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Maturing toward Wholeness in the Inner Life

Chapter Fifteen

With All Your Mind—Thoughts

*May the mind of Christ, my Savior, grow in me from day to day,
by his love and power transforming all I do and say.¹*

1 - In considering the five components of the human person Jesus referred to in Mark 12:29-31, we now come to the mind. It too must be re-formed.

2 - It is helpful to view the mind as being composed of

- thoughts and
- emotions.

These are closely related. We look at emotions in the next chapter.

3 - The first step in my re-formation is intention—an orientation of the heart. I choose to intend to learn from Jesus how to access the new life he offers.

4 - My first step in implementing this intention is to choose where I will place my thoughts. Jesus teaches me to live with my thoughts on God.

5 - At first, thinking about God all the time seems strange, hard, unappealing. This reflects the extent of the damage that sin has caused within.

6 - I am created for life in God's Presence. To live in God's Presence I must live with him in my thoughts. To do so leads to peace, purity, insight and overall well-being.

7 - I need help in becoming able to do this. I turn to Jesus—the Master Teacher (John 13:13). I become his apprentice. He teaches me by his Spirit.

8 - The entire Bible teaches me to center my thoughts in God. How am I to think about the Bible? How did Jesus think about the Bible?

9 - Jesus viewed the Bible as authoritative. He didn't defend it; he took it at face value. He relied on it. It was the foundation of his teachings.

10 - Jesus to the Sadducees: "Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God" (Mark 12:24b).

11 - We have two kinds of thoughts:

- analytical thoughts and
- imaginative or intuitive thoughts.

Both are God-given; both have their place.

¹ Adapted from the song "May the Mind of Christ My Savior" by Kate B. Wilkinson

12 - My car breaks down on a deserted road. What am I going to do now? My God-given capacity to think analytically will be extremely useful!

13 - But analysis, so valuable when used appropriately, has limits. Large areas of reality can only be accessed intuitively.

14 - How do I know that a sunset is beautiful? That I love my family? That I want to study a certain subject? That God is real and I have met him?

15 - Much truth loses meaning when analyzed. Some classical writers equated truth with beauty. Beauty's essence is inaccessible to analysis.

16 - Jesus knew this. He taught primarily to the intuitive. Why? The integrating theme of his teaching was an unseen Kingdom. Its realities must be intuited.

17 - Jewish leaders asked Jesus to explain the source of his authority. He asked them to explain the source of John the Baptist's authority (Matthew 21:23-27).

18 - The source of Jesus' authority was God's unseen kingdom. Its qualities cannot be discovered scientifically or accessed analytically. They must be intuited.

19 - Jesus: "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29). God's kingdom is unseen.

20 - Symbols are vehicles of intuitive communication. Effective leaders know how to use them. They convey meaning directly to the imagination.

21 - The power of symbols is "beyond words." Jesus used them extensively. To grasp the depth of Jesus' teachings the intuition must be fully engaged.

22 - Jesus: "I am the bread of life." "I am the door." "I am the way." "Come to me and drink." "I and the Father are one." The meanings must be intuited.

23 - Meanings in Jesus' parables must be intuited. The kingdom of heaven is like treasure in a field. A wise man sold all he had to buy the field (Matthew 13:44).

24 - Caution: The imaginative mind can also connect with what is

- unhealthy
- spiritually dark.

Its conclusions must always be tested by Scripture.

25 - A plate and chalice are before me as I write. I pause to look at them and pray. Jesus gave us symbols of communion when he invited us to remember him.

26 - Church history is rich with symbols that inform the mind about God: cross, water, bread, wine, oil, paintings, icons. Their power must be rediscovered.

27 - Here mind and soul connect. As the intuitive mind dwells on the beauty of God through the use of symbols, the soul is fed.

28 - Many assume truth can only be discovered analytically. They tirelessly analyze themselves and God. The result? God often seems far away—unreal.

29 - We can reach a point where we "live in our heads." We become compulsively analytical—cut off from ourselves and the Presence of the Resurrected One.

30 - Living in our heads further wounds us. We know tension, uncertainty and striving rather than peace, healing and wholeness in God's Presence.

31 - Many believe we can grow closer to God by analyzing the Bible. Analysis has its place. But in reality, we grow closer to God by living in his Presence.

32 - Beliefs develop from world view. World view is based on assumptions. The assumptions with which analysis begins shape the conclusions analysis draws.

33 - Many focus on the doctrine of salvation. What is biblical salvation? Only removing my guilt? What about breaking sin's power in my behavior (Romans 6-8)?

34 - "As he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Peter 1:15-16).

35 - Other doctrines inform our understanding of salvation. There is the doctrine of God. Who is he? What does he intend for man? What is his purpose in history?

36 - "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). Understanding that God is my Creator is foundational to my re-formation.

37 - Sin left all creation "in bondage to corruption" (Romans 8:21). Salvation is God restoring all things. "Behold, I am making all things new" (Revelation 21:5).

38 - In the "all things" God is making new in salvation, the human person is included. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17a).

39 - A biblical and time-tested practice in living with my thoughts on God is meditation on Scripture.

40 - Psalm 1:2 says of the man who is blessed: "His delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night".

41 - An effective way to meditate on Scripture is to memorize it. Memorizing phrases or verses is good; memorizing complete passages is even better.

42 - If one is wondering where to start, consider beginning with Jesus' teaching in John 13-17 and Paul's teaching in Romans 6-8.

43 - So we pray: "Come Holy Spirit. Fill my thoughts. Fill my analytical thoughts. Shape my worldview by the Bible that my reasoning may lead me to truth."

44 - We also pray: "Come Holy Spirit. Fill my intuitive thoughts. Give insight that can come only from you. Protect my thoughts from what is soulish or dark."

