

HOW TO RENEW OUR MINDS

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(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 01) Last Sunday I introduced you to Harry Blamires - the Christian Mind. Remember the definition:

(SHOW SLIDE 02) The Christian mind is the prerequisite of Christian thinking - and Christian thinking is the prerequisite of Christian action.

Our ability to think and to choose what we think about is the ultimate freedom and responsibility we have as human beings. But thinking is not enough – the thinking has to become doing.

It is nothing to do with brains – or being intellectual. It is nothing to do with having degrees. It is following out the command to love God with all of our minds. But then we talked about how this Christian mind has been seduced by the culture it which we live. It has been seduced by pluralism – modernism – consumerism and sensualism. So Blamires begins his book by saying – - **(SHOW SLIDE 03)** **There is no longer a Christian mind.**

But as we will see - Paul encourages us to renew our minds - so there is hope.

(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 04) This idea of thinking revolves around 2 main factors.

1 - Ideas 2- Images

Ideas are very general - abstract - freedom is an idea - ideas are broad categories - like pictures in our head. We see ideas in the realm of the imagination.

Images are more specific. Jesus does this in John 13 - he takes an abstract idea of servanthood - and translates that image into a picture when he takes a towel and basin - takes off his robe and washes feet. No one can say any longer - I don't understand that.

The process of spiritual change and transformation involves changing our ideas – the reason is that ideas are the strongholds of both good and evil. The process of spiritual change and transformation is one of progressively changing destructive ideas and images with ideas and images that reflect the mind and the heart of God.

When Satan wanted to draw Eve away from God – he did not make a frontal attack on her - he simply planted an idea – it was the idea that God could not be trusted.

Napoleon said that imagination – the power of an idea – rules the world. So one man had the idea of ruling the world and eliminating society of Jews gypsies Homosexuals, and – the idea grew into an image – and the image became a holocaust of concentration camps and gas chambers.

The ideas that are in our minds from our culture have to be challenged and then changed by the ideas of God which we find in the Scriptures. So we need better ideas and different images to the ones that fill

our minds. Spiritual change is the interchange of our fallen ideas with God's ideas. This is what Paul calls metamorphosis.

So the Christian mind is the interchange of our fallen ideas with ideas that come from the heart of God. We find the thoughts of God in the Scriptures – which is the record of his ideas through the lives of people. **(SHOW SLIDE 05) Romans 12**

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.

To understand this verse - you need to know that Paul is using two words that he uses a lot -

(SHOW SLIDE 06) Greek has 2 words for form -

1 - schema - external, appearance

2 - morphe - internal, inside

These 2 words are at the centre of Phil 2- key passage last week – they explain the person of Jesus to us.

Phil 2:6 —Jesus was in the form (morphe) of God. He shared the inner essence of God.

Phil. 2:8 – he came in the fashion (schema) of a man.

Phil. 2:7 – he took the form (morphe) of a servant) a slave.

It is teaching us that Being a servant for Jesus was not something external -- it was his inner essence – inner being.

Back to Romans 12 **(SHOW SLIDE 07) Do not conform - word is metaschema.** It has the idea of just copying the fashions of our cultures. We just go along with what everyone else is doing.

(SHOW SLIDE 08) Be transformed - word is metamorphosis. This is talking about internal transformation and change from the inside out.

Galatians 4:19 - My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed (morphed) in you,

There are several key **(SHOW SLIDE 09) steps to engage in this interchange of ideas** - and they all revolve around the Scriptures which are the thoughts and ideas of God.

(SHOW SLIDE 10) READ - we read the Scriptures – because correct ideas always come first. Without correct information – our thinking will be based on the wrong ideas. One of the great revivals in the OT was in the time of Nehemiah – the source of that revival came from simply reading God's Word.

Nehemiah 8:18

Day after Day - Ezra read from the book of the Law of God.

(SHOW SLIDE 11) STUDY - now just for a few keepers – it is for all of us.

If you can read and understand a knitting pattern – or load a computer program – you can study the Bible. There are all kinds of helps available today that will help you.

(SHOW SLIDE 12) MEDITATE - it means you allow the ideas and thoughts of Scripture to come back again and again into your mind – to challenge our thinking – to analyse our thoughts.

(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 13) I am a city boy – but I am told that cows have 4 stomachs – we describe what they sometimes do as chewing the cud – they bring what they are eating from one stomach into another – proper word is to ruminate – meditation is ruminating on the Scriptures – bringing it back again and again into our minds.

Ask yourself – what kind of life would I like to live -- one that just blows away like chaff – one that has no substance -- or one that is like a tall strong tree. That is why our reading over this study is Psalm 1.

1 Blessed is the one

who does not walk in step with the wicked

or stand in the way that sinners take

or sit in the company of mockers,

2 but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,

and who meditates on his law day and night.

3 That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,

which yields its fruit in season

and whose leaf does not wither—

whatever they do prospers.

4 Not so the wicked!

They are like chaff

that the wind blows away.

So ask yourself – what kind of life do I want – just one that blows away or one that is strong?

The difference lies in the interchange of ideas and images – what’s in your mind - through meditation we allow the ideas and images from God to permeate our thinking and direct our actions. I will tell you – you will not find that in Netflix – you will only find that in the Scriptures.

(SHOW SLIDE 14) Phil 4

Finally, brothers and sisters, 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.

(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 15) Proverbs is a book about wisdom – the wisdom of God. Hebrew word is hochma – which means living with skill. I know that your pastor recently did a whole series on Proverbs – go back – study and meditate on it. – Communications – money – relationships – marriage – children. We need skill – hochma - in these things.

A transforming way is to read Proverbs that will change your life and infuse the wisdom of God into your mind – on day 1 of the month – read chapter 1 – on day 2 – read chapter 2 and so on. Work at it for a month – 30 days – then another month and so on.

There has been a lot of emphasis in recent days on mindfulness. Mindfulness and meditation are not the same. Mindfulness is being in the present – where we are and what is going on. We come from the past and also the future to be mindful of the present.

Meditation is a conscious discipline of thinking – and in biblical terms, we base the content of our thinking in the Scriptures.

Everyone who is seriously interested in a spiritually transformed life will have to concentrate on the Scriptures.

Been a pastor for over 50 years – my goal was to nurture thinking Christians who think christianly.

Back for a moment to Romans 12:2 – note the last phrase.

(SHOW SLIDE 16) 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.

(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 17) I used to lecture in a Bible school – every student wanted to know what God's will was for their lives – what job should they take – should they marry this girl they had just met last weekand so on.

Most of the time – when we ask about God's will for our lives – we are actually asking a different question – what we usually are asking is – How do I make godly decisions for my life. That's another sermon for another time.

Here are 4 interchanges of ideas that have to happen in us. They are not linear – you can start at any one and work from there – they are like 4 doors into this truth of Christian thinking – you can start at any one you wish – perhaps the one that speaks to you this morning right now.

(SHOW SLIDE 18) **When I start to think Christianly - I start to live sacramentally.**

The interchange of ideas that has to take place is the interchange of thinking that life has two dimensions – one of them is spiritual (the God stuff) and the other is secular – all the normal down to earth stuff. When we think like this – we see everything in bits and pieces. We fail to connect God's truth to the realities of daily life and life in the physical world.

We may believe in God – attend church and believe in the God who lives there – but when we step back into our ordinary lives – we leave God somewhere behind us in the building.

(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 19) When I was a young Christian – the challenge I often got was – how's your spiritual life, Tom. Then one day I realised – God I not interested in our spiritual lives – God is interested in ALL of life.

He is interested in how we speak – how we treat people – how we drive – how we live at home – how we spend our money - how we work.

We must give up this false dualistic view of life being physical and spiritual – and instead see and view all of life – every action – every place we are as something that God is interested in and wants to be part of. We begin to see that all of life is sacred.

The well known Dutch prime Minister – Abraham Kuyper - there is not one square inch of this entire creation about which Jesus Christ does not cry out – this is mine! This belongs to me.

We are saying the same thing when we say – Jesus is Lord!

So that may be an interchange you have to start to make – you say to yourself – you know I never before thought about the fact that God is interested in this part of my life – or that part of my life. I never thought that all of life is sacred. I never thought that God was watching my car when I was driving!

(SHOW SLIDE 20) When I start to think Christianly - I start to live supernaturally.

One of the marks of Christian thinking is that we become more aware of the reality of the supernatural world. Life does not only consist of what we know through our 5 senses – what we can touch – hear – smell – see and taste.

There is another whole dimension of life which is just as real, in fact, even more real than the physical. When this begins to dawn on us – it is like moving from black and white to color.

We begin to see things differently. **(SHOW SLIDE 21) 2 Cor 4 says to us. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.**

(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 22) This spiritual interchange takes place on 2 levels.

1 – there is the supernatural interchange about the reality of God and his power at work.

The more we immerse ourselves in the mind of God the more we realise that there is a supernatural world – and while we cannot see it – it is there and it is real. There is a supernatural universe and it is all round us right now.

2 – the other part of the supernatural world is to recognise that it has a dark side. There is evil in our world – and the real battle is a spiritual battle. When we start to think Christianly – We will become more aware of the reality of evil in all its various disguises.

It is a sad reality that we have to street proof our kids before we send them to play -- we teach them - don't talk to strangers - we also should be teaching courses for Christians on street-proofing our minds and our hearts.

(SHOW SLIDE 23) Ephesians 6

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Then using the picture of a roman soldier in full battle dress -Paul moves from an abstract idea to a concrete image.

(SHOW SLIDE 24) Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and

with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 25) When we ignore both dimensions of the spiritual world - light and darkness - we will be left powerless and anaemic. Our lives will become mere hollow defeated shells.

But when we start to think Christianly - we become aware of spiritual power - power that we need and also power that we need to be wary of.

(SHOW SLIDE 26) When I start to think Christianly - I start to live purposefully which leads to hope.

(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 27) The ideas and images that seek to fill our minds and so control how we act and what we buy are powerful -- They often come from advertising. Images of self-gratification – voices say to us you owe it to yourself – you have earned it – you deserve a break today.

That leads to the demand for instant gratification. Not only do I want it – I want it NOW. That’s why we get all those little plastic cards in the mail. If you can’t afford it – don’t worry – you have good credit – just charge it.

If we are not careful –this fog silently leads to the loss of purpose and the loss of hope. When you can have everything now – there is nothing worth waiting for – that breed nihilism – the emptiness and the nothingness of life – and for some people this is the breeding ground for suicide.

One of the greatest tragedies of our time is that this is the first generation with so much to live WITH and yet so little to live FOR.

These sad ideas have to be exchanged and interchanged for new ideas and new images – there is the new idea of purpose. God gives me the fresh image of identity and value as a person – make in the image of God.

My purpose does not come from self-gratification – rather my purpose begins to come into focus as I see what I can do to change the lives of others. Patience is not learned by instant gratification – patience is only learned through waiting.

Sometimes things do not go well in life - I know that many of you know that - so we begin to ask better and deeper questions.

James says-

(SHOW SLIDE 28) Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 29) It is not easy when we see people struggle and we cannot help them – and we cannot fix things – that is not easy – especially when it relates to our family – but sometimes God has a purpose for their lives which will only be realised through struggle and pain – and if we help them to avoid that struggle – we may be interfering with God’s work in their lives. That is not easy to understand – but it the only way we learn to become people of hope.

Romans 5:3... "Suffering produces perseverance, perseverance produces character – character produces hope – and hope does not disappoint us

(SHOW SLIDE 30) When I start to think Christianly - I start to live with gratitude.

G K Chesterton once asked - who does the atheist thank when things go well?

(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 31) One of the marks of God at work in our life must be a spirit of gratitude and thanksgiving. Not just for a thanksgiving weekend or some occasional celebration – but an attitude of the heart for everyday stuff.

Our society is toxic with grumbling and complaining – about the government, or covid or whatever. It has become a national sport – Complaining means that we do not trust what God has given us or what God is doing.

But this is not the Christian mind. The Christian mind is one of gratitude –

(SHOW SLIDE 32) Phil 2:

14 Do everything without grumbling or arguing, 15 so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation. " Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky

So the Spirit of God wants us to change this toxic lethal attitude of complaining for one of gratitude and thankfulness. Try that for one day - no grumbling --

(SHOW TITLE SLIDE 33) So the Spirit of God wants us to change this toxic lethal attitude of complaining for one of gratitude and thankfulness. Try that for one day –or this -- try that for the rest of this day - no grumbling – live in thankfulness. Deal!

The Scriptures are essential in this disciple of developing a Christian mind. They give us the ideas and images that flow from the mind of God. This is the essential stuff of metamorphosis.

Some small practical steps – you could start with Psalm 1 – meditate on that -- memorise the picture it gives you -- ask yourself what kind of life do I want to live – one that is strong and grows like a tree – or one that just blows away.

Or you could start with Proverbs as I have suggested – each day read the chapter for that day of the month. I guarantee that alone will begin to change your life in 31 days. You could start tomorrow at chapter 16.

The search for a mind that truly thinks like a Christian takes on ultimate significance because in the end – the search for the Christian mind is ultimately our search for God.

This is our true metamorphosis – our true transformation.

END OF SERMON

ASK PEOPLE TO STAND

WORSHIP TEAM UP

(FULL SCREEN SLIDES) Psalm 1

(SHOW SLIDE 34) 1 Blessed is the one

who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,
2 but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,
and who meditates on his law day and night.

(SHOW SLIDE 35) 3 That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,

which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
whatever they do prospers.

(SHOW SLIDE 36) 4 Not so the wicked!

They are like chaff
that the wind blows away.
5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

(SHOW SLIDE 37) 6 For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,

but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.