



Introduction: Today we are thinking about what 'Intentional Discipleship' means in relation to our minds: how do we learn to live **consciously** aware of trying to think like Christ thinks. The Greek word for 'repent' literally means 'a change of mind': we need to change our minds about our behaviour or attitudes before expecting to see a change in our actions. This means putting God's interests first, before our own, remembering we are apprentices to Jesus our Master Craftsman and consciously aligning our choices with His teachings. **Read Romans 8: 5-6; 12: 1-3.**

1. How our minds develop. Romans 8: 5a, 6a.

- Babies are born with special instinctive reflexes, e.g. the grasp reflex and the suck reflex which originate in the central nervous system and increase their chance of survival before their thinking processes are developed.
- As the child grows into an adult, these reflexes are suppressed by the development of thought processes and the brain takes over. We find ourselves making conscious decisions, influenced by what goes on around us.
- But we can still display reflex actions, especially when we are under pressure to meet a deadline, catch a train, or we're tired and no-one is co-operating: we snap, stop thinking, by-pass our brain and react unreasonably.
- We don't mean to behave like that, but we are too human and too weak to resist our flawed basic reactions.

2. How our habits develop. Romans 8: 5b, 6b.

Scientific studies of the brain demonstrate three distinct stages to habit formation and these principles can be applied to the process of being intentional about developing a Christian mind-set:

- Exploration – When we start ask lots of questions about Christianity and explore its reality and relevance.
- Habit Formation – We start to enthuse about Christian teaching but are quite easily discouraged by the life issues we wrestle with: the Jesus way is formed in us but not well rooted. Cf. **Luke 8: 4-8; 13.**
- Habit Imprinting – We can choose to form good habits and under pressure we will revert to them. If we choose to develop a Christian mind-set, even our instinctive reactions will be wise and holy. **Ephes. 4: 22-3**

3. Creating good habits. Romans 12: 1-3

- Paul urges us to refuse to comply with the prevailing world view: to resist our original instinctive reflexes which lead us to 'white lies,' bad language etc. 'Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world.'
- And crucially for the Christian: 'Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.'
 - a) The Greek word translated as 'transformed' is the word from which we derive 'metamorphosis' – a profound change from one stage of development to another. Our minds need to be changed that much!*
 - b) Intentional discipleship is doing more than isolating ourselves from undesirable influences, instead we are to be proactively involved in our world's affairs and get them changed for the better.
 - c) As Jesus' apprentices, we cannot possibly do all this without the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, giving us holy habits, divine discernment, insight, wisdom and right judgement. **1 Corinthians 2: 14-16.**
- Five bite sized suggestions to help us **TRY** to start and sustain the development of healthy habits of the mind:
 - a) Identify one habit in our lives that we know Jesus wouldn't do and ask Him to help you break it.
 - b) Then commit to a conversation with God once a day,
 - c) Concentrate on the words of hymns when you sing them: music, poetry and Biblical insights in holy fusion
 - d) Memory verses from the Bible – but only one a week and only for a week!
 - e) Join a home group to discuss how to get biblical understanding into your mind-set. We are all on a journey of learning what it is to become the **people we were made to be** in order to live life to the full.

Questions for discussion

1. *Can you think of a time when you were under pressure and describe how you reacted?*
2. *We might think of ourselves as responsible adults but we can still display reflex actions: what comes to mind?*
3. *In what ways do we allow ourselves to conform to the patterns of this world?*
4. *Are there habits, or ways of thinking that we have found hard to shake off?*
5. *What does it mean to have our minds transformed?*
6. *Are there Christian ways of thinking that we find difficult to adopt consistently?*
7. *Is there an area we could focus on as a group or individually, in order to facilitate the renewal of our minds?*

*Further thought: This word metamorphóō is translated 'transfigure' in the transfiguration narratives in Matthew 17:2 and Mark 9:2. The only other place it appears in the New Testament is in 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 which speaks of believers being 'changed' into the likeness of Christ 'from one degree of glory to another' by the 'operation of the Lord, who is the Spirit.' RSV