
ALTERNATIVE REALITY

Part 3 - Alternative Story

Our story is one of cultural and personal progress towards perfection, promising life but delivering death. One way or another, whether it's through the educational system, the media, the songs you listen to or the movies you watch, hollow and deceptive philosophies based on human tradition and the basic principles of this world, rather than on Christ are being peddled to you constantly.

But in Jesus is hidden the wisdom of God, an alternative story, an alternative philosophy, found in an alternative kingdom that brings life. Jesus' wisdom can replace the foolishness of this age. We stand out, we are different because of who we are in Christ. We live an alternative reality to the rest of the world because we belong to an alternative Kingdom.

We are supposed to be different to make a difference! The most subversive, counter cultural message of Christianity is the one that finds complete fullness of every aspect of life in Jesus. Potentially the most important may be the battle that constantly rages for control of our thoughts and mind.

Don't Be Held Captive - Colossians 2:6-10

When Paul wrote to the Colossians, the church at Colossae was being influenced by false teachers who were trying to undercut the major doctrines of Christianity, not least of which was the deity, absolute Lordship, and sufficiency of Jesus. The church was constantly facing this idea of religious pluralism and syncretism, diluting the truth for the sake of unity. Paul was anxious to ensure that the Colossians would not be deceived by such thinking and the message is the same today.

Jesus' teachings had a major emphasis on a transformation from the inside out. A transformed mind produces right thinking, right feeling and right behaviour in alignment with the created order and His intentions for this world.

The way we think in large part determines our emotional perspective

The way we think in large part determines our behavioural responses

The way we think in large part determines our friendships and friendship capacity

To make a difference through a kingdom lifestyle is by changing the way you think as you become highly selective in terms of what is taken into the mind, understanding that from the mind come our feelings and behaviours. (Romans 12:1-2).

Change is possible - God wants our minds to be renewed by the power of His Spirit at work in our lives. Change requires:

- + Time
- + Co-operation with the Holy Spirit (Philippians 4:8)
- + Vigilance in a spiritual battle (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

We cannot outsmart or outmuscle the flesh or the devil on our own. Our weapons must have "divine power" if we are going to have the wisdom of Christ to be different to make a difference.

Captured Thoughts

God want us all to live with mental tenacity as it pertains to our spiritual life. 1 Peter 1:13 tells us that we are to prepare our minds for a fight.

As followers of Jesus, we need to become critical thinkers. Even though we have had our minds renewed through salvation in Jesus Christ, we will spend the rest of our lives disciplining our minds, learning how they can become captured to the will of Christ.

Re-Capturing Our Thoughts

Here are three practical suggestions for how you can re-capture your thoughts and align your way of thinking with Jesus' and not be taken captive by the world's philosophies.

1. Discover God's Truth

If we are going to re-capture our thoughts to Jesus, we need to continually remember who we are in Christ and what we have as His followers. When you expose the lie Satan is trying to sell you, you win the battle for your mind. Here are some references found in the Bible as to your identity in Christ:

- + You are a child of God (John 1:12)
- + You are Jesus' friend (John 15:15)
- + Your body is a temple – a dwelling place – for God. His Spirit and His life live in you. (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19)
- + You are a child of God who will receive the inheritance He has promised (Galatians 4:6,7)
- + You are a saint, a holy person (Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1)
- + You are chosen of God, holy and dearly loved (Colossians 3:12)
- + You are born again in Christ, and the evil one – the devil – cannot touch you (1 John 5:18)
- + You have been made acceptable to God (2 Corinthians 5:21)
- + You have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer you who live, but Christ lives in you. The life you now live is Christ's life (Galatians 2:20)
- + You have been bought out of slavery to sin (redeemed) and forgiven. You have received His generous grace (Ephesians 1:7,8)

2. Submit Yourself to the Holy Spirit

The moment we are tempted to get a need met in the world instead of in Christ, we are on the threshold of a decision. If we don't immediately choose to "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5), we will begin to consider it as an option but God has provided a way of escape from every temptation or will give you the strength to hold up under the weight of temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13). As you submit yourself more and more with Christ captured thinking, the Holy Spirit's promptings will become stronger as you tune yourself in on a regular basis.

3. Build Significant Relationships with Other Christians

The Bible says that Christians need to sharpen one another (Proverbs 27:17). As you develop significant relationships with other Jesus loving, kingdom thinking people who are committed to Christ, you will sharpen your thinking and be held accountable by each other.

Living as People Captured by Christ

The basics are what a Christ captured spiritual life is all about. Never forget that the Bible teaches that the consequence of our sin is death. We deserve death, however every day we need to remind ourselves that we are loved, we are filled with the Holy Spirit and our eternity is secure. We are completely forgiven and fully pleasing to God (Colossians 2:13-15). We have been given spiritual gifts, we have the Word of God, and we are surrounded by brothers and sisters in Christ who love us and are like family.

Commit yourself to live as a person captured by Christ. Have a go at one or all of the following:

- + Spend 10 minutes a day for one month reading the Bible and stop long enough to journal what God is saying to you personally. Have someone pray for you and hold you accountable to this.
- + Spend 10 minutes each morning for two weeks listening quietly for the gentle leading of the Holy Spirit in your life. Ask God to give you His mind as you face the many decisions you will have to make in the day ahead.
- + Identify one person who you respect as a committed follower of Christ. Contact that person and ask if you can spend time together in the coming month. Pray for God to use his or her life to sharpen yours.

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss with the group your response to the message outline.
2. What are some of the patterns of this world that you see people's minds conforming to?
3. In what ways do you see God's good, pleasing and perfect will in conflict with the thinking of this world?
4. What are some of the things you have discovered that re-capture your thinking and help you see things from God's point of view?
5. What one mental battle are you fighting now? What are you doing to help you see things from God's vantage point and not as the world sees things?