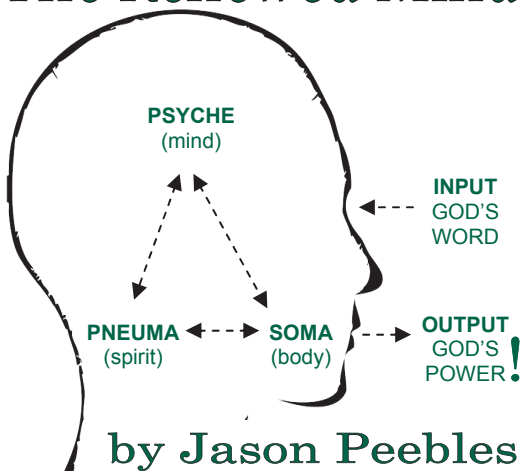


The Renewed Mind



One of the most important subjects that you can study is how your thought processes can influence your overall success in life. Regardless of what you may be experiencing right now, your future can be filled with God's success. But in order to experience it, you must avail yourself to the right "tools." **Some people erroneously think that success just happens – but the truth is, the way you think has everything to do with what you get out of life.** The wonderful news is that God created your mind in such a way that it has creative abilities to "produce" what you plant in it. Thus, you must learn to plant the right "seeds" in your heart and mind.

Your Future

In the *Parable of the Sower* (Mark 4), Jesus gives us a lesson on how your future will be determined by the kind of "seeds" that you plant in your heart. Just like the soil of a garden has innate ability to germinate seeds and produce a crop, so your heart has the ability to produce a future crop too. Another passage that links your heart and mind to what your future holds is Romans 12:2,3. It connects the idea of renewing your mind to finding and fulfilling God's will. It says, "*And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the*

renewing of your mind; **THAT** you may prove what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God. “**Do you see the connection? The way you think is tied to your future and the will of God.**”



The Garden of Your Heart

Let's further consider the idea of a garden, the seeds that are planted in it, the soil, and the future crop that is ultimately produced. You don't have to be a farmer to understand these basic principles. **It's important to understand the different roles that the "soil" and the "seed" have. Both are important.** In the *Parable of the Sower*, Jesus teaches that your heart functions like the soil in a garden. It has creative ability to germinate what you plant in it and produce a crop. But the seed is important too. Think about it. The "type" seed obviously determines the "type" crop. The seed has the DNA code to determine the harvest – not the soil. Hence, apple seeds produce apples and corn seeds produce corn. In reality, the soil doesn't care what type of seed that is planted. The soil will germinate whatever seed you plant in it. **In a similar way, your heart acts like soil. That's the way God created you. Your heart will go to work on whatever seed you give it and begin the germination process.** That's why Jesus said that we should plant the "seed" of God's Word in our hearts (Mark 4:14). ***Before reading further, take a moment to read my footnote on the Biblical term "heart".*

Now let's apply these simple truths to what Jesus taught about your heart and the seeds you plant in it. In His teaching on the heart,

Jesus uses the garden illustration. He tells us that our hearts are like the soil and the Word of God is like the seed (Mark 4:13-20). Ideally, you will make a decision in your life to plant God's seed in the garden of your heart. If you do, then you will get a "God-crop" for your future! God will help you produce success in your life, regardless of what your past has been. **BUT HERE'S THE VITAL TRUTH THAT WE ALL MUST GRASP – OUR HEARTS WILL GERMINATE ANY TYPE SEED THAT WE PLANT IN IT!** Why? Because that's the way God designed the heart. He entrusted us with part of His own creative ability. Your heart is designed to act just like soil. The soil doesn't discriminate – it just begins to "produce" the crop once the seed is planted. You'll never find soil saying, *"I don't like corn. I refuse to germinate corn seed! Please tell the farmer that I only want apple seeds."* In the same way, your heart does not discriminate when it comes to this innate creative ability. It simply starts the process of "creating" a crop when the seed is planted in it. This truth highlights the critical responsibility that we all have to control the "type" of seeds that we allow in our hearts.

Now let's examine this principle in the negative sense, to further reinforce this vital truth. Let's consider the seed principle in the life of a criminal. The criminal didn't just wake up one day to find that he was randomly transformed into a criminal while he slept. No, the "seed principle" had been working for some time. Most likely, he entertained thoughts (seeds) of robbing the store or whatever crime he became involved with. The idea (seed) began to take root in his heart and germinate. He probably thought about it and imagined it. Perhaps anger or bitterness was involved. Somewhere in the process, he began to associate with the wrong people who "helped him" on his way. **It's amazing how the path of your feet is connected to your mind. We tend to move in the direction that we spend time imagining and thinking about.** It's as if we are drawn to people and circumstances that help us produce the harvest. And so, you can begin to see how a person is influenced by the seeds (good or bad) that they allow into the garden of their heart. The seed principle is very simple, yet has profound implications for your life and future. Ask yourself some basic questions. **What do you want for your future? Then examine the "type" seeds that you are allowing in the garden of your heart. The**

seeds you plant NOW will determine your FUTURE harvest.

Thus, there's good news AND bad news when it comes to understanding the garden of your heart. The good news is that you can determine the type crop that you will receive in your future by controlling the type seed that you plant now. **Regardless of your past or the bad things that may have happened, you can take control of your future.** And the bad news? The bad news is that this principle works for evil as well as for good. God did not create a race of robots. He gave us the "tools" that we need to find happiness and success. Perhaps the greatest "tool" that God wants you to use is a mind that is renewed with His Word, His wisdom, and His Spirit.

****Footnote on the Heart** (Greek - *kardia*) let me insert a few comments here on the word "heart" that is found throughout the Bible. I remember when I was studying Greek as a Theology student that some of our most intense debates were on the definition of the term "heart." Some sided with the idea that the heart refers to the spirit. Others argued that it's the mind. Still others said that it's analogous to the modern term "subconscious." After years of consideration, I've come to the conclusion that it's all of them. **In other words, to me, the term "heart" is an inclusive term that describes the deepest levels of your inner man.** Why do I say this? Because in some verses the term "heart" is used in connection with the spirit while in other places it is connected with the mind.

The fact that the modern medical term "cardiology" draws on the Greek word *kardia* (*heart*) also sheds some light on the subject. Just like the physical organ of the heart is vital to life and pumps life-giving blood throughout your body – so your spiritual heart "pumps" life-giving forces throughout your life. Proverbs 4:23 says, "*Keep (guard) your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues (forces) of life.*" The phrase "*out of it*" and "*the forces of life*" are evidence that your heart has power to "produce" and influence you greatly. Because of this power, we are instructed to "guard" our hearts with all diligence. One thing is obvious when you study the idea of the heart in the Bible -- it certainly does not refer to the surface, conscious level of the mind. We all have thoughts on the surface level that never influence us. However, all "seeds" start on the conscious level and then root down into the heart (just like in a garden). How far it "roots down" will depend on the level of attention you give it and the amount of emotion involved. Thoughts, images, and life events that are filled with strong emotions (good or bad) tend to permanently imprint our memories quickly and influence us greatly. There's probably even a biochemical process involved. This is why certain things can be so addictive by nature – drugs, alcohol, pornography, etc. **In my opinion, the "heart" is a term used to describe the deepest dimensions of your mind, emotions, subconscious, and spirit – all of which have creative abilities.** Thank God we don't have to fully understand how this process works. We simply need to know that it DOES work and then use that knowledge to our advantage. Jesus taught relatively uneducated people by today's standards, yet they quickly understood this agricultural illustration of the seed, the soil, and the power to produce a future harvest.



As a Man Thinks

Proverbs 23:7 says, "*As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.*" I want you to pause and truly consider the profound implications of this verse and what it means. The way you think influences (obviously) who you are and what you will become. If you have a habit of thinking negatively then you will undermine your own future. We all have "down days" – but if you develop a lifestyle of thinking negatively, talking negatively, and expecting bad things then that is exactly what you'll get. **You can't plant weeds and expect a crop of delicious apples! It doesn't work that way in the natural and it doesn't work that way in the Spirit.** Galatians 6:7 says, "*God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, THAT shall he also reap.*" The world puts it this way – "*what goes around comes around.*" You can't keep planting bad seeds and hope to have good things. If you want your life to change then you have to change the way you think and what you imagine.

In my missionary travels around the world, I've seen people in the most backward and impoverished areas. Many of them have very little possibility for improving their lives due to the type government they live under. Yet, at times, I've seen them rise above it all and end up owning businesses and drastically changing their lives. The strength of the human spirit is remarkable. This is particularly true when I see people who are willing to flee oppressive countries, cross mountains, get on rafts, or whatever to head out for a country that offers freedom. **Without exception, in EVERY PERSON that I've**

talked with who made that kind of step, they had a strong image and hope on the inside, bordering on obsession, to find something better. *With them it was more than a passing idea – it was an emotional seed on the inside. That “seed” is what propelled them to overcome all odds.* What also amazes me is that sometimes people who are born in a free society with every opportunity, end up destroying themselves. They plant the wrong kind of seeds in the garden of their heart and then wonder what went wrong. **Dear friend, the garden of your heart is a powerful “tool” that God has given you. You can learn to harness it for God’s best in your life.**

The principle of the seed can change your life no matter what you’ve been through or how “low” you may be right now. God will help you break addictive habits, overcome mental torments, get you out of debt, and help you build a new future – **IF, IF you will start planting good seeds in the garden of your heart.** I want to pause a moment and say that this is not a “get rich quick” scheme. No, it will take time to turn your life around if you are struggling with big problems. But I know it works because I’ve done it myself -- and so can you. I’ve faced some of the most difficult things that a person can face and found victory by the grace of God. The point that you need to cling to right now is that it WILL happen if you will hold the course. **The seed of God’s Word WILL produce the fruit that you are looking for. Here are three keys to help you plant good seed:**

1. The Word of God

The first key for renewing your mind with good seed can be found in what Jesus said in the *Parable of the Sower* (Mk 4:14). He said the seed is the Word of God. The most powerful seed that you can plant in your heart and mind is God’s Word. Why? *Because it has “God-power.”* As you read and study the Word, it releases God’s power, strength, and inspiration in your heart. Faith is generated. Romans 10:17 says, *“So then, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”* Thus, the way to increase your faith is to increase the “dosage” of God’s Word in your life. God’s Word will strengthen you on every level – in your mind,

emotions, subconscious, and even in your physical body. Thus, let me encourage you to increase the amount of time you spend reading your Bible. Make sure that you have a Bible by your bed stand. Make it a lifelong habit to read God’s Word. And, as you read, mark key verses. Expect to receive God’s ideas and God’s inspiration. Apply the stories and principles to your life. Ask God to speak to your heart as you read.

2. The Holy Spirit

The next major key for renewing your mind is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God’s very presence in our lives. He is “with” all people regardless of their culture or belief – *but He actually lives “in” believers (Jn 14:17).* **The Holy Spirit has a wonderful way of planting seeds in our hearts via ideas and thoughts that He imparts to us. You should become increasingly sensitive to this process.** As you study the Word (see Key #1 above) the Holy Spirit has a way of taking what you read and applying it to your specific situation. In other words, what you read in the Bible becomes something that is personal and meaningful to you – which is a work of the Holy Spirit. You should be expecting this process to happen every day. Let the Holy Spirit lead you and guide you.

3. The Wisdom of Others

The third main area that will help you renew your mind with good seed is to associate with key people. Learn to draw on the wisdom of others. If God is leading you into a ministry, then find others who have already done it. Gain wisdom from them. Don’t try to reinvent the wheel! If your business needs to go to the next level, then find others who have done it and take notes. The least expensive University on the planet is *“The University of Successful People.”* Proverbs 13:20 says, *“He that walks with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.”* Make it an ongoing project in life to find key people and learn from them.

Dear friend, I pray that you will plant good seeds in the garden of your heart and let them “produce” the harvest that God has for your future.

■ **Jason Peebles**

Key Memory Verse:

“Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God.”

Romans 12:2,3

Prayer for Renewing Your Mind

“Father, thank you for sending your Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for my sins. I accept His sacrifice and commit my life to Him. I commit my heart and mind to your renewal process. Teach me to guard my heart and plant “good seed” in the garden of my heart. Thank you for your great love. In Jesus Name – Amen.”

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