

Resurrection Life: Thinking

1 Corinthians 2:9-16; Isaiah 55:9; Proverbs 23:7a

1. Renewed mind.

- *Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 5:17, 10:5*

2. Righteous spirit.

- *Romans 8:5-9; Luke 11:13*

3. Resolved thinking.

- *Colossians 3:1-2; Matthew 16:21-23*

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As many of you know, a week and a half ago my father suffered a stroke, and he was admitted to the hospital. Many of you also know that my mother has been fighting terminal brain cancer for the last two years. They live in Salem, so this last week I was in Salem tending to both of them, and making arrangements for what is ahead – which is going to be challenging not only for them, but for me as I have to arrange and provide all their care while living five hours away from them. My Dad's stroke happened when a clot cut off blood flow to the basal ganglia – a place deep in the center of the brain. Among other things, this area of the brain determines motor control, as well as other roles such as motor learning, executive functions and behaviors, and emotions.¹

That happens to be same place where my mother's tumor is, so both of my parents are impacted in the same ways, both affecting communication skills and the use of their hand and foot on one side. In mom's case, a tumor is putting pressure on and displacing the basal ganglia, in dad's case, a clot cut off much needed oxygen to the basal ganglia. It's amazing how this computer in our skulls works – and how fragile it is.

The human brain is a remarkable computer in its size, capacity and speed with which it can work – unmatched by the world's largest supercomputers. It really goes without saying that what God has engineered is miraculous. And he has made us in his image; meaning he has made us to function as he does – including and especially in how we think, because that drives how we act.

We are in this series called "Resurrection Life," and we are exploring what resurrection life is and what it looks like and how we can have it and live in it. We've learned so far that it means we have a different blood running through our spiritual veins – the blood of Christ. We've learned that we don't need to worry or be anxious or fret about things but instead can prioritize him and live in his principality, which means we will live for him with piety, and when we do, he will provide everything we need in this life.

But resurrection life does more than affect whether or not we need to worry; resurrection life means that in all ways we think entirely differently than the world around us.

We can think at a higher spiritual level than before; we can actually gain God's brain – we can begin thinking the way God does, and he thinks in an entirely different way than we do.

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3543080/>

God says:

"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:9, niv)

Every person who is a Christian—that is everyone who has realized they need God, has accepted Christ's death on the cross in their place and are now living for and with Him—every person who is a Christian has the capacity to think with the very mind of Christ. Resurrection Life means we *think differently*.

Believers in Jesus think differently, act differently, and look at the world differently. They have an entirely different perspective than the world around them. At least, we're supposed to. The Bible says that we have the mind of Christ. But that means that our thinking—how we use our brains—is supposed to be completely transformed.

Dr. Duane Gish has a Ph.D. in Biochemistry, and is an author and researcher from the University of Tennessee. He says, "The human brain is the most complex arrangement of matter in the universe. We have an amazing machine inside our head called a brain." You may have a high IQ, an average or even below average intelligence but your brain is still incredible. Did you know that inside the skull of your head is stored more information than in the Library of Congress? The Library of Congress contains more than 120 million items. That is really incredible for a very small machine that only weighs about 3 pounds.

Psychologists tell us that each person has about ten thousand thoughts per day. Did you realize that many thoughts go on inside your head each day? That means that every day we have hundreds of opportunities to have Christ-like thoughts.

One thing is sure about the mind: how you think will affect the directions of your life and walk with God. The Bible says:

"For as he thinks within himself, so he is." (Proverbs 23:7a, nasb)

How we think drives how we act.

Resurrection life means how we think and what we think about is different – different than maybe we've been used to thinking.

Would you honor God's Word by standing with me, and let's look at what the Bible says (pay attention to the capital "s" with the word "spirit"):

"As it is written: 'What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived'—the things God has prepared for those who love him—these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit,

explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, for, 'Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?' But we have the mind of Christ." (1Corinthians 2:9-16, niv)

Thanks – you may be seated. "But we have the mind of Christ." And it's *that* mind that transforms us from a life that is constantly nagged by dead thinking to resurrection life thinking – life that is abundant, full and free.

But let me make this clear: having the mind of Christ does not mean that the circumstances around us will change, or that bad things will no longer happen to us. What *will* change is *our perspective* of those circumstances and our ability to make it through them. Those same difficult circumstances that we face will no longer weigh us down but will actually become the catalyst through which we will grow and powerfully affect the world around us. With the resurrection mind of Christ, God turns everything into opportunities for our growth and greater impact on the world around us. And by the way, that's why you are here, Christian: to make a difference in this world for Christ. To do so, you will need to live a resurrection life, especially when it comes to the way you and I think (which drives what we do).

Let me give us some essentials about the mind of Christ from this passage. First is that resurrection life means a...

1. **Renewed mind.**

What does it mean to have a renewed mind, or a mind made new? The Bible describes it this way:

"Do not conform any longer to the patterns 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." (Romans 12:1-2, niv)

We think differently, and our actions display God's will, or what God wants.

To gain the mind of Christ, to know His thoughts and think His way, it takes something totally revolutionary. It's not about setting your mind to something different or conforming to some different way of thinking. It doesn't take modifying your thoughts and behavior. It doesn't take conformation, it doesn't take modification, it takes *transformation*, and that only comes through resurrection life! That means it's literally a change in the condition of your mind, the character of your mind, and the function of your mind. In other words, it takes a change in what's in your mind and what your mind is used for. It implies a transplant, if you will.

This can only happen by being brought into a right relationship with God through Christ's resurrection from the dead. The Bible says:

“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17, niv)

Resurrection life is like getting a mind transplant; it's like completely erasing the hard drive on your computer, completely reformatting it, and placing an entirely new operating system on it. This change can only happen by confessing your sin, accepting Christ's death on the cross for you, and putting your faith in His resurrection life that he has for you. Until you do this you will never have transformational thinking, which drives resurrection life in you.

Your computer is infected with a virus called sin. But once you give your life to Christ, you'll find that God is near you, always ready to reveal His thoughts to you. God reformats the hard drive of your brain. When you give Him your life (and that means your past, present, and future), a whole new world opens up to you and you see and hear God-possibilities all around you.

Let me give you an example. Take a look around where you're sitting and find five things that have blue in them. Go ahead and do it.

With a —blue mindset, you'll find that blue jumps out at you: a blue sweater, a blue Bible cover, and so on . . . Once you are aware of it, you see it everywhere. It's like after you buy a new car; you suddenly notice that kind of car everywhere.

Well, once you've gotten a renewed mind, you'll see God all over the place, and you'll see his perspective and his thoughts and his leading everywhere that you are willing to look and listen. If you are a follower of Christ, let me remind you: once your mind is renewed, it's a constant thing. It takes diligence: The Bible says,

“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:5, niv)

We must continually monitor our thoughts in order to have and maintain a resurrection renewed mind. So listen to and examine your thoughts. I've always said that there are three voices in every believer's head: your own voice, God's voice, and the enemy's voice. If you have more than three, you need to see a doctor or an exorcist. But as a Christian you have to distinguish between those voices. That's why you want to take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ.

To have the resurrection mind of Christ, it takes a renewed mind and second, resurrection life takes a...

2. *Righteous* spirit.

By “righteous,” I mean purified or holy. We talked about this last week, didn't we? This is done by God's Holy Spirit, filling us and living within us. In our passage from 1 Corinthians 2, the mind of Christ can also be translated as the spirit of Christ. It's by God's Spirit, who alone knows God's thoughts according to verse 11, that we can know and think with the mind of Christ, because the Spirit tells us what's on God's mind. The Bible says:

“Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to God.” (Romans 8:5-9, niv)

It is absolutely crucial that we “live in accordance with the Spirit” – which means literally, we listen to the Spirit’s thoughts, that we walk in the Spirit, depend on and are led by the Spirit, and that we don’t rely on our own thinking. How? Surrender your life to God and ask him to fill you with the Holy Spirit. God *wants* to give you his Spirit!

One time when Jesus was teaching about God, he was comparing a good earthly father to God. Jesus made it clear:

“If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (Luke 11:13, niv)

Whatever we might ask for, the greatest and most important that we can receive from God is his Spirit.

This is true for us as individuals and it’s true for us as a church, too. These are very important and exciting days in the life of this great church. Ten months ago we began our “Here For Good” giving – to eliminate our debt and to do critical renovations in our church facility. After only ten months we are miraculously close to paying off our \$1.1 million debt, so we can move money from mortgage to ministry and move on to renovations. There are vital decisions that your Leadership Team and pastors need to make; like how to prioritize that \$10,000 a month that was going to mortgage into ministries and what those ministries will be. We will share those plans with you soon. We will also need to determine what architect to work with (we have begun interviewing church architectural firms), and once we pick one, what the designs for renovation will be – all of which we will share with you – every step – when we are working on that very, very soon. These are vital decisions that will shape our church and our community for generations to come; how will we make right decisions about all this without having the mind of Christ in the Holy Spirit?

Our church sits on a strong foundation, put in place by pastors and leaders over the last 60-plus years of the life of this church—many of you have contributed and sacrificed for this church. Because we have such a strong foundation, we have much to build on.

To continue with that, we as a church are called into this community to serve and reach those who don’t know Christ, and to help them and all of us grow into Christ-likeness

in greater ways, that each of us can best serve, support, and sacrifice for the sake of the Kingdom of Christ in this church and community. We must walk in the Spirit and be continually filled with the thoughts of Christ. If we don't, we could miss some very important decisions and details.

Sir William Osler was the eminent professor of medicine at Oxford University. One day in class he had a small bottle containing urine on his desk. Sitting before him was a class full of young, wide-eyed medical students, listening to his lecture on the importance of observing details. To emphasize his point, he announced, "This bottle contains a sample for analysis. It's often possible – by tasting it – to determine the disease from which the patient suffers." He then dipped his finger into the fluid and brought it to his mouth. He continued speaking, "Now I am going to pass this bottle around. Each of you please do exactly as I did. Perhaps we can learn the importance of this technique and diagnose the case."

The bottle made its way from row to row, each student gingerly poking their finger in and bravely tasting the contents with a frown. Dr. Osler then retrieved the bottle and startled his students by saying, "Ladies and gentlemen, now you will understand what I mean when I speak about details. Had you been observant, you would have seen that I put my *index* finger in the bottle but my *middle* finger in my mouth!"

If we're not walking in the Spirit, we might miss some very important details that could be distasteful for our lives and for this church and for our community!

To have the resurrection mind of Christ, we must have a renewed mind, a righteous spirit, and third, resurrection life means we must have a...

3. *Resolved* thinking.

What I mean is a firm determination to think on Kingdom priorities; to think on God's value system, and to pursue God's plans.

The Bible says:

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly." (Colossians 3:1-2, niv)

Don't just assume that because you are saved (meaning you have a renewed mind), and walking in the Spirit (a righteous spirit), that whatever *you* think must be what God wants. You cannot trust your own thinking! Set your mind on what Christ wants—keep taking every thought captive. If you don't resolve to think on things above, then what makes sense to you will be nothing more than foolishness to God. In fact, *your* thoughts may even be detrimental, dangerous, and even deadly to the Kingdom.

Let me illustrate this with an example from the Bible: it's in Matthew 16:21-23. Let me set the stage first: Peter has just made what's called the Great Confession; he tells Jesus, "You are the Christ! The son of the living God!" In other words, Peter says, "Jesus, you are the Messiah, the savior of the world!" This was a high point in Peter's

faith and spiritual life. So, surely if anybody is thinking right it's Peter at that moment, right?

Well, then *immediately* after Peter said that, in verse 21 it says:

“From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.” (Matthew 16:21, niv)

Now, Peter does what makes perfect sense to himself: After Jesus said that, Peter wanted to defend and protect Jesus. So he said what made perfect sense to him:

“Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ‘Never, Lord!’ he said. ‘This shall never happen to you!’” (Matthew 16:22, niv)

Wouldn't you and I do the same? It makes perfect sense. We'd say, “Quit talking like that Jesus!” It might make sense to you and me, but *not* to Christ's mind:

“Jesus turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.’” (Matthew 16:23, niv)

Do you see the importance of this? What made perfect sense to Peter was not only foolishness to Christ, Jesus said it was actually the thinking of Satan.

Don't assume that just because it makes sense to you that it must be what Jesus is thinking; it might just be the work of our enemy, the devil, who is working to derail and destroy you. Always resolve to seek Christ's mind through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Resurrection Life means we have the mind of Christ, which is a renewed mind, a righteous spirit, and resolved thinking.

These are important days for us as individuals, as families, and as a church and community. Each of us are making decisions that are very important to our own lives. Don't make those decisions without the mind of Christ! I heard a great quote; someone said, “Your next choice could change the world. Make it a good one.”

That is most definitely true if you have the mind of Christ! Each choice you make can be a world-changing choice. It will change your world, your home, our church, our community, and our world.

As a church, we may never make more important decisions than we are making now. As I said, these are significant days as we move closer and closer to being mortgage free, multi-ethnic, multi-generational, and multi-site. What we are as a church tomorrow is determined by the choices each of us makes today. We need to make the right choices for our lives; we need to think in ways that create and promote resurrection life around us, not the ways that lead to and sustain more death. We need the mind of Christ, not what might make sense to us.

I'd like to ask every one of us to step into resurrection life; come into alignment with Christ's mind by renewing your mind, having a righteous spirit, and being resolved in your thinking.

Prayer

Let me close with this story: In the year 1870, the Methodist churches in Indiana were having their annual conference. At one point, the president of the college where they were meeting addressed the group and told them they were living in a very exciting age. He said he believed that they were coming into a time of great inventions and that he believed, for example, that men would someday fly through the air like birds.

The presiding bishop didn't think much of this statement. As a matter of fact, he called it heresy and said that the Bible says that flight is reserved for angels so there would be no such talk here. When the bishop got home, he told his family about what the president had said and how ridiculous it was. But Bishop Wright's two young sons, Wilbur and Orville Wright, looked at things from a different perspective than their father. And of course you know the rest of the story. Being willing to think differently, they changed the world.

Friend, there is a life worth living; a life that doesn't have to be encumbered by dead thinking and living. It is resurrection life: full of abundant life. God has incredibly exciting and new things for your life and for us as a church that will change history; yours, ours, and this city's.

Renew your mind. Refresh your spirit with righteousness. Resolve your thinking. The mind of Christ.

Amen? Thank you for coming! Go live in resurrection life every day.