

7. Developing Leaders Who Are Learning to Walk in the Spirit – Part 2

In our last topic, we began to talk about how to help developing leaders learn to walk in the Spirit. Today, we will continue our discussion of that topic. We saw that as we learn to walk in the Spirit, the Holy Spirit is reversing the effects that original sin had to our human spirit. Today, we will see how the Holy Spirit transforms our mind, emotions, and will as we learn to walk in the Spirit.

First, we will see how the Holy Spirit transforms our mind. Romans 12:1-2 says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” In the Old Testament, the people offered a dead animal as a sacrifice. The blood of that dead animal provided a covering for their sins.

However, Christ died and shed His blood as the sacrifice for our sin. As a result, we do not offer animal sacrifices. Instead, Christ tells us here, in Romans 12:1, that we are to present our own bodies as a sacrifice. There are two things that are to be true as we present our bodies to Christ. First, we are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. Second, we are to present our bodies as a holy sacrifice. God says that such a living and holy sacrifice is acceptable to Him.

Verse two says that we are to stop being conformed to this world. Being conformed to the world is being conformed to the spirit of the age so that we still act like the world. Since the Holy Spirit has come into our human spirit, we are actually putting on a mask when we continue to act like the world. Instead, this verse says that we are to commit ourselves to the lifelong process of transforming our lives. Verse two also tells us how this process happens to change us from being like the world to becoming like Christ. The verse says that this process happens by the renewing of our minds.

This brings us to the question, “How does the Holy Spirit transform our minds?” In Isaiah 55:8-9, God says, “For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, Nor *are* your ways My ways,” says the LORD. “For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.” In these verses, we see that the thoughts and ways of the Lord are higher than our thoughts and our ways. The way we transform our minds is by replacing our thoughts with the thoughts of the Lord, so we begin to think and act as Christ thought and acted.

We learn the thoughts of God in five ways. We learn the thoughts of God by:

- ◆ hearing the Word of God – Romans 10:17
- ◆ reading the Word of God – Revelation 1:3
- ◆ studying the Word of God – 2 Timothy 2:15
- ◆ memorizing the Word of God – Psalm 119:11
- ◆ meditating on the Word of God – Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:1-3

Then, as we learn the thoughts of God, we bring our thoughts into agreement with the thoughts of God. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 tells us, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to

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the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” Instead of thinking any longer the way the world thinks, we are to think the thoughts of Christ, so we replace the wisdom of the world with the wisdom of Christ.

Here, we see that true spiritual warfare is able to cast down the strongholds of the world and the world’s system of thinking. We notice an interesting thing here. The strongholds of Satan are in the thinking of the people of the world. Because of the sinful nature of mankind, the thoughts of people in the world are centered in pleasing self. The more a person desires to please self, the more evil the thoughts of that person become. The result of such thinking was shown before the flood. Genesis 6:5 says, “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.”

Instead of thinking any longer the way the world thinks, we are to think the thoughts of Christ so that we replace the wisdom of the world with the wisdom of Christ. These verses teach us that we learn to think the thoughts of God by:

- casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God
- bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ

First, we see that we are to cast down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. In 1 Corinthians 3:19-20, we read, “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, ‘He catches the wise in their *own* craftiness’; and again, ‘The LORD knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.’” The wisdom of this world is the thoughts, ideas and philosophies of man. It includes the futile thoughts that are a part of any man-made religion. God tells us as Christians that we are to transform our thinking by replacing these futile thoughts with the thoughts of the Word of God. That happens as we memorize and meditate on the Scriptures.

Second, we are to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Here, we see that we are now able to use the Word of God to evaluate every thought we have and every statement we hear. As we evaluate these thoughts and statements, we will begin to recognize the thoughts and statements that are motivated by the fear, guilt, and shame that are the result of original sin. Then, we can pray and ask the Lord to reverse and replace those thoughts and statements so that the new thoughts are motivated by the love of Christ. We will begin to recognize the statements of others that are motivated by fear and respond to those statements in love rather than fear.

Once we begin to realize that the thoughts and ideas of others are based on the wisdom of the world, it will begin to affect us in the same way it affected Christ. In Matthew 9:36, we read, “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.” We will begin to view both the Christians and non-Christians around us with compassion, because we realize that they are faint-hearted and scattered like sheep, due to the fact that they have not learned to depend on the Good Shepherd. When we view others with this kind of compassion, it will also transform our wills and our actions.

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Instead of getting angry at the thoughts and ideas of others, we will ask the Lord to help us to do His will to minister to those people. In this way, we are bringing our will into agreement with the will of God. It will cause us to pray as Christ prayed in the garden, in Matthew 26:39. “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You *will*.” We will then go to the Word of God, so the Lord can show us how to respond in love.

Finally, once we have asked the Lord how to respond to others in love, we will be able to obey the instructions in Galatians 5:13. That verse tells us, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” We will realize that the Lord has given us real liberty. That liberty now makes it possible for us to serve one another in love.

As we help developing spiritual leaders learn to transform their minds, emotions, and wills so that their actions are done in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Lord will be able to work through these developing leaders in a mighty way. In fact, the Lord will work through them in ways beyond what they could ever imagine. At the same time, they are also learning to walk in the Spirit because the Holy Spirit is ministering to their spirit; transforming their minds, emotions, and wills; and giving them the power to serve one another in love.

One other thing also happens as developing leaders learn to walk in the Spirit. Galatians 5:16 says, “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” Here, we see that developing leaders will see the Lord giving them increasing victory over sin as they walk in the Spirit. Because they are learning to bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, they will be using their bodies to glorify God instead of fulfilling the desires of the flesh.

The Lord gives us a great privilege by allowing us to help developing leaders learn to walk in the Spirit. Needless to say, such a privilege also brings great joy to our own lives as we see that the Lord is using our lives to fulfill His purpose. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders learn to walk in the Spirit.