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UNDERSTANDING THE MIND

Much as the human mind has been explored and discussed, it is yet to be discovered in the laboratory or revealed through scientific experimentation. Indeed, understanding of the mind is not something that even the world's best scientists, doctors, historians, or philosophers can give, for their finest explanations of the mind are speculative at best.

That's because the mind is an intangible, spiritual entity, and only God's Word can shed the best light on it.

Hebrews 4:12 tells us:

"...the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the

***dividing asunder of soul and spirit,
and of the joints and marrow, and is a
discerner of the thoughts and intents of
the heart.”***

This is something the ordinary mind can't do or give you. It takes the revelation of the Word of God through the power of the Holy Spirit to make such distinctions between the soul and spirit known.

So we will begin with a simple definition of the mind:

The mind is the faculty of man's reasoning and thoughts. It holds the power of the imagination, recognition, and appreciation, and is responsible for processing feelings and emotions, resulting in attitudes and actions.

There are some key words in this definition, the first of them being “thoughts.”

Thought(s) is the creation, recalling, reviewing, and processing of images, for meaning, reason, language, and expression.

This means you can create, recall, review, and process images for meaning. In other words, you can give meaning to the images you get. You can also process those images for reason, language, and expression. All of these take place in the mind.

When your eyes focus on an image, it's your mind that interprets that image, and that's when you really see. If your mind can't interpret it, it doesn't matter what the image is, it'll make no sense to you. For instance, if you're given an Arabic book to read, and your mind hasn't been trained to understand Arabic letters, they'll be unrecognizable to you. Your first surprise would be that the words are written from right to left!

In studying this subject—whether in the Old or New Testaments—you'll discover that several words

are used interchangeably to refer to the mind or its activities. Examples are “thoughts,” “reason(ing),” “imagination,” “thinking,” and “inclination.”

Sometimes, you’ll read a scripture in one Bible version where the word “thought” is used, but another version expresses the same word as “reasoning.”

You’ll also find the words “mind,” “soul,” and “heart” being substituted for each other. But the

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mind is not the heart, and the heart is not the soul. Sometimes, “soul,” “heart,” “the hidden man of the heart,” and “spirit,” are used to describe the inward man

(who comprises the human spirit and his soul).

But these are all just generic expressions of the inward man you’ll find being used synonymously throughout the scriptures. And they’re just a fraction of the vast number of synonyms that are used in

expressing the phenomenon of the mind and its activities. Therefore, to better understand the mind, you need to have a clear understanding of the scriptural definition and description of the human person.

The Outward Man And The Inward Man

Man, primarily, has a twofold nature: the outward man and the inward man. In 2 Corinthians 4:16, Paul clearly distinguishes between these two when he said, *“For which cause we faint not; but though our OUTWARD MAN perish, yet the INWARD MAN is renewed day by day.”*

He lets us know there’s an outward man and there’s an inward man.

The outward man is the physical body and its five senses (sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste). These senses are his medium for relating with his environment. That’s why the human body can only receive information

from this world through its five senses.

The inward man, however, is the human spirit and his soul (the seat of his mind, will, emotions, reasoning, and intellect). He's the one the Bible calls "the hidden man of the heart." He's not seen with the natural eyes, because he is the "man within the man."

Now, every one of us is a spirit being, and our inward man is the real person living in the physical body. That's the one who receives Christ's salvation. When you believed and confessed the Lordship of Jesus, it wasn't your body (your outward man) who was reborn; it was your inward man—your human spirit—that was born again.

Your human spirit has spiritual senses, and they function through your soul and its mind. This shows why your mind is so powerful and important, because it is the connector of your spirit to your body.

A Clearer Picture Of The Mind And Soul

Sometimes, spiritual things can be difficult to communicate, but the Bible shows that we can understand them by looking at the physical. That's because the spiritual gave birth to the physical. Hebrews 11:3 tells us, *"...the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."*

To give you a better understanding of what I said about the inward man being the human spirit and his soul, and the outward man being the human body and its senses, I'll compare the nervous system and the soul:

**What the nervous system is to the
body, the soul is to the spirit.**

Just as the nervous system is an integral part of the human body, the soul is inseparable from the human

spirit; it belongs to and functions for the human spirit. You'll get an even clearer picture of the soul with this comparison between it and its physical counterpart:

**What the nervous system is to the body,
the soul is to the spirit, and what the
brain is to the nervous system, the mind
is to the soul.**

This therefore means that the mind is in the soul, just as the brain is part of the central nervous system. That's why you can see (imagine), hear, or feel with your mind. All the things the central nervous system and physical senses of the body can do are actually a reflection of the attributes of the inward man.

Thus, your mind has the ability to see, hear, perceive and interpret, even though you can't physically locate it in your body. It resides in your soul, and is a spiritual entity that only God can see.

The Human Brain

The American Heritage Stedman's Medical Dictionary gives the definition of the brain as “the primary center for the regulation and control of bodily activities, receiving and interpreting sensory impulses and transmitting information to the muscles and body organs. It is also the seat of consciousness, thought, memory, and emotion.”

This is a great definition of the brain, but there's a part of it that isn't exactly right. The seat of consciousness, thought, memory, and emotions doesn't reside in the brain. In medical science and other fields, they know that the brain can be fully functional even when an individual isn't conscious. Consciousness, therefore, doesn't reside in the brain. Even memory can't be said to reside in the brain, because true memory goes beyond recording information to processing it. And such processing of information—usually for interpretation, meaning, language, and expression—

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is not in the power of the brain but the mind.

So the proper definition of the brain would be that it is the center for the regulation and control of bodily activities, receiving and interpreting sensory impulses and transmitting information to the muscles and organs of the body.

Even though *The American Heritage Stedman's Medical Dictionary* goes beyond the scope of the brain in its definition, there's some truth in it; it shows us there's a seat of consciousness, thought, memory, and emotion. That's because Science recognises there's a connection between the mind and the brain—i.e. between the inward man and the outward man—but it doesn't know how to make that connection.

The brain is neither the mind nor the soul; it's a physical organ of the body, while the soul and mind are intangible. However, the body's central nervous

system (the brain and spinal cord) works in conjunction with the mind for optimum consciousness, cognition, and expression. These two—the central nervous system and the mind—are ultimately responsible for the character of a man. This is the connection between the mind and the brain and how they work together.

Educating The Inward Man

The mind is capable of receiving and processing information from the outward man and its senses, as well as from the inward man and his spiritual senses. It is the connector of the physical or outward man and the spiritual or inward man, thus giving the man his real character. The mind is ultimately responsible for the man's attitude and actions.

The best education in the world is an attempt to inform, refine, and develop the mind through the senses of the outward man. This is the most and farthest even the best schools and universities can go: the education

of the mind through the senses. But man has a far better and more sublime potential than this. It is the education of the inward man, the human spirit, which ultimately leads to the education of the mind. This is only achievable through receiving and meditating on the Word of God.

Only through God's Word can the inward man be discovered and educated. You'll see this in **Hebrews 4:12**,

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

Notice it says the Word pierces “even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit.” This means it goes into the very core of our nature to distinguish and

separate between the soul and the spirit. Only God's Word can do that. It helps us discover our inward man. No school in the world that educates the mind through the senses can do this. The farthest they can go is train the mind to become educated in the sense-realm, but the real man—the spirit man—requires a different kind of education.

I'm not in any way belittling formal education, because the better educated a person is, the more advantages he can have in this world. When you know more about your environment, the world in which you live, and the people in it, you have an advantage over the one who doesn't.

Now think what better advantages you'll have with the education of your spirit and your spiritual senses. That's the advantage you get by reading spiritual material such as this that can help you discover the real you and improve the quality of your life from within. This critical education of your inward man is achieved

through what I've termed MIND MANAGEMENT, and it's what Paul refers to in **Romans 12:1-2** where he tells us:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

Notice he says in the first verse, "...ye present your bodies"; this means you (the inward man) own your body. He lets you know that your human spirit has power over your outward man. Therefore, don't let your body control you; instead, take control of it and present it to God as a living sacrifice.

He then goes further in the second verse to talk

about your spiritual education: *“be ye transformed by THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND.”*

Just as a man is transformed through education of his natural senses, your inward man can also be transformed through the education of your spiritual senses.

Therefore, don't be conformed to this world. Don't live like them, or think like them, or see from their perspective. Instead, be transformed, transfigured, and translated by the renewing of your mind.

Don't say, “Oh God, take me to the next level!” It's your responsibility to transport yourself from one level of glory to another in your life. You can live a better and more glorious life by your choice, and He's shown you here exactly how to do it—by renewing (effectively managing) your mind.

A Better Understanding Of The Working Of The Heart, Soul, Mind, And Thoughts

I'll show you a few portions of Scripture that you'll find helpful in understanding the points we've made so far about the heart, soul, mind, and thoughts.

Matthew 15:1-11:

“Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread... And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.”

The scribes and Pharisees had charged Jesus' disciples with the offense of eating with unwashed

hands. Understand that they weren't so concerned about hygiene here, but a ceremonial purification. So Jesus replied them, "It's not what goes through the mouth into the human body that defiles a man, but what comes out of his mouth." His disciples went to Him later, requesting further explanation of this parable, because they didn't understand it.

“And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from THE HEART; and they defile the man. For out of THE HEART proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat

with unwashed hands defileth not a man” (Matthew 15:16-20).

Watch Jesus’ words here. The “heart” He’s talking about isn’t the physical organ beating beneath your chest and pumping blood through your body; rather, it’s the human spirit and his soul (or more specifically, his mind), from where, He says, evil thoughts proceed. He’s letting us know that evil thoughts don’t come from the physical body (the brain), but from the mind.

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This is remarkable! The Lord helps us see the difference between the human spirit and the physical body, and how a man is defiled (corrupted, made unclean) by evil thoughts that come, not from his brain, but from his inward man (his heart and mind).

There are different kinds of thoughts—good and

evil—that come from the heart, and Jesus categorised these as evil, because they had been negatively processed in the mind.

Now, let's read another portion of the Bible from **Luke 24:36-37:**

“And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit”

This was after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. The disciples were all huddled together in a small room, discussing the harrowing events of the past few days, and wondering whether it was really true that Jesus had resurrected as some had reported.

While they were talking, Jesus suddenly appeared in their midst, with the doors being securely shut. They thought they'd seen a ghost, and, boy, were they

terrified! Then Jesus said to them,

***“Why are ye troubled? and why do
THOUGHTS arise in your HEARTS?”
(Luke 24:38).***

Again, I want you to observe the word “heart” closely. Remember, I told you the words “heart,” “soul,” and “mind” are used interchangeably in Scripture. Let’s read from the NIV translation and see how this verse is rendered,

***“Why are you troubled, and why do
DOUBTS rise in your MINDS?” (Luke
24:38 NIV).***

This time, the translators correctly used the word “mind” in place of “heart.”

Jesus had told His disciples He was going to rise again from the dead; then they heard eyewitness reports from those who had seen Him alive after

His crucifixion, but were still in doubt. Then the Man Himself showed up right in their midst, but they looked at Him and still doubted, thinking, “It must be His ghost.”

Jesus’ response to them was so beautiful. It helps us understand something about doubts and the mind. He asked them, “Why do these thoughts (doubts) arise in your minds,” letting us know that doubt is a kind of thought that forms in the mind.

Observe something here about how the mind works. When Jesus appeared to His disciples, they thought they’d seen a ghost, and they were scared out of their wits. These men had obviously heard some terrifying stories about ghosts. They must have heard that ghosts are spirits of the dead that haven’t gone to their place of rest and are wandering about the earth, even though they’ve passed over into the spirit realm.

Just because you’ve never seen a ghost doesn’t mean they don’t exist. They’re real, and sometimes our

eyes and ears can be opened in the spirit realm to see and hear them before they're taken away.

The disciples must have learnt about the reality of ghosts, but you know, people are often afraid of what they don't understand, or things beyond their control. In this case, the disciples were afraid of ghosts, even though they'd never seen one before. They didn't know what ghosts were, aside what they'd heard about them. Now, they thought they'd seen one and almost passed out from fear.

However, it wasn't a ghost they saw, but the Lord Jesus—the One they'd known and interacted closely with the last three years. But now He had a hard time convincing them He wasn't a ghost. He said, *"Look at my hands and my feet and see who I am! Touch me and find out for yourselves. Ghosts don't have flesh and bones as you see I have"* (Luke 24:39 CEV).

And to further prove His point to those who were still doubtful, He *"asked them, "Do you have something*

to eat?" and in response, *"They gave him a piece of baked fish. He took it and ate it as they watched"* (Luke 24:41-43 CEV).

When they saw Him eat normally this way, it dawned on them that it was indeed the Master who had risen from the dead.

Where Did The Fear Come From?

Why were Jesus' disciples so afraid in the first place? Their fear came from the previous wrong and negative information they'd received regarding ghosts. That information had communicated fear to their hearts. Fear was already resident within them, and when Jesus showed up, their "fear files" were opened, and they manifested fright.

Understand this: what we hear (the information we receive) can produce faith or fear in us; it can generate weakness or strength. Fear doesn't exist by itself; it comes as a result of information.

In the next chapter, we'll go further to see the benchmarks against which the character and quality of your thinking are measured. Paul gave us that beautiful list in Philippians 4:8, and it's our responsibility to study it and conform our thinking to God's standard.