

Reformation:¹ Thinking New Thoughts



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 7

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 2 Corinthians 3:17, 18; 2 Corinthians 10:3–5; Romans 12:2, 3; John 10:10; Matthew 5:13–15.

MEMORY VERSE: “You have been raised up with Christ. So think about things that are in heaven. That is where Christ is. He is sitting at God’s right hand. Think about things that are in heaven. Don’t [do not] think about things that are on earth” (Colossians 3:1, 2, NIV).

ISAAC WATTS² WROTE OVER SIX HUNDRED AND FIFTY HYMNS. Many of his hymns are sung by thousands of Christians today. One day, a parade was held in London in Watts’ honor. People met on the streets to take a quick look at this famous man. As Watts’ carriage passed by a group of people, one lady was surprised to find that the writer of powerful hymns was just a short man, bent with old age. She shouted, “What, you are Isaac Watts?” Watts ordered the carriage to stop. He stood as tall as he could. And he said, “Madame, if I could hold creation in my hands, I would still be measured by my mind, because the mind is what a man is measured by” (adapted).

Isaac Watts was right. The mind is the measure of a man. And reformation is about our minds. If we have reformation in our thinking, we will have reformation in our actions. Reformation takes place when the Holy Spirit brings our thoughts into unity (oneness) with Christ’s thoughts. When that happens, our reformed actions will follow.

1. reformation—the ongoing process in which a person changes his or her lifestyle in order to follow God’s will after having accepted Christ as Savior.

2. Isaac Watts—a famous English writer of church hymns. He lived about 200 years ago.

SUNDAY—SEPTEMBER 8**THE MIND IS IMPORTANT
(2 Corinthians 3:17, 18)**

Our thoughts will always control our behavior. The way that we think influences the way that we act. But the reverse is also true: actions that we do again and again influence our thoughts, too. The Christian is a “new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV). His or her old thoughts have been replaced by new ones (2 Corinthians 5:17).

When a sailboat goes out to sea, the sails are set. The set sails give the boat its direction. Throughout the journey, the sails need to be reset so that the boat can continue to go in the right direction. If the sails are neglected, the boat will go off course very quickly. Like those sails, our thoughts give direction to our spiritual lives. When the apostle (teacher



Like sails on a boat, our thoughts give direction to our lives.

and leader) Paul warns Christians to “think about things that are in heaven” (Colossians 3:2, NIV), he is encouraging us to turn our thoughts toward heaven. This is because our minds are shaped by what we put into them. Just like our actions, our thoughts are influenced by what we think about all the time.

What miracle of grace³ happens in our own lives as we experience God’s glory (power) in His Word? Read 2 Corinthians 3:17, 18.

As we read about Jesus in His Word (the Bible), we are changed. New thoughts take the place of old ones. Thus, by studying Jesus, we become more like Him. “It is a law for both wise and spiritual people that by beholding [looking upon] something we become changed. The mind slowly but surely accepts the subjects that it thinks about. The mind has absorbed so much that it becomes used to what it loves and respects. Man will never rise higher than his own standard of purity or goodness or truth. If self is his greatest ideal, he will never reach anything more honorable. Rather, he will continue to sink lower and lower. The grace of God alone has power to make man honorable. Left to himself, man’s path must always go downward.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy [War Between Christ and Satan]*, page 555.

Reformation is all about looking up

3. grace—God’s gift of mercy and forgiveness that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

to Jesus. It is about Jesus filling our minds. It is about Jesus influencing our thoughts. And it is about Jesus guiding our actions. When we watch Jesus, He will lead us to higher standards than just following strict rules. We cannot really look to Jesus and remain the same. When we think Jesus' thoughts, we have only one desire. And that desire is to do His will.

What advice would you give to a person struggling to make Jesus important in his or her thoughts? What does the Bible mean when it talks about “beholding [watching]” or “looking to Jesus”?



Reformation is all about looking unto Jesus.

MONDAY—SEPTEMBER 9

THE MIND'S FILTERS (Philippians 4:7, 8)

There are some parents who are worried that their children will visit unwanted Internet sites. So they have installed filters to block certain sites.

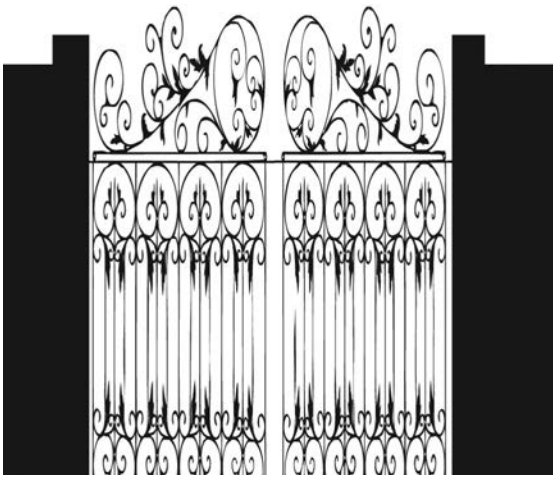
Other parents have done almost the same thing with television. The purpose of these electronic filters is to let some things in while keeping others out. In a similar way, God has provided a “spiritual filter” for our minds. It has been carefully designed to let only those things into our minds that will build our spiritual experience with Jesus.

Read Philippians 4:7, 8 and Romans 12:2. What useful advice does Paul give to his fellow Christians in order to create a filter designed to guard their minds from evil influences? How does this advice help us today with television, the Internet, and DVDs?

Here is one simple truth. It is not possible to develop deeply spiritual thoughts if we feed our minds on worldly things. Our senses are the gateway to our minds. If our minds are filled with the exciting scenes of movies and TV, they will be molded by these worldly scenes rather than by the principles (important rules) of God's Word. Millions of dollars are spent by movie-makers who control our emotions and thoughts. We can be sure that the movie-makers are not interested in preparing people for the soon return of Jesus. Their chief goal is to make money. Seventh-day Adventist Christians preparing for the Second Coming of Christ should think carefully before sacrificing (giving up) their souls to TV and movies.

There is a great cathedral

(church building) in Milan, Italy. It has three large, wooden entrance doors. Carved above the left-hand door are these words: “All that pleases is for a moment.” Over the right-hand door, these words stand out: “All that troubles is but for a moment.” In big letters over the center door are these wise words: “That alone endures [remains faithful] which is eternal.” Ask yourself: How often do you think about what is eternal? How do your choices show those thoughts?



Our senses are the gateway to our minds.

TUESDAY—SEPTEMBER 10

**THE MIND’S SAFEGUARD
(PROTECTION)
(2 Corinthians 10:3–5)**

“Then God’s peace will watch over your hearts and your minds because you belong to Christ Jesus. God’s peace can never be completely understood” (Philippians 4:7, NIV). This is a wonderful promise. But we

have to act on it in order to make it real in our lives.

There are many ways that we can let down our guard over our hearts and minds. We can let our minds be polluted by TV and movies and other things of the world. Our minds might be influenced by anger, bitterness, and hate. They may be sunken in an ocean of pleasure or bad habits. The good news is that Jesus has promised to safeguard our minds—if we let Him.

Read 2 Corinthians 10:3–5. When Paul says that “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal [worldly, fleshy]” (NKJV) but spiritual, what does he mean? What are carnal weapons? What are spiritual weapons? The apostle also says, “I keep every thought under control in order to make it obey Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5, NIV). What does Paul mean? And how can it be done?

Preacher Billy Graham once said, “You cannot stop the birds from flying over your head. But you can stop them from nesting in your hair.” This means that thoughts will come into our minds quickly. There are different sights, sounds, and smells that excite certain thoughts. Different experiences encourage different emotions. We cannot always choose the thoughts that come quickly into our minds. But we can choose whether we will think about them and let them control our thinking. Thus, to make each thought obey Christ is to surrender our minds

to Jesus. Carnal (worldly) thoughts are not removed by just wishing them away. They are driven out as the mind is filled with something else. The mind that is busy with the positive principles of God's Word is the mind that is "safeguarded" and "kept" by God's grace from Satan's tricks.

Paul says, "You should think in the same way Christ Jesus does" (Philippians 2:5, NIV). What does Paul mean? How is it possible for us to have the mind of Christ? How do the words in this verse say that we are responsible for change?



Jesus will safeguard our minds if we let Him.

WEDNESDAY—SEPTEMBER 11

MIND-BODY RELATIONSHIPS (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

The Greeks of Bible times believed that there was a separation between our bodies and our souls. But the Bible teaches that the body and the soul are united (joined) in a human.

Whatever happens to one part of the human body has some influence on all parts. The disciples (followers of Jesus) taught that physical, mental, emotional (having to do with strong feelings), and spiritual health were interconnected (connected to each other) and could not be separated.

How is this idea shown in 1 Thessalonians 5:23?

For the New Testament believers, physical, mental, and emotional well-being is connected to spiritual well-being. The apostle Paul encouraged believers to "glorify [praise] God in their bodies." He believed that all humans were bought with a price and that we are not our own (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20). Taking good care of our bodies by having a more healthful lifestyle does much more than add a few more years to our lives. If it is done for the right reasons, it can be an act of worship itself.

How do Romans 12:2, 3; John 10:10; and 1 Corinthians 10:31 show the very close relationship between our physical and spiritual health?

The Holy Spirit does not limit Himself to one part of our lives when He encourages us to grow spiritually. This is because reformation is not one-sided. The Spirit wants us to obey the will of Christ in every way. God invites us to surrender unhealthful practices for His glory. Satan wants to control our minds

through our bodies. But Jesus wants to control our bodies through our minds. Our bodies are temples, not funhouses. By following Heaven's principles we can live more joy-filled, useful, and healthy lives.

What personal experiences have shown you just how closely connected our bodies and spiritual lives are? What choices can you make to help them to work more closely?

THURSDAY—SEPTEMBER 12

EXAMPLES OF INFLUENCE (Matthew 5:13–15)

There are many examples that Jesus uses to describe Himself and His church. One is “light.” He is “the light of the world” (John 8:12). He is also the “true light that gives light to every man” (John 1:9, NIV). He encourages us to “walk while you have the light” and “believe in the light” (John 12:35, 36, NKJV).

Compare⁴ Matthew 5:13–15 with Philippians 2:14–16. What is our Lord's goal for His people in this world? What does that mean to us in our lives? How can we be what we are called to be?

The goal of all revival⁵ and reformation is to let the light of Christ's love, grace, and truth shine through our lives. Light shines, but darkness does

not. Jesus has called His people to live a lifestyle different from the lifestyle of the people in the world. Jesus wants to show that His way of life is much better. He calls (asks) us to be merciful, caring, and kind in a world of selfishness and false pride. He calls us to uphold (keep) high standards in a society drunk (too full) with pleasure (Colossians 3:1, 2). He calls us to healthful living at a time when millions of people are dying too young from diseases due to unhealthy living (John 10:10). In the midst of a shameless (feeling no shame), sex-centered, thrill-seeking generation, Jesus calls us to something different. He calls us to be humble, proper, and pure (1 Peter 3:3, 4).

The Old Testament prophet (special messenger) Isaiah gave a warning call to Israel for reformation about seven hundred years before Christ. His words speak with true meaning to a church waiting for the return of our Lord. “ ‘My thoughts are not like your thoughts. And your ways are not like my ways,’ announces the LORD. ‘The heavens are higher than the earth. And my ways are higher than your ways. My thoughts are higher than your thoughts.’ ” (Isaiah 55:8, 9, NIV). God's idea of right living for His church and for us as individuals (persons) is higher than we can imagine. All of heaven wants to show God's character (who God is) of love through His people.

Look at the standards by which

4. compare—show how two or more things are the same or different.

5. revival—renewed interest in God and the desire to improve one's spiritual life.

you live. In what ways (if any) do they show that you are a follower of Jesus? Do they show that your life is set on something other than this dying world?

FRIDAY—SEPTEMBER 13

ADDITIONAL STUDY: “Many claim to be on the Lord’s side. But they are not. Most of all their actions are on Satan’s side. How shall we know whose side we are on? Who has our hearts? With whom are our thoughts? Upon whom do we love to think about? Who has our warmest affections [love] and our best interests? If we are on the Lord’s side, our thoughts are with Him, and our sweetest thoughts are of Him. We have no friendship with the world. We have dedicated all that we have and are to Him. We want to be like Him. We want to breathe His spirit. We want to do His will. We want to please Him in all things.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 2, page 262.

“It is the special honor of every soul to share with the world the treasures of God’s grace and the riches of Christ. There is nothing that Christ wants more than for His people to represent to the world His Spirit and character. There is nothing that the world needs more than the perfect example of the Savior’s love for all humans. All heaven is waiting for

God’s people to be ready to receive the holy oil of joy and blessing.”
—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, page 419.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Read 2 Corinthians 5:18–20 and 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18. What words does Paul use to “picture” the high calling of God’s people? What do these “pictures” mean to us in our daily lives? How do our lives show that this verse is talking about us?
- ② If we are honest, we can read and claim all the Bible promises we want. But if we do not make the right mental choice at the time of temptation, we will fall into temptation. What principles or practices (ways) have helped you to control your thoughts when tempted?
- ③ What would you say to someone who says, “Yes, my thoughts are not always what they should be. But my actions and lifestyle are always perfect”?
- ④ Along with the wonderful truths we have as Seventh-day Adventists, we have the health message, too. How can we learn to better include these principles in our lives and in our outreach and witness? What part should the health message have in revival and reformation?