

KNOWING GOD'S VOICE- PART VII



Controlling Our Thought World

"I just had a wild idea!"
"You would never believe what I have been thinking?"
"I just had a thought out of the blue!"

Have you ever made any of these statements or similar ones? Have you heard somebody else say anything like them? Of course, you have!

All of these statements indicate that we are sometimes surprised by our own thoughts. For example, your thoughts are proceeding along an orderly path; then suddenly comes a thought that is not a part of that pattern. And you may say, "I just thought of something," or words to that effect. Our speech is filled with phrases indicating that we have random thoughts for no apparent reason.

**What bearing does our thought life have on the physical world?
How does the spiritual world interact with the physical world?
How does God work His will on earth?**

He usually does it by placing thoughts in our minds. If we receive those thoughts and act on them, then God is successful in working His will on earth.

How does Satan get his will done? How does he slander a person? Murder someone? I have never known of a person being slandered or murdered directly by Satan. But, there are many people harmed by others after Satan puts evil thoughts in their minds.

The first step of the spiritual world's interaction with the physical is most often a thought placed into the mind of an individual. The Lord communicates through our thought life. The Holy Spirit interprets the thought to our spirit.

It is extremely important for us to understand certain basic things about our thought life; for God lives inside our minds and spirits-in our thought world.

The Importance of our Thought Life

My attitude at any given point is determined by my thoughts, if I'm afraid, loving, anxious, peaceful, whatever the feelings, they are driven by my thoughts.

- 1. Our thoughts produce our attitudes. It is possible to be fearful when there is nothing to be afraid of simply because we are thinking wrong thoughts.**
- 2. Our thoughts proceed our attitudes. Before we do anything, we think. Before we act, we think. It might be just a split-second reaction, or there may be a long time between thoughts and actions. But there is always a thought process prior to an action.**

The enemy's attack consists basically of placing untrue thoughts in our mind and calling them "truth" so that we will live

according to his purpose and desire. The only power the Evil One has over us is through our thoughts.

We inevitably become what we think about all day. This is a commonly accepted psychological truth, and the writer of Hebrews states its logical conclusion unequivocally: "Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith...." (Hebrews 12:2).

The key is that as we look at Jesus, he works a step-by-step transformation in us, if we want to be like him, it is imperative that we understand our thought life and learn to control it.

Processes of the Thought World

Is it possible to get all the air out of a glass?
Yes, it's easy; just fill the glass with water!

Is it possible to control our thought life, to control what we think? Can we ever bring 'every thought captive,' to Christ"? (II Cor. 10:5). Yes, that's easy, too, if we fill our minds with different thoughts. The principle is the same as filling a glass with water.

Here are three facts about thinking:

1. We cannot choose not to think. We must always think.
2. We cannot think two thoughts at the same time.
3. We can choose our thoughts.

All thoughts can be divided into two basic categories, true and false. The thoughts that come from God are true. He is the God of all truth and has sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in us in order to guide us into all truth.

If I can receive God's thoughts, I can think the truth. Therefore, I will have the right attitudes and actions.

How do you get the air out of a glass? By filling it with water. How do you get rid of wrong and untrue thoughts? By filling

your mind with true and right thoughts from God. The control of our thought life, then, comes by thinking God's thoughts with Him. What a powerful revelation, to be able to think God's thoughts right along with Him!

The Capacities of the Mind

There are three basic mental capacities relevant to fellowship with God that we all possess: the capacity to remember, the capacity to receive new information, and the capacity to reason.

Because of their importance in understanding our thought life, we will consider each capacity individually.

The Capacity to Remember:

Picture a family reunion, the first in a long time. Laughter, exclamations, people milling around and going from one small group to another. Everyone seems to be talking at once.

"Remember the time....."

"Whatever happened to....."

"Al looks better than ever....."

The members of that family are using a wonderful ability of the mind that God has given us, the capacity to remember.

Earlier I compared the conscious mind to a glass filled with thoughts. Continuing the comparison, the subconscious mind can be compared to a deep reservoir into which are emptied and stored all the streams of past experiences and all the brooks of "knowledge" (true and false) that have been fed into it.

Those folks at the family reunion were each lowering the glass bucket of the conscious mind into the reservoir of the subconscious. Then they brought up a composite of the thoughts and experiences about their family life and history that had been stored there.

We all do it. When there is a need to act, we let the bucket down into the well of our thoughts and bring up anything that is

related to the matter at hand. Whatever is down in the well (the subconscious) will come up in the bucket (the conscious), including truth, falsehood, and the most dangerous type of lie-untruth that has a mixture of truth in it.

Therefore, the person who decides to act on the basis of the past (what is in the reservoir) is prisoner of his or her previous experience and/or knowledge. If the streams and brooks have been pure and true, that's good. If they have been contaminated and wrong, that's bad. Faced with a need for some kind of action, it is vital that we determine what in our bucket is true and what is untrue.

The Christian who wishes to please God must live beyond the limited knowledge and experience of his reservoir and the subconscious. The examination of our thought world-what the Bible calls "bringing every thought captive to Christ"- is of utmost importance to the believer. But, before going further into that we must consider another capacity of the mind, since the ability to remember is never static but is always influenced by new and changing input.

The Capacity to Receive New Information:

Comparing the mind now to a computer, we can say it has the capacity to receive new information. There are new thoughts and knowledge that cover areas we have never been in before, areas for which there is nothing stored in our memory bank.

Some new ideas and information enlarge and expand areas where we already have some experience. Others contradict the old thoughts stored in our computer-mind.

When we recognize, accept and appropriate thoughts as truth from God, we repent. We change our minds. We reprogram our computer. We haul out the garbage of our wrong thinking and enter the new information that comes from God in its place.

Remember that any new thoughts coming into our conscious minds will find their way down into our subconscious. There they will be catalogued, regardless of whether they are truth or error, and they will affect our future behavior.

The more the subconscious is filled with truth, the easier it will be to live the Christian life and please our God. "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:2)

When the subconscious is transformed, it becomes a treasure house of truth; a place God's daily graces are pondered. Like the mainspring of a clock, it feels every turn of God's leading and brings it back to our consciousness when we get discouraged or confused. It points us toward decisions that will honor God when the conscious mind cannot decide what to do.

So, what we do with the subconscious mind is very serious business. As Christians, we must guard our subconscious mind as carefully as we guard our conscious mind. We must protect the very center and core of our "decision making powers."

Meditation is the process of connecting our subconscious mind to God's Will and receiving truth for the situation at hand. (We will examine this further in the next message). Once we have received the truth, we then have the opportunity of choice. And choosing is usually done on the basis of the third capacity of the mind-reasoning.

The Capacity of Reason:

Another capacity that God gave our minds is reasoning, calculating, coming to conclusions that are the basis for action. Again, we cannot choose whether or not we will reason, but only how and on what basis we will do so.

Let us consider the importance of reasoning that is revealed in its side effects. The side effects consist of expectations and interpretations.

1. Expectations: Have you ever expected, presumed, or anticipated that something would happen? Whether or not you realized it at the time, you were using your capacity to reason. You considered the known facts, dipped into your reservoir of the subconscious, brought up a bucket of thoughts and feelings about the present situation-and arrived at certain expectations of what you figured would happen. Then you could decide what you were going to do about it.

It is not wrong to have expectations. The Bible even has special words for certain expectations. It calls them "faith" and "hope." These are expectations based on the truth - the truth that comes from God.

2. Interpretation: How many times have you been misunderstood? Your words, your actions, or your lack of response were falsely interpreted. Remember how it hurt, or hurts even now?

Through reasoning, we arrive at certain interpretations of what we think, we know and perceive. Sometimes these interpretations are not sound or accurate because the information we based them on is incorrect. Since we do not recognize our information as wrong, we are sure we are right in our understanding of the matter. It's obvious to us, but only to us.

We have no control over how we feel, how we act - our attitudes, and actions - except as they are determined by our thoughts. All these elements are irrevocably tied together.

But since we do have control over what we think, it is possible to control our attitudes and actions. If we can think true thoughts, we can have attitudes and actions that will be right. And it is in 'thinking God's thoughts with Him,' that we are able to think true thoughts and come to the correct conclusions and actions.

We will discover how this is done, as we look into the "Process of Meditation" in the next message. And I do mean we because I

am learning as much as you are in delivering these monthly messages. Can you imagine what it would be like to think God's thoughts **with Him**? To think along **with God**! Not about Him or on Him, but **with Him**. Glory!