

What Are You Listening To? 10

Please refer to chapter 15 in the *Extraordinary* book, along with session 10 of the teaching series.

“The divine nature has been imparted to us! We have extraordinary potential! But we have to *feed correct knowledge into our minds*, which will eventually be deposited in our hearts and deeply believed. Then we will say to any adversity, ‘Be pulled up by the roots,’ and it will obey us. Even though it’s not the end result, what we feed into our mind is the beginning. ...When our mind lines up with God’s Word, eventually our inward belief will line up as well.”

JOHN BEVERE
adapted from chapter 15

1. Have you ever asked God to “increase your faith”? The disciples asked Jesus this question, and He answered them, “If you have faith as a *mustard seed*, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you” (Luke 17:6).

- a. What was Jesus actually trying to convey to His disciples then and to us now?

Heaven’s APPEAL

Hear instruction and be wise, and do not refuse or neglect it. Blessed (happy, fortunate, to be envied) is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoever finds me [Wisdom] finds life and draws forth and obtains favor from the Lord.

—Proverbs 8:33-35 AMP

- b. Getting God's Word into your heart is the major key to increasing your faith. Read Deuteronomy 6:6-9, Romans 10:8,10 and Psalm 119:11 and write what these indispensable truths communicate to you.

FASCINATING FACT: THE MARVELOUS MUSTARD SEED

Jesus uses the **mustard seed** to give us a tangible illustration of His Kingdom as well as the power of faith. Mustard is a well-known plant with tiny seeds that flourishes in the Holy Land. During Jesus' time, the mustard seed was the smallest seed used by farmers in the region, yet it has the ability to *grow rapidly* into the largest of garden plants. In spite of its tiny size, it delivers a strong, pungent flavor. The strength of its growing roots has been known to be powerful enough to crack cement. Although most plants grow to the height of three to five feet, Palestinian mustard trees have been known to grow to a height of 10 to 15 feet or more.¹

CHECK OUT THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER IN MATTHEW 13:3-23 AND MARK 4:3-20.

2. Planting God's Word in our hearts is what the parable of the sower is all about. The *seed* represents God's Word and our heart is the *soil*. Jesus said, "If you don't understand this story, you won't understand any others" (Mark 4:13 CEV).

- a. What is the real focus of this parable: the *seed* or the *soil*? Why is this so important, especially in light of God's will being done on earth?

- b. The seed that fell *upon the path* represents the enemy stealing the Word before it has a chance to reach our heart. List some of the major ways Satan tries to steal the Word. (See page 178 in the book.)

Voice of the Ages

“You say, ‘How can I increase my faith?’ Know more about God. The secret of having more faith is to know more about God. Faith has a direct relationship with our knowledge of God.² ...Faith grows and develops in the same ways our physical bodies grow and develop—by eating good food and exercising properly. *The food that faith thrives on is the Word of God* (1 Peter 2:2; Romans 10:17), and the faith in our hearts is to be exercised through regular use.”³

—Dr. Lester Sumrall

3. The seed that fell on *rocky ground*, sprouted, and then withered represents those who receive the Word joyfully and allow it into their heart, but it doesn't get rooted. Something happens during the **critical belief period** that causes the seed to die.

- a. Explain the meaning of *critical belief period*. (See page 179 in the book.)

- b. During this time, what can you do to strengthen your faith and ensure that the seed of God's Word gets rooted in your heart and brings forth fruit?

Check out Matthew 14:25-31 for an example of this in Peter's life.

- c. Read Psalm 33:18-19; 42:5 and write what these principles speak to your heart.

Have you been greatly distressed? Do as David did (see 1 Samuel 30:6).

“We must remember the **heart** is the *seat of our faith*, where the seed must be planted. This is why we are told, ‘Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life’ (Proverbs 4:23 NIV). We guard our heart by guarding what enters our mind, for our heart cannot correctly believe unless we are feeding proper knowledge to our mind. ...Correct knowledge in our mind will mean the right information is fed to our heart.”

JOHN BEVERE
adapted from session 10

Heaven's

APPEAL

[What, what would have become of me] had I not *believed* that I would see the Lord's goodness in the land of the living! Wait and **hope for** and expect the Lord; be brave and of good courage and let your heart be stout and enduring. Yes, wait for and **hope for** and expect the Lord.

—Psalm 27:13-14 AMP

4. The fourth soil Jesus mentions in the parable of the sower is the *good soil*, which produces a bumper crop of 30, 60 or 100 times more than what was sown.

- a. Read Matthew 13:23 and Luke 8:15 and describe the character of the person having a heart of good soil that enables him to produce an extraordinary crop.

- b. Which of the four soils would you say currently represents your heart? Why?

Voice
of the Ages

“Zeal without knowledge is like a mettled (*courageous, determined*) horse without eyes, or like a sword in a madman's hand; and there is no knowledge where there is not the word: for if they reject the word of the Lord, and act not by that, ‘What wisdom is in them?’ saith the prophet (Jeremiah 8:9; Isaiah 8:20).”

—John Bunyan⁴

[words in parentheses added for clarity]

5. Ironically, it *is* possible to be zealous and sincerely devoted to God, yet be sincerely *wrong* in what we believe in our heart. This is how many Jewish people were in Jesus and Paul's day and how a number of Christians are today.

- a. How does this happen—how do we miss out on true faith and Christ's abundant provision?

Check out Luke 11:52; Romans 10:23.

SIFT

The word *sift* used in Luke 22:31 is the Greek word *siniazo*. While it paints an image of “winnowing grain, sifting and shaking it in a sieve,” it literally means “an inward agitation to try one’s faith to the verge of overthrow.”⁵ Thankfully in the midst of this, Jesus our awesome Savior, is praying for us that our faith will not fail (see John 17:15-20; Hebrews 7:25).

- b. Write out Paul’s passionate plea found in Colossians 1:9-10 and *make it your prayer*:

6. Just as Satan desired to *sift* Peter through trials and troubles, he desires to sift you. He is not really afraid of you making a lot of money, enjoying your life, or even going to heaven one day. But there is something that absolutely terrifies him.

- a. What is it that Satan fears most about you growing and maturing in Christ? (See page 185 in the book.) How much of a threat do you think you currently are to him?

- b. Read Psalm 34:17,19 and 1 Corinthians 10:13 and write how these promises regarding trials challenge you.

“The Scripture says Satan is subtle and crafty. His strategies appear extremely ‘normal,’ which make them difficult to discern. His number one goal is to make God’s Word appear ‘abnormal’ and his words ‘normal.’ It’s the message planted in the *heart*, not the mind, that’s a threat to his kingdom of darkness. When Jesus says, ‘If you have faith as a mustard seed,’ He is not talking about the Word of God in our mind but in our *heart*.”

JOHN BEVERE

adapted from chapter 15

7. It’s important to realize that when the enemy attacks you, he is ultimately after your heart. However, he can only access it through your mind. Without question, the *mind is where the fight begins*.

- a. According to John 8:44, what's the most important thing to remember about the thoughts Satan brings against you?

- b. How are the enemy's *impure*, *negative* and *fearful* images strengthened in your heart?

- c. How are God's positive images of *faith*, *hope* and *love* strengthened?

Heaven's

APPEAL

Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? Of course not! And if worry can't do little things like that, what's the use of worrying over bigger things?

—Luke 12:25-26 NLT

8. Worry, *anxiety* and *fear* are some of Satan's greatest tools to drain you of joy and paint a picture of hopelessness on the screen of your heart. Thankfully, your Father has personally promised to provide for you. He doesn't want you to worry about anything. Instead, He wants you to learn to rest and live in peace with Him.

- a. Read Jesus' words in Matthew 6:24-34 and Luke 12:22-34. What is the Holy Spirit speaking to you about worry? How does this strengthen your faith?

Voice of the Ages

"The greatest burden we have to carry in life is *self*. ...In casting off your burdens, therefore, the first one you must get rid of is yourself. You must hand yourself and all your inward *experiences*, your *temptations*, your *temperament*, your *frames* and *feelings*, all over into the care and keeping of your God, and leave them there. He made you, and therefore He understands you and knows how to manage you, and you must trust Him to do it."

—Hannah Whitall Smith⁶

- b. Read Matthew 6:31-33 and 1 Peter 5:7. What can you do on a practical level to put these words into action?

HOPE

A desire of good, accompanied with an expectation of obtaining it; the highest degree of well founded expectation of good, such as a hope founded on God's gracious promises. Hope is different from *wish* or *desire* in that it implies some confidence of obtaining the good desired. Hope therefore always gives pleasure or joy; while wish and desire may produce or be accompanied with pain and anxiety.⁷

Heaven's

APPEAL

(*The Lord*) satisfies your mouth
[your necessity and desire at
your personal age and situation]
with good so that your youth,
renewed, is like the eagle's
[strong, overcoming, soaring]!

—Psalm 103:5 AMP

[italicized words in parentheses
added for clarity]

149

WHAT ARE YOU LISTENING TO?

9. One of the main reasons people struggle to have faith is because *they have no hope*. As Proverbs 13:12 declares, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when dreams come true, there is life and joy" (NLT).

- a. In a practical way, explain how *hope* differs from *faith* and how the two work together to produce joy, peace and happiness in your life. (See page 183 in the book.)

- b. God's Word is full of references on **hope**. Look up these verses and discover some of the wonderful facets of hope:

LOOK UP	ASK YOURSELF...	ANSWER
1 Peter 1:3	As a born-again believer, what have I been birthed into?	
Romans 15:4,13	What are the two main sources of my hope?	

Psalm 62:5-7; 71:5-6; 119:74	Where am I to put my hope?	
1 Corinthians 13:13 Colossians 1:5	What other "ingredients" spring from and work with hope?	
Hebrews 6:19	How does hope affect my soul (my mind, will and emotions)?	
Psalm 33:18; 147:11	How does the Lord respond to my hope?	
Colossians 1:27	What is my only hope of seeing the image of God's glory reproduced in my life?	
Titus 2:13	What is my most blessed hope?	

“The enemy and God are both contending for the screen of your heart. This is the spiritual war zone. For whatever fills the screen and is believed, that is what will come forth in our life. The words we *hear* and *heed* on a daily basis will paint pictures on our heart's screen. This is why Jesus says, ‘Be careful what you are hearing’ (Mark 4:24 AMP).”

JOHN BEVERE

adapted from chapter 15

10. When communicating God's Word, Jesus told stories of *fish* to fishermen, stories of *farming* to farmers, and stories of *business* to businessmen. He did this so people could understand the truth He was sharing and have an image in their heart they could relate to.

- a. What type of work are you involved in on a regular basis? With this in mind, how do you think the Lord is most likely to speak truth to you? Or, how does He speak to you most often?

- b. Have you ever thought that God was speaking to you but dismissed it as just “being you” because it sounded too simple and familiar? If so, what did you hear?

- c. Don't let the enemy fool you into believing you can't hear from God. The truth is *you can*! Read John 10:4,27 and Isaiah 30:21 and write what these promises from your Father speak to your heart.

11. Abram had a disappointing and hope/less image in his heart regarding the future of his family lineage. This was the result of experiencing decades of barrenness and the knowledge that Sarai was now beyond her ability to have children. But God changed all that by painting a new, positive picture of hope in his heart (see Genesis 15:1-6).

- a. What image has life's *experiences* and *knowledge* painted on the screen of your heart?

- b. Has God spoken to you about your future and painted a special picture on the screen of your heart? If so, describe it.

If you are in need of a fresh, new image to generate hope in your heart, *get quiet before the Lord* and humbly ask Him to speak to your heart in a way you can clearly understand. Write what He reveals in the "Notes" section of this chapter.

Heaven's APPEAL

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you **hope** and a *future*."

—Jeremiah 29:11 NIV

Voice of the Ages

"My Words shall be life unto thee, for My commandments are given for thy health and for any preservation. They will guard thee from folly, and guide thee away from danger.

Hide My commandments in thy **heart**, and make them the law of thy life. Cherish My words, and take not lightly the least of them. I have not given them to bind thee, but to bring thee into the life of greatest joy and truest liberty."

—Frances J. Roberts⁸

UNVEIL YOUR HERO

As a teenager, he became impassioned to rescue the millions enslaved by human trafficking. He gives his life to an organization to help end the sex slave trade worldwide.

Justice is being served
by **Austin...**

the bottom line

The key to living an extraordinary life of faith is getting God's Word deep within your heart, and the way to get it in your heart is by renewing your mind. As you study and meditate regularly on the promises and principles of Scripture, your heart will have the proper knowledge to draw from. The result will be a positive picture of hope painted on the screen of your heart.

Journal Your Journey

“Here's the bottom line: *No faith* means no access to grace and no ability to please God; *little faith* grants little access to grace and little ability to please God; *great faith* gives great abundance of grace and great ability to please God. It all comes down to faith.”

JOHN BEVERE
adapted from chapter 15

EYE-OPENERS

Are you seeing some things about faith that you haven't seen before? Has your view on the importance of God's Word reached a new level? Take time to write what the Lord is revealing.

REVOLUTIONARY YOU

Next to feeding your spirit the truth of God's Word is making sure your heart is *pliable* and *prepared* to receive it. What new objectives is the Holy Spirit prompting you to establish?

A Captive AUDIENCE

We are human, but we don't wage war with human plans and methods. We use God's mighty weapons, not mere worldly weapons, to knock down the Devil's strongholds.

—2 Corinthians 10:3-4 NLT

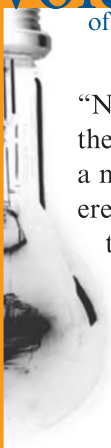
If you've been serving God for any length of time, you are well aware that we are in a war. It's not a physical war with people made of flesh and blood—it's a spiritual war with an unseen enemy. The place where the battle rages the greatest is in our mind. Indeed, the "thought life" is the area where we win or lose the fight.

Every moment of the day, our eyes and ears are busily at work receiving countless clips of information—some good, some bad, and many shades in between. But before our mind categorizes this information, we need to analyze it. Second Corinthians 10:5 gives us some very important instructions regarding how we are to handle what's going on in our mind:

Casting down *imaginations*, and every *high thing* that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every *thought* to the obedience of Christ.

—2 Corinthians 10:5 KJV

Voice of the Ages



"No faith is required to do the *possible*; actually only a morsel of this atom-powered stuff is needed to do the *impossible*, for a piece as large as a mustard seed will do more than we have ever dreamed of."

—Leonard Ravenhill⁹

From this verse, we see three major things that we must actively guard against: *imaginations*, *thoughts* and “*high things*” (improper knowledge) that exalt themselves against the true knowledge of God’s Word. To cast these things down means to willfully throw down, throw away or discard them. In other words, we **reject** any theory, thought, argument or idea that comes into our mind and attempts to arrogantly supersede or replace the truth of Scripture. We then take it *captive*, confining and imprisoning it, by disproving it with the Word.

Ask yourself: *What type of things does the enemy repeatedly bring to my mind in these areas?*

IMAGINATIONS [ungodly mental images of something not present to the senses]

HIGH THINGS [false, improper knowledge, arguments or theories that challenge God’s Word]

THOUGHTS [ideas, notions or opinions that cross your mind and are not in line with Scripture]

“The devil tries to invade your life through lies that he plants in your brain. If you don’t take your thoughts captive, it will be just a matter of time before the devil starts using those lies to create mental and emotional strongholds for the purpose of keeping you in bondage. But if you take your thoughts captive, then your thoughts cannot take you captive!”

—Rick Renner¹⁰

Satan would love for you to sit back and receive every thought he drops into your head. One of his most effective disguises is pretending to be *you*. He injects thoughts into your mind using phrases like, “I am...,” “I feel...,” “I want...” and “I think...,” and then completes the idea with negative, discouraging, fear-filled, or ungodly words. Can you detect any patterns like this in your thinking? If so, what are they?

These are the areas you need to search and study in Scripture to discover God's invincible seeds of truth you are to plant in your heart.

STRONGHOLDS

The word *stronghold* is from the Greek word *ouhuroma*, one of the oldest words in the New Testament. It was originally used to describe a *fortress* or *castle*. Ancient fortresses had very high and thick impenetrable walls that were made to keep outsiders from coming in. Interestingly, *ouhuroma* is also the same word in the New Testament for a *prison*. So while a fortress is designed to keep outsiders from getting in, a prison is designed to keep the one inside from getting out.

When someone has a stronghold in his mind or emotions, he has a fortress or castle of wrong thinking in his soul. Invisible, impenetrable walls of lies surround him. Like the walls of a fortress, these lies isolate him from others who attempt to break in and help him see the truth. And like the walls of a prison, they hold him captive in the devil's deception.¹¹

While some imaginations and thoughts that the enemy hurls at our head are obvious, others are more subtle. In order to be able to discern the devil's devious deceptions, you must spend regular time in God's Word and in His presence. If a repetitive pattern of ungodly thinking is *accepted* and *fed*, a stronghold will be built. The longer you tolerate it and choose not to confront it with the truth of God's Word, the more deeply rooted and controlling the stronghold becomes.

THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT. Begin to monitor your mind's thoughts and imaginations. Ask yourself, "What kind of fruit is being produced by this thought?" If it is producing feelings of stress, anger, fear, worry, depression, lust, and the like, cast it down in the name of Jesus and speak the Word against it.

Are you wondering if something you are thinking is from God or not? *Meditate on the message* of James 3:17

and describe what true godly wisdom from above sounds like.

After reading about John's battle with sexual perversity, how has your hope and faith been strengthened? What principles can you learn and apply in your own life?

Voice of the Ages

"The condition your mind should be in is described in [Philippians 4:8]. You have the mind of Christ; begin to use it. If He wouldn't think it, you shouldn't either. It is by this continual 'watching over' your thoughts that you begin to take every thought captive unto the obedience of Jesus Christ (see 2 Corinthians 10:5 KJV).

The Holy Spirit is quick to remind you if your mind is beginning to take you in a wrong direction, then the decision becomes yours. Will you flow in the mind of the flesh or in the mind of the Spirit? One leads to death, the other to life. The choice is yours. Choose life!"

—Joyce Meyer¹²

[words in brackets added for clarity]

Remember, you must think right, godly thoughts *on purpose*—they're not just going to fall on you. Effort is required. Write out Philippians 4:8, making it a model for your mind to live by.

Philippians 4:8

Prayer of Dedication

Lord, thank You for this eye-opening study. I ask You to tear down any stronghold of wrong thinking in my mind. By Your grace, help me develop the habit of casting down and taking captive every ungodly thought and imagination that comes into my mind. I'm hungry for You and Your Word. Help me establish the discipline I need to daily feed my spirit. Break up any hard, infertile soil in my heart. I want to be pliable and receptive to Your truth. As I do my part and study, I ask You to give me total recall of Your Word, chapter and verse. If the enemy can bring back to my mind ungodly images from movies and profane lyrics from songs I've heard in the past, then surely You are more than able to give me total recall of Your Word. Thank You for loving me and answering my prayer...in Jesus' name, Amen!

FOR FURTHER STUDY

THE HEALTHY HEART

Deuteronomy 11:18-20
Psalm 40:8; 51:10-12; 73:25-26
Proverbs 12:25; 17:22
Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26
Hebrews 10:22-23

THE POWER OF HIS WORD

Psalm 107:20
Isaiah 55:10-11
Jeremiah 23:29


LOOKING & LISTENING TO GOD

Proverbs 18:15
Isaiah 50:4-5
Luke 10:38-42
John 10:4,16,27
Revelation 3:20

John 17:17; Ephesians 5:26
Hebrews 4:12

NOTES

1. Adapted from *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, Merrill F. Unger (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1988) p. 1335; and *Information on a Mustard Seed* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mustard_seed, retrieved 6/10/09).
2. Dr. Lester Sumrall, *Faith Can Change Your World* (South Bend, IN: Sumrall Publishing, 1999) p. 78.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
4. Quotes by John Bunyan (<http://dailychristianquote.com/dcqbunyan.html>, retrieved 6/22/09).
5. *Thayer's Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Joseph H. Thayer (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House Company, 1977) p. 576.
6. Hannah Whitall Smith, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* (Gainesville, FL: Bridge-Logos, 1998) p. 22.
7. *Noah Webster's First Edition of an American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828), Republished in facsimile edition by Foundation for American Christian Education (San Francisco, CA 1995).
8. Frances J. Roberts, *Come Away My Beloved* (Ojai, CA: King's Farspan, Inc., 1973) p. 22.
9. Quotes by Leonard Ravenhill (<http://dailychristianquote.com/dcqravenhill.html>, retrieved 6/22/09).
10. Rick Renner, *Sparkling Gems from the Greek* (Tulsa, OK: Teach All Nations, 2003) p. 370.
11. *Ibid.*, adapted from pp. 918-919.
12. Joyce Meyer, *Battlefield of the Mind* (New York, NY: FaithWords, 2002) p. 181.



And so, dear brothers and sisters, I
plead with you to *give your **bodies***
to God. Let them be a living and holy
sacrifice—the kind he will accept.
When you think of what he has
done for you, is this too much to ask?

Don't copy the behavior and customs
of this world, but let God transform
you into a new person by *changing*
*the way you **think***. Then you will
know what God wants you to do, and
you will know how good and pleas-
ing and perfect his will really is.

—Romans 12:1-2 NLT

xtraordinary