



#2 In the Mastermind Series Think on These Things

Forest Park Church

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Almost a generation ago, when the computer revolution had just begun, the pioneers in the field coined a brand-new word. In those days not many people knew how to operate a computer and those who did made many mistakes. Sometimes the neophyte experts entered the wrong data only to discover a universal truth: *If the raw data is bad, the computer can't do anything good with it.* What you put into a computer determines what comes out. If you put the right data in, the right answers come out. The reverse is also true.

In order to express that truth, a new word was coined. It describes in four letters both the cause and consequences of putting the wrong data into the computer. Most computer buffs know what word I'm talking about. The word is GIGO. It stands for Garbage In, Garbage Out. Those four letters summarize a huge truth about computers: What you put in determines what you get out. If your input is garbage, guess what your output will be? Garbage.

What is true of computers is also true of the human mind. That comparison is apt because the human mind has often been compared to a computer. In fact, the human mind is far more complex than the most advanced computer ever designed. But the basic principle of GIGO is still true: Garbage In, Garbage Out.

What you put into your mind determines what you get out.

Romans 12:2

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind

But there is a brilliant passage in Romans, the seventh chapter in which the apostle Paul lays out the great challenge we all face. The battle within ourselves is that we do irrational things sometimes.

- Want be nice—Yell
- Save money—Spend
- Trust God—Worry



Why do we behave irrationally? — Wires crossed.

- Neural pathways** are formed when we experience new things
- The brain creates Neural Paths for efficiency
- Experiences are wiring—Programming the brain.

For Instance:

- Baby smiles—Mom smiles back (“Goo-goo”)—Smiling is good.
- Baby touches hot stove—Ouch—Hot stove bad.
- Baby wants sucker—Mom says no—Baby cries—Mom gives sucker.

The more we think a thought, the easier it is to think again.

Last week, we opened this series with a text from the book of II Corinthians.

We said That:

Our Mind is a battlefield. Most of life’s battles are won or lost in mind.

2 Cor 10:3-4

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴ The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

We are to take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ.

Our life is always moving in the direction of our strongest thoughts.

- What comes into your mind—Comes out in your life.
- Cannot have a positive life with a negative mind.

If we don’t gain control over what you think, we will NEVER control what you do.

Regardless of age, our minds need to be trained they crave it.

- Think about for a second how we set out to train our bodies.
- I’m not just talking about what you do for a workout routine.
- But also about what you put into your body

Phil 4:8

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

For a little context when Paul writes one of the most encouraging passages of the New Testament, he finds himself personally chained in prison.

He didn't say

- God let me down,
- Can't go on,
- Life can't get worse.

Phil 4:8 KJV

... if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

I. The Value of Meditation.

In the book “Move: What 1,000 Churches Reveal About Spiritual Growth.” the key conclusion of that book after surveying one thousand churches was this (quoting the book):

“Nothing has a greater impact on spiritual growth than reflection on Scripture . . . If churches could do only one thing to help people at all levels of spiritual maturity grow in their relationship with Christ, their choice is clear. They would inspire, encourage, and equip their people . . . to reflect on Scripture for meaning in their lives.”

Definition of meditation—To engage in mental exercise; to focus one's thoughts.

Ps 119:15

I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways.

Ps 143:5

... I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done.

This is very different from Eastern meditation, which relies on an empty, still mind.

Christian meditation is an active mind, filled with truth, focused on Jesus Christ

To MEDITATE on God's Word is to *Think it over – reflect on it – ponder it – dwell on it (in it).*

- It's spending enough time in God's Word until you recognize God *speaking* to you personally.
- You think about what it meant to the original hearers.
- You think about what the author was thinking or feeling.
- You ask the Holy Spirit *why*

And as you do, so, a cool thing begins to happen you begin responding in thought to this scripture, you will most likely enter a type of dialogue with God, and that dialogue is called *prayer* – real prayer.

- You will likely find yourself praying about this scripture and you'll be praying (interacting with God) according to this scripture.
- And as you do, the Lord will speak to you through his living Word and by his Holy Spirit, most often by causing you to focus on a particular part of the scripture or a particular subject in the scripture.

This takes a few minutes. You have to slow down enough, your mind has to be focused enough, and you have to be engaged with God enough, and then you can sense what the Holy Spirit is impressing on you in these verses, and you will start to become amazed!

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires . . .

If we will allow it to! Engaging scripture with our mind, our heart, and our actions all aligned with God's Word and all in the power of the Holy Spirit is the most effective and transforming way that you and I can grow in our life in Christ.

Colossians 3:1-4

“Therefore, since you have been raised with Christ, strive for the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”

II. Training Our mind

The world has a way of getting us down. It fills us with distractions, temptation, and entertainment, promising us happiness but never fully delivering.

- ❑ Perhaps you have felt weighed down when looking at the state of the world
- ❑ overwhelmed by the corruption and confusion that surrounds us.
- ❑ Even the day-to-day responsibilities that we are given can feel burdensome.
- ❑ When we focus on these earthly things, our eyes slip from the “things above.”
- ❑ We forget the blessings and promises we have through our adoption as sons and daughters of Jesus
- ❑ and our satisfaction in Christ slips away as well.

Focus is a skill. – “To be trained, we must be aware of what can derail our focus.”

Here are three timeless truths about training:

1. Focus is knowing the goal.

Talent only matters when you are willing to train it conscientiously.

- ❑ Scripture calls us to focus on Jesus.
- ❑ Jesus knew why he was here and what he wanted to accomplish.
- ❑ Jesus’ focus helped him endure the emotional and physical pain involved in reaching his goals.
- ❑ focusing our eyes on Jesus, who is the Author and Perfecter of faith [the first incentive for our belief and the One who brings our faith to maturity], who for the joy [of accomplishing the goal] set before Him endured the cross, disregarding the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God [revealing His deity, His authority, and the completion of His work].
- ❑ Hebrews 12:1-2

Great theologian Jackie Chan (*The Karate Kid*) once said—**“Your focus needs more focus.”**

When our mind drift, it generally ends up in lies

Things like

- I Can't,
- I Won't.
- I'm Not.

Some of the most valuable mind training is teaching our mind to focus on the truth rather than emotional knee-jerk reactions.

Where do we have the wires crossed?

- Never get out of debt.
- I can't overcome this addiction
- Always struggle health
- Never feel close to God
- Never meaningful job
- Never going to get married.

What truth demolishes that stronghold?

2. Perseverance is setting our mind.

Knowledge is only useful if you have the discipline to apply it.

Knowledge without application and discipline will not produce transformation

Hebrews 12:3-6

Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

Perseverance is an attitude and mindset. It's about setting our mind about how we will handle fatigue (Hebrews 12:3), setbacks or opposition ahead of time.

Our goal as Christians is to set our mind on how we want to love God and others regardless of our circumstances or the hurts we have caused.

Our natural tendency when we face hurt, fatigue, setbacks, and opposition is to get discouraged, vengeful or indifferent

- We say things like “this is unfair” or “I don’t need this” (Hebrews 12:5-6).

In these moments,

- we must decide what we will believe about God over our feelings or fatigue.
- We have to decide what we will believe about our hardships so that, when discouragement comes, we are ready to endure spiritual training.

3. Encouragement pushes us to reach our full potential

When we are going through spiritual training, encouragement from God and friends is imperative.

Hebrews 12:12-15

Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. 13 “Make level paths for your feet,” so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed. 14 Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. 15 See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

A: Seek the encouragement of strengthening your weaknesses.

B: Seek the encouragement that comes from making every effort.

C: Seek the encouragement of mentors and friendships.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up, just as you are doing.

Talent can achieve success but won’t sustain it without the coaching to train it.

Conclusion:

Did you know that the average person has 10,000 separate thoughts each day? That works out to be 3.5 million thoughts a year.

If you live to be 75, you will have over 26 million different thoughts.

- Already most of you have had over 2,000 separate thoughts since you got out of bed this morning.
- You'll probably have another 8,000 before you hit the sack tonight. Then you'll start all over again tomorrow.

Every one of those 10,000 thoughts represents a choice you make, a decision to think about this, and not about that.

Suppose someone gave you \$10,000 this morning and said, "Spend it any way you like as long as you spend it all before you go to bed tonight."

- You'd be careful how you spent it, wouldn't you?
- I'll bet you'd sit down and take inventory of what you could do with that much money.

It's sad that we devote so much time to how we spend our money and so little time to how we spend our thoughts.

But are your thoughts really so unimportant?

1. **Ralph Waldo Emerson** said, "Beware of what you set your mind on because that you surely will become."
2. **Norman Vincent Peale** said, "Change your thoughts and you change the world."
3. **Henry Ford** gave that truth a different spin when he declared, "Thinking is the hardest work in the world, which is probably why so few people engage in it."
4. **Betty Sachelli**: "Two thoughts cannot occupy the mind at the same time, so the choice is ours whether or not our thoughts will be constructive or destructive."

Change your thoughts and you change the world.

My whole sermon is in these four words: "The choice is ours." God gave you 10,000 thoughts today, but it's up to you what you do with them.