus experienced as he faced the crucifixion (Hebrews 12:2).

WHAT TO THINK ABOUT

We can choose the content of our thoughts

- Paul teaches us to replace unhelpful content with the list in verse 8.
- “Dwell on these things” means to think about, ponder, or meditate on.
- The point is to be disciplined about what we think about.

Paul’s list can be distilled down to: Focus on Jesus and the Gospel.

- That is the ultimate example of whatever is true, honorable, etc.
- We do this by meditating on the Bible, praying, participating in the liturgy, and remembering the Gospel promises and benefits.
- For example: Psalm 103:1-5.
- When we load our minds in that way, the God of peace will be with us.

THIS IS VERY POWERFUL

Applying the biblical teaching on mental discipline produces powerful results.

- The Holy Spirit helps us think right about the right things.
- The result is positive, healthy feelings, such as peace.
- We can love God with our minds.

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

Review

- Review the November 24 study guide (<https://www.famousgod.com/study-guides>).
- What were the highlights of the passage or Peter's teaching?
- What questions do you have about the passage or Peter's teaching?
- Use the S.P.E.C.K. method to reflect on and apply the teaching:
 - S: Sins to confess
 - P: Promises to claim
 - E: Examples to follow
 - C: Commands to obey or Christ to rest in
 - K: Knowledge or insights to consider

Discuss

- How does Jesus's joy in Hebrews 12:2 connect with Peter's teaching on mental discipline? How could Jesus have joy as the cross loomed?
- Make a long list of mind-shaping content based on Jesus and the Gospel. How does this help with joy, gentleness, gratitude, no worries?
- Now, discuss how the previous content list can be used to replace dark, junky, unhelpful thinking with truthful, pure, honorable, excellent thoughts.
- How does Proverbs 4:23 relate to Peter's teaching on mental discipline? What role does the heart play in how we think? Hint: the heart is the biblical term for the source of our values, goals, and commitments.

Prayers

- Pray for the entire Cornerstone family to grow Jesus Strong in mental discipline.