

A  
**MESSAGE OF HOPE,**  
comfort and freedom in Jesus Christ

**“Be Transformed by the Renewing of Your Mind” by Greg Kinney**

I was blessed to have an opportunity to attend last month’s meeting of the Prison Ministry Collective as a representative of Message of Hope Jail and Prison Ministry. It is so great to see so many different ministries and organizations represented at the meetings and to meet new people each month. Some members of the group are individuals seeking to get involved in jail or prison ministry, some are returning citizens, some have loved ones who are incarcerated, and some are active ministry leaders who are looking to be an encouragement to others (as well as be encouraged). The common passion we all share is a desire to share God’s love with others, to lead others to Him and to inspire hope. As Joe Mazzio, Director of the Prison Ministry Collective, often says, “We are hope slingers.”

At the July monthly meeting, Greg Kinney, State and Regional Director for Celebrate Recovery Inside, presented a message to the group. In addition to being a CRI Director, Greg is part of the North Central Regional Team for CRI. He is also a long-standing member and participant of Celebrate Recovery. Greg has been “slinging hope” in the prison system for nearly 10 years now. The following is what he shared with those in attendance at the meeting:

Romans 12:2 tells us, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Nonconformity to the world implies bringing the body and its appetites under the control of the Spirit of God, subjecting the imagination to the mind of Christ and walking in humility of spirit through a world where self-confidence and boasting are the order of the day. In order, then, that our spiritual experience of the truth of God should maintain its ground, it must not be dulled and deadened by conformity to the world.

Your mind is the control center of your attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and actions. Paul says that God wants your mind because He knows the power of the mind and wants it for Himself. He wants you to think His thoughts. As you do, your mind will be renewed. As your mind is renewed, you will be able to fulfill His will for your life.

The mind is our only place of total personal privacy. It is that territory no other person can invade. As a result, we tend to be very much ourselves in our minds. We do not have to put up a facade to anyone. It is where immoral fantasies and schemes can play out in intimate detail. Thoughts of revenge, jealousy, lingering anger, and envy can have unchecked freedom.

In contrast, our mind can be the place where we seek to enjoy the pleasures of purity and devise plans to serve, help, and heal. It is where we can embrace memorized Scripture and meditate on His Word and His ways. Our minds can pray and commune with the Lord on a constant basis. Our thoughts can be a temple where we offer sacrifices of praise and worship to our Lord. Our minds are a powerful force for good or evil. It is no wonder God’s Word teaches us that a changed life begins with a changed mind. All of life begins and is defined by how we think, what we think about, and what we decide in the confines of our thoughts. God wants our minds. He calls us to think His thoughts after Him and to conform our thoughts to His will and His ways.

I think all of us underestimate the dramatic impact the fall has had upon the earth. Our first parents' choosing to rebel against God and to go it alone has altered the very fabric of daily life. Coming to terms with our "stinkin' thinkin'" is part of the maturation process.

1 Corinthians 2:12-16 says, "We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgements about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgement: 'For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?' But we have the mind of Christ."

Paul was trying to get the Corinthian church to think like spiritual people – thinking thoughts and making decisions as Jesus would make them – by reminding them God has given each of us His Spirit to enable us to live abundantly in Him and not like the world.

In Isaiah 30:15 we read, "This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it."

In this verse we see the tension between our old nature and our new nature. We have to plug into "the mind of Christ" plus accept that returning to God and resting in Him is our salvation – our deliverance, our rescue – from the trials and tribulations of daily life. Instead of intellect and savvy, quietness and trust are our strength. On the surface, this is counter-intuitive, but deep within our spirit, where things are "spiritually discerned," we know this to be true. All of us need to "understand what God has freely given us" so we can live daily in quietness and trust. This is where strength is found and nowhere else.

True wisdom, the source of all mental, emotional and spiritual healing, can only be found through the proper worship and reverence of our higher power, Jesus Christ. To worship our God in prayer and devotion, we must submit our entire heart, soul, mind and body to worship. This is the first and greatest commandment and the second is like it; one must love thy neighbor as thyself. These two commands sum up the entire law and the prophets.

The heart is the seat of emotions while the soul is comprised of the will, the intellect and the mind and is that part of us which transcends death. Celebrate Recovery helps us to spot erroneous, self-defeating patterns of thinking which have gotten us into trouble in our speech and actions. Through this program, we come to realize that we all have certain spiritual and emotional gifts which make us special and unique children of God.

## Blessing

"The LORD bless you and keep you, the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

(Numbers 6:24-26; Romans 15:13 NIV)