

Issues of Life: The Mind

Today I am beginning a six-part series of messages addressing “Issues of Life that Every Christian Faces.” These issues are the areas of our lives where we can make them more nearly as our Creator intended... or not. They are places in our lives that profoundly groom who we are as persons and what we make of life: how we think, act, relate, and where we are going for eternity. These six issues are:

1. **The mind: conformed or transformed?** Formed by the world or transformed by Christ?
2. **The body: idol or temple?** Worship our bodies or use our bodies to worship God?
3. **Wealth: blessing or barrier to God?**
4. **Work: calling or curse?**
5. **Our neighbor: stranger or friend?**
6. **Technology: servant or master?**
- 7.

I'll begin today with reflections on **the Mind: one of the greatest blessings God has given us.** Does your mind sometimes wander? I know mine does ... not only does my mind wander, but sometimes it leaves altogether! Nevertheless, I hope we can all keep our minds focused for a few minutes this morning to consider how and why our minds are divine gifts.

Wasting Away

Maybe you've heard that axiom, **“The mind is a terrible thing to waste.”** It's true! God has given us minds to reason and to discern and to bring us into genuine communion with Him. Our minds can be likened to a garden, which may be intelligently cultivated or allowed to run wild; but whether it is cultivated or neglected, it must and will, bring forth.¹

We can use our minds to great benefit for ourselves, for our families, and for many others. **But if our minds are not aligned with the mind of Christ, all our focus and efforts will still fall short of our potential.** What does your mind bring forth?

The cultured despisers and the power-hungry critics of Christianity say that people of faith are mindless believers of a myth. Karl Marx (world's worst economist and historian) called Christianity the opiate of the masses. **Nothing could be further from the truth. From its inception Christians have never been told to leave their brains outside when they entered church.** In fact, many of the greatest advances in science, medicine, understanding humanity, life and our world, have come from Christian thinkers, and we would be much poorer people without the wise minds of Christ's followers. Yielded to God's direction, the mind becomes a tremendous force for great good.

Conformed or Transformed

To be yielded to God we must ask this about our minds: are they conformed or transformed? Conformed to the values and morals of culture? Or transformed by our faith in Christ? Who or what shapes your mind? Have you ever thought about that? Who or what is really determining the quality and direction of your life?

One can hardly read the four Gospels without realizing that **Jesus did not think like everyone else**. His mind was not captured by the “conventional wisdom” of either the Jews or the Romans. That’s because His mind was shaped by His heavenly Father. St. Paul wrote to Christians: ***Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will, Rom. 12:2.***

What Paul is saying is this: **If we do not consciously choose to fill our minds with the wisdom of heaven, our minds will be filled with whatever** is the prevailing thought-pattern, including morality, of the cultures around us. From birth our minds are filled with information, shaping how we see and understand ourselves, our families, all our relationships, the world, and God. If we do not consciously choose to have our minds shaped by God, they will be shaped by everyone in our lives and the world. And who is the prince of this world? (Satan)

Renewal

Paul exhorts Christians to renew their minds. What does he mean? You’ve all heard me explain that although God created people in His image and intended for them to have pure and perfect communion with Him, they turned away from God. This is what we call sin and the fallen state of humanity and it infects all aspects of life. As St. Paul says, ***The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so, Rom. 8:7.***

God sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to take away all sin and offer us a renewed life. In Him we can renew our minds, replacing the thinking of a fallen and sinful world, with a mind that is directed by God’s ways.

Renewing our minds means replacing those old thoughts with what God says is true. The best source of God’s truth is right here [the Bible]; and yet statistics tell us that even a high percentage of Christians don’t devote much time to reading and studying Bible. That’s not judgment or condemnation on anyone. Just pointing out a reality. If the shoe fits, wear it. But if we don’t fill our minds with God’s truth (the True Truth) found in here [Bible], our minds will be filled with something else.

An experienced pastor once gave me this advice: **choose your friends wisely for you will become like them.** They will influence your thinking and shape your mind. Our lives and minds are shaped by the people we spend the most time with and the things we spend the most time doing. I wonder how many gave thought to that when they got married. When you get married you are, in effect, choosing the greatest influencer in your life. Or the second greatest if you’ve given your life to God.

Parents, I know that raising children is a challenge ... probably the toughest but most important job you’ll ever have ... been there myself. My concern these days is that our culture is not supportive of a Christian worldview and in some cases, it is downright hostile to our faith. Maybe you’ve heard of this ideology being introduced into many schools across the county ... this “Critical Race Theory.” In reality it is a

Marxist view of humanity using race, rather than class, to divide people. I believe it's a form of child abuse to fill children's minds with notions that one's skin color determines who they are; that one's race makes one either an oppressor or a victim. This is toxic thinking that only results in children (and adults) pre-judging others based on how they look. How sick is that? Let us teach our kids what the Bible teaches: ***There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus, Galatians 3:28.*** That's the truth! As His disciples let us see other people as God sees them ... Christ died for all. It is crucial, in these times, to bring our children to church, because if their minds are not filled with the truth of the Christian faith (its worldview and morality) they will be filled with faith in something or someone else... things of a fallen and sinful world.

Losing Your Mind

Have you ever said that you felt as if you were about to lose your mind? How about losing your mind for Christ? I'm not talking here about standing on the street corner wearing a sandwich board saying, "The End Is Near." What I mean is the process of replacing the thoughts and worldview of a fallen culture, with the thoughts and worldview of Christ. Again St. Paul writes: ***Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus... Phil. 2:5.***

How do we get the mind of Christ into our minds? Again, **our best resource is the Bible**, and people who encourage renewal in Christ through word and deed. Psalm 1 tells us: ***How blessed is the man ... whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law, day and night.*** Sounds like the life of a monk; pretty unappealing and impractical for most of us. Yet, the Hebrew words here suggest that our desire should be to study and give some thought not to what others say about God, but what God Himself says. In other words, not to be conformed to the patterns of this world. How are you doing with that? Think about the prevailing voices and influences in your life. Ask yourself this question: **Am I building my core on what _____ says more than what God says?** You fill in the blank ... and be absolutely honest with yourself.

The mind of Christ is not self-centered, nor is it a stubborn mind. Rather, it is a mind of submission and humility, not to earthly powers but to the will of God the Father. He knew God's purpose for Him was to be the sacrifice that would procure salvation for fallen humanity. He did not argue with God the Father saying, "Not my will, but thy will be done." How submissive are we to the will of God? The measure of our submissiveness will always be in measure to the amount of the mind of Christ that we possess.

Who Are You?

Jesus once asked His disciples, "Who do you say I am?" He knew who He was ... just wanted to see if His disciples understood. That's the big question for all of us: **who we say Jesus is will determine who we say we are.** Who is that "who" for you that tells you who you really are? Is it your mother, father, boyfriend, spouse, ex, your boss? Or is it the One who created you? As a man or woman thinks about who he/she is, so shall he/she be.

Beware, there are plenty of people, voices and ideas in the world that want to tell you who you are. Let me warn you about this phenomenon called “Cancel Culture.” Cancel culture attacks a person’s or organization’s motives and character based on disagreement over some social or political maxim. It seeks to punish and intimidate one’s thinking. It is not only an attack on the freedom to speak our minds, but an attack on the *use* of our minds. Cancel culture seeks to prevent people from thinking critically about issues, and in our case, to bring a Christian worldview to bear on issues of the day. Cancel culture is the tool of a totalitarian mindset that seeks to impose one way of thinking, one way only, forcing people to be mindless robots if you will. (It’s the tool used to rule over people as in N. Korea, Cuba, China, or any other Marxist run state). This push for one way of thinking and silencing dissent, is inimical to how God has created us to use our minds and to be free.

Do you realize and understand all that God has to say about you? You need to read this [Bible]. Here you will discover an incredible God, who is madly in love with you. You are not an afterthought. God had you in mind, when He created you. We are sons and daughters, kings and queens, of our Heavenly Father. Created in the image of God Himself, not to be slaves, not to be mindless drones ruled by elites, and certainly not to judge one another based on race, skin color, nationality, bank account, or any other such criteria. We have family connections, yes ... with the family that God is making, for *...to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...* John 1:12.

We have wonderful minds because we are made in the image of a wonderful Creator, whose design is on display in this universe, and who desires more than anything to have a deep love relationship with each of us. Though He is beyond our ability to completely comprehend and understand (we can’t fully wrap our minds around God), this thing is crystal clear: through all of our failures and pride He never stops chasing our minds and hearts. He never, ever, ever stops pursuing us. He created the world with you and me in mind. He has also given us minds to seek Him and to love Him. Let’s do it!

We know that when we “put our mind” to something we can accomplish it. Let’s put our minds to seeking the mind of Christ ... that will bring genuine joy and satisfaction to life. *Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you, 2 Cor. 13:11.*

Here’s a prayer for all of us: *Lord, give us your mindset this day to see the world and people from Your perspective. Amen.*

¹ James Allen, *As A Man Thinketh*, Grosset & Dunlap, New York; 11.