

The Battlefield of the Mind

Read: Colossians 2:8, II Corinthians 2:11-12, James 4:7-8

The key word or concept in all of the previous passages is “the mind.”

The Enemy tries to influence our minds, which in turn determines where we set our desires

Even the bodily urges that might lead us to sin are controlled through the agency of the mind. It is therefore vital that our minds be submitted to the things of God that we might resist sin, avoid temptation, and keep our desires pure.

The Enemy encourages us to choose self-satisfaction – which influences our feelings and emotions (the heart)

Ideas are powerful things. If we change our ideas about something, we change the way we feel. Our heart (the seat of our emotions) powerfully motivates us for good or evil. By keeping our focus on God’s word and the example of Jesus Christ, we can keep our hearts in submission to Him.

The Enemy wants us to operate in the world system by influencing our minds, which changes our hearts, which changes our behavior and actions.

In almost every battle, the Enemy attacks our minds – trying to steer our attention away from the things of God. We can defeat him consistently by keeping our focus.

Can you point to ideas that have changed your thinking, feeling, and then behavior, as an example of the principle above?

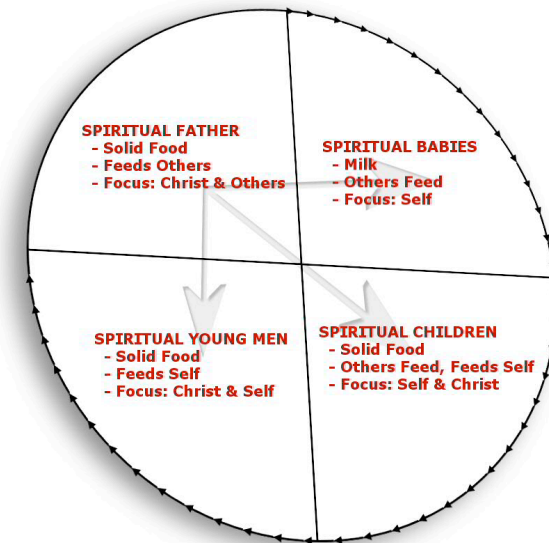
Application:

Thinking on God’s Word changes the MIND
(Philippians 4:8)

Dwelling on God’s Word changes the HEART
(Luke 6:45, Luke 8:15, Colossian 3:16)

Expressing God’s Word changes LIVES
(Hebrews 4:12)

The Stages of Spiritual Growth:



Almost every spiritual conflict is fought on a specific battlefield. This is because the Enemy, Satan, only has access to a specific area of our lives where we might be influenced. This is very important to understand. Satan does not have the ability to control our bodies, or our hearts, or make us do anything we do not want to do. God has not granted that Satan should have that level of power. However, Satan does have the ability to influence every person, including Christians – primarily through deception and pride. To do this, he needs access to the most important battlefield where he can exercise his influence and attempt to defeat the Christian.

Satan cannot claim “new ground” in spiritual warfare. “The whole world [already] lies in the power of the Evil One” (1 John 5:19). Rather, he can only defend what he already holds. It is we; God’s chosen people, who are on the offensive, taking back that which the Enemy has stolen. This study will introduce you to the battlefield of the mind.

The Natural Man

Read: Romans 7:18-25, Galatians 5:17-25

The natural man sets its desire on the things of the flesh
(Romans 8:6, Galatians 5:17)

Man's basic nature is sinful. This is what we mean when we use the word, "flesh." It is man's normal propensity to give his mental and emotional attention to the things which Romans 7 says are "hostile to God."

What kinds of things do you find yourself dwelling on from time to time? Do all of your thoughts and actions always please God?

The natural man chooses self-satisfaction
(Galatians 5:19-21)

Man's desire is to satisfy himself – often at the expense or exclusion of others. The list in Galatians 5 contains character traits we often resort to when we are confronted with the possibility of not having our desires met. Another way to say this is, "It's all about me."

There are some personal desires that are not sin, but can become sin. Look at the list and write down some acceptable desires that might be turned to evil through the application of sinful behavior.

The natural man operates in the realm and ways of the world
(I John 2:16)

"The world" is defined as the operation of man's sinful nature in the world that results in a system of life hostile to God. When men live their lives according to the sin nature, they create worldly systems as a natural byproduct of that nature that is contrary to the principles of God's word. Satan is the "god of this world" (II Corinthians 4:4), and thus, is interested in maintain this system of operation in opposition to God's will.

When you sin, how does that take part in the system of the world? How can you defeat it?

Discuss or write your personal reflections.

The Spiritual Man

Read: Romans 8:5-6, Galatians 5:22-23, Philippians 4:8-9, II Peter 1:3-8

The spiritual man sets his desire on the Word of God and the person of Jesus Christ
(Matthew 22:37-38)

Giving our attention to the Word of God, and applying its principles, is a powerful safeguard against sin and the world system. By setting our minds on the things of God, we begin the process of changing our thoughts (mind), which leads to a change in ideas and emotions (heart), which is in turn expressed in our behavior and actions (body).

List three areas of difficulty or sin in your life that you want to change, and how you can apply new Godly desires to them.

The spiritual man chooses Godly conviction over self-satisfaction
Think of different times in your life when you made a wrong or sinful decision. Do you do it out of a deep conviction of right and wrong, or from personal convenience, satisfaction, or escapism?

The spiritual man operates in the world, but not as part of the world
(John 16:33, I John 2:15, 4:4)

Notice the progression in the above passages. (1) Jesus has overcome the world (2) He provides power for us to overcome the world (3) We have overcome the world through obedience to Him.

Look at the progression again. If we sin, and begin operating "in the world," where does our breakdown first occur, and why? 1, 2 or 3?

Discuss or write your personal reflections:

- 1.) II Peter 1:3-8 makes it clear that God has provided all the power we need to resist sin. If we don't avail ourselves of that power, what happens?