

Renewing the Mind in Worship

Series: Thoughts on Worship

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Call to Worship: Colossians 3:1–17

Have you ever thought about those words we have just sung together?

Ancient words, ever true
Changing me and changing you
We have come with open hearts
O let the ancient words impart

[[Ancient Words](#) (Lynn DeShazo) • CCLI Song #2986399]

It is a glorious prayer desiring that the truth that resounds in God's heart, would also resound in us—that God would impart His Word to us in a way that changes us—reshapes our thinking and living—and renews us.

Tonight we are returning to our study "Thoughts on Worship." Our focus in this message will be on **worship and the mind**. We are in constant need of reformation in our thinking. Worship is a wonderful means that God uses to sanctify us and keep us pointed to Christ. As we have just sung—we need God's Word to change us, to transform us, to renew us.

Specifically, I want to address two questions:

1. Why be concerned with the mind in worship?
2. What takes place in the mind in worship?

I will then conclude with some practical ways we can pursue God in worship with the mind.

Let's begin with the first question—

I. Why be concerned with the mind in worship?

There are 3 truths about the mind that we see highlighted in Scripture.

1. Our minds are darkened—by nature

In ourselves we have no light. Outside of Christ and the power of the gospel, we do not have ability to understand or think rightly. We don't think in right ways about God, about the world, or about ourselves. Paul tells us in—

1 Corinthians 2:14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Paul describes the plight of natural man in—

Romans 1:20–21 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but **became futile in their thoughts**, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Later in Romans 8, he says:

Romans 8:6–7 (ESV) For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; **indeed, it cannot**.

Apart from the grace of God, we have no ability to see or understand or submit ourselves to the truth of Scripture. If we are to worship God, we need Him to give us spiritual light and sight. We need Him to open our minds to hear and receive truth.

2. Our minds are besieged—by Satan and the world

We are under attack and surrounded. Paul reminds us in Ephesians 6 that we are engaged in spiritual warfare. Our minds are a battlefield in that war. We have an enemy of our soul who seeks to deceive us and blind us and keep us in darkness. We read in—

2 Corinthians 4:3–4 But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, **whose minds** the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

We are described in Ephesians 2 as those

Ephesians 2:1–3 ... who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh **and of the mind**, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

Not only is the mind dark without Christ—it is under siege. And even after we come to Christ and have His light, there is much to distract us from God and hinder us in our pursuit of holiness. Paul

expresses his fear in 2 Corinthians 11:3 that the craftiness of Satan might somehow corrupt our minds from the simplicity that is in Christ.

It is essential that we give attention to the mind and fortify our thoughts with God's Word—continually keeping Christ and His gospel foremost in our thinking, so we can recognize evil—to stand against it when needed; to flee from it when needed—and so we can know the truth and embrace it and set the course of our life by it.

It is God's will that we engage our minds in the spiritual battle and arm ourselves with knowledge and obedience to His Word. There is not one thought that crosses our minds that we can allow to go unchallenged. Paul says in—

2 Corinthians 10:4–6 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing **every thought into captivity** to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

We must bring the thoughts and imaginations of our mind before the rule of Scripture—setting them under its light and submit them to God's revealed and holy will.

3. Our minds are impressionable—by God's design

Why is the mind such a prize for Satan? Why is it such a battlefield for the soul? It is a prize because it is God's. God has made us to be vessels, to be reflectors. He created us to reflect His glory—to ponder His attributes and perfection and wonder at His holiness and moral excellence. He made it to absorb and delight in truth and righteousness.

Paul tells us in Romans 8:29 that God foreknew and predestined His people to be conformed to the image of His Son. It is our hope one day to be like Christ. John says in—

1 John 3:2–3 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

It is by God's design that we are made impressionable. He describes Himself as the **Potter** and us as the **clay**. He is the One who has given us the capacity to learn and grasp and know. According to Genesis 1:26 we were made to bear God's image. Part of being made in the image of God is our ability to know Him and love Him and serve Him with our minds. His has given us a measure of some of His attributes—an ability to understand, to create, to be just, to show mercy, to love, to be truthful and faithful...

We are created to bear His image and to reflect a measure His glory. But sin has marred that image and dulled that reflection. And so instead of displaying His praise, we are twisted out of shape and bent by the evil that is in us and around us. Instead of delighting in truth, we exchange truth for a lie and squander our thoughts in paths that are empty and godless. We must be concerned with

the mind, because we need guidance, direction, prodding and shaping to be made into the person God desires us to be.

We are in a battle for the truth. All of us will conform to something—we will be shaped. Satan’s goal is to deceive us and destroy us by marring that shape with evil. The world is attempting to shape us—intimidate us, allure us or shame us into conformity. Our flesh is weak and ready to give in and drift with the flow. But God desires us to stand firm and resist and fight. And to do so we must engage our minds.

II. What takes place in the mind in worship?

1. Attention and Adoration

When we worship God with our minds, we give attention to the things of God and give our affections, our praise and our gratitude to God.

Colossians 3:1–3 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. **Set your mind** on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

1 Peter 1:13 Therefore **gird up the loins of your mind**, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Giving attention takes effort. It takes intention. It involves all the activities of the mind. We must:

- **concentrate** — focus / participate / look and listen / speak and sing
- **ponder** — contemplate / mull over [truth that is new or not yet clear]
- **comprehend** — understand / grasp / realize
- **meditate** — [letting the truth we know] resound within / preach truth to ourselves
- **remember**—built upon truth we already know / establish a grid of understanding

We must give our attention to God and we must do so in love for God. We must love God with our minds—by cherishing Him and holding Him in our thoughts. Jesus tells us this when He summarizes the Great Commandment:

Mark 12:30 And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with **all your mind**, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.

This was Paul’s prayer for the church. Listen to how he prays for the Philippians—

Philippians 1:9–11 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more **in knowledge and all discernment**, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

As we worship, we set the attention and affections of our minds upon the Lord.

2. Illumination and Transformation

We must certainly and intentionally aim at concentrating, pondering, comprehending, meditating and remembering. But we do so, knowing that it is God who must give the light and understanding, if we are to grasp and hold on to truth.

2 Corinthians 4:6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

We need spiritual sight and understanding. The sons of Korah prayed in—

Psalm 43:3 Oh, send out Your light and Your truth!
Let them lead me;
Let them bring me to Your holy hill
And to Your tabernacle.

We need God to give us light—to make His Word clear; but we can never stop at mere understanding. We need more than light; we need to be changed. We need to take what God has been pleased to teach us and weave it into our lives in obedience, hope and trust. We need to be carved and shaped and recast in the light of God's Word.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

We need this kind of radical surgery in worship as God's Word penetrates our souls.

Turn for a moment to Romans 12. Notice here how Paul describes God's work in us.

Romans 12:1–2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the **renewing of your mind**, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

In these two verses Paul exhorts us to give ourselves wholly to God, mind and body. All we are on the inside and all we do on the outside is for God and His glory.

He implores us in verse 1 **to present our bodies as a living sacrifice**, holy and well-pleasing to God. And he exhorts us in verse 2 to **not to be conformed to this world** [or this age], but rather, we are **to be transformed by the renewing of our mind**.

Our goal is not just mental comprehension of truth—our aim is to become a living sacrifice—a life transformed by God by the renewing of the mind—a life that demonstrates and affirms God's will to be good, well-pleasing and perfect.

What does it look like to be transformed by the renewing of our mind?

Let me suggest 3 ways the gospel renews our thinking:

1) We need to **refresh** our thoughts with the gospel.

We need revived. We need awakened. We are in constant need of being reminded who Christ is, what He has accomplished and why it matters. We need to keep the gospel fresh and new in our thinking. Worship keeps the gospel before our eyes and in our ears.

2) We need to **reprove** our thoughts with the gospel.

We are surrounded with bad thinking and bad ideas—both coming at us from the outside and rising up within us on the inside. We need to renew our minds in worship so we can expose what is false and wayward and filter out the bad.

2 Timothy 3:16–17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

We need to know truth—know doctrine—so we can discern what is not true, and reprove it and correct it and avoid it in the future.

3) We need to **reform** our thoughts with the gospel.

We need to recast our thoughts in light of truth. We need to reshape our thoughts and be changed. Paul's word in Romans 12 is *transformed*. This word *transform* in verse 2 of Romans 12 the same words used in Matthew 17:2 for *transfigure*. It is the word μεταμορφώθη — from which we get our English word "metamorphosis." It means to change form. God is taking us who were once enemies and recasting us as children—we who were far off are now brought near—we who were aliens and strangers are now citizens and saints. God is making like His Son.

2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Paul describes this radical change—

Ephesians 4:17–24 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, **in the futility of their mind**, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be **renewed in the spirit of your mind**, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

In a parallel passage in Colossians 3:10 Paul describes the new man as one who is who is “**renewed in knowledge** according to the image of Him who created him.” Learning Christ and embracing truth is life changing and transforming. We need God to teach us and plant the gospel deep in us. We need Him to weave His Word into our thinking, so we can walk in its light and see clearly the way we should go.

Worship provides a needed corrective to our thinking. It helps us keep truth in sight and sharpens our perspective as we try to make sense of the world. A good example of this is in Psalm 73. In this psalm Asaph is wrestling with a question that confounds him. He sees the wicked, who have no regard for God, and they seem to prosper and flourish. Yet, those who love God face trials and difficulties. How can this be?

Then he says in verses 16 and 17:

Psalm 73:16–17 When I thought how to understand this,
It was too painful for me—
Until I went into the sanctuary of God;
Then I understood their end.

As he remembered and rejoiced again in God’s Word in worship, his mind was renewed. He continues—

Psalm 73:18–19 Surely You set them in slippery places;
You cast them down to destruction.
Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment!
They are utterly consumed with terrors.

What appeared at first to be prosperity was actually a slippery slope leading down to destruction. What appeared to be hardship was actually a blessing. Prosperity was preventing the wicked from seeing their desperate need for God and salvation. Trials were making that need crystal clear to those loved by God.

God can clarify our thinking, rest our hopes in Him and direct our paths as we submit our thinking to His sure and certain Word. Paul says in—

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

And notice that it is not just mental comprehension that Paul has in mind. He continues—

Philippians 4:9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

A renewed mind displays itself as a living sacrifice to God’s glory and praise.

3. Unity and Maturity

Worshipping God unites us and helps us grow together in grace and faith. Scripture speaks of our unity in Christ as being of one mind.

Romans 15:6 that you may **with one mind** and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:27 Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, **with one mind** striving together for the faith of the gospel,

Philippians 2:2 fulfill my joy by being **like-minded**, having the same love, being of one accord, of **one mind**.

And Scripture speaks of spiritual maturity as our goal in uniting and walking together.

1 Corinthians 14:20 Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in [regard to] evil, but in your thinking be mature. [ESV]

Philippians 3:13–16 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

In Ephesians 4:13–15 Paul desire that—

Ephesians 4:13–15 . . . we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.

Colossians 1:27–29 To them [the saints] God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

In our worship God is at work unifying and maturing us in the faith.

So in conclusion—

What are some practical ways we can pursue God with our minds in worship?

1) We need to prepare our minds before worship

Worshipping God with the mind doesn't begin when we try to listen to the preaching or sing songs together here in gathered worship; it begins during the week as we daily feed on the truth.

If you want to increase your capacity to give attention to God in corporate worship, you need to give your attention to God throughout the week.

- Take time to read and memorize Scripture
- Pray and ask God to teach you and help you understand His Word
- Practice daily private devotion
- Practice family worship

Keep watch over what you allow your mind to dwell upon. Be careful what you listen to and look at. The sounds and images and words you take in during the week can help or hinder your worship. Be careful to what you open your mind as you entertain thoughts. Challenge false thinking when it comes into your mind. Challenge destructive thinking that will lead you away from what is good for your soul. Challenge doubts and fears. Don't just let it wash over you and through you.

The more you open yourself to what is false, without consciously recognizing and challenging what is false, the harder it will become for you to distinguish and discern what is false. Remember the promises of Scripture. Remember the gospel. Remember what Christ has done. Look to the cross and cling to righteousness and forgiveness that God has given us in His Son.

- Prepare for worship by reading the Scripture text for the sermon ahead of time.

Use the resources on our website. We post the order of worship, the songs we will sing, the Scripture text for the sermon. Take advantage of this to prepare your mind and heart.

- Get enough rest so you will be alert and ready to listen and participate.

2) Be intentional in engaging your mind in worship

Engaging the mind may mean making the effort to learn new songs. It may mean wrestling with hard truths or trying to resolve apparent contradictions or humbly realizing that God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts and His ways past finding out. It might mean learning the meaning of unfamiliar words or making the effort to ask questions.

It might mean taking steps to stay alert.

- Stand up in back
- Take Notes
 - Listen for main points
 - Listen for memorable statements
 - Listen for summary statements

- If you have children, have them sit with you and copy your notes

This can be a great help:

- It forces you not to write down everything
- It forces you to think more carefully
- It forces you to zero in on what is most important
- It forces you to be clear and concise

[You may need to reword to make something more understandable.]

3) Hold on to God and His truth in your thoughts after worship.

- Review your notes
- Do further study of the sermon text or topic
- Discuss the sermon in Family Worship
- Discuss the sermon with others in the church body

We need to engage the mind as we worship God. We need God's Word to dwell in us richly. And we need Him to illumine His Word and change us. We need to renew our minds so that our lives are transformed and anchored in the hope and trust in the gospel.

God promises in His Word —

Isaiah 26:3 You will keep him in perfect peace,
 Whose mind is stayed on You,
 Because he trusts in You.

This is my prayer for you this evening. Set your mind on things above and you will know the joy of a life hidden with Christ in God.

Let us pray.

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