

How to Change Your Attitude

The best advice that I could give anyone, other than God's plan of salvation, is to answer the question: "*How can I constructively change my thought pattern?*" God's Word tells us that you can change your habits and be released from your reactions to circumstances that happen to you. You do not have to be impatient, depressed, angry, or entertain imaginations that are harmful. However, you must first recognize your need for changing your attitude.

Proverbs 4:23 states, "*Watch over your heart with all diligence for from it flows the springs of life!*"

In Psalm 119:9, a young person asks the question, "*How can I keep my ways pure?*" and God's answer is, "*By living according to God's Word!*" Which means, to allow God's Word to change our way of thinking, to allow it to affect our conduct. It means to begin to put into practice the principles which are found in God's Word. One translations simply states, "*Fill your mind with God's Word.*" King James translates this verse as, "*Thy Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee.*"

Romans 12:2, "*Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God - holy, and pleasing to God - which is your spiritual worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*"

The 6th chapter of Romans describes the **PROVISION** which God has provided for us. This chapter teaches that "*We are delivered from sin.*" Let me read a few verses from this 6th chapter of Romans: Look at verse 6, "*Our old self is crucified with Him, so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless.*" Verse 14 declares, "*Sin shall not be your master!*" Verse 18 teaches, "*You have been set free from sin.*" Romans 6 describes our provision! A provision has been made to that we might overcome the power of sin.

The 7th chapter of Romans discloses a picture of our struggle with sin. Look at verse 19, "*What I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do - this I keep on doing!*" Verse 21 says, "*When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.*" Verse 22, continues, "*For in my inner being I delight in God's law.*" Verse 23 proceeds, "*But I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.*" Verse 24 carries on, "*What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?*" Verse 25 answers the question by exclaiming, "*Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*"

The question is, "*How do I get the power of chapter 6 into my life?*"

Chapter 7, after picturing our struggle with sin, verse 26 concludes by saying, "*So then, with my mind I myself serve the law of God.*"

Romans 8 repeats over and over the phrase, "*Setting the mind*" Let me read verses 5 through 7 of the 8th chapter of Romans, "*Those who are according to the flesh [that is, they are living according to the flesh] is because they set their minds on the things of the flesh. However, those who are according to the Spirit [they are living according to the Spirit] is because they*

have set their minds on the things of the Spirit. Because the mind that is set on the flesh, brings death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace." (WHY?) Because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God."

I'll give you one more Scripture than I'll put it all together. Philippians 4:8, "*Fix your thoughts on what is true, good and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely. Dwell on the fine, good things in others. Think about all you can praise God for and be glad about.*"

The whole concept presented is "*Fix your thoughts!*" This is a command which requires a response of our "**will**." God's command is, "*Set your mind on these things.*" Our thought pattern is so ingrained within us that it is impossible for us to change. Satan knows how to get us to "*set our minds*" his way and, before we realize it, our old thought pattern is off and running. We need to ask God to "*Alert us, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the moment a negative thought pattern begins.*" And, when God does "**alert us**," then we become responsible to "*set our thoughts.*" God will not do what He has told us to do. Even though God makes available all the power and resources we need to carry out His command, we are responsible to make the choice of carrying out His Word.

Let me illustrate. Out in California, years ago, rain would come cascading down a mountainside, ruining fertile soil and farmlands. The water, draining down the mountainside, created rivulets. Each time it rained the water would cut these ravines deeper and deeper, until finally the rain cut great chasms into the mountainside and fertile soil is lost.

Our thought pattern is much the same. All the experience of our life, everything thing that we have ever done, or even thought about, is programmed into our brain. As we live, our thoughts begin to run along a certain pattern and they become stronger and deeper, until they are ingrained into the very plastic cells of our brain and become a part of our makeup. We "*react*" in a certain way to the circumstances, which happen to us. Our thought pattern has been reinforced until a certain habit is formed. Without even thinking, we react, automatically, in a certain manner to whatever happens to us.

Let's return to our illustration of the rain cascading down the mountainside. Men, in order to preserve mountainsides and farmland, build dams to stop the rain from flowing down the mountainside.

That's what we must do with our thought life. We must build a dam in our mind. God has told us that we are to say "*no*" to certain thoughts, to stop their flow in our mind!

However, we must realize that building a dam is not enough.

To save the mountainside and farm lands, there must also be "*water control*," in order to **re-direct** the flow of the water.

We, too, must provide a new course of thinking. Just suppressing our thoughts is not enough. We must **re-direct** our thought life.

To illustrate: Ephesians 4:28 says, "*Let him that stole, steal not more*" . . . (however, the verse continues to say) . . . "*let him labor with his hands that which is good.*" For a thief to stop

stealing isn't enough; he must also learn to labor with his hands. This passage of Scripture goes on to say that "*Liars must stop lying, but also they must learn to start telling the truth.*"

The point is, that there is a **NEGATIVE PART**, the thief is to say "no!" to his destructive habit of stealing (that's building the dam). The one who lied, is now to say "no!" to lying.

However, there is also the **POSITIVE SIDE**, the thief is to get a job and start earning honest money (The one who lied is to learn to tell the truth) Only then, is the progress of changing complete!

Our negative thoughts is dealt with by an act of our will. *We must choose to stop this negative thought pattern.* However, in order for our thought pattern to be complete, we must, also, choose to replace our thoughts with corresponding, constructive, action, thoughts, creating good habits.

Two things must happen:

1. We must build a dam in our mind, refusing to allow any wrong thoughts to remain in our mind.
2. We must redirect the flow of our thought pattern by developing a new way of thinking.

This, of course, takes God's power within our lives, however , it also takes **an act of our will**. God never takes away our "*will power.*" We must **choose** to fulfill God's commands. God will give us the spiritual power and ability, but we must *choose* to do His will.

Colossians 3:2 commands us to, "*Set our minds on things above.*" God commands **us** to do it! He will give us all the ability and help we need, but **we** must do it.

Verse 5, continues, "*Put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature.* Again, it is something that **WE** must decide to do. By God's help, **WE** must decide to get rid of our evil desires. God does the work, but we must make the choice.

Verse 12 teaches, "*Put on . . .*" This is redirecting our thoughts into a healthy, positive way of thinking. Many attempt to change their thought life by just building a dam, but that is not enough, we must also, "*put on new wholesome thoughts.*"

Colossians 2:5 teaches us to "*Put to death this old nature of yours,*" however, it will not die, **naturally**. It requires *continual* action on our part. Every time our old thought pattern raises its head, we must "*put it to death.*" The more times we put a wrong thought to death, and put a new thought in its place, the less our thoughts tend to flow in the wrong direction.