

Have the Mind of Christ

✘ One of the instructions given to us in the Bible is to have the mind of Christ. We read in Philippians 2:5, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (NKJV). Have you ever wondered how this is possible?

Certainly, we know how important it is. God created the human mind as a combination of conscious and unconscious processes (thoughts) of the brain that direct our mental and physical behavior. Our thoughts influence our actions. It follows, then, that if we want to act like Christ, we must also think like Him.

With the mind we exercise the power of reason, conceive ideas and use judgment. It stores our intellect, as distinguished from emotion or will.

There are many benefits to having the mind of Christ, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). One is that we will come to “the full knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ” (v. 2). Here are some others:

* *Peace*. Romans 8:6 tells us that “to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”

* *Increased intimacy with God*. Isaiah 1:18 says that God wants us to come and reason with Him. He wants us to know His will for our lives (see Heb. 13:21).

* *Desire to live a life of obedience to Him*. The psalmist asked God to give him understanding in keeping His laws and walking in His commandments so that he might “turn looking at worthless things” (Ps. 119:33-37). Having any mind other than Christ’s causes us to live a life of disobedience and rebellion.

David Wilkerson of Times Square Church in New York City wrote: “ a refusal to seek His [God’s] mind in all things. We can never obtain the mind of God by relying on our own reasoning.”

To have the mind of Christ, we must think as He thinks. This is difficult for us because, as the prophet points out, our thoughts are not God’s thoughts (see Is. 55:8). The foundation for them—our beliefs, ideas and paradigms—are based on perceptions of reality that were developed in our families of origin and life experiences.

If the people and circumstances that influenced our mental processing were godly, we will find it easier to fix our thoughts on Jesus. If we were raised under dysfunctional, abusive conditions, we may struggle with evil, carnal thoughts. This is certain death to living a godly life, as the Bible states “to be carnally minded is death” (Rom. 8:6).

Having the mind of Christ clarifies any distorted thinking we may have. Otherwise we are subject to our own carnal minds. And the carnal mind—as the apostle Paul points out—can’t understand the spiritual mind (see vv. 6-7).

Renewing the Mind

The Bible tells us how it is possible to have the mind of Christ in spite of our life history. We are to “be transformed by the renewing of [our] mind[s]” (Rom. 12:2).

One method we can use to renew our minds is to meditate on God’s Word. The psalmist says: “My soul is consumed with longing for your laws at all times. Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors” (Ps. 119:20,24, NIV). Like the psalmist, we can find joy and knowledge in the Word when we choose to dwell on it.

One of the most important ways we can renew our minds is to think on the things that are listed in Philippians 4:8: “Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right,

whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” Included in the list are things that are “true.” Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary explains that we are to “make those (true) things the subjects of our thoughtful consideration” or “carefully reflect on them.”

God is a God of truth. In fact, the Bible says it is impossible for Him to lie (see Heb. 6:18). He gives us His truth in every situation to apply to our thoughts. “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32, NKJV). If you’re not free, which lie of the devil are you believing as truth in your life?

As stated earlier, we live our lives according to our perception of what is true—according to what we perceive is real. But if our perceptions are false, if we do not think on the truths of God, we will easily be led astray by Satan’s deceptions and counterfeits.

Philippians 4:7 says that the peace of God guards our minds. I believe one reason God protects us in this way is that wrong thoughts are a breeding ground for Satan’s lies. Another name for Satan is deceiver: He can mimic truth, but “there is no truth in him” (John 8:44).

We are not immune to “the devil’s schemes” (Eph. 6:11, NIV). In fact, we must constantly be on guard lest, “just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, [our] minds may somehow be led astray” (2 Cor. 11:3).

As a counselor, I listen to clients share the hurts and struggles that develop within them on their life journeys. The Holy Spirit reveals the lies of the enemy that they hear and receive as truth. My goal is to help them uncover the lies so that they can live in the freedom of God’s truths.

Thoughts vs. Feelings

How can you know if what you are hearing is the truth or a lie? One way is to determine the difference between what you “think” (a mind issue) and what you “feel” (a heart issue).

Paul prays in Ephesians 3:17-19 that Christ will dwell in our hearts and that we will know the love of Christ so that we may be filled with all the fullness of God. Both feeling and thinking are important.

One method we can use to help us separate our thoughts from our emotions is validation. When we validate ourselves, we are acknowledging our feelings. You say, “I feel” and then complete the statement with a word that expresses feeling, such as “lonely,” “angry” or “sad.”

Feelings are necessary. They are given by God in order for us to experience emotions. The Bible tells us that Jesus experienced joy, wept and had righteous anger. But He distinguished His emotions from reason, and so must we.

Let’s use the feeling of anger as an example. Anger was created as an internal alarm to warn us of potentially threatening situations or conditions.

To feel anger is not a sin (see Eph. 4:26). But the ungodly behavior that often accompanies the emotion of anger is sin. If we discipline our children, for example, by using our anger in ways that devalue them, discourage them or provoke them to anger, we misuse the emotion.

The feeling of fear is another internal alarm. But if we allow feelings of fear to paralyze us from taking biblical action, such as confronting someone in truth and love about their abusive behavior toward us, we misuse the emotion.

Even though feelings are important, we should not allow them to direct our behavior. In the Believer’s Bible Commentary, William MacDonald defines having the mind of Christ as “To see things as He would see them, and to respond as He would

respond.”

Many Christians, however, respond as the world responds. Generally, the world’s approach to living is, “If it feels good, do it.” Their thought process looks like this: My actions.

But the approach of a Christian who has the mind of Christ is, “I know what I think and how I feel, but I will do what God says to do.” That process looks like this: My ’s actions.

The second set of thoughts is based on God’s Word (see Heb 4:12)—aligning our thoughts with His thoughts before we act. “A prudent man gives thought to his steps” (Prov. 14:15).

Discerning the Truth

Let me give you an example of how this works in real life. A husband and wife exchange cross words. The wife says, “I feel you don’t love me.” In actuality, the idea that her husband doesn’t love her is a thought, not a feeling. The feeling is probably hurt or rejection.

The wife needs to examine her belief from a rational perspective. Is the thought that her husband doesn’t love her the truth or a lie? Usually it is a lie of the enemy to put spouses at odds with one another.

The truth is that her husband does love her but needs to learn ways to show his wife his love in order to minimize her feelings of hurt and rejection. If the wife can see this truth, she is able to cast down an argument that goes “against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5, NKJV). What could have escalated into a battle can become fertile ground for unity, growth and change.

Let’s say you make a mistake at work. The feeling you have as a result is probably frustration or disappointment. But the

thought that goes through your mind might be something like this: "I'm so stupid. I can't seem to get anything right."

This is a lie, of course. God's Word says that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps. 139:14).

Learning to replace the lies of Satan with God's truth is the key to having the mind of Christ and living a life that is pleasing to God. God will honor you as you seek to align your thoughts with His. "I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve" (Jer. 17:10, NIV).

Ask the Lord to show you the lies you have been believing and living out in your life. Replace the lies with God's truths so that your relationship with Him, yourself and others will improve.

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