

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

With All Your Mind—Thoughts

*May the mind of Christ, my Savior, grow in me from day to day,
by his love and power transforming all I do and say.¹*

1 - In considering the five components of the human person Jesus referred to in Mark 12:29-31, we now come to the mind. It too must be re-formed.

2 - It is helpful to view the mind as being composed of thoughts and emotions. These are closely related. We look at emotions in the next chapter.

3 - The first step in my re-formation is intention—an orientation of the heart. I choose to intend to learn from Jesus how to become the kind of person he is.

4 - My first step in implementing this intention is to choose where I will place my thoughts. Jesus teaches me to live with my thoughts centered in God.

5 - At first, thinking about God all the time seems strange, hard, unappealing. This reflects the extent of the damage sin has caused within me.

6 - I am created for life in God's Presence. To live in God's Presence I live with him in my thoughts. This leads to peace, purity, insight and overall well-being.

7 - I need help in becoming able to do this. I turn to Jesus—the Master Teacher. (John 13:13) I become his apprentice. He teaches me by his Spirit.

8 - The entire Bible teaches me to center my thoughts in God. How am I to think about the Bible? How did Jesus think about the Bible?

9 - Jesus viewed the Bible as authoritative. He didn't feel the need to defend it. He took it at face value and lived by it. It was the foundation of his teachings.

10 - Jesus to the Sadducees: "Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God." (Mark 12:24b)

11 - We have two kinds of thoughts:

- analytical thoughts
- imaginative or intuitive thoughts

Both are God-given; both have their place.

12 - My car breaks down on a deserted road. What am I going to do now? My God-given capacity to think analytically will be extremely useful!

13 - But analysis, so valuable when used appropriately, has limits. Large areas of reality can only be accessed intuitively.

14 - How do I know that a sunset is beautiful? That I love my family? That I want to study a certain subject? That God is real and I have met him?

15 - Much truth loses meaning when analyzed. Some classical writers equated truth with beauty. Beauty's essence is inaccessible to analysis.

16 - Jesus knew this. He taught primarily to the intuitive. Why? The integrating theme of his teaching was an Unseen Kingdom. Its realities must be intuited.

17 - Jewish leaders asked Jesus to explain the source of his authority. He asked them to explain the source of John the Baptist's authority. (Matthew 21:23-27)

18 - The source of Jesus' authority was God's Unseen kingdom. Its qualities cannot be discovered scientifically or accessed analytically. They must be intuited.

19 - Jesus: "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:29) God's kingdom is unseen.

20 - Symbols are vehicles of intuitive communication. Effective leaders know how to use them. They convey meaning directly to the imagination.

21 - The power of symbols is "beyond words". Jesus used them extensively. To grasp the depth of Jesus' teachings the intuition must be fully engaged.

22 - Jesus: "I am the bread of life." "I am the door." "I am the way." "Come to me and drink." "I and the Father are one." The meanings must be intuited.

23 - Meanings in Jesus' parables must be intuited. The kingdom of heaven is like treasure in a field. A wise man sold all he had to buy the field. (Matthew 13:44)

24 - Caution! The imaginative mind can also connect with what is unhealthy or spiritually dark. Conclusions must always be tested by Scripture.

25 - A plate and chalice are before me as I write. I pause to look at them and pray. Jesus gave us symbols of communion when he invited us to remember him.

26 - Church history is rich with symbols that inform the mind about God: cross, water, bread, wine, oil, paintings, icons. Their power must be rediscovered.

27 - Here mind and soul connect. As the intuitive mind dwells on the beauty of God through the use of symbols, the soul is nourished.

28 - Many assume truth can only be discovered analytically. They tirelessly analyze themselves and God. The result? God often seems far away—unreal.

29 - We can reach a point where we “live in our heads”. We become compulsively analytical—cut off from ourselves and the Presence of the Resurrected One.

30 - Living in our heads further wounds us. We experience tension, uncertainty and striving rather than peace, healing and wholeness in God’s Presence.

31 - Many believe we can grow closer to God by analyzing the Bible. Analyzing the Bible has its place. But we grow closer to God by living in his Presence.

32 - Beliefs develop from world view. World view is based on assumptions. The assumptions with which analysis begins will shape the conclusions analysis draws.

33 - Many focus on the doctrine of salvation. What is biblical salvation? Only removing my guilt? What about breaking sin’s power in my behavior? (Romans 6-8)

34 - “As he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’” (1 Peter 1:15-16)

35 - Other doctrines inform our understanding of salvation. There is the doctrine of God. Who is he? What does he intend for man? What is his purpose in history?

36 - “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1) Understanding that God is my Creator is foundational to my re-formation.

37 - Sin left all creation “in bondage to corruption”. (Romans 8:21) In salvation God is restoring all things. “Behold, I am making all things new.” (Revelation 21:5)

38 - Of the “all things” God is making new, the human person is primary. “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.” (2 Corinthians 5:17a)

39 - A biblical and time-tested practice in living with my thoughts on God is meditating on Scripture.

40 - Psalm 1:2 describes the man who is blessed: “His delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.”

41 - An effective way to meditate on Scripture is to memorize it. Memorizing phrases or verses is good; memorizing complete passages is even better.

42 - If one is wondering where to start, consider beginning with Jesus’ teaching in John 13-17 and Paul’s teaching in Romans 6-8.

43 - So we pray: “Come Holy Spirit. Fill my thoughts. Fill my analytical thoughts. Shape my worldview by the Bible that my reasoning may lead me to truth.”

44 - We also pray: "Come Holy Spirit. Fill my intuitive thoughts. Give insight that can come only from you. Protect my thoughts from what is soulish or dark."

¹Adapted from the song "May the Mind of Christ my Savior" by Kate B. Wilkinson

