

## Battle for the Mind – Lesson 5

### The Word and the Mind

#### Introduction:

Philippians 1:6 - *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

The passage of time affects different people in different ways. To some people time is a healer while to others it is a source of frustration. Still others reminisce on the events of past years, either with joy or sorrow. There is, however, one consequence of the passage of time to which we are all subject – we forget! Memories dim and past joys fade. What happens to God's Word in all this? Does that also fade? Of course not! God's word is eternal and we must not forget it if we are to grow in our faith.

#### 1. 'Do Not Forget...'

Forgetfulness was one of the greatest enemies of Israel. Only a short time after being miraculously delivered from Egypt, the people of Israel cry:

Exodus 14:12 – *Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."*

God intervenes and they are delivered through the parting of the Red Sea. Great rejoicing prevails for a time. Mighty miracles are wrought by God on their behalf, yet within eleven weeks:

Exodus 16:2-3 - *And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, and the people of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."*

We could illustrate this further, tracing the ups and downs of Israel's history, when they remembered what God had done for them and lived in the good of it, they were blessed and found success. When they forgot the Lord they fell into spiritual, social and moral decline. Consequently, God kept urging them to remember him:

Deuteronomy 4:9-10 - *"Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children-- how on the day that you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, the LORD said to me, 'Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children so.'*

The sad truth was that the many commands to remember the Lord were also forgotten:

Judges 2:10-11 - *And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD or the work that he had done for Israel. And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals.*

## **2. Us, Too!**

Being prone to forget was not unique to the children of Israel; it is a trait of all humanity. No doubt God has spoken a clear word to you and in the emotion of the occasion you have determined to put it into action right away. Afterwards, you continue with your busy schedule. Suddenly, it is Tuesday lunchtime and you remember your commitment...!

Do you remember your initial zeal for Christ and how you were going to turn the world upside-down for him? Can you remember the excitement of stepping out in specific faith for the first time? Do you recall the impact that being baptized in the Holy Spirit had on you? Because God knows what we are like, the Bible is full of injunctions to remember him and his Word. The prophet Isaiah upbraids Israel at a time when they have rebelled against God:

Isaiah 46:8-9 - *"Remember this and stand firm, recall it to mind, you transgressors, remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me..."*

In a similar way, God himself, through the apostle John, urges the Ephesian church to remember their former zeal:

Revelation 2:4-5 - *But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.*

## **3. Stay Motivated**

In the last lesson we saw how important it is to understand your identity in Christ. We understand that Christ is the goal for our lives, both as an example and as a direction. Our responsibility is to constantly look and move towards him through all areas of our lives. We must now stay motivated. We must maintain that enthusiasm and hold on to God's promises through His Word.

Hebrews 6:12 - *So that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

The word of faith that sped you on your way to fulfill God's purpose for your life must be outworked. For all of us it will mean patient endurance as we use God's Word to remind ourselves of the specifics about which God has spoken to us. We are confident of their ultimate fulfillment because:

Isaiah 55:11 - *So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*

Don't let God's word to you fade from your mind but keep it uppermost. In this way you will become more Christ-like and press on undisturbed by life's pressures.

#### 4. The Test of Time

Abram had faith in God's purposes for him that stood the test of time. When he was seventy-five years old God gave him a promise that he would be the father of a great nation (Genesis 12:2). Yet he and Sarai were childless. God later confirmed his promise to Abram:

*Genesis 15:5-6 - And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.*

Abram believed God. Because God had spoken, he knew he would one day have a son and heir. God then confirmed his covenant by changing his name from Abram ('exalted father') to Abraham ('father of many') (see Gen. 17:3-8).

In his mind he probably tried to imagine what his son and heir would be like. He pondered the things he would teach him and do with him, thus keeping God's Word and promises on his mind. Yet it was twenty-five years before Isaac was born (Gen. 21:5). Abraham successfully maintained his faith over this period by constantly remembering God's original word to him. It stood the test of time.

*Romans 4:20-21 - No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.*

#### 5. Refresh Your Memory

*Romans 10:17 - So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

God's word to us is the source of our faith. Therefore, we need to keep that word fresh in our minds. Recognizing the importance of this, the apostle Peter writes:

*2 Peter 1:12-13, 15 - Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder...And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.*

Refresh your memory regularly. Meditate on God's great and precious promises to you. This will strengthen your faith and mature you into a Christ-like person.

The test of the genuineness of faith is seen when we encounter times of pressure or adverse circumstances which could take our mind and confidence away from God's word.

*1 Peter 1:7 - So that the tested genuineness of your faith--more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire--may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

At these times we truly discover that it is by faith and patience that we inherit the promise (Hebrews 6:12). Indeed, the testing of our faith in this way increases our capacity to persevere:

*James 1:3 - For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.*

In times of pressure refresh your memory like the psalmist who, when feeling low, remembered God's goodness:

Psalm 42:6 - *My God, my soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.*

## **6. Keep it in Mind**

The importance of keeping in mind God's word is graphically illustrated by the story of the men sent into Canaan to spy out the land. They all knew that it would be a land 'flowing with milk and honey' (Exodus 3:8). They had also all heard God speak about the way they would possess it:

Exodus 23:27 - *I will send my terror before you and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you shall come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you.*

All twelve spies knew what God had said. Why then was there a difference of opinion between Joshua and Caleb and the other ten spies about their ability to go in and possess the land (see Numbers 13:26-33; 14:6-9)? It's possible that the reason was that Joshua and Caleb always kept God's word in mind. They believed it and let it color all they saw. So when they encountered the fortified cities and giants, they were not intimidated because they saw them with the eye of faith:

Numbers 13:30 - *But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, "Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it."*

Numbers 14:9 - *"Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them."*

Joshua and Caleb had faith that God would be with them to conquer the land He promised to them.

Even though the other ten knew God's word, it was not filling their hearts and minds. Their memory was short and their confidence in God's word lacking. So when they saw the self-same obstacles, they reasoned in their minds that the task was too great. They knew God's word but had not heard and received it in a way that would produce faith to overcome all obstacles.

Numbers 13:31-33 - *Then the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are." So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, "The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height. So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, "The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height."*

An important key to maturing in the faith is to have a memory refreshed by God's Word. Keep feeding yourself with God's eternal Word! Then whenever difficulties seem to obstruct the path, through faith and patience you will overcome.

1 John 5:4 - *For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith.*

## **7. Stimulate Your Thinking**

What is the first thing that comes into your mind when a problem arises in your life? Is it a cry of despair which leads to a horrible sinking feeling in your stomach? Is it a quick survey of your ability to handle the situation out of your own strengths? Or is it what God says about the situation?

We must train our minds to be so full of God's Word that we respond according to it in every situation. Just as an army trains continually in order to be ready for battle, our minds must be trained by God's Word so that we are always equipped to win the battle for the mind.

After the Apostle Peter's exhortation to 'refresh your memory' (2 Peter 1:13), he gives the purpose of his letters:

2 Peter 3:1 - *This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder*

His purpose was to make his readers think God's thoughts. He knew that this kind of wholesome thinking would lead to wholesome living. Notice in the next verse what he specifically requests them to do:

2 Peter 3:2 - *that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles*

Peter urges us to recall, bring to mind and think about God's Word. And he mentions three sources of that Word: the prophets, Christ's commands and the apostles' teaching. This is what our minds should have an immediate recall to meet every situation life might bring. Sometimes it may seem a lot to remember:

Psalm 139:17 - *How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!*

The more you get to know God's Word, the better equipped you will be to win the battles of your mind. Before long, you won't have to ask: 'What does God say about this?' Instead, God's response will be in your mind and on your tongue automatically.

## **8. Meditate on the Word**

To meditate is to speak to yourself on the inside: to discuss and ponder inwardly over a matter. We need constantly to stimulate our thinking with God's Word. Meditating regularly on it is an indispensable key to living the life God has for us.

Scripture exhorts us to meditate on various aspects of God and his Word so that our knowledge of him is all-embracing and we are equipped for every situation we face in life:

Psalm 119:97 - *Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.*

Psalm 63:6 - *when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night;*

Psalm 77:12 - *I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds.*

Psalm 119:148 - *My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promise.*

Note also that meditation is something that we can do all day and all night. As we do this God's Word finds an abiding place in our hearts and minds (John 15:7).

While meditating, memorize key scriptures – specific promises – that God highlights to you. This may be a discipline at first, but the benefits you reap will encourage you to continue.

### **9. Responding with the Word**

Ephesians 4:22-24 - *To put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Before we came to Christ our natural response to a situation was based in our flesh. However, we are now new creations, made righteous by Christ with lives sustained by Christ. We no longer have to respond and react to situations based upon our old selves.

As we read the Word, meditate on the Word and are constantly refreshed with the Word our natural responses will be based in the Word. As we do this, the old, fleshly responses will seem uncomfortable to us, making us naturally respond as Christ would.

This is a major component in the battle for the mind. As we continue to keep God's Word foremost on our hearts and minds, old thoughts will seem uncomfortable and easily thrown away.

Meditate on the Word and you will respond with the Word.

### **10. Doing the Word**

Becoming Christ-like and maturing in your faith depends on your practical obedience to God's Word on a daily basis.

#### **a. Deeds**

Faith must be accompanied by deeds to be real faith.

James 2:17-18 - *So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.*

#### **b. Obedience**

Faith in God's Word results in obedience.

Romans 1:5 - *through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations*

c. Perseverance

Faith in God's Word produces perseverance.

Hebrews 10:36 - *For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.*

Building your life wisely demands that you both hear and do God's Word (Mathew 7:24-27). As you respond obediently each day to God's word to you, you not only grow in your faith but you will start to shine it out wherever you are!

**11. Conclusion**

Stay motivated by God's Word, the Bible, and his word to you. Refresh your mind with it; let it stimulate you to wholesome thinking; meditate on it; memorize it, and, most importantly, do it.

Philippians 1:6 - *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*