

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

A study of what it means to "have the mind of Christ"

"But we have the mind of Christ." I Corinthians 2:16

Prologue – What does it mean to have "the mind of Christ?" An Introduction based on the theme verse – I Corinthians 2: 16.

Lesson 1 –	"Changing Your Mind"	Romans 8: 1 – 17
Lesson 2 –	"Refocusing Your Mind"	Romans 12
Lesson 3 –	"Renewing Your Mind"	Ephesians 4: 17 – 5:2
Lesson 4 –	"Purifying Your Mind"	Philippians 4: 4 – 13
Lesson 5 –	" Setting Your Mind"	Colossians 2: 20 – 3: 17
Lesson 6 –	"Activating Your Mind"	I Peter 1: 1 – 21

Study Time suggestions for this series –

These lessons are designed for you to use in the way that best fits your own schedule and preferences. Whether you schedule a regular and predictable hour each week as your study time or you prefer to have shorter and more spontaneous times to do the lesson is entirely up to you. The important goal is that week by week you find time to focus and concentrate on God's Word and your relationship with The One Who loves you and longs for you to spend time with Him through the study of the Bible. If at all possible, find a quiet and uninterrupted time and place to meet with JESUS.

Preparing Quietly - As you begin your study time, it is always wise to quiet your heart and mind – to be still. Put aside the details of your life and focus on God who is waiting to meet you and to communicate with you through His Word.

Listening Intently – The Bible is God's love letter to you. In it He unfolds His purposes and plans for mankind and for you. It is helpful to read the passage a few times and in various translations. You might want to jot down some of your observations or questions as you read.

Pondering Carefully - God has promised that He will open the eyes of your understanding and teach you His truth. He has promised that the Holy Spirit will guide you and teach you as you focus your mind and heart on His Word.

Responding Personally – In the honesty and intimacy of this time, why don't you talk over your concerns and your questions with Jesus? You can tell Him exactly what you are thinking and He will meet you at that point and walk with you on your journey as you learn to "have the mind of Christ" each day.

These study guides have been designed to assist you in the "Three R's" of your own Bible study – reading, receiving, and responding. There will be introductions to each lesson posted each Friday morning for this study, beginning on April 13, 2012, on the following interactive internet study site – www.westudytogether.com

You will also find this study and many other ones on the website – www.women-in-the-word.com

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"But we have the mind of Christ." I Corinthians 2:16

Prologue – An Introduction to the Study – I Corinthians 2: 16

Have you thought about what it means to "have the mind of Christ"? It's a profound and astounding idea, isn't it? What is the purpose? How does it happen? What are the implications for you and for me?

In his letter to the believers in Corinth, Paul explains this idea quite simply when he says that "those who are spiritual will actually know God's thoughts and the wonderful things that God has freely given us" – I Corinthians 2: 12 and 16. When Jesus talked with His disciples that final night of His life before the crucifixion, He told them that "just as He is in the Father, we would be in Him and He in us" – John 14: 20. It might sound like a crazy kind of notion to those who haven't yet come to know the Savior, but it is the reality of all who have come to Him by faith.

How is it possible for a human being to contain the presence of God and have His mind? It's an obvious and important question, isn't it? Jesus explained to His followers that the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, would come and would not only be WITH them as a comforter, counselor, and teacher, but He would live IN them – John 14: 17. This is the reality that Paul wants the people in the Corinthian church to grasp so that they can become mature in their faith. Divisions and arguments, immorality and confusion had crept into their lives and into their church. Paul knew that there was only one solution to those problems and that it could not come from human wisdom or effort. It would only be possible through the recognition and submission to the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in each of their lives.

While our minds are capable of enormous intellectual achievements and we are capable of grasping concepts and visible realities in our environment and in relationships, ultimately everyone is limited by time, space, and energy. Perhaps the greatest of all our limitations is our own selfish perspective and interests. The staggering and yet invigorating promise that Jesus gave to those who believed in Him was that through the indwelling Holy Spirit, they would be able to appraise or evaluate the true value of everything in light of eternity. Then He would enable them to make their decisions accordingly. Clearly, it is the quality of life that Jesus wants us to experience so that He can give us His joy and peace in full measure. It's the way that His Kingdom is displayed on earth so that His glory can be seen. It's the way I want to live my life!

As we embark on this study together, I am praying that each of us will grasp in very meaningful and practical ways what it means to "have the mind of Christ" so that He can accomplish His purposes through us.

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Lesson 1

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CHANGING YOUR MIND

"Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit." Roman 8: 5

It is very difficult to break old habits, ones that have become ingrained in our minds and may have even brought pleasure or satisfaction to us at some stage in our life. It is very likely that there are some habits which we continue to embrace even when we know that they are detrimental to relationships, unhealthy for our own bodies, or limiting to our future choices. The good news is that there is a way to change and to be released from those selfish and harmful ways of thinking and living. That is exactly why Jesus came to our world – to live, to die and to demonstrate His Father's power through His resurrection. He came so that you and I could be forgiven. So that God's Spirit could live in us and actually give us His amazing power to change and to no longer live for our own selfish desires, but for His glory and for His delight. He longs for you to forget man-made rules and obligations, and for you to live out the relationship that you have with Him with great joy and anticipation of life eternal.

Preparing Quietly – As you come to meet with Jesus, why not ask Him to help you focus on His love for you? He knows you, so don't pretend. He accepts you, so relax. He understands you, so give thanks. Listen for His gentle reassurance and feel His presence. "Those who seek Me will find Me. . ."

Listening Intently – READ Romans 8: 1 – 17

Take the time to read these verses in several translations. Read them out loud. Copy these verses by hand and think about what is being explained.

Pondering Carefully

1. What do you think it means to be "in Christ Jesus" or to "belong to Christ Jesus?" - verse one? How do these verses add to your understanding of what this means?

Romans 3: 21 – 24

Romans 5: 1 – 2

Romans 6: 5 – 14
2. What are the various names that are used in this passage for the Holy Spirit who indwells those who by faith have been made children of God?
3. In these verses the contrast is made very clear – a person is either controlled by his/her sinful (old) nature or by the Spirit of God. Believing in Christ does not eliminate the former way of thinking and acting, but it does give you and me the option of not being controlled by it. Do you think this is true? What are your questions? What is your experience?
4. Just before His crucifixion, Jesus promised His disciples that the Holy Spirit would come. What did He want them to know and to understand about the Holy Spirit?
John 14: 15 – 17, 25 – 27

John 16: 5 - 15

Responding Personally

As you read these verses once again, what do you hear the Spirit of God saying to you? Is there an old way of thinking, of rationalizing or excusing certain attitudes and actions, that He would like to enable you to change?

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Lesson 2

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REFOCUSING YOUR MIND

"Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world,
but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.
Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect." Romans 12: 2

When you hear or read the word "therefore", it is always good to pause and consider what has been previously explained. In His letter to the church in Rome, Paul gives to them and to us, a clear presentation of the Gospel message. He devoted most of his message to doctrine and then completed his letter with some practical guidance about what it means to live as believers. He does not want them to miss out on any of the joy of "believing and obeying Jesus Christ." (Romans 16: 26)

Preparing Quietly – As you come to meet with Jesus, it is a good thing to bow your head and your heart and acknowledge His greatness and His glory. Read Romans 11: 33 – 36. Re-write these ideas in your own words. Let them be absorbed into your mind and heart so that other distractions begin to fade away.

Listening Intently – READ Romans 12

Concentrate on verses 1, 2 and 3. Copy these verses and compare different versions of the Bible.
What would be a good title for Romans 12: 4 – 8?
What would be a good title for Romans 12: 9 – 20?
What would be some other ways to verbalize Romans 12: 21?

Pondering Carefully

1. Everything that we choose to do or not to do as God's children hinges on our view of "God's mercy" – verse 1. What is mercy? What do you know and believe about the mercy of God? How do the following verses expand your understanding of God's mercy?

Ephesians 2: 1 – 7

I Timothy 1: 15 – 17

Titus 3: 3 – 7

I Peter 1: 3 – 9

2. Romans 12: 2 would indicate that letting God change the way that we think is the path that leads to change. How does this happen? Are there any clues in these verses that help to explain this process?

3. "God's will for your life!" It's a phrase that people use quite often when they are looking for guidance and direction. How is this phrase used and what does it mean in Romans 12: 2?

I Thessalonians 4: 3 – 8

I Thessalonians 5: 12 – 16

4. If you chose to really consider and believe the truths about yourself and other people that are presented in Romans 12: 3 – 8, would this change the way that you see people and your relationship with them?

Responding Personally

Do you want to actually live a life that is holy and pleasing to God, which is a way of worshipping Him? An easy place to begin might be with the list that is given in Romans 12: 9 – 21. Write out these verses in a list and then start *thinking* about ways that you can incorporate these ideas into your life – one idea at a time, one day at a time – always remembering that the Spirit of God will enable you to do what is good and pleasing to Jesus.

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Lesson 3

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RENEWING YOUR MIND

"Let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.

Put on your new nature, created to be like God – truly righteous and holy." Ephesians 4: 23 – 24

When is someone "mature"? The dictionary uses words like "complete, finished, fully developed, and perfected" to explain the concept of maturity. It is a word that we use when talking about all kinds of development both in people and in nature. It is also a goal in the mind of Paul as he writes to the believers in Ephesus and to us. Isn't it interesting that Paul connects his desire for them to become fully mature in Christ with the concept of "being made new in the attitude of their minds"? What is the connection in your mind?

Preparing Quietly – As you come to a quiet place to hear from Jesus, read Ephesians 3: 14 – 21.
Make it your own prayer, changing the word "you" to "me" and "I" throughout the prayer.
Don't hurry on to the lesson but stay here a while and let Him refresh and renew your spirit.

Listening Intently – Read Ephesians 4: 17 – 5: 2
Take some time to read these verses in a few translations and to write it down in your own format.
Highlight some of the verses that seem to stand out to you as important to remember.

Pondering Carefully

1. When you think about the "new nature" or "new self" that you have as a child of God, what do you think this means?
John 1: 11 – 13

Romans 6: 1 – 14

II Corinthians 5: 17

I Peter 1: 3 – 5
2. There are both positive and negative instructions given in Ephesians 4: 25 – 32. Make a list for each of them. Why do you think the writer gives both ideas? Which list motivates you or helps you the most?
3. There is a reference to the Holy Spirit of God in verse 30. Why do you think that this verse was included in this list?
4. When they are dearly loved, children want to imitate their parents both spontaneously and consciously. How does this word picture – Ephesians 5: 1 – help or motivate you to think about the call to "live a life filled with love"?

I John 3: 1 - 3

Responding Personally –

It's just between you and the Lord. Why not go back and read both the prayer (Eph. 3: 14 – 21) and the passage you just studied. Are there places where you would be willing to let the "Spirit renew your thoughts and your attitudes"? Just listen to His voice and ask Him to make His desires known to you. He is willing. Are you?

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Lesson 4

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PURIFYING YOUR MIND

Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable.

Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Philippians 4: 8 (NLT)

Would you agree that we live in a culture that seems to thrive on worry and anxiety, discontent and criticism? We are bombarded with events and opinions that can easily pull us into a very negative kind of mindset. If the economy, moral climate, and the elections are not the things that distress you, then perhaps it is the things that are much closer to home. Broken relationships, disappointing circumstances, illness, stress or even boredom can often occupy our thoughts both day and night. It was true for the believers in the early church and it is still true today. How do we break that cycle and find the joy and peace that would make us content?

Preparing Quietly - As you come to hear from Jesus, read Philippians 2: 5 – 11. Some translations use the word attitude in verse 5, but think about it this way – "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus". (NKJ)
What was His attitude when "He became the Son of Man so that you could become a child of God"?
What are the desires of His heart for you to understand and to think about?

Listening Intently – READ Philippians 4: 4 – 13

This would be a good passage to copy down from your favorite translation.

Then you could read it every day, underline certain verses, and remind yourself of these truths.

Pondering Carefully - There are some final things that Paul wants to write about before he concludes this letter.

1. How is it possible to rejoice or be full of the joy of Lord all the time? Or is it possible?

Do you know some believers who actually think this way and then experience the joy that God has promised to us as His children?

John 15: 9 - 11

John 16: 24 and 13

Romans 15: 13

2. What is the difference between these 2 phrases? "The peace of God" – vs. 7 and "the God of peace" – vs. 9?
How are both of these ideas helpful as an antidote to worry and anxiety?

Isaiah 26: 3

John 14: 27

Galatians 5: 22 – 23

II Thessalonians 3: 16

3. What are some synonyms and antonyms for Paul's words in his practical advice on things to focus on?

For example - **True** - Facts, Reality

Lies, errors, untruth, speculation, rumor

Noble - Honorable

Right -

Responding Personally

Here is a truth that you might want to discuss with Jesus – "I can do all things through Him who gives me strength". It is His promise to you, but until you integrate it into your thinking, which means your heart and your mind, it will not become a reality. How about talking it over with the One who knows you and loves you beyond your comprehension?

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Lesson 5

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SETTING YOUR MIND

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. **Set your minds** on things above, not on earthly things. Colossians 3: 1 -2

Religion is about rules and regulations. Do this and don't do that and perhaps if you are good enough you will be worthy of God's attention or whatever rewards you are seeking for the future. It is the way of our culture, isn't it? It is through our performance that we are graded, promoted, paid, and find gratification. It is through effort, concentration and determination that success is possible. That's what makes our Christian faith so dramatically different, isn't it? No longer is our destiny determined by our own strength or wisdom, but it is totally dependent on Jesus. By His grace we have been made totally new and by His resurrection power, we have been "made alive with Christ". Think about it . . .

Preparing Quietly – Take time for some quiet moments of reflection. Read Colossians 2: 6 – 7.
What relevance do these verses have to you today?

Listening Intently – **READ Colossians 2: 20 – 3: 17**
Take some time to read these verses in a few translations.
Highlight some of the phrases that stand out to you as important to remember and to consider.

Pondering Carefully

1. How is your relationship to Christ described in these verses?
2. How do you think that focusing your heart and mind on the realities of your new life in Christ, will actually bring about changes in your behavior? How would you explain this to someone else?
3. Make two lists. The first one will be all of the things that are a part of our natural or sinful nature. The second one will include what the person who is living out their new life "in Christ" will choose to do. Remind yourself as you do this that neither the negative nor the positive list are your rules so that you can earn any favor with The One who totally loves you already. They are guidelines so that you know how to respond to the mercy and grace that God has shown to you already.
4. How are these ideas the same or different from the ones that you studied in Ephesians 4: 25 – 5: 2?
5. Why do you think that verses 15 – 17 are important for us to know? Could you implement these ideas into your relationships in some new ways?

Responding Personally –

What do you hear the Spirit of the Lord whispering into your mind and heart? Is it peace that you need? He will give it to you? Is it a spirit of gratitude that you want? He will show you how. Is it encouragement from others? He will provide. Is it a consciousness of His presence? Ask Him and He will surprise you. Then give Him thanks!

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ACTIVATING YOUR MIND

Therefore, **prepare your minds for action**; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. 1 Peter 1: 13

What do you picture when you hear the phrase "gird up the loins of your mind"? Newer translations have simplified that idea by using the words "prepare your minds" or "think clearly", but the more literal translation gives a word picture that was familiar to the early believers and actually can be very helpful to us. First century men wore long, flowing robes which needed to be gathered up and tied around the waist with their belts whenever they wanted to move quickly or freely or go into battle. The dictionary explains that the word *gird* means to fasten securely or to prepare (oneself) for action. Why do you think that Peter urges his readers to keep their mind active and alert at all times?

Preparing Quietly – *"Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty! All Thy works shall praise Thy name in earth and sky and sea. Holy, Holy, Holy! Merciful and mighty! God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!"*

In these quiet moments, read Revelation 4: 8 – 11 and let Jesus embrace you with an awareness of His holiness.

Listening Intently – I Peter 1: 1 – 21

As you read this introduction to the letter that Peter wrote to these believers, what do you think was his reason for writing to them? Read these opening verses enough times to understand his passion and concern.

Pondering Carefully

1. How does Peter describe the people to whom he is writing – verses 1 and 2?
What can you learn about the triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – from this whole passage?
2. Try to put verses 3 – 12 into your own words. What truths is Peter reminding them of?
What are the blessings that we have because of the mercy of God?
3. What is the purpose of our present trials and grief? How are they compatible with experiencing joy?
4. What do you think the word "holy" means? Write out your definition of "holy"?
Do you think it is possible for us to be "holy"? If so, how is it possible?
5. The idea of "self-control" is in I Peter 1: 13, 4:7, and 5: 8. Some translations use the words "sober-minded".
How does this expand your idea of self-control? Why would this be important?
Why would this be important to consider?
Galatians 5: 22

II Peter 1: 5 – 8

Responding Personally –

It's really a very simple idea that God is asking us to keep clearly and constantly in our minds - "BE LIKE ME".
Ask the Lord Jesus what this might mean for you in your thought life, in your relationships and in your goals?

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