



GRACE DISCIPLESHIP
S E R I E S

THE WALK

EVERYDAY SPIRITUAL GROWTH

This is an excerpt from *The Walk*, a collection of Bible study guides exploring what the Word of God has to say about ten practical areas of life. This PDF includes the first chapter, *The Mind*. You are free to make and distribute printed and/or digital copies of this PDF, provided you do not edit it in any way.

To purchase printed copies of the full book, visit store.gracechurchmentor.org.

FOREWORD

The Walk was created at Grace Church of Mentor as a resource for its disciple-making and church-planting ministries. Originally preached as a sermon series, the study was envisioned as a follow-up to the *Foundations* book. The ten chapters apply the Bible to ten areas of daily life in a practical way. Like their predecessor, these lessons were well-received at Grace Church and proved to be helpful for both infant and mature believers.

It was our aim to produce a discipleship series that is biblically astute and theologically accurate, yet easily understood. We recognize that the studies will be beneficial only to the extent that they prompt believers to study and apply God's inspired and sufficient Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

An increasing number of professing Christians are biblically illiterate and struggle to apply what they know to their daily lives. We pray that the Lord will use this series as one step in alleviating that problem. It is our hope for individuals that these studies will help you understand how spiritual growth happens and what daily disciplines every Christian should practice in order for the Spirit to work. It is our hope for churches that this study will be a useful tool in your discipleship ministries.

May the Lord be magnified!

THE WALK: EVERYDAY SPIRITUAL GROWTH,

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Unless otherwise noted, all Bible quotations are taken from the New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update. LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995.

THE MIND

Just as a newborn child will naturally grow, every Christian must grow in their spiritual maturity. The indwelling Holy Spirit conforms us over time to become more like the image of God's Son, Jesus Christ. Any Christian, regardless of their spiritual maturity, wonders at some point, "How do I do that?" This study is designed to give you practical tips and resources to understand spiritual growth and the daily disciplines every Christian should practice in order for the Spirit to grow you. We call these steps "the Christian walk." It's an ordinary, simple, everyday process.



PREPARE YOUR MIND The journey of Christian growth starts in your mind. Your thinking affects your actions, which form habits, which form a lifestyle.

Proverbs 23:7 says that as a person thinks, _____ .

Get the thinking right, and your actions will follow in the right direction. That's growth!

God cares about what goes on in your mind, even though no one else has any idea what you are thinking.



Christians under persecution don't have the ready access to God's Word that we enjoy. What if your Bible was taken away? Would your mind be prepared?

1 Peter 1:13 tells believers to "_____ your minds for action."

The Greek word for prepare describes someone who is getting ready to run or work, tucking the hem of their robe into their belt so it wouldn't be a hindrance. Our minds too have to be prepared for

obedience. We must be disciplined to keep our thinking from being a hindrance to our growth in Christ.

Many Christians allow themselves the luxury of laziness. Bible memorization has sharply declined. Compromise and conflict often come from lazy thinking. But there is no room for mental laziness in the Christian life, because we are in a battle.

BATTLE FOR THE MIND A good soldier is never lazy; he is always vigilant, because he knows he has an enemy who wants to destroy him.

What foe are we fighting in our Christian walk? **1 Peter 5:8** says that our adversary is _____.

What is his goal? _____

What does **2 Corinthians 4:4** say that Satan (called "the god of this world") does to the minds of unbelievers? _____

If the Devil blinds the minds of unbelievers, he certainly wants to do anything he can to influence the mind of believers as well.

Thank God that Satan will not ultimately succeed! In the meantime, we don't want



There is no room for mental laziness for the Christian.

to give him any small victories. If our struggle is against spiritual forces (**Ephesians 6:12**), we cannot be passive in our thinking.

What does **1 Peter 5:8** say we are to do? _____



What Is “The Flesh”? The physical body is not inherently sinful (John 1:14: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”). Paul uses the term “the flesh” to refer to our sin nature. (See Galatians 5:16-17.)

The battle of the mind is the battle against sin. The very act of fighting sin in our minds is one thing the Holy Spirit uses to assure us of our salvation.

Read **Philippians 3:18-19**. Paul is

describing once-professing believers. Were these people fighting a good fight against worldliness? _____

What characteristics were true of them? _____

It’s not that these people somehow lost their salvation. Instead, they showed themselves to be “enemies of Christ” because there was no battle against their flesh. Their minds were set on earthly things.

According to **Romans 8:5**, what is the difference between a believer and an unbeliever? _____

Clearly, a believer cannot have their minds set “on the things of the flesh.” Look down a few verses at **Romans 8:8**. What does Paul say about those whose mind is set on the flesh?

Certainly this describes an unbeliever and not a child of God!

What type of things describe a mind that is set on the flesh? (Hint: Think back to what your mind was like before you were saved.) _____

These thoughts might still be a struggle, but don't be discouraged. That's the point: if you are a Christian, you will struggle against how you used to think. But you will also see your thinking change!

Look at **Galatians 5:16-17**. According to verse 17, there is a battle going on inside every Christian. Who are the opponents? And what are they fighting for? _____

Notice that the word "Spirit" is capitalized in both verses. Who does this refer to? _____

Before you were saved, you did not have the Holy Spirit dwelling in you, influencing your thoughts and behavior. Now as a child of God, you have the Holy Spirit, who actively combats "the desire of the flesh," so that you may think and live in a way that pleases God.

This is what one pastor calls the "glorious agony" of the Christian life: as long as you are here on earth, you will grow in Christ but still struggle against the sin nature. We can't get away from the spiritual battle for our mind! So how do we fight it?

BATTLING WORRY No doubt we've all fought the mental battle with worry. A good word picture for worry is kneading dough. We work a problem over and over again in our minds, but unlike kneading dough, it is not productive or helpful!

It's not that we don't know how to think, we just need to channel the thought. Paul gives us instruction on worry in **Philippians 4:6-8**:

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren,

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT WORRY?

The Bible has a lot to say about worry. First, let's look at words the Bible uses to describe worry. List them below:

Psalm 27:1 _____

Psalm 56:4 _____

Matthew 6:25 _____

Luke 10:41 _____

Philippians 4:6 _____

The most common word for worry in the New Testament is translated “anxious.” It's found in Matthew 6 and Philippians 4 (both good chapters to review when you or another believer is struggling with worry!).

In Matthew 6:25-34, what are some circumstances that can cause worry? _____

What truth should we remember to fight against those worries? (See verses 26, 30, and 32-34.) _____

whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.”

Instead of mulling over our problems, we must correct our thinking, focus and guide it with Biblical truth.

God’s solution is in verse 6. We are to turn worry into prayer! In prayer, we acknowledge the greatness and goodness of the Lord. We give our worries over to Him with thanksgiving.

And here is the promise: when worry attacks, the peace of God will guard your mind. It’s as if God puts a garrison of soldiers on duty to protect your mind from the dangers of worry and doubt.

From a human standpoint, it is natural to worry when money is tight or the future is uncertain. God grants the Christian a supernatural peace that defies logic, where all worry is put aside and the believer depends completely on the Lord.

HAVING THE MIND OF GOD You will never win the mental battle against sin on your own. It is only through God’s power working in you that you can have victory. In fact, God transformed your mind when you were saved. In a spiritual miracle, God took you from spiritually dead to spiritually alive (see **Ephesians 2:1-5**). Now you can understand spiritual truth that was confusing and mysterious to your unsaved mind.

In particular, God gave you the ability to understand His Word through the power of the Holy Spirit. You could read, learn, and even memorize the words of the Bible before you were saved – but without the Holy Spirit, you were not able to see the Bible for what it is. For the Christian, the Bible is more than just words or facts: it is truth that transforms your life as you personally own and apply it.

Paul describes the transformation of the Christian’s mind in

CASE STUDY: THE MIND OF PAUL

Before his salvation, the apostle Paul was a student under a highly-respected Jewish rabbi (teacher) named Gamaliel. As an unbeliever, Paul used what he learned to persecute Christians. He separated families, threw men and women into jail, and even oversaw executions (see Acts 8:1-3).

But one day as he travelled to persecute more Christians, the Lord regenerated his heart. He was converted him from a spiritually dead condition to a condition of spiritual life. (You can read about his conversion in Acts 9:1-19.)

As a new believer, Paul now had the ability to understand the significance of the truth he had learned under Gamaliel. The Holy Spirit illumined his mind to the truths found in God's Word, and he became one of the most influential leaders and teachers of the early church! His writings eventually formed half of the New Testament.

1 Corinthians 2:6-16. According to verse 14, can the natural man (i.e. the unbeliever) understand spiritual truth? _____

Why not? _____

Unbelievers have a natural mind and not a Spirit-equipped mind. Verse 13 tells us that the Holy Spirit interprets spiritual truths to spiritual minds. He teaches the believer as you read God's Word and enables you to understand its spiritual truths.

This is a profound truth! Since the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead, he has immediate access to the mind of God the Father. And since he has been put into every believer, each believer can be assured that the Holy Spirit will be personally teaching him through God's Word.

As Paul says in verse 16, "we have the _____." This is not a statement of pride; it is the reality for every believer!

The natural mind cannot know or discern the truth of God on its own or through mere human teaching. What does **Isaiah 55:9-10** say about God's thoughts compared to our thoughts? _____

It's the difference between looking at your house from the driveway and looking at it from a plane at 30,000 feet. That's how different our lives and our problems look from God's perspective. Why would we ever try to tackle a problem without first considering His view? Asking for wisdom from God and seeking it through His Word will affect the way we look at our problems!

Mental battles come when we lose focus on the Lord and are distracted by worldly things. This usually happens when we're trying to live in our own strength, not being filled with the Word of God. It is such an incredible privilege to have the Spirit of God indwelling us. We need to use it!

Philippians 2:13 tells us that "it is God who is at work in you, both to _____ and to _____ for His good pleasure." God produces the desire in you to do His will as you study His Word. When you meditate on the Word, you start thinking God's thoughts, because God the Holy Spirit put them there!

Philippians 2:5 says, "Have this attitude [or mind] in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus." God wants us to actively use our minds for His glory.

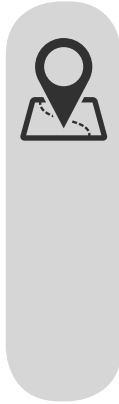
RENEWING YOUR MIND We know that we are in a battle and that the Holy Spirit is the one who equips us for victory in the battle. Now, what is our part?

Winning the battle of the mind is not a passive process where we let the Spirit do all the work. We have an active role too! **Romans 12** tells us what it is. Fill in the blanks from verse 2: "Do not be conformed to

this world, but be

_____ by the _____
of your _____."

Before we dig into what that means, we have to look at the context. Romans 12:1 starts with the word "Therefore," which tells us that whatever came right before is important to what Paul will say next.



Word Study: Metamorphoo

The word Paul uses for "transformed" in Romans 12 is the Greek root of our word "metamorphosis." Similar to a caterpillar changing into a butterfly, the Spirit transforms us to look completely different and wonderfully beautiful.

Look back at **Romans 11:33-36**. What characteristics of God does Paul celebrate in those verses? _____

Paul marvels at the wisdom and knowledge of God in combining two very different groups – Jews and Gentiles – to make a new group, the Church. The purpose of the Church, as with all things, is to bring God glory.

So the instructions Paul gives in Romans 12 are how we as believers can bring God glory. The first thing Paul says is to continually present our bodies as a "_____ and _____ sacrifice, _____ to God, which is your _____ of _____" (verse 1).

Verse 2 further explains what that sacrifice looks like. What are we not to do? _____

These words carry the image of soft clay being pressed into a mold. We are not to let the world shape our thinking with its corrupt ideas. How does the world try to press us into its mold? _____

Instead of “being conformed to this world,” Christians are to “be transformed.” How will we be transformed? _____

And what will be the result? _____

Transformation must constantly be taking place through the renewing of our mind. This is the opposite of what happens in an unbelieving mind, seen in **Romans 1:28**. What is happening to the mind of the unbeliever in this passage? _____

A believer’s mind is “renewed” or “made new” by meditating on the Word of God. Psalm 119 tells of the many benefits of studying God’s Word. According to **Psalm 119:9-11**, why should a Christian treasure God’s Word? _____

As we read, study, and know God’s Word, we are able to discern God’s will and know how to please Him – the ultimate goal of the Christian life!

CHANGING A CULTURE’S THINKING

Christians with renewed minds see things from a completely different perspective. This is why we are so odd to the world. God wants others to see that difference and know another way of thinking is available.

We cannot control a society’s thinking, but we can influence the individuals who make up that society. Only God can change the thinking of a society, through the power of the Gospel. Our part is to be engaged in the battle for our own minds and the minds of those to whom we minister.

WHAT'S A CHRISTIAN TO THINK OF THE SELF-ESTEEM MOVEMENT?

Romans 12:3 tells Christians not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought, but to think with “sound judgment.” What was true in Paul’s day is true today: low self-esteem is not the problem of our culture. Our society worships man and believes that human ability can solve all problems.

In contrast, the Bible doesn’t ever tell us to think higher of ourselves than what God says about us. Apart from Him, we are “dead in our trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). But God has “made us alive together with Christ” (verse 5).

Christian thinking recognizes our actual position in the eyes of God, and at the same time, it realizes that God has given us a great privilege to serve Him.

PRACTICAL REMINDERS Here are three things to remember as you renew your mind:

- **Renewing our minds is a day-by-day, life-long process.** (Remember the term “progressive sanctification”?) It would be different if we could read God’s Word once and apply it faithfully and flawlessly for the rest of our lives. Sadly, we know this is not even close to being true! We must constantly be reading, studying, and memorizing God’s Word. **1 Peter 2:1-2** compares the study of the Word to the growth of a baby. As a baby needs milk to grow, the Christian needs the Word to grow!
- **Renewing our minds is an active process.** You can never coast when it comes to the fight against sin in your mind. In a battle, a soldier does not stop fighting until he knows his enemy is finally defeated. Though their power has been overcome by Christ’s death and resurrection, your sin nature and the Devil – the

enemies of all believers – will never stop their attack in this life. The battle will end only when we are in the presence of our Lord through death or His return.

- **The purpose of renewing your mind is to “prove” and to live the will of God.** Mark it down: you cannot properly know or do God's will unless your mind is renewed with God's Word. How does this truth affect your daily decision-making? Your leadership in your home? Your testimony with believers and unbelievers?

SCRIPTURE MEMORY **1 Peter 1:13** –Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Romans 12:1-2 – I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Philippians 4:6-7 – Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:8 – Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS What are the three most significant lessons you learned in this Bible study? How can you apply them in your own mental battles?

Answer the following questions to measure your understanding of this chapter:

1. According to 1 Peter 5:8, why should the Christian be alert and active in the way he thinks? (page 2) _____

2. What does the believer set his mind on, according to Romans 8:5? (page 3) _____

3. True or False: The fact that a Christian experiences a struggle in his mind against the flesh is really a sign that he is born again. (page 4) _____
4. Who, according to Galatians 5:16-17, helps fight for us against the desires of our flesh? (page 4) _____
5. When tempted to worry, Paul tells us in Philippians 4:6-8 to approach God with "prayers and supplications with thanksgiving." Why is it important that we give thanks in times of distress? (page 6) _____

What will be the result (page 6)? _____

6. What does it mean when we read of the Holy Spirit illumining the

mind of the Christian (as in 1 Corinthians 2:6-16)? (page 7) _____

7. In Romans 12:2, how does the Christian avoid being conformed to the world, and how is he progressively transformed into the image of Jesus Christ? (page 10) _____
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8. What is the purpose of having our minds renewed by the Word of God? (page 10) _____
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9. Check off these verses when you can say them from memory:
- 1 Peter 1:13
 - Romans 12:1-2
 - Philippians 4:6-8
10. Do you know this material well enough to teach it to someone else? _____ If not, review it until you do!