

A Different Perspective
Having Faith That Moves Mountains (4)
09-25-4
My Mind Really Matters

I am so excited today, truly I am. As I sit here in the studio – I have this sense that there's so much to share today. In fact, what's bursting out of my heart is that I want to share with you just a handful of the most powerful things that I have ever learned about having the sort of faith that moves mountains.

We spoke the other day about the world's template of success. The notion that if we would just have positive thoughts, we can have positive outcomes in every aspect of our lives. We can do anything and achieve anything, if only we'll get a positive mindset.

It's a seductive idea. It's one that we would love to pull up next to. In fact, so popular is this notion, that a whole school of positive thinking has grown up over recent years. But it doesn't matter how positively we think, there are going to be things that we can't overcome. It doesn't matter how positively I think about life, one day, one way or another, this mortal body will give up its spirit.

And so, many a Christian will reject this notion of thinking positively, because it has been so intrinsically linked to the world's template of success.

Yet, God's Word is very clear, that ***what we do with our mind actually matters***. That instead of being locked into the patterns of thinking that pervade the world and just don't work, instead of allowing ourselves to be squeezed into the world's mould, we need to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

What we do with our mind really matters.

That's what today and tomorrow on the program are all about. Now – let me say this. You may have heard me talk about these things before – and if you have, you have a couple of choices. You can say to yourself – I don't need this, I've heard it before. Or you can just take it in again and let it sink even deeper into your heart.

And today, today I want to share with you that our thoughts can destroy us. The flip side of that, is if we learn how to think fresh new ideas, ideas that come from God Himself, that in turn can set us free.

Now, I am a naturally positive person. I just am. Probably my training at the Australian Army Office Academy – the Royal Military College Duntroon helped. But the way that I’m wired inside means that I see the glass as being half full and not half empty. And I guess it’s a great help too that much of my work involves me in studying and preaching God’s Word. I’m constantly listening to Him and hearing from Him. It’s one of the reasons I so love doing what I do.

Every now and then though, I get to feeling a little down or lost. Normally when I’m tired and I have a lot going on in my life. But that’s generally only a now and then sort of thing.

One day, I decided to take notice of my thoughts – a stock-take if you will, of the way in which I used my mind. I was absolutely shocked at the number of negative thoughts that I allow to occupy my mind. I mean really shocked. Because I’d always seen myself as Mr Positive. In fact those who know me well, would tell you that as well.

Here’s how it happens. We race around doing all the things we do in life. Getting the kids off to school. Getting ready for work. The long commute. The pressures at work. Go, go, go. And this intrudes on our schedule. Or there are delays. Or this person says something that annoys us, hurts us or alienates us.

And that’s before the guy in the car in front of us changes lanes without using his indicator. And so we honk the horn and we think bad thoughts.

“How could that guy do that?!” “Oh no, I’m running late.” “Oh I forgot to put an apple in Johnnie’s school bag.” “That idiot – how can he come up with that.” “She has absolutely no idea what she’s doing.” “Who do they think they are.”

Let me ask you something. Do any of these sound even vaguely familiar to you? And they’re just the tip of the iceberg aren’t they. I’m sure if we thought about it we could add a whole bunch more.

The salesman sitting there staring at the phone afraid to pick it up and make an appointment. “They’re never going to buy from me.” The wife who looks at her busy husband and thinks to herself “He’s never, ever going to understand me.”

In fact, it doesn’t matter who we are, where we live, what walk of life we’re in – these negative thoughts creep in and then we begin to verbalise them. We start speaking them out to ourselves and to

other and before you know it we're wandering around through life with a stinking attitude that is going to rob us of the blessings that God has planned for today and for tomorrow and for the next day. That's exactly what Jesus taught:

Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile. (Matthew 15:17-20)

These thoughts and these words – the negativity - begin to shape our reality. They shape how we see the world. And that shaping in turn defines the attitude with which we live our lives. And our attitudes are like the lenses that we see the world through.

That's why some people are just mean spirited and nasty and glum and negative. The pathetic character Gollum in the Lord of the Rings if you've read the books or seen the movies is a caricature of such a person. Gollum clung onto the one ring that ruled them for so long that in the end, it destroyed him.

And we're prone to do exactly the same thing. We want to hang on to the bad things even though we know they're bad and let them destroy us. The problem with all of this is that these negative thoughts are insidious. They creep up on us and cloud our vision.

A few years ago, I was fiddling with my glasses over lunch at a friend's house and they snapped in two. I was so annoyed – this was going to cost me some serious money. So I visited the optometrist to have my vision tested for a new pair. And one of the test that they routinely conduct is to check the eye pressure to test for glaucoma.

Now this was a routine test and I was diagnosed with that very disease. It's insidious because there are no discernable symptoms. The pressure inside the eyeball remains high and slowly damages the optic nerve at the back of the eye. Over a few years, it can send a person blind. By the time they notice that there's something wrong, they've lost much of their sight and the damage cannot be reversed. Fortunately, mine was diagnosed very early and with routine treatment, my eyesight will be fine for many years to come.

This is exactly what happens to us when we allow negative thoughts to rule our lives. Our view of the world becomes clouded and

distorted and we don't even know it. Have a listen again to Jesus on this:

The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! (Matthew 6:22,23)

If our vision is clear then the light can get in. But if it's clouded with all these negative perceptions and behaviour, we end up in darkness. It robs us of the light. But it's the very last bit of what Jesus says here that is the most damning: *If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!*

In other words if what's going on in you is darkness, but you think that it is still light – boy are you in some serious trouble. This strikes right at the heart of this issue. We go on through life thinking that somehow we're right, it's everyone else that has a problem. The negative thoughts cloud our vision and our darkness is as light to us. In other words, we're kidding ourselves. And so we live our lives in darkness never realising there is such a better way of living. Isn't that scary?