

Metamorphosis part 3 8-24-03

From The Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren chapter 27 & 28

The interpretation of a word can completely change the idea of what one intends to convey. To illustrate this, I'm going to share some Qantas Airlines' humor. *After every flight, pilots fill out a form called a gripe sheet, which conveys to the mechanics problems encountered with the aircraft during the flight that need repair or correction. The mechanics read and correct the problem, and then respond in writing on the lower half of the form what remedial action was taken, and the pilot reviews the gripe sheets before the next flight.*

Never let it be said that ground crews and engineers lack a sense of humor. Here are some actual logged maintenance complaints and problems as submitted by Qantas pilots and the solution recorded by maintenance engineers. By the way, Qantas is the only major airline that has never had an accident.

Listen to the way the meaning of word can change everything:

P: Left inside main tire almost needs replacement.

S: Almost replaced left inside main tire.

P: Evidence of leak on right main landing gear.

S: Evidence removed.

P: DME volume unbelievably loud.

S: DME volume set to more believable level.

P: Suspected crack in windshield.

S: Suspect you're right.

P: Number 3 engine missing.

S: Engine found on right wing after brief search.

P: Aircraft handles funny.

S: Aircraft warned to straighten up, fly right, and be serious.

P: Target radar hums.

S: Reprogrammed target radar with lyrics.

Those Aussies sure have a sense of humor and a good time with word play. Three weeks ago we were looking at the difference in our understanding of the word 'repentance' and the use of the word in Jesus' day. We learned that it included the idea of a turn around in our way of thinking. We considered how our 'autopilot' had to be reset by developing new habits by the power of the Holy Spirit. The resetting of our autopilot is the reprogramming of our thought life.

I hope that some of you took up the challenge to read a portion of Scripture daily, finding one key thought to recall and apply every time your watch's hourly chime goes off. I've experienced some wonderful encouragement from doing this as well as some conviction about things I need to change. It has been an ongoing repentance experience, that is, turning around the way I think.

This morning I want to give you some more insights and tools to use in this process of changing us into the likeness of Christ from chapters 27 and 28 of The Purpose Driven Life. God promises us in His word that He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can stand. The Apostle Paul wrote: *Remember that the temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it.* 1 Corinthians 10:13 (NLT) There goes any excuse that the temptation was just too much for us. Here are four common ways God has provided for us to escape temptation:

First, refocus your attention on something else.

P= Autopilot focuses on enticement (I keep going the wrong direction)

S= Autopilot does what you set it to do (Aim toward another direction)

The Bible never says to resist temptation. It tells us to run from it, not to be captured by it. Resist Satan but never try to resist temptation. The more you resist a temptation, the more it stays in your thoughts. Don't chant, "I will not". Don't even think about why it is not good. Those strategies keep the temptation before you. You actually give the temptation room to work in your mind when you resist it like that. The thing to do is refocus on something else. Change the channel. Turn to something that is worth thinking about. That is the first step.

The Psalmist prayed, *"Keep me from paying attention to what is worthless."* Psalm 119:37a (TEV) If you hold on to worthless thoughts they will eventually win out. Drop them, and grab onto something worthy of your thoughts. The Apostle Paul writes that we are to be renewed in the attitude of our minds. (Ephesians 4:22-24) We often think of a person becoming a Christian and their outward life changing, but God wants to change our thought life also. He wants us to see things as they really are. That is the mind of Christ.

We are very vulnerable to a suggestion. Have you noticed how seeing a person yawn can cause you to yawn? A commercial for food can get us off our seat and into the refrigerator. Cough during a concert and others will too. Their throats started to itch at the mere suggestion. It doesn't take much to get us thinking in a certain direction, nor does it take a huge effort to shift our thoughts. When you recognize your thoughts going the wrong way, intentionally steer them in a good direction.

Temptation captures your attention, which grabs your emotions, that activate behavior. The more you focus on not wanting to do something, the more you are captured by the desire. Don't argue, hang up and pick up another line. Once you're on to something else, the temptation has lost its power. It may mean physically leaving that theater, party or discussion. If you're standing with a group that is

Commented [notes1]: ²²You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.
Ephesians 4:22-24 (NIV)

gossiping or negative and critical, and your hint at changing the subject doesn't work, then walk away. If you don't want to be stung, stay away from the bees. Practice thought replacement. Go to a Scripture; think about a blessing; sing a worship song. The Apostle Paul wrote: *"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."* Romans 12:21 (NIV) If you're tempted to pout, praise! When tempted to criticize, think of good things you could say. When people are dragging you down, pull them up, and if they won't come up – leave! Don't let the world around you pull you down, pull it up by the power of the Holy Spirit! Don't quench the Holy Spirit with critical, negative thoughts; fan the flame with praise!

Keep your mind occupied with what is good and positive, and the tempting thoughts can't find airtime. That is why the Bible tells us to *"Fix your thoughts on Jesus"* Hebrews 3:1 (NIV) *"Always think about Jesus Christ"* 2 Timothy 2:8 (GWT) *"Fill your minds with those things that are good and that deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honorable."* Philippians 4:8 (TEV)

Defeating temptation includes staying away from areas that you know are tempting and actively managing your mental and media intake. Walk through the trash and you'll begin to stink. You can't keep from getting dirty when you wade in the dirt. Selectively decide what you will allow yourself to dwell on. It is possible to capture every thought and make it obey Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:5b) It doesn't happen overnight, but with the Holy Spirit's help and consistent cooperation, anyone can reprogram their autopilot.

Commented [notes2]: we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.
2 Corinthians 10:5b (NIV)

If you are struggling in an area then you can't keep it a secret. The best way to defeat the power of that temptation is to bring it into the light. Temptation thrives in darkness and secrecy. Find a friend who you can trust to share your struggle with, someone who you can count on to pray for you. That is the second way to defeat temptation. The Bible encourages us to, *"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."* James 5:16 (NIV)

P= Navigational system not working at night (Secret sins affecting my direction)

S=Turn on the cockpit light (Expose them)

That friend needs to be someone who will ask you point blank how you are doing in that area of your life. Once you confess your battle, suddenly it appears as ugly as it really is, and at the same time it begins to weaken its power over you. When you know someone is going to ask you how you are doing in that part of your life, suddenly the temptation begins to lose its hold on you. *"Don't repress it; express it! Don't conceal it; reveal it. Revealing your feeling is the beginning of healing."* -Rick Warren Revealing your secret battle usually means you have decided it will no longer control you. Our pride would have us put on a perfect front to the world. There is no freedom in that route. In fact, temptation thrives on being hidden. In the light, it soon shrinks, losing its power to control us.

If you were strong enough to deal with it on your own you would have already gotten the victory over it. The fact that you are still struggling means you need someone's encouragement, prayers and accountability. Some problems get such a hold that we need someone to help us break free.

What is it that you are pretending isn't a problem in your life? The mind can justify a problem in a million ways, but the heart still faces the guilt and knows something is not right with God. Humble yourself and find an accountability partner, a Christian 12-step group, or your care shepherd. Make it known that you are counting on their confidentiality. The moment you voice your weakness you will notice a difference in its power over you.

The third solution is from the book of James where we read that we must resist the Devil. (James 4:7) First we submit to God. That is what is done when we acknowledge and confess our weakness. Then he says to resist the Devil! That passage promises that when we resist him, he will flee. We resist the Devil in the same way Jesus did in the wilderness. He quoted verses of Scripture. The Apostle Paul calls the Word of God a sword. (Ephesians 6:17) He also speaks of the helmet of salvation. I don't know if the Apostle Paul understood that the head is where thought takes place, but the Holy Spirit does. He's the One who inspired Paul to write about the helmet of Salvation protecting us from Satan.

Commented [notes3]: Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. James 4:7 (NIV)

Satan cannot force a believer to do anything. He can only suggest. Put on the helmet of salvation. Take the way of escape that God always graciously provides. That, along with your sword (the word of God), is your resistance to Satan.

P= Wind resistance affecting planes functions (Satan is tempting me)

S= Read the manual (Resist him with the Word of God)

Don't try to argue with Satan; he's got a lot more experience than you, thousands of years of it. Just answer him with the word. You must hide God's word in your heart through memory to do that, unless you are in a place where you can open up your Bible and just read. No verses in your memory is like no bullets in your gun. The Psalmist wrote that he hid the word of God in his heart so that he would not sin against God. (Psalm 119:11) Satan trembles at the word of God. It is the one thing more powerful than him. If you take my suggestion of meditating on a thought from Scripture throughout the day, you'll find many of those verses are retained in your memory. Write down your favorites on cards so that you can review them. If you really want to get spiritually strong, memorize a lot of God's word. I'll tell you the best way I have found to memorize a lot of scripture during the fellowship time after the service.

And the fourth key is to realize your vulnerability. We all know stories of prominent men and women who fall from their strong faith into sin. It destroyed them, their homes, and did great damage to their church. Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. (1 Corinthians 10:12) When you think you are doing great, watch out! When you let down your guard, here comes the enemy of your soul. You've been seduced into an area of pride that has nothing to do with reality. In that place, you can talk yourself into utter destruction and call it godliness. Jeremiah warned us, "*The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure.*" Jeremiah 17:9 (NIV) Never let down your guard. Never think you are too strong for temptation. Beware of the deceptive promises of the forbidden. Forbidden things carry great allurements but leave you with death instead of satisfaction.

Commented [notes6]: Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. 1 Corinthians 10:12 (KJV)

P=Sensing structural integrity may be weakened (Realizing human weakness)

S=Your sensing ability is functioning well (Too true! Depend on God!)

The more spiritual a person becomes, the more they realize their own weakness and utterly depend upon God. That is Jesus' example to us when He walked this earth. Why did He humble Himself and say and do nothing but what He saw and heard from the Father? It was because He found Himself in the body of man, and He more than anyone else, knew how weak man is. Listen how the Message puts 1 Corinthians 10:12. *"Don't be so naïve and self-confident. You're not exempt. You could fall flat on your face as easily as anyone else. Forget about self-confidence; it's useless. Cultivate God-confidence."*

Do you have those 4 keys to resisting temptation?

1. Refocus your attention on something else
2. Bring your temptation into the light – accountability
3. Resist the Devil with the Word of God
4. Realize your vulnerability

I want to close with a clarification of something I said 3 weeks ago. I said you can grow as fast as you are willing to. That doesn't mean we can instantly mature. The Holy Spirit gradually exposes places in our lives that we were unwilling to yield before. Growth is a slow but steady process. God is more concerned about solid strong growth than how fast we grow. Today we want a quick fix, but becoming like Jesus is a long and sometimes painful process. But remember, it is a process that God will not give up on. Paul wrote *"I am sure that God who began the good work within you will keep right on helping you grow in his grace until his task within you is finally finished on that day when Jesus Christ returns."* Philipians 1:6 (LB)

It takes time because we have a lot to unlearn, new habits to develop, and the world is constantly bombarding us with a contrary message. It takes time because we are sometimes afraid to face the truth about ourselves. It takes time because, like the Children of Israel, we are often slow learners.

I'd encourage you to keep notes of lessons learned and review them. It could save you painful repeat lessons. Don't get discouraged; God is the master craftsman. Do any of you remember the old bumper sticker PBPGINFWMY? Please be patient. God is not finished with me yet. It's just as true today. Let's end on a thought from the Message in 2 Corinthians 3:18b *"And so we are transfigured, (there is that word metamorphosis one last time) our lives gradually becoming brighter and more beautiful as God enters our lives and we become like him."* God's goal for each of you is nothing less than Christ-likeness. Cooperate every way you can in this wonderful purpose for your life by using these 4 ways to escape temptation in your thought life.

Our first purpose is to glorify God in worship. The second is to belong to a family of believers. We've just finished the third purpose, transformation into Christ's likeness. Next week we will look at our fourth purpose in life. I hope you'll join us. I trust you are taking these to heart and finding the real purpose for which you were created.