

Who Am I?

Understanding Why I Think This Way

(Pr 23:7)

INTRODUCTION

1. Good Evening,
 - a. Greeting...
2. Series of lessons on "Who Am I?"
 - a. We have looked at recently...
 - i. Understanding Why I Did That
 - ii. Understanding Why I Feel This Way
 - b. Tonight we are going to look at "Understanding Why I Think This Way."
 - i. A look at the...
 1. Brain, mind, perception, and conscience.
3. All four of these things we must understand if we are to grasp why we think the way we do.
 - a. Have you ever thought...
 - i. Why did I think that?
 - ii. Why did that pop into my mind?
 - b. Though we are not going into a complete in depth psychological examination of the brain and mind we are going to cover the basics that will help us each to be better at thinking first, feeling second, and acting third.
4. Why is it so important to understand this...
 - a. "As a person thinks in his heart so is he..." (Pr 23:7).

I. The Brain

- A. It is the seat
 1. "The brain is the seat of our personality, intellect, and emotions, but it is not our mind." (New Life Behavior Ministry; Understanding How We Think; As a Person Thinks; by Creach, George & Motsinger, Hillery pg. 2)
 2. It is the physical environment where the mind resides.
- B. The brain is a remarkable organ
 1. Its main responsibility is to coordinate the nervous activity of the body.
 - i. It and the spinal cord make up the body's central nervous system.
 2. The brain receives the incoming impulses from the senses, analyzes them, and makes the required adjustments in the body.
 3. It is made up of between 10 and 15 billion cells.
 - i. These cells are divided into three categories.
 - a. Nerves
 1. "a cordlike structure comprising a collection of nerve fibers that convey impulses between a part of the central nervous system and some other body region." (<http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/nerve>)
 - b. Neurons
 1. "Nerve cells in the brain, brain stem, and spinal cord that connect the nervous system and the muscles." (Ibid)
 2. Each neuron can store 2 million pieces of information.

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- c. Neuroglia
 - 1. "the supporting structure of nervous tissue, consisting of a fine web of tissue enclosing neuroglial cells" (Ibid)
- 4. The brain weighs about 3lbs in men and about 2% less in women.
 - i. It makes up about 2% of man's weight.
 - ii. It makes up about 2 ½% of women's weight.
- C. The brain is divided into two hemispheres
 - 1. The left hemisphere.
 - i. This is "usually" the dominate hemisphere.
 - ii. It emphasizes logical precision and exactness.
 - a. It is the center of speech and arithmetical characteristics.
 - b. It also sorts out information in an analytical and sequential order.
 - 1. It then creates or entertains ideas from the information given.
 - iii. These are usually your lawyers, doctors, mathematicians...
 - 2. The right hemisphere.
 - i. This the side of the brain concerned with wholeness or seeing the whole picture & is mostly non-verbal.
 - a. It is the center of geometrical and perspective drawings, along with the fine arts expression as well.
 - b. It sorts information viewing the whole picture and finding patterns rather focusing on the details.
 - ii. These are usually your poets, musicians, writers, painters...
 - 3. We are either right brain or left brain people from birth it appears.
 - i. The question isn't which are we but what do we do with our natural ability.
 - a. Do we waste what God has given us or do we develop it to its greatest potential.
 - 4. Though one hemisphere might dominate our thought process, we need both sides to meet the demands of our normal day to day activities.
- D. The brain needs exercise
 - 1. For a healthy brain to function properly, it must be used.
 - i. It is like a muscle that gets stronger the more it is pushed.
 - ii. If we ignore or neglect it, weakens.
 - 2. The brain is not made stronger by physical exercise but by mental.
 - i. Such as...
 - a. Reading, studying, thinking, creating...
 - 3. When we put our brain on auto pilot and coast through life we neglect it and when this is done we lose out on many of the pleasing and rewarding experiences this life has to offer.
 - i. This is especially true concerning God's Word.

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- E. The brain is truly amazing
 - 1. **Ps 139:14** "I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well."¹ (NKJV)

II. The Mind

- A. What is the mind?
 - 1. According to scientist it is...
 - i. That which has stumped many of them for thousands of years.
 - a. Scientist are not closer to finding out what it is then they were thousands of years ago.
 - ii. You could say that the mind is the "seat of reasoning."
 - a. It is reflected in such things as...
 - 1. Sensations, perceptions, emotions, memory, desires, motives...
 - b. It is an invisible and abstract force.
 - 2. According to the Bible it is...
 - i. Our soul or that which makes the decision to serve God or reject Him.
 - a. **Pr 23:7** "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he..." (NKJV)
 - b. **Lk 12:34** "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."
- B. The mind is made up of two parts
 - 1. The conscious and the subconscious.
 - 2. There are two views concerning the relationship between the conscious and subconscious.
 - i. Sigmund Freud compared the mind to an iceberg.
 - a. The conscious part was the tip of the iceberg we can see which is extremely small, making only 20 or 30 percent of the iceberg.
 - b. The subconscious part was the rest of the iceberg which is massive at 70 to 80 percent of the iceberg.
 - 1. Thus he was saying that we are not consciously responsible for what we do and think. The decisions we make are a result of the subconscious telling it what to do which we have little or no control over.
 - ii. Alfred Adler compared the mind to a jade tree.
 - a. The conscious mind was the trunk, limbs, and leaves of the tree, and thus a large part of the tree.
 - b. The subconscious was the roots of the tree which are very small.
 - 1. Thus he was saying that we are responsible for what we do and think. Past training and environment (subconscious) are important but we consciously decide what we want to do.
 - 3. It is easy to see which one is biblical.

¹ All Scriptures are taken from the ESV unless otherwise noted. If other translations are used this is not necessarily an endorsement of the translation.

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- C. The conscious mind
 - 1. Conscious defined.
 - i. It is "that part of our mind that is functioning when we are awake. Our five senses report to it. It gathers the information they provide, evaluates it, and makes decisions." (New Life Behavior Ministry; Understanding How We Think; As a Person Thinks; by Creach, George & Motsinger, Hillery pg. 6)
 - 2. Some aspects of the conscious.
 - i. It is the executive of the mind or soul.
 - a. It is the CEO, or administrator.
 - b. It is responsible for knowing why and what we are doing.
 - c. "It perceives reality, knows what we sense and knows our emotions and senses the emotions of others." (Ibid)
 - 3. With this in mind it removes the notion that someone can "do things without thinking about them."
 - i. This is literally impossible.
 - 4. Something to keep in mind.
 - i. Our conscious mind is constantly deciding how we treat people and what we say to them.
- D. The subconscious mind
 - 1. Subconscious defined.
 - i. It is that part of our mind that is functioning when we are awake and asleep. It is the autopilot and warehouse of the mind.
 - 2. Some aspects of the subconscious.
 - i. It is the automatic side of the two consciousnesses.
 - a. It tells the heart to pump or the lungs to breath.
 - b. it tells the body it hunger or thirsty.
 - ii. It is the storehouse as well.
 - a. Most scientist believe the subconscious never forgets anything that happens to us.
 - 1. It's just a matter of accessing it.
 - iii. The subconscious does not form or evaluate truth or values.
 - a. It accepts everything as truth. It then takes all that information and integrates it into our personality.
 - 1. This is seen in the example of the mom who is told her child is dead even though he/she is not.
 - iv. The subconscious can be trained.
 - a. It can be trained, educated, and changed.
 - 1. If someone is wanting to change their personality it takes constant "self-talk."
 - 2. In other words telling yourself or reading something to yourself over and over until it becomes a part of you.
 - i. Example: The person who keeps telling themselves something long enough they believe it.
 - 3. By doing this we train our subconscious with our conscious.

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III. Perception

- A. Perception defined
 - 1. "a result of perceiving; a mental image" (Merriam-Webster, I. (2003). Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary. (Eleventh ed.). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.)
 - 2. In other words it is the view the mind takes of a situation that has taken place wherein the person is affect.
- B. Our perceptions
 - 1. People's perceptions have an odd way of changing reality into something that it isn't.
 - i. It is like the half filled glass of water.
 - a. It can be perceived as half full or half empty.
 - b. It is our perception that makes our determination.
 - ii. As the old saying goes, "it's all in the mind."
 - 2. What we do, feel, and think is not based on what actually happens but on how our mind perceives what happens.
- C. The importance of perception
 - 1. Our mind is extremely important.
 - i. It not only controls our physical body but our entire outlook on life.
 - ii. If we therefore shape and develop our mind into the type of person we want to be it in turn will shape our personality and perceptions into what we want it to be.
 - 2. When it comes to perceptions we must understand they include more than just what we think about ourselves.
 - i. They include what we think of others.
 - ii. They include how we interpret what others do.
 - iii. They include how we interpret the natural world around us.
- D. How our perceptions are created by five basic things
 - 1. Our perceptions are created by our groups not in isolation.
 - i. Groups such as family, friends, coworkers, schools...all help in the development of our perceptions of everything.
 - a. Once again this is why it is so important for parents to influence their kids for righteousness, and train them thusly.
 - 1. **Pr 22:6**
 - ii. We cannot escape from each other's influence. In fact we were create this way as social people. That is why we are to be careful who we associate with.
 - a. **I Co 15:33** "Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits.""
 - b. If we are influenced for righteousness we will develop righteous perspectives. If we are influenced for evil we will develop an evil perspective.
 - 2. Our perceptions are created by fatigue.
 - i. When rested and full of energy we look at life and the event of life in a different light than when we are fatigued.
 - ii. Fatigued will make cloudy our perceptions.
 - a. We are usually more agitated and quick tempered.

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3. Our perceptions are created by habits as well.
 - i. Every person as habits. They are needed to survive.
 - a. Habits are simply our daily routines.
 - ii. Habits are necessary but not all habits are good.
 - a. If one of our habits is to respond aggressively to everything said to us that habit is bad, and we need to create a new habit of response.
 4. Our perceptions are created by our "needs."
 - i. Our needs are thus...
 - a. Physical needs
 - b. Social needs
 - c. Safety needs
 - d. Self-esteem
 - e. self-realization
 - ii. If our basic needs are not met we will create bad perceptions.
 5. Our perceptions are created by our knowledge and experiences.
 - i. Everything that happens to us is stored remember.
 - a. When the time is right the mind brings it forth to help us make sense of our current situation.
- E. How can we help our Christian perceptions?
1. By focusing on those five basic things and making sure they are righteous.
 - i. Whether it be our groups or habits they all must be righteous.
 2. We see this in action in Jesus' life.
 - i. **Ph 2:5-11** "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."
 3. We see this in expectation through the Word.
 - i. **Mt 7:12** "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

IV. Conscience

- A. The conscience defined
1. It is that part of us that guides us in making decisions about what is right and what is wrong.
 2. Sidney Callahan called it "a personal, self-conscious activity, integrating reason, emotion, and will in self-committed decisions about right and wrong, good and evil." (<http://goo.gl/ptqCz>)

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- B. The development of the conscience
1. It is to guide us in our decisions.
 - i. The conscience is created within us and it is instinctive knowledge of what we "ought" to do.
 - a. It is our "oughtness."
 2. We are created with this "oughtness" and thus are without excuse when we reject God and do wrong.
 - i. **Ro 1:18-20** "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse."
 - ii. **II Th 1:8** "in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus."
 3. When we reject this "oughtness" everything turns upside down.
 - i. Right become wrong and good becomes evil.
 - a. **Ro 1:22** "Claiming to be wise, they became fools"
 4. We are also able to develop our conscience or train it.
 - i. **He 10:2** "Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins?"
 - ii. **II Co 4:2** "But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God."
- C. The conscience as a filter
1. When something happens or when we consider doing something that has a moral or ethical value it is filtered through our conscience.
 - i. Just because it is filtered through the conscience doesn't mean we will always follow its advice.
 - ii. Example: A Christian man commits adultery and because of his lust for the one whom he is committing fornication with he decides to ignore his conscience.
 - a. This is ignoring that which was developed.
 - iii. Example: A man steals and tells himself it is ok. That he was right in doing such.
 - a. This is ignoring the natural "oughtness."
 2. Even though it is a filter we can override it.
- D. The two types of conscience
1. The first is the clean, good, sensitive, and clear conscience.
 - i. This conscience uses Christ as its model.
 - a. **Ac 24:16** "So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man."

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- b. **I Ti 1:5** "The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."
- ii. It is...
 - a. Clean because it seeks purity.
 - b. Good because it seeks righteousness.
 - c. Sensitive because it seeks others first and has compassion.
 - d. Clear because it has been made new.
- 2. Because our conscience is constantly changing we must be diligent to keep a good clean conscience. It will change either for the better or the worse.
 - i. The direction of change will determine what we believe.
 - a. If our emphasis is on Christ, our conscience will filter us to not violate the Bible.
 - b. Thus we can see where our emphasis should be to have a clean, good, sensitive, and clear conscience.
 - 1. **Lk 9:23** "...If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."
 - c. Keep in mind that "new life" we have in Christ purifies our conscience.
 - 1. **Co 1:22-23** "he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister."
 - d. This is why a Christian when he/she violates their conscience they feel a sense of guilt.
 - 1. **II Co 7:10** "For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death."
 - ii. There are two types of people that have this conscience.
 - a. The Christian who is willfully sinning.
 - 1. **I Ti 4:1-2** "Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, 2 through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared"
 - b. The unbeliever.
 - 1. **Ti 1:15** "To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled."
 - ii. If our emphasis is on anything other than Christ we will have a weak, defiled, seared, and guilty conscience.

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CONCLUSION

1. We get to decide how we are going to think. It is up to us to make the right decision. We are in control of our thoughts to righteousness or destruction. The choice is ours.
2. Question: Are you thinking, then feeling, then acting?
 - a. Herein lies the only biblical path by which we can walk in the light.
3. Invitation
 - a. For those that are Christians but are not living for Christ repent by confessing your sins to God that He may forgive you and dedicate your life/time back to Him.
 - i. **I Jn 1:7, 9** "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin...9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
 - b. For those that are not Christians or for those that think they are Christians and want to know for sure notice what is required to become a child of God or Christian according to God and God only.
 - i. Hear/Study **Rom 10:17; II Tim 2:15**
 - ii. Believe Jesus Is The Christ **Jn 3:16; 8:24**
 - iii. Repent/Turn To God **Ac 17:30; Lk 24:47**
 - iv. Confess Jesus As Lord **Mt 10:32; Rom 10:9**
 - v. Immersed For The Forgiveness of Sins **Ac 2:38; 22:16; I Pt 3:21**
 - vi. Live A Faithful Life **I Jn 1:7; Eph 5:8**