

NAZARENE BIBLE COLLEGE
CHAPEL SERMON
“IT’S ALL IN YOUR MIND”

A. Experiment

Everyone raise your hand high. For the next thirty seconds do not think of pink elephants. Once I say “Go!” if the words “pink” or “elephant” come to your mind, put your hand down. If an image of pink or of an elephant come to your mind, put your hand down. So whatever you do, do not think about pink elephants for the next thirty seconds. If you do, put your hand down. Ready, start!

This experiment emphasizes the role our mind plays in our transformation into the image of Jesus. Paul addresses this role of the mind in our text for the evening.

A. Text: Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer 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. (NIV)

B. Exegesis

1. Paul provides a number of foundations for our transformation.
 - a. Ultimate motivation for transformation: in view of God’s mercy
 - b. Ultimate illustration of transformation: living sacrifices
 - c. Ultimate essence of transformation: holy and pleasing to God
 - d. Ultimate method for achieving transformation: be transformed by the renewing of your mind
2. When we talk about the transformation of our minds we must first understand why this transformation is necessary – we are conforming to the pattern of this world.

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- a. Be Conformed: to be in intimate company and fellowship with the habits, actions, and schemes
 - b. Most often interpreted as giving way to outside pressures – like a press
 - c. More Appropriate: internal, self-induced pressure – Here’s the Box – fit in
 - d. Illustration: Pretty Woman – The “Modern” version of Cinderella. The message is if you want to find your prince charming, then go sell yourself on the street corner.
3. How do we combat this enticement to pressure ourselves to fit into the pattern of the world? The answer is by the renewing of our mind.

C. Exposition

1. How do we achieve this renewing of the mind? The Bible addresses two aspects of renewal: the source of our thoughts and the focus of our thoughts
 - a. The source of our thoughts
 - i. Romans 8:5-9

“Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.”
(NIV)

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ii. 1 Corinthians 2:9-12 and 16

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us...We have the mind of Christ. (NIV)

b. The focus of our thoughts

i. Colossians 3:1-2, 5 and 8

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things...Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry...rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. (NIV)

ii. Philippians 4:8

Finally, brothers, 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.

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D. Illustration: My Personal Battle with Anxiety

1. Philippians 4:6-7

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

2. Matthew 6:34

Do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

E. Invitation

1. We will all find that our pursuit of transformation into the image of Jesus will take us through this battle for our minds. Frequently, it is our conformity to the mental patterns of this world that keeps us from experiencing the complete victory that God desires for us.

a. Pattern of worthlessness: you will never accomplish anything

b. Pattern of lust: world exists to feed your own appetites

c. Pattern of anger: God and life are unfair,

d. Pattern of greed: every relationship is a competition

e. Pattern of fear: battered and bruised, no security, no foundation

2. We can no more change these deep seated patterns of our mind than we can restrain the images of pink elephants from our thoughts. Our transformation begins when we exchange the mind of the flesh for the mind of Jesus through the power and presence of the Spirit abiding in us.

3. Once we have crucified the mind of the flesh and have the mind of Jesus, we will find our mind drawn to the thoughts of Jesus.