

Change Your Thinking, Change Your Life

Digging Deeper

John Lohmar

Director of Life Groups

It's seven o'clock in the morning and sunlight is streaming through the window as I sit here writing this summary of Sunday's message. That's what I do on Monday mornings. It's become a routine and it's something I really look forward to. The rest of the week I start my day by listening to music, reading the Bible and praying. Having a healthy morning routine really helps me put my mind in a good place before I walk out the door and face a world that seems a bit crazy at times, to say the least.

It wasn't always this way. My days used to start with thoughts filled with worry and fear that waged war on my mind and destroyed my day before it even started. And it was all downhill from there.

Things are better now.

It's been said that a mind is a terrible thing to waste. The truth is, the mind is more often laid waste by our own stinking thinking, and that is what separates us from God and makes life difficult.

But Jesus offers us a solution. He invites us to let Him pour living water - his Holy Spirit - into our life so that love, hope, peace and joy flow abundantly out of us (John 7:37-38). The question becomes, are we willing to let him do that, or is our soul going to become like a deer panting for water who dies from thirst (Psalm 42:1-2)?

When we live without the living water of the Holy Spirit, we become spiritually dead and end up clinging tightly to the life of the flesh we were born into. Our focus becomes surviving, seeking pleasure, and not much else.

There's a lot of pain that comes from living this way. We attempt to change our life by trying harder to connect with God, and end up exhausted. We pretend we're connected with God, but are still disengaged. We change churches and continue to struggle. Or we just give up and resume going through the motions. In the end, what we learn from all of these coping strategies is that we can change our circumstances, but that does nothing to change our life. For all of our efforts, we stay stuck in a miserable life of the flesh that is hostile and not pleasing to God and remain spiritually dead (Romans 8:5-8).

But our life **CAN** change, and here's how.

Our life flows from our thoughts. If we want to change our life, we need to change our thoughts. And that means changing our mind.

The mind is a busy place, with thoughts coming in from all directions. It is the place where Satan and the world try to impose their will on our thinking and keep us trapped in a life of the flesh. It is also the place where the Holy Spirit enters us to do battle with the forces of darkness, **IF** we allow it to. And that is a choice. A choice between life, and death.

Our life happens in our mind. When we change our thoughts, we change our life (Proverbs 23:7). The connection between our thoughts and our actions determines who we are and who we become. It

determines whether we lead a life of hope or despair, virtue or sin, truth or deception, growth or stagnation, and love or pride.

The good news is the path our life takes is our choice. Here are some things we can do to keep us on the right path.

We can invite the Holy Spirit to take control of our mind every day, and first thing in the morning is a good time to do that. I used to start the day watching or reading the news. And you know what I learned? My mind is wired for Little House on the Prairie, where pain comes every once in a while in small doses I can manage, not twenty four hour coverage of global crises that are beyond my control. We need to take the news in small bites later in the day and spend the time we save listening to the Holy Spirit.

We can choose to set our minds on things above, not on earthly things (Col. 3:1). The ultimate freedom we have as human beings is to select what we will allow or require our minds to dwell on (Dallas Willard). We can continue to see ourselves as a victim or a survivor, or become a navigator with the Holy Spirit as our compass. We can think in the past and stay stuck in the past, or dream big and plan for the future. We can dwell on the ugliness of the world or set our gaze on higher things (2 Cor. 4:18). These choices determine the course of our life.

We can take captive our thoughts and make them obedient to Christ (2 Cor 10:5). We all hear the lies that are said about us. Even worse, we all tell ourselves lies, like "I'm not good enough, nobody loves me, I can't control what I think, I don't have a choice in where my mind goes, and my life will never improve". All these lies lead to negative self-talk that can

destroy our life. We need to demolish these lies before they destroy us by comparing them to what Jesus says about us and dealing with them as he did.

We can use the Holy Spirit as our weapon to win the spiritual battle for our mind. The Spirit in us gives us the power to demolish the strongholds that Satan sets up in our mind. It gives us the power to break down the defenses that surround the worldly lies and deception. And it supplies the power we need to take control of every impure thought before it destroys our life.

So let's all commit to monitoring our thoughts and resist thinking about things that corrupt our mind, like what's going on in a world we have absolutely no control over. Instead, let's dwell on what God is doing all around us so our life will be filled with love and purpose.

That will make for a better world, and a much better us.

Key Verse: For as he thinks in his heart, so is he (Proverbs 23:7 NKJV).

Key Message: Our life happens in our mind. When we change our thoughts, we change our life.

Question For Understanding:

What causes your thoughts to stray from God and how do you respond to that?

Thought Provoking Questions:

How much of your worrying comes from your own negative self-talk and how much comes from being around or growing up with other worriers?

What can you do, or are you doing, to eliminate your negative self-talk and get some separation from the worriers in your life?

Questions for Sharing:

What worries you the most right now and how is it affecting your thinking and your life?

What promises of God, what bible verses, and what people can help you change that thinking and how will that change your life?

What one little action is God telling you to take right now to begin changing what you're worrying most about?