



Paths in your Mind

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upon God's word day and night?
Peace, sweet peace.**

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by Art Dappen

God says, “Train up a child in the way he should go”, and much of this has to do with teaching the child to choose “paths for his thoughts”. There are “paths in our minds”, where our thoughts travel when we are not concentrating on any pressing business. When our minds are “in neutral”, so to speak, they tend to meditate upon certain things. Unless we have made it a habit to meditate upon God’s word day and night, our thoughts will wander out into forbidden paths, and will not be pleasing to the Lord.

God sees our thoughts, and they often cause him grief. “The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.” (Ps 94:11) He sees that men’s thoughts are filled with hatred, bitterness, strife, and violence. He sees they are filled with doubt and discontentment. He sees that they are filled with lies, deceit, and error. Jesus said, “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man...” (Mat 15: 19-20.)

God tells us approximately 100 times in the Bible to “not fear” or “fear not”. This is because men’s thoughts do not travel on paths of peace, but on paths of worry. “The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.” (Isa 59:8.) Faith and trust are beautiful paths within the mind.

Do your thoughts run on those paths? Or do you find yourself worrying and fretting? People worry about their health, their money, their loved ones, their work, and innumerable other things, great and small. These paths of anxiety are desolate and dry places.

The Lord personally calls us to return from such crooked and uneven paths. “Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth.” (Luke 3: 4-5.)

Jesus applied this personally to Martha, saying, “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” (Luke 10: 41-42.) Mary had chosen to sit at Jesus’ feet and meditate upon his words. What a fine choice of thoughts she had made! Jesus was calling Martha to do the same.

The Bible says, “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (Phlp 4: 6-7.) What is the result of meditating upon God’s word day and night? Peace, sweet peace.

Psalm 1 describes the happiness which results from not thinking about the imaginations of the ungodly and the opinions of the scorners. True happiness comes from meditating upon the Word of God at all times, day and night. When our thoughts are following these paths, then our lives will naturally produce just and merciful actions, and God will keep us from falling into sin and destruction. If our thoughts are clean on the inside, then we will also be clean on the outside. Jesus said, “...cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.” (Mat 23:26.) When God’s word is within our hearts, we will not sin. “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” (Psalm 119:11.)

God asks us for our heart. He says, “My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.” (Prov 23:26.) The way we “give our hearts to God” is to let his thoughts fill our minds. It means that we make the precepts and testimonies of God’s word to be the paths in our minds where our thoughts continually travel.

A man’s heart consists of his thoughts. As a man thinks in this heart, so is he. God tells us to write his true and pure thoughts upon our hearts. He says, “Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart.” (Prov 3:3.) He also says, “whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just,

whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” (Phlp 4:8.)

A “perfect heart” refers to the true and pure thoughts which dwell within it. Psalm 101 speaks of this: “I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.” (Psalm 101: 2-3.) We should keep our eyes and ears away from evil imaginations, lest they “cleave” (stick) to us. We don’t want those wicked attitudes in our hearts!

Psalm 139 contains a very important prayer. It says, “ Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”✝

Art Dappen (1946-2006) was a leader in the homeschool movement in Mexico. He served for over 30 years as a missionary with his wife of 35 years, Linn. Art’s ministry included the creation and free distribution of a Spanish reading program for homeschoolers. About two years before his home-going, he and Linn added seven Mexican orphans to their family, making them the parents of seventeen. Two married daughters in the U.S. have blessed them with 13 grandchildren (so far). Linn and the rest of the family continue to live and minister in Mexico.

Art received his high school education at an elite boarding school in Connecticut, and continued on to university. One day, as a new Christian in a graduate-level chemistry class, he came to a realization. As he studied the equations on the blackboard, the thought came to him: “Jesus Christ did not dedicate his life to what is written on that blackboard.” He left school and purposed to serve the Lord.

A daughter said, “He always felt it was a privilege to throw it all away.”

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