

MANAGING YOUR

MIND By MaryBeth Wimmer

Chapter 1 **What were you thinking?**

When I was young, after doing something incredibly dumb, my father would ask, “What were you thinking?” I never had an answer. Things remained that way well into my adult years. I would even ask myself that question after doing stupid stuff.

Before I could manage my own mind I had to realize some very basic things. Firstly, I needed to understand just what a mind is. One day, in church I heard an answer that really resonated with me. It sounded true, and indisputable, and this teaching began my journey to become a manager of my own mind.

I'm no preacher, but here is that paradigm-shifting truth that began my journey. We, human beings, are all Spirits! I used to think I was my body and thoughts. If I am a Spirit, and my body and thoughts are separate from me, who is running the show?

Have you ever heard the saying, “The inmates are running the asylum?” Yes, that's right, my body and mind were running primarily on autopilot. My whole history, everything I recalled from growing up, suddenly became a whole different story. Now I realize that the reason I didn't know what I was thinking is because I, the eternal Spirit, was not involved in my thinking. So, if I am a Spirit, what is my mind? What is my body and what does it do?

Back to the preacher, we are eternal Spirits who live in earthly bodies which enable us to dwell on our physical planet. Think about astronauts. They need special suits to live in an environment their bodies were not designed for. Our Spirit needs a suit in order to interact with this physical world. We are visitors here. Our real home is a spiritual home, with our spiritual Father in a spiritual world.

So, our bodies are the vehicle for moving about in this physical planet. Is our mind just the physical brain? Is it something else? Is it part of a larger thing? This is the part of the sermon that it took me years to integrate. I won't go into all the scriptural evidence here, but the mind is part of our soul.

The soul has three parts, the mind, the will, and the emotions. Our minds and emotions are two distinct things. Bear with me, it will soon make perfect sense and science has even backed this idea. Scientists now know that thoughts create the 5 basic emotions. Mad, sad, glad, fear, and disgust are the building blocks of all emotions. Emotions are very important and useful in our embodied experience.

Since I was a child I had problems with anxiety. The feeling and sensations of fear would come suddenly upon me. But, I wasn't thinking scary stuff, so where did the emotions come from? Eureka! I, the Spirit, was not involved with the scary thoughts that were causing the emotions and the sensations in my body. My mind was creating thoughts automatically.

The brain and mind are like a computer and software. My mind thinks thoughts (operating system) inside my brain (hardware) which causes synapses to fire, creating chemicals to be released, which causes emotions to be stirred, which causes the brain to send signals to the body, which causes a needed action. This sequence is very important for

our physical safety.

For example, the eye, our computer camera, sees a lion. The mind, which is always scanning the brain's inputs, thinks about the danger that the lion represents. The mind thinks it is a high priority to escape the danger and the emotion of fear is activated. Emotions are like subroutines that

prime the body to take action. The emotion of fear pumps the body full of adrenaline so we can move faster and FLEE the danger, or it pumps up the muscles so we can FIGHT the danger, or it causes the thoughts to fly faster so you can find a hiding spot and FREEZE until the danger is over.

So, our mind is designed to continually observe and think. It does this in the background all the time. It does not make judgments on the quality of the thoughts. It is just always observing, scanning, and looking for ways to keep the body alive. That is the mind's sacred duty. It protects the body by initiating thoughts and plans. In essence, it is a factory of thoughts. But, every factory needs a manager.

Chapter 2 Quality Thought Control

The mind is constantly thinking. Most of us never stop to listen to what is going on in there. If you ever tried meditating, emptying your mind, and focus on your breath, you soon realize just how out of control your thought factory is. This may age me, but I think about that iconic episode of I Love Lucy where Lucille Ball's character is wrapping candies in a candy factory trying to keep up with the conveyor belt. The candies are coming too quickly for her to wrap, so she stuffs them in her mouth and her blouse and her hat. If you have never seen this, it is quite funny and I suggest you Google it for the sheer joy it will bring.

Scientists call the out-of-control thoughts the monkey mind. Think of a room full of monkeys, screeching while swinging, jumping, and tossing

stuff about. Not much good reasoning can happen in that atmosphere. There is a time and place for a barrel of monkeys, like when you need to brainstorm a new way of doing things, or come up with an invention, monkey brain is great! Your mind is throwing out ideas like throwing spaghetti against a wall to see what sticks.

Whether spaghetti or monkeys, there needs to be an observer who is outside of this process. The mind needs someone who can judge the value of the thoughts, someone who can reign in the chaos. Enter the will. Remember that the soul consists of your mind, will, and emotions. We discussed that the mind generates thoughts that cause emotional generation. The third part of our soul is the will.

The will makes choices. God asks us to choose each day whether we will serve Him. Each day we are in a valley called decision. This valley is between two mountains, the mountain of blessings and the mountain of curses. Throughout the Bible, we are told about the two paths humans can take. But, the choice isn't always obvious.

If you want your will to make good choices, you must fill your mind with the word of God. God tells us what type of thoughts we are to think. He tells us to test every thought and keep only what is good. We are to test the thoughts by this measure, "whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." Phil 4:8. In our society though, it can be hard to discern what is true, or any of the rest. The truth seems to change daily.

Jesus said He is the truth. He also said if we look upon Him, we have seen the Father because they are one. He told his followers to wait for the Spirit because it would guide them into all truth. God is truth, Jesus is truth, and the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth. The measure of truth must be the word of God, not some fluctuating societal standard.

If our mind is the thought factory and our will chooses which thoughts we keep in our mind, then our will acts as a quality control manager. Our will needs to ensure factory compliance with the designer's spec sheet. Our will needs to ensure that the warehouse is filled with quality raw materials. People say a lot about willpower. Your will is only as powerful as the thoughts it chooses to store in the warehouse.

Chapter 3 Thought's Raw Material

Every factory needs the raw materials to create the end product. These raw materials are the factory's treasures. The factory takes these treasures and creates goods. The end product is only as good as the raw materials used to create it. From the treasury of the heart, the mouth speaks. The mouth's utterance is the end product of the thought factory.

With the heart we believe and with the mouth, we confess. So the heart is the place where thoughts turn into beliefs. Humans are full of beliefs, some are true and some are not. When I was young I believed that when it was raining on me, it was raining everywhere. That belief started as a thought based on the observation of natural phenomena. So, my mind observed rain, the cloud-covered sky the clearing of clouds and the rain stopping. I also knew of a story about a flood that began as a worldwide rain. My mind concluded that it rained everywhere at once.

We all have faulty beliefs. A good definition of belief is a habitual thought that becomes automatic. Once my mind thought it had investigated rain enough, it stopped looking for new evidence about rain and automated the thoughts about rain into my worldwide rain belief. With my heart, I believed that it rained everywhere at once. God warns us that the heart is deceitful above all things. We can be deceived in our hearts, and in our beliefs. Without the knowledge of the truth to measure my faulty thoughts against, my will placed that habituated

thought into my storehouse.

A good man out of the good treasure of his heart will bring forth (out of his mouth) good. An evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth (speaks) evil. So the question is, what are you treasuring in your heart? What are you thinking often enough that it becomes a belief? Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word. So does doubt. Doubt comes from hearing the anti-word.

In the Garden of Eden, God told Adam not to eat from the Tree of knowledge of good and evil. Eve heard from the serpent a new thought. This thought was against what God had said. The serpent told Eve she would NOT die from eating this fruit. Eve now had 2 thoughts in her mind. Her will chose to believe the new thought. She was deceived. Her heart took hold of this new thought and added a thought that the fruit looked like good food. With this evil treasure in her heart, she gave some fruit to Adam who was with her. Now, if I hand something to my husband, he won't know what to do with it until I say something. I believe Eve, out of the evil treasure in her heart, told Adam that he should eat this good food and become wise.

It is no wonder why David asked God to create in him a new heart. God promised to take out of his people the stone heart and to replace it with a flesh heart. We should desire that the meditation of our heart be pleasing to God. Meditation is ruminating, or tumbling a thought around. Many of us meditate often without realizing it. We call it worry. Worry is a meditation on a negative thought.

So now that we know all the pieces to our thought factory, let us put it all together so we can become effective managers of our minds.

Chapter 4 Cleansing the House of Thoughts

The will needs to clean out the old inventory of thoughts in your mind.

It does this by setting your mind on things above and washing the mind with the water of the word.

James 1:21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

When we receive salvation, it is a free gift of God for believing in the atonement of our sins through the blood of Jesus. This is spiritual salvation, our spirit is changed instantly from death to life. James is mentioning another salvation, an ongoing process of implanting God's word into our souls.

Why is this an ongoing process? Because our soul is constantly thinking. It is unregulated unless our will is governed by our spirit. This is a process of laying aside the will to sin and receiving the will to follow the Word.

Romans 12:2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will.

Here we see that the mind must be renewed for transformation to take place. The transformation happens in testing the thoughts of the mind by God's will or words. Our will must use the Word of God as the testing standard. I gave one standard in a previous chapter, Phil. 4:8. Another standard is in 1Corinthians 13:4-7.

⁴*Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

If our only command is to love God and people then our thoughts must be loving of God and people. Our thoughts create emotions, and our

emotions initiate actions. What we think, we become.

Proverbs 23:7 *For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he*

To become an effective manager of your mind, you must sift your thoughts using the sieve of God's word.

2 Corinthians 10:5 *We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ*

Take God's word as the weapon that it is. Use its power to come against those ingrained thoughts and patterns of belief that have been in you since childhood. You have been given power, love, and a sound mind to combat fear.

Matt. 12:34 tells us that out of the things treasured up in our heart, we will speak and bring forth good things, and so we must treasure up those glorious promises of God and speak them out loud as God Himself spoke our world into being. This will displace those fearful thoughts and create a new life of courage.