

LifeWay Bible Studies for Life Series for February 7: Are you in the right mind?

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Our day witnesses huge strivings between opposing forces. Teams strive for supremacy in championships. Individuals and corporations strive for the dominant market share and seek to reach the ultimate financial goals. Nations strive against nation. Human organizations strive against conditions they recognize as harmful to humankind.

As important as these conflicts are, they pale in relation to the foremost battle—the battle for the minds of humans. God, in his Spirit, strives to gain the minds, that is, the entire direction of life and commitment of people. Satan continues to attempt to draw people to his way of thinking, to his manner of considering reality, and to his ways of setting priorities. This month's lessons center on this ultimate battle for the minds of humans. These lessons help us dedicate our minds (our directions of life and priorities) to Christ.

This lesson introduces the concept of two competing mind-sets—the mind of the Spirit of Christ and the mind of the spirit of the world.

The spirit of Christ over the flesh (Romans 8:5-8)

Paul wrote "Romans" to the Christians in Rome with whom he had no direct apostolic contact. He systematically expressed his understanding of the gospel to prepare for his personal contact with them. Paul explained that believers are in right relationship with God through faith in Christ. They will never suffer condemnation (separation from God), because they have

been liberated from the law of sin and death.

For these reasons, believers can be led by God's Spirit to put aside the flesh principle that continues within them and commit to the Spirit leadership that allows them to follow God's mindset. Any who live according to the sinful nature center their minds and thoughts on the things the flesh (natural, unredeemed) desires. Those whose minds are centered on the realities of God and controlled by the Spirit center on God's will. The mindset of the sinful person leads only to death (separation from God and good), but the mindset controlled by the Holy Spirit leads to genuine life and peace.

The sinful, flesh mindset does not submit to God's design because it cannot do so. This way of thinking and living resists God and his will. It is in direct and active hostility to God. These people never can please God.

Believers should exercise their opportunities to allow the Holy Spirit to guide their minds and directions and control their lives so they will please God and experience life and peace. The world may present the things of the flesh in pleasing packages and cry out of the advantages that fleshly living can provide. The believer, led by the Spirit, knows the proper direction is in the mindset that follows God.

Spiritual sight over blindness (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)

People who follow the mindset of the flesh cannot understand or apply the spiritual teachings of the Spirit. The "god of this age," that is, Satan, blinds them to the truth (light of the gospel). The meaning of God's word is covered up in the minds of those who follow Satan.

People who follow the leading of Satan fall into Satan's ploy to turn humans from understanding God's message and following it. We open ourselves to this serious falling by becoming preoccupied with the unspiritual, worldly,

sinful things. Satan blinds people to the dangers of the evil and the beauties of the good.

The Holy Spirit provides spiritual guidance that allows those who accept God's provisions to understand, accept and act on God's great teachings. The truth of Christ reveals the nature of the Eternal God. Jesus is the "image of God" that reveals his nature, love and saving power.

Those who follow the mindset of Christ have the Spirit. They alone can understand the revelation of God. They alone can see the light of the gospel. The proper mindset brings the victory of spiritual sight over sinful blindness.

The mind of Christ over human wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:12-16)

Paul addressed some problems in the church at Corinth. A part of the problem at Corinth related to discord and dissention among the people. Paul indicated this dissention arose due to a lack of wisdom. Even believers can act under the direction of human wisdom. Paul called on the Corinthians to find in the Holy Spirit the real wisdom that would lead to peace and victory.

Paul taught that believers should not be led by the "spirit of the world" that is by human wisdom. Human wisdom is ever limited. Believers, on the other hand, are led by the Spirit from God who teaches spiritual truth to spiritual people. The Spirit guides believers to understand the truth of God and his power.

Persons without the guidance and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit can never understand God's truth. They cannot perceive the spiritual truths that remain foolish to them. Following human wisdom, persons cannot accept and implement spiritual teachings. Spiritual truths are understood only through the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Those who have the mindset provided by the Spirit can understand and evaluate spiritual matters. Isaiah indicated the one who could understand the creation and all in it would be only those who had the mind of the Lord and were instructed by him (40:13).

Many Christians today fail to impact the lost world because they have followed human wisdom rather than the wisdom that comes only from God's Spirit.