

Revival and Reformation

Reformation: Thinking New Thoughts

Lesson #11 for September 14, 2013

Scriptures: Colossians 3:1-2; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 10:3-5; Romans 12:2-3; John 10:10; Matthew 5:13-16.

1. This lesson is about the key to overcoming sin. We must learn to think right thoughts. Reformation is all about our thinking. While it is true that actions follow thoughts, it is also true that repeated actions influence our thoughts. Christians who hope to be a part of the new kingdom of God must learn to think in new ways. And the way to learn to think new thoughts is by practice.

It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence. Man will never rise higher than his standard of purity or goodness or truth. If self is his loftiest ideal, he will never attain to anything more exalted. Rather, he will constantly sink lower and lower. The grace of God alone has power to exalt man. Left to himself, his course must inevitably be downward.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 555.1

2. If we want to be like Jesus, we must focus on His life, fill our minds with His thoughts and ideas, guide our actions by imitating Him, and thus, behold our only safe Guide. What does it mean to behold Jesus? We should spend time studying His life, thinking about Him, and we will learn to love Him. The more we study Him, the more interesting He will become.

It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 83.4.

And do not leave out the Jesus (God) of the Old Testament. (1 Corinthians 10:1-4)

3. We do not have time at this point in the world's history to be spending major amounts of our lives filling our minds full of this world's trash. To a greater or lesser extent, everything we take into our minds impacts our characters. Our only safety is in focusing on what is good. (Philippians 4:7-8; Romans 5:10; 12:2)
4. The world around us is full of violence, immorality, greed, and materialism. Each of those things has a certain appeal. Hollywood has mastered the science of manipulating people's minds. Surely, they have taught us that we cannot believe what we see! Billions of dollars are spent by media producers to discover the latest sensation, including new ways to manipulate our emotions, condition our thinking, and shape our values. Can people who are preparing to spend eternity in heaven be filling their minds with that kind of material?
5. How do we control the avenues of the soul? What is the secret to letting in only the good? Surely, we all recognize that we are surrounded by a cesspool which the world calls entertainment. Almost everyone around us seems to be motivated by pleasure-seeking, greed, anger, hate, or resentment. One of the most noteworthy sayings from Billy Graham goes like this: "You cannot stop the birds from flying over your head, but you can stop them from nesting in your hair." Is that what Paul meant when he wrote, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus"? (Philippians 2:5, NKJV)
6. We need to become more and more efficient in studying Christ, practicing thinking like Christ, and acting like Christ.

7. Plato and other ancient Greeks believed in a dualistic world and universe. They thought that everything material was evil while everything ethereal was good. But, the Scripture does not agree with that. The Scripture teaches that we are physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual beings. Whatever affects one part of us affects our whole being. (1 Thessalonians 5:23)
8. Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 10:31; Romans 12:2-3; John 10:10. God has purchased us with an incredible price. He cares about every aspect of our beings. Living a healthy lifestyle means much more than having a few extra years of life on this earth. The most important reason for living a healthy lifestyle is so that our thinking will be more clear and our resolutions more firm in practicing our Christianity. In fact, caring for our bodies can be an act of worship.
9. Jesus repeatedly referred to Himself as light. (John 1:9; 8:12; 12:35-36) But, Jesus intended for us to be lights also. (Matthew 5:13-16; Philippians 2:14-16) If we were to live lives like the life of Jesus in our world today, do you think people would notice? Would people notice if we practiced loving, compassionate, caring lives instead of acting like the selfish, greedy, and egotistical people of the world? We live in a world intoxicated with pleasure. (Colossians 3:1-2)

He calls us to healthful living at a time when millions are dying too young from self-inflicted degenerative diseases (*John 10:10*). In the midst of an immodest, sex-centered, jaded generation, Jesus calls us to something different. He calls us to modesty, propriety, and moral purity (*1 Pet. 3:3, 4*). (*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, for Thursday, September 12.)

Is that possible for us today?

10. Read Isaiah 55:8-9. God is calling for us to consider the very clear separation between our earthly ideas and His heavenly ideas.

God's ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." [Matthew 5:48] **This command is a promise.** The plan of redemption contemplates our complete recovery from the power of Satan. Christ always separates the contrite soul from sin. He came to destroy the works of the devil, and He has made provision that the Holy Spirit shall be imparted to every repentant soul, to keep him from sinning. (*The Desire of Ages* 311.2)

Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God's ideal for His children. Godliness—godlikeness—is the goal to be reached. Before the student there is opened a path of continual progress. He has an object to achieve, a standard to attain, that includes everything good, and pure, and noble. He will advance as fast and as far as possible in every branch of true knowledge. But his efforts will be directed to objects as much higher than [19] mere selfish and temporal interests as the heavens are higher than the earth. (*Education* 18.3)

11. Do your coworkers and those you associate with in your day-by-day routines recognize that you are different from a typical worldling?
12. Think about the record that you are producing in the books of heaven. If you could be allowed to enter heaven and hear your case presented in all its details before the court of heaven, could you vote for yourself?

Many profess to be on the Lord's side, but they are not; the weight of all their actions is on Satan's side. By what means shall we determine whose side we are on? Who has the heart? With whom are our thoughts? Upon whom do we love to converse? Who has our warmest affections and our best energies? If we are on the Lord's side, our thoughts are with Him, and our sweetest thoughts are of Him. We have no friendship with the world; we have consecrated all that we have

and are to Him. We long to bear His image, breathe His spirit, do His will, and please Him in all things.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 262.

13. God is in desperate need of friends. He is doing His best to make us His friends, and He wants us to help make other friends for Him as well. (2 Corinthians 5:18-20; 6:17-18)
14. Be honest with yourself! Does the life which you live match the claims that you make? The only way we will ultimately overcome temptation is through the Holy Spirit's help in making conscious choices at the moment of temptation to set our minds on the things we should. Many Christians down through the generations have discovered that **one cannot stamp out sin; one can only crowd it out by filling his/her mind with better things.**
15. How would you respond to a fellow Christian who says, "I cannot seem to control my thoughts, and they are not always perfect; but, my actions and lifestyle are above reproach"?
16. What about our health message? In addition to our wonderful understanding of Scripture and the great controversy theme, we have been given precious truth regarding living a healthy lifestyle. Millions of dollars have been spent on research demonstrating that those who carefully follow the advice given us by Ellen White will live 10 to 12 years longer. And those 10 to 12 extra years are not the feeble years added on at the end, living in a nursing home! The 10 to 12 extra years that are added are at the best times in our lives. The period of infirmity and deterioration at the end will be shortened. Shouldn't we all want that? And if we practice our health message, our minds will be clearer to comprehend and live out the truths we claim to believe.
17. The 11 disciples and some friends lived through that terrible crucifixion weekend. But, when they realized that Jesus was indeed fully God and that He rose from the dead, they went forth with one goal in mind and that was to tell the whole world. What percentage of our time is spent in telling the world? If someone were to carefully chronicle the details of your life, would spreading the gospel be shown to rate high on your list of priorities?
18. Read Philippians 2:5. What steps can we take to fill our minds with the thoughts, ideas, and actions of Jesus Christ?

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us. (DA 668.3)

19. None of us can deny the fact that there are strong temptations to practice the customs, amusements, pleasures, and lifestyles of the world. How do we abandon those in favor of living like Jesus Christ? If we lived Christ-like lives in our world today, would people notice?

Transformed thoughts lead to transformed actions. Our feelings are not safe guides. Our choices to yield to the convictions of the Holy Spirit, in spite of our emotions, and receive Heaven's power for change, are the pathway to transformed characters. (*Adult Teacher's Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, p. 132)

20. One of Satan's most successful devices is to keep us so occupied and so busy with "urgent and important matters" like earning money and "keeping up with the Joneses" that there is no time for Jesus Christ.

William Dunn Longstaff was a Christian businessman living in England in the
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latter part of the nineteenth century. He was extremely successful in his businesses, and he heavily supported his local church. He also made donations to William Booth of the Salvation Army, as well as to the evangelistic efforts of Dwight Moody. One day as he sat in church listening to a missionary from China preach on 1 Peter 1:16, “‘Be holy, for I am holy’” (*NKJV*), something stirred deep within his soul. He sensed that God was leading him to a richer, fuller spiritual experience. He recognized that change—growth in grace—comes to those who spend time with Jesus and choose to allow Him to transform their thinking. So that evening in 1882 he went home and wrote the old familiar hymn that we sing so often: “Take Time to Be Holy.” It is found in our *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 500. The hymn is the heart-cry of a busy Christian businessman who longed to allow God to shape his thinking as he spent time in His presence. (*Ibid*, p. 133)

21. Every day and every hour, each one of us is being molded and fashioned after the world’s model or after the image of Christ. Are we sure that we are following the right model? (Romans 12:2) J. B. Phillips translated that verse: “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold.”
22. Read 2 Corinthians 3:18. The word *transformed* in that passage is *metamorphoō* from which we get the word *metamorphosis*. *Metamorphosis* is the word we use to describe the changes that take place as a caterpillar becomes a cocoon and then breaks out as a beautiful butterfly. Those are not subtle evolutionary changes! When Jesus was speaking to Nicodemus in John 3:1-21, He called the change a new birth. (Compare Titus 3:5; 2 Corinthians 4:16)
23. We may wish desperately to have Christ-like characters; but, if we are day by day filling our minds with this world’s trash, the result will not be a Christ-like character. We cannot completely avoid exposure to this world, but we can minimize it. And we can maximize our exposure to the thoughts, ideas, and actions of Jesus Christ. And this must be a day-by-day experience.
24. Read Philippians 2:5; Romans 8:5; and Colossians 3:1-2.

The Pulpit Commentary makes an interesting observation regarding this passage. It translates it as, “Mind . . . the things which the Lord Jesus minded” then adds that Paul encourages us to “love what he [Jesus] loved . . . hate what he hated; the thoughts, desires, motives, of the Christian should be the thoughts, desires, motives, which filled the sacred heart of Jesus Christ our Lord. We must strive to imitate him, to reproduce his image, not only in the outward, but even in the inner life.”—*The Epistle to the Philippians* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), p. 59. (*Ibid*, p. 135)

25. These verses make it very clear that what matters is where we set our minds, the day-by-day tendency of our thoughts, and what ideas we love to dwell upon. What is the attraction of this world’s sins? Why do we seem to enjoy sinning? (Hebrews 11:25)
26. Could we actually reach the place where we enjoy living lives like Jesus Christ? Read Philippians 2:14-17. How many people do you know who are living lives like Jesus Christ? Or, even Paul? Does that help to explain why we are still here 169 years after 1844?

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