

## Lord, help me to ? Lord, help me to use my mind

*[Please note: sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.  
New King James Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

Today begins a new series called “Lord help me to use...” We will look over the coming weeks at using our mind, time, natural abilities, energy, influence, and money.

Our minds are central to understanding the mind and will of God and directing us to live accordingly. In Matthew 22:36, Jesus was asked the question, “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” He answered, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (vv.36-40).

The Lord makes it clear that we demonstrate our love for God through the complexity and inter-relationship of our heart, soul and mind. Unlike our bodies, our hearts are hidden from sight, and our souls and minds are invisible. But the actions of our bodies are directed by what rules these three aspects of our beings. So, God works spiritually within: our hearts, representing our entire lives; our souls, representing our distinct personalities; and our minds, representing our thinking and motives.

We often think of God speaking to our hearts and souls but perhaps less so to our minds. But it is so important to reflect on what the Bible says about our minds and to pray, “Lord, help me to use my mind!”

Luke 24 is helpful in this reflection. In this chapter, just before the Lord ascends to heaven, he gives us two direct references to the way He opened the understanding of His disciples; in other words, how, He opened their minds. There are two key elements to this process: the presence of the Lord; and the centrality of the Scriptures. We see this on the road to Emmaus when, after listening to the sad and confused conversation of the two disciples He walked alongside, Jesus says to them,

““O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (vv.25-27).

In doing so, Christ took away their confusion and sadness by speaking to them through the Scriptures and how they foretold the sufferings and glory of Christ. It was a conversation that: caused their hearts to burn, their minds to be enlightened, and gave them the energy to immediately return to Jerusalem and share their experience with the other disciples.

Later in the chapter, the Lord appears to an assembled group of His disciples in Jerusalem and to

demonstrate the reality of His resurrection.

“Then he said to them, “These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.” And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures”” (vv.44-45).

God created us body, soul, and spirit; and has given us minds. W.E. Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words describes the general presentation of the mind in Scripture as “...the seat of reflective consciousness, comprising of the faculties of perception, understanding, and those of feeling, judging and determining.” The Bible teaches us that we can only truly and fully use these remarkable aspects of our beings when the Person who gave them to us, is at the centre of our lives. Christ uniquely demonstrated what it meant to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” But the law given in the Old Testament *via* Moses proved humans’ inability to live such lives. We needed a Saviour. Jesus Christ sacrificed His perfect life for our redemption. Through faith in Him, we have received new life and the capacity and power to express it. Our hearts respond to the love of God. Our souls are redeemed by Christ and give expression to the life we now possess in Him. We worship in spirit and truth indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit to bear the fruit of the Spirit. And our minds are renewed to spiritually understand and be used to direct us to live in the good of the spiritual blessings we possess in Christ.

### **The renewed mind**

The opening verses of Romans 12 give us an understanding of the Christian’s renewed mind,

“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” (Romans 12:1-2).

The apostle appeals to us to present our lives as a living sacrifice to God. We are not to be conformed to the world. In John 17:14-17, Christ made it clear that we do not belong to the world and that the word of God is the guide for our lives.

“I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”

I remember hearing about a Polish lady who came to live in Oldham in Lancashire. She wanted to fit in and worked very hard learning the Oldham accent. She succeeded, and eventually, you would think she was born and bred in Oldham, when you heard her speak. Sometimes Christians want to fit into a world they don’t belong to; and they adopt the thinking, attitudes, and behaviour, of a world that has rejected Christ. He redeemed us to be His witnesses to the world, not by becoming like it, but distinct from it. Instead of living according to the world’s thinking, attitudes, or behaviour, we follow the Saviour. This process does not cut us off from the world but enables us to live Christlike lives which witness to the Saviour in our love of God, fellow Christians, and our neighbours.

The word of God sanctifies and directs us, enabling us to live lives that are pleasing to Him. The Old Testament priests were sanctified, that is, separated, for the service of God and the blessing

of the people. Romans 12 teaches us that by the spiritual renewing of our minds, our lives are directed to live in harmony with the mind, and will, of God.

Having renewed minds, we are transformed. This is not a superficial outward change but a total inward transformation. Our minds are renewed: through our communion with God the Father and the Son; through the power and direction of the Holy Spirit; and through the application of the word of God. This is an ongoing spiritual process. In this way, we demonstrate our response to the love of God and prove “what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” So, we use our renewed mind to live transformed lives and fulfil God’s will personally, and in fellowship with the people of God.

### **The mind of Christ**

But what are the features of the renewed mind? To answer this question, we need to go to Philippians chapter 2. Paul begins the chapter by addressing the needs for the Christians in Philippi to be “like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord of one mind.” He also encourages them not to do anything through “selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself” (vv.2-3). Then, to support them in this endeavour, he writes one of the most beautiful passages in the New Testament about the Person and mind of Christ.

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (vv.5-11).

The apostle describes the mind of Christ displayed through the steps He took from glory to the cross of Calvary. These downward steps led from the centre of heaven to a place of no reputation. Instead of being served, He took the form of a bondservant. Though divine, He came in the likeness of men. Though glorious, He humbled Himself. The One who gave, and sustained life sacrificed His own life. He left the throne of eternity to be nailed to the cross. This was the mind of the Saviour filled with divine love and wondrous grace.

But Paul does not stop at the cross. He reminds his readers that there was an answer to Christ’s lowliness and sacrifice. God has highly exalted His Son, and He possesses the Name above every name, Jesus. To this Name, God says every knee will bow, in heaven, on earth, under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Later in the New Testament, Peter writes,

“Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:6-7).

The Creator of the world came into His creation to redeem it through a lowly life sacrificed to reveal the majesty and power of the love and grace of God. It is a pathway we are called to follow. To do this, we need to let the mind of Christ be in us (v.5). This is not an easy task, but we have: the word of God to teach and guide us by faith; and the Holy Spirit to bear His fruit in our lives.

The outcomes of having the mind of Christ are entirely consistent with the fruit of the Spirit described by Paul in Galatians 5,

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (vv.22-23).

To produce this fruit, we need to walk in the Spirit. Our renewed minds are used to direct us to fulfil the mind of Christ in our everyday living and ensure these Christlike features are seen in us.

### **The carnal mind**

The opposite of the fruit of Spirit is the lust of the flesh. This lust begins in the mind and results in what Paul calls the works of the flesh (vv.17-21). Paul describes what our sinful nature is capable of descending into in verses 19-21.

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Although we are redeemed, we still have a nature which wants to go its own way and act selfishly. Paul explains that a constant battle is taking place within us between the indwelling Holy Spirit and our old sinful nature (Galatians 5:17). In Romans 8:5-8, the apostle uses the expression “carnally minded.” In other words, to live lives directed by our human nature. He adds,

“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

The carnal mind is self-centred. Its decisions are sometimes careless and thoughtless. At other times they are carefully planned and pre-meditated. God has given us consciences that convict us and act to prevent us from fulfilling wrong thoughts. But we can ignore our consciences. We can do this so effectively that our consciences are annulled. Paul writes about “consciences seared with a hot iron” in 1 Timothy 4:2. The carnal mind is the force that fulfils selfish motives and appetites that damage us and so often many others.

As Christians, we are not exempt from acting out of self-interest. Paul unfolds to the Philippian Christians the mind of Christ and appeals to them to let that mind reside in them (Philippians 2:5). He also reminds his readers of the way they had obediently followed the Saviour in the past and encourages them to continue to live in the same way. We must be aware that, even when we follow the Lord faithfully, things can come along which divert us from this pathway and, instead of walking in the Spirit, we start to act in unspiritual ways.

Paul had an affectionate relationship with the Philippian assembly. But disagreements, complaints, and disputes, had emerged, threatening the unity and harmony of the church. And, when Christians disagree, you can guarantee self-interest and pride become the dominant forces at work sometimes hidden behind a pretence of spirituality and humility. Why does God allow such difficulties to happen? I believe He uses them to teach us to use our renewed minds to display the mind of Christ and to shine in witness to Him when problems arise. That’s why Paul writes,

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (vv.12-13).

And then he encourages them to,

“Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or laboured in vain” (vv.14-16).

Paul demonstrates that the way to overcome the carnal mind is to have the mind of Christ. We find the power to live for Christ through our relationship with Him as His individual disciples and as the people of God living in fellowship together. Peter supports this when he writes,

“Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tender-hearted, be courteous” (1 Peter 3:8).

Our renewed minds are like a compass that always points us to the mind of Christ. In doing so we can overcome the problems which emerge from the selfish actions of the carnal mind by manifesting the constant love, lowly grace, and powerful wisdom, of the mind of Christ.

### **Using our minds to focus on the Life of Christ**

Paul’s letter to the Philippians highlights several vital ways which encourage Christians to use their minds to focus on Christ to equip them to live for Him. The first is to focus our minds on the life of Christ. Paul was writing from prison, and in the face of possible martyrdom, his mind was not confused or afraid. It was focussed and centred on the Person of Christ. In the first chapter of Philippians he writes,

“For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:19-21).

The carnal mind looks downward and its thinking is entirely focussed on the material world and all that it offers. The spiritual mind is Christ centred, Paul captures this when he writes, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” He also writes of this in Colossians 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. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory” (vv.1-4).

The renewed mind looks beyond the material world that so often captivates our attention and affection. It looks to the Person who made the world and became its Saviour. Setting our mind on the risen Christ is a spiritual occupation which influences us in the most practical ways. We are encouraged and empowered in our personal lives, families, and fellowships, in our work and service, and every other aspect of our lives to demonstrate the features of Christ and live by faith in Him. This focus makes us Christlike see Colossians 3:12-17.

“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering; bearing with one another, and

forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

### **Using our minds to focus on the Mind of Christ**

We have already seen that Paul unfolds the mind of Christ to us in Philippians chapter 2. He does not command us to do what Christ did. He asks us to “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” We become like Christ by being in His presence. So much of Christianity is taken up with what we think we can do for the Saviour. But service is like salvation. We could not be saved without Christ, and we cannot serve without Him. He told us,

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

Our renewed mind always leads us into the presence of Christ and the experience of abiding in Him. In this way we learn to walk with, and serve, the Lord and to know and fulfil His will. So, we need to use our minds to ensure we build into each day the practice of coming into the presence of God and allowing His word to speak to our hearts and minds; and to lay out before Him the day and the events that lie in front of us. This is not a complex process, but it is vital. Sometimes our minds, like Martha’s in Luke 10, are full of “many things” and the most needful thing is often forgotten or rushed. The renewed mind uses time: to worship, to be led by God’s word, and to pray thoughtfully with thanksgiving, and to bring every circumstance of life before the Saviour. This practice is necessary for our personal spiritual well-being, in the many relationships we have, and in our local and wider Christian fellowship and service. The simple watchword in our daily lives is “Am I fulfilling the mind of Christ?”

### **Using our minds to focus on the Knowledge of Christ**

In chapter 3 of Philippians, Paul describes to us how his mind was devoted to knowing Jesus more and more. He begins by looking back on his Jewish pedigree. It was an illustrious history, but he came to understand that all his heritage and learning had no value in the sight of God. In an interview earlier this year at the G7 summit, Robert Peston interviewed our Prime Minister, Boris Johnson. Peston remarked that Sir Keir Starmer, the Labour leader, said he did not believe in God. Then he asked the Prime Minister if he believed in God. Mr Johnson said, “The foolish man has said there is no God”, a reference to Psalm 14:1.

It is one of the most important lessons to learn that we live in the sight of God. We are very conscious of what we think of ourselves and what others think of us. But what about the God who knows everything about us? How much do we care about what God thinks?

Paul did not find Christ. Christ found Paul. Later he wrote,

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

In Philippians chapter 3, Paul explains the focus of his life was to know Christ, and the power of his life came from this knowledge. We use our minds to necessarily think about so many different things and, in doing so, we gain knowledge. Paul was describing the thinking which was at the basis of everything else he did. He believed that by knowing Jesus everything else he did would fall into place. By knowing and following the Saviour he would know how to work, how to live harmonious relationships, how to love, communicate, decide, and sacrifice. He genuinely believed

that knowing Christ was the secret to all things. It was his constant ambition and his desire for his fellow Christians to also set their minds on Christ.

### **Using our minds in unity, prayer, progress, and power**

Philippians 4 focuses our minds on unity, believing prayer, spiritual progress, and Christ's strength. The chapter begins with an encouragement to be strong in the Lord (v.1). Then Paul names two sisters, Euodia and Syntyche, who had a disagreement and encourages them to be of one mind in the Lord. At the same time, he asks that others would help them to do this. It is so important to maintain unity amongst the people of God and to deal swiftly and spiritually with difficulties as they arise. This is not always easy, and honesty and humility have to be exercised. In Nehemiah 4:6 we read,

“So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.”

We need “a mind to work” in dealing with spiritual or practical matters that affect the fellowship of God's people.

Paul then turns to having a mind to pray and to be thoughtful in our prayers. Our minds are vital to effective prayers. We need to be prepared, precise, persistent and full of praise in our prayers. Focused prayer ensures

“the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7).

Interestingly, Paul writes in Ephesians 6, at the end of his section on the armour of God,

“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints” (vv.17-18).

The last piece of armour was the helmet. After the helmet, the word of God, as the sword of the Spirit, is mentioned, followed by prayer. The close connection between the mind, the word of God and prayerfulness is important. The helmet protected the head. We think of our minds in relation to our heads - where our brains reside. The mind is associated with knowledge, thought, understanding, perception, and wisdom. We need to guard our minds and be careful what occupies our thoughts. Paul refers to watchfulness, and we must be watchful about our own spiritual condition and ensure we are not drawn away from Christ. We need to “wear” the helmet of salvation and live in the good of God's salvation, which saves us from the penalty, the power, and ultimately the presence, of sin.

What Paul refers to in verses 8-9 of Philippians chapter 4, is very helpful to this spiritual process,

“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. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”

In this short section, Paul tells us the kind of things which should occupy our minds and promote spiritual progress. The focus is on what is honourable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, virtuous and praiseworthy. The object is to learn and replicate such things and experience the presence of the God of peace.

Paul speaks of learning to be content in every circumstance (v.11). We learn through experience,

reflection, understanding, practice and wisdom. And we learn most effectively in the presence of God, discovering that The power of the Christian life comes from “Christ who strengthens me” (v. 13).

Our minds are critical to our spiritual well-being and progress. The Lord speaks about us being “as wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” We are not to be stupid or foolish or open to dangers in whatever form. We are to act thoughtfully about the decisions and direction, we take in our lives. We should be aware small mistakes lead to larger ones, so need to pay careful attention. It is wise to seek and learn from the counsel of experienced and spiritual brothers and sisters in Christ. And we should always test our judgements against the word of God. God promises us,

“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You” (Isaiah 26:3).

When Jesus healed Legion in Mark 5:15, it describes the man “sitting and clothed and in his right mind”. Salvation includes the spirit, soul, mind, and body. As Paul explains in 2 Timothy 1:7, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” God has saved our minds and we need to use them to their full potential and under His direction for His glory.

Alongside all that we have considered in our appeal to the Lord to use our minds, we should never forget that we are always in the mind of God (Psalm 144:3).

“Lord, what is man, that You take knowledge of him? Or the son of man, that You are mindful of him?”

We are in the mind of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26-27),

“Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”

And we are in the mind of the Lord Jesus (Romans 8:34-39).

“Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

May the Lord answer our prayer, “Lord, help me to use my mind” and enable us “with one mind and one mouth to glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:6).

Thank you for listening to the Truth for Today talk “Lord, help me to use my mind”. Talk number T1231.

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