

Spiritual Growth Lessons from Christian Ambassadors

Lesson 72 – A New Mindset

By Sharon K. Griffiee

Many people resist change. That is why we see many people repeatedly making the same mistakes. Yet God calls us to change. However, change cannot come about in our lives without changing “mindsets”. If we sincerely want a different result, we must follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit and let God help us break free from our old pattern of thinking.

In the following verses, Paul reminds the Ephesian believers how they used to walk aimlessly through life, indulging in self-gratification of every kind with no regard for others.

***Ephesians 4:22-24 (NIV)** – You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Paul details what they learned previously regarding their former way of life, emphasizing the need now for a fresh mental and spiritual attitude. Because their minds were no longer darkened, and their hearts were no longer hardened (vv. 18-19) they had become open to hear the truth that is in Jesus. Paul brings out two important points for us to think over.

- 1) The believer must put off the old (self-centered), self with its deceitful desires, which promises joy, but fails to provide it in the end.
- 2) The believer must put on the new self, which has been created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Believers are new people in Christ.

The goal of all believers is to be Christ-like, to be made *new* in the attitude of our *minds*. Brothers and sisters, following Jesus is about a *transformed* life. It is about humbling ourselves before God, allowing the character of Christ to become visible in us. With the *returning* to the Lord and receiving the abundant pardon of sin from God, our mind is at last free to be *transformed* into the image of Jesus Christ.

***Romans 12:2 (KJV)** – “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind...”*

Renewing of your mind

The first thing to consider, before real change can take place in your mind, is to have an understanding of your old “mindset”. Your old mindset was naturally conformed to the principles of the world around you. It happens, not only because of man’s basic sin nature, but also through the influence of your culture. Nevertheless, God says not to conform to the world, but to be *transformed* by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2). The goal is to be changed into a new image from inside out. The pattern for that image is the Lord Jesus Christ.

***II Corinthians 3:18 (NKJV)** – But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

As we reflect on Romans 12:2, we can agree as to why this transformation is to come about through the *renewing* of our mind. If we want to attain a *new mindset* we must get rid of worldly standards and conform to the principles revealed in God’s written Word. It is vital that God’s Word become our new standard of thinking. Transformation occurs as we learn and develop the mind of Christ.

***Philippians 2:5 (KJV)** – Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:*

The important word “*Let*” in this verse, indicates you have a choice to make. You must be decisive and unbendable. *You* have to *let* the transformation of your mind take place. The essential point to understand is that *you* have a responsibility in the development of your transformed mind. It is not something God does automatically for you. If you truly want your mind renewed, you must go after it.

The Word of God, your mirror to freedom

James 1:21-25 (NKJV) – *Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is **able to save your souls**. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into **the perfect law of liberty** and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.* [Bold emphasis is mine]

James is warning those who desire to benefit from the Word of God, to first put away all moral filthiness (arguments, angry words, etc.) from their life and receive (welcome) the Word of God with humility. This is significant, brothers and sisters, because the Word of God is able to save a person's soul. Consequently, the Word needs to be planted in the *fertile* soil of your heart.

James explains that people who merely listen to the Word, but does not do the Word, is only deceiving themselves. Why? No matter how knowledgeable someone is in the scriptures, or how amazing their memory is of particular verses, it is self-deception if that is all there is. God is not seeking righteous knowledge. God is seeking righteous lives. Similarly, God is not interested in how many Bible Study Certificates we have accumulated. God is interested in how we respond when we look into the mirror of His Word. Are we doing what He says?

James 1:25 (NKJV) – *But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.*

God's *perfect law of liberty* is available to anyone, as Dennis, a prison inmate, happily shared his testimony. As he set his mind on studying the Word of God, really digging into it for answers; he became conscious of God's Spirit leading Him.

"When I am reading the Bible," Dennis said, "I find myself looking at ways I behave and my

reaction to situations and I find a better way to handle them. It is as if someone is telling me, 'don't do that, or handle it this way, and you will not lose your path.' If we do not study, we stumble. I've seen good changes in those around me and also in myself, and I finally realized I can't go on living and thinking like I used to. You know, Sharon, it struck me funny when you mentioned "growing pains" in association with spiritual growth. That is exactly how I feel at times. Sometimes I have trouble letting go of my old life and taking a firm grasp on my new life in Christ. I know where the problem lies – it is with me. It is a matter of focus and paying attention. If I am paying attention and focusing my thoughts on Christ, I do not have any problem doing what is right. It is when I let my mind wander that Satan jumps right in, trying to lure me astray. It is easy for him, if I am not paying close attention. Then I hear a soft voice asking me, 'What are you doing?' That is all it usually takes to get me to snap back and regain my focus on Christ."

"If you hold to my teaching," Jesus said, "...Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." **John 8:31-32 (NIV)**

Questions for Personal or Group Study

- 1) Why do many people repeatedly make the same mistakes?
- 2) How does Paul describe the character traits of the old (former) self? See: Ephesians 4:22
- 3) What is the goal of all believers? See: Ephesians 4:23-24
- 4) When does our mind at last become free to be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ?
- 5) How does this transformation come about in our life? See: Romans 12:2
- 6) If we truly want our minds renewed what must we do? See: Philippians 2:5
- 7) James says people are *deceiving* themselves when they merely listen to the Word, but do not do the Word. Explain why they are deceived.
- 8) God's *perfect law of liberty* is available to anyone. Have you personally experienced it in your own life?