

Intro Basic to any understanding of Christianity according to the Bible is the truth that God deals primarily with us at the heart and mind level. The Bible does not shrink or minimize being a Christian to a profession of faith in Christ accompanied by redecored or upgraded thinking and behavior. Too often we hear of and applaud people who profess faith in Christ but are content to embrace old ways of thinking and living. It is impossible for God's people to be satisfied in him and to enjoy him without radical transformation of our way of thinking.

Jesus teaches us that our speech and behavior is not caused by external sources but rather is produced by our hearts and thinking. Our speech and behavior reveal what is in our hearts. We are sinners with sinful hearts and minds. Jesus said 'for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks' Luke 6:43-45. Any genuine satisfaction or joy in God in this life must begin with changing our minds. Romans 12:2 teaches us that our lives are transformed by the renewing or changing of our minds.

The first word in our passage of study this morning is important in setting us on the right path. 'Finally' (v.8) connects our thinking with the previous verses by saying in addition or it follows then that if you are going to stand firm, you must begin with new thoughts. Your fight to live in the presence of God by solving conflicts, rejoicing always, being reasonable to all and not worrying will only be successful as you pay close attention to a new way of thinking.

Joy, living in a connectedness with our God who is at hand, requires a change of thinking. You do not enjoy the presence, closeness, peace and love of God consistently because the way you think about your life includes more of you and your ideas than God and his ideas. We are easily moved away from joy by circumstances and challenges not because they are so hurtful or great but because our thinking is not God focused.

Philippians 4:1-9 read/explain/teach 8-9

Admonition to stand firm	1
Stand firm by resolving conflict	2-3
Stand firm by living in the presence of God	4-7
Stand firm by changing your mind.	8-9

Note that the dominant verbs that point us toward application/response are 'think about these things' v.8 and 'practice these things' v.9. Learning these new ways of thinking are necessary for us to be assured that the God of peace is with us v.9.

Advancing the gospel in our partnerships with each other is dependent on new ways of thinking. Note the repeated references to new or deeper thinking in 1:9-11; 2:5; 3:15; 3:19.

4. You will change your mind by careful response to bible teaching.

What is excellent and praiseworthy v.8 has been made known to the Philippians by Paul's teaching and example.

4:9 Both what you have learned and what you have received draw attention to what has been taught. The command to keep putting into practice implies the active, daily connection of these truths v.8 that have been learned by instruction to daily life thinking and behavior.

'Learned' is from the same word family as disciple . . . a learner.

'received' is often used in connection with set traditions or systematic presentation of truth.

Take note of how you process or think about what you are being taught from God's words.

Contrast . . . that was a great message/lesson with what I need to remember, do or think as a result of that message/lesson is . . .

5. You will change your thinking by following godly examples.

The importance of finding and following a godly example is mentioned again.

3:17 keep your eyes on those who walk a certain way . . .

What/how did they hear from Paul? conversations, letters, reports, preaching, teaching

What/how did they see from Paul? close connection between truth and life prison/enemies/death

Pray for and follow elder's example as they are pace setters . . . 1Tim. 4:12; 1Pet. 1:1-4; Heb. 13;7

1Cor. 11:1 Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

Look for examples to follow who value loss as gain; weakness as strength; suffering as success; change as normal; death as life/hope. 3:7ff

6. You will change your mind by concentrating on God's presence.

For the person with Christ as Savior, the Lord is near not far. The essence of the gospel requires the saved person to now live and think in such a way that shows our union with Christ. We were once far away, dead in our sins . . . we have been brought near and made alive by Christ. God's love draws us close. The Lord is present with me now. The Lord is coming back for me soon. Rejoice, reasonable, pray

v.9 Practicing the presence of God results in sharing his peace. What bothers God bothers us. What he worries about, we worry about. His peace is our defender, our guard. Our small and inaccurate thoughts about God doom us to the small thinking of worry, conflict and joylessness.

Paying closer attention to God's presence means an active, progressive strategy to know him better, walk with him daily and worship him above all else. Psa. 139 34:18

6 New Thoughts to Change Your Thinking

- 1. You will change your mind until the day you die.**
- 2. You will change your mind by managing the filters.**
- 3. You will change your mind bit by bit, not all at once.**
- 4. You will change your mind by careful response to bible teaching.**
- 5. You will change your thinking by following godly examples.**
- 6. You will change your mind by concentrating on God's presence.**

Conclusion Some of you have experienced in the last few weeks the amazement of seeing what is in your heart. As we have been taught from God's word, we are realizing with growing discomfort that changing our thinking and behavior is not only difficult, but impossible without God's grace. Fighting for joy and choosing Christ over all else requires that we change our thinking by humbling ourselves before God, repenting of going our own ways and making life changes.

These six truths are a great beginning to developing a personal strategy for significant growth in Christ in any area of your life. Review them. Talk with a friend or spouse about them. Write out a plan to change your mind.

Some this morning need to change their mind about themselves and Jesus Christ. Some think more highly of their own righteousness than they should and think less of Christ's righteousness than they should. Repentance, changing your mind about God, you, Jesus and belief, is the first step toward saving faith and forgiveness from God. I invite you and appeal to you to turn to Christ today.