BIBLE STUDY

Mind Over Matter

RESONATE

Mind Over Matter

It’s All in the Mind

Have you ever struggled with sin? Have you felt consumed by what was wrong? Have you felt the weight of good verses evil in your life? Have you felt hopeless instead of victorious? You are not alone. We all experience this battle. This week we will study the war zone of the mind as well as discover how to win the war!

DAY 1 / DAY 2 / DAY 3 / DAY 4 / DAY 5

DAY 1

The Word

Today's Scripture: Romans 7:14-25

Paul. An apostle. The greatest missionary who ever lived. Writer of the majority of the New Testament. A prisoner for the Lord. Faithful to the end. Martyred for the Name of Christ. Throughout the past 2,000 years writers have written books on this man and his writings; artists have painted portraits of events from Paul's life; pastors have preached sermons based on his letters; people have aspired to live like him, and so much more. This man who changed the world through the power of Jesus' Name wrote these words:

Romans 7:14-20

> 14We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. 15I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. 16And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. 17As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. 18I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. 19For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. 20Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

Verse 7-20: For everyone out there who feels like the Christian life is impossible and you can never be like those apostles in the Bible, raise a hand. When you do, your hand will be raised with every Christian throughout time and it would include all the apostles, even Paul, themselves! They knew their struggles. We have them looking picturesque, but they knew the truth. The bottom line: we are wretches! We do what we do not want to do and do not do what we want to do. Where does this struggle come from?

Romans 7:21-23

> 21So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. 22For in my inner being I delight in God's law; 23but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

Verse 21-23: Good and evil are still at war within us. Where is this war taking place? In the mind. The battle is lost and won in the mind. It is with our mind that we choose whatever action to perform. For example, if I am on a diet, I can choose in my mind whether to stay on the diet or not. I can choose in my mind to eat healthy and so I will choose to eat healthy. Or

I can think in my mind about eating junk food and so I will eat junk food. It begins in the mind. My hand does not force junk food into my mouth. Instead, it obeys the bidding of the mind. Or, for another example, I choose in my mind what to say or not to say in a conversation. I can decide in my mind to say what is good or I can decide to say what is evil. The words run through the mind before they come out of the mouth. The battle begins in the mind.

How do we win this battle? We must confess the truth.

Romans 7:24

> 24What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

Verse 24: In ourselves, it is impossible for us to win this war. The good and evil will rage within us and there is no hope for victory. We must recognize our weaknesses. This means we must strip ourselves of every façade and be real. We must stop pretending that we have it all together. Look at Paul’s vulnerability. He is writing this letter to a group of believers in Rome. These are not people that he has personally met, yet he is willing to share his struggle with sin. That is authenticity! We need to be willing to confess to God and others our struggles so that we can stop investing time and energy in covering up our sin and instead investing it into recovering from it! Only One Person can help us do this!

Romans 7:24-25

> 24What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Verse 25: Jesus is willing to help us. His help was extended on the cross. He won over sin and death and now we can join Him in His victory! The struggle will continue but the results in our lives can change if we live through Jesus! Thanks be to God!

DAY 1

Application

Confess any sin that you are struggling against. Praise God that He can help lead you to victory through Jesus Christ our Lord!

How can the words of Paul help us when we struggle with sin?

Why does it not feel like others struggle with doing what they don't want to do and not doing what they want to do?

How can being vulnerable with one another actually guard us against sin?

Who are people with whom you can share your struggles with in an honest and open way?

How can these people develop into group that is accountable to one another?

DAY 2

The Word

Today's Scripture: Romans 8:1-4, 7:19-20. 6:1-11

We learned yesterday that there is a battle in our mind. Jesus is the only One who can rescue us from it. How is this possible?

Romans 8:1-2

> 1Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

Verse 1-2: When a baby is born, they have one nature alone: a sinful nature. It is hard to look at a cute little baby and say "only a sin nature dwells in there" but when he hits about two years old, you believe this truth! However, when this child believes in Jesus as Lord, he receives the Spirit. Now, the battle has begun. The sin nature and the Spirit's nature are against one another. This is why we read yesterday about Paul's struggle:

Romans 7:19-20

> 19For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. 20Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

We are struggling within ourselves. However, because we have the Spirit within us, we are not condemned. Sin brings condemnation. Those without Jesus will experience eternal punishment. But as believers, Jesus Himself bore our sins upon Him so we do not experience the condemnation of sin.

Romans 8:3-4

> 3For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, 4in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

We sinned. We could not keep the law. God sent Jesus to live perfectly under the law. He took our sins on the cross and He gave His righteousness. Now, in God's sight, we are perfect and we will not be condemned for our sin.

Note that I said that we will not receive condemnation but that does not mean that we will avoid consequences. Our sin may bear present results, however, they will not lead us to eternal damnation.

This truth comes with a warning. Many people will realize that they will not be condemned for their sin so they falsely believe that they can live whatever life they desire now and reap heaven later. Paul retorts this distorted view.

Romans 6:1-11

1What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 3Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

5If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. 6For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— 7because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

8Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. 10The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

11In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Verse 1-11: Our present victory comes from recognizing that through Jesus Christ we are dead to sin. Jesus died in our place. He took our sins upon Him. He took death in order to give us eternal life. We no longer have to live in sin. The sin life is dead within us. We must believe this by faith. Often we live in the “sin lies”. Here are just a few: I can never change; this is the way I am; I was raised to be like this; I have lived this way for too long…the list can go on and on. But these are all lies. It says in the Bible that we are dead to sin. Our old self was crucified with Him. When we sin, we are just paying a visit to a corpse! Why would we want to live in a dead way? We can live in new life because Jesus gave us life. But we must have faith that this is true for us. Count yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ.

DAY 2

Application

Praise God for sending Jesus to be your substitute for condemnation. He was condemned so that you might have eternal life!

Write in your own words what Jesus accomplished for you on the cross.

What is the connection between faith and victory over sin?

DAY 3

The Word

Today's Scripture: Romans 8:5-8

What is your obsession? Maybe it is sports, or a hobby of some sort, or reading, or items you collect. If you are passionate about anything, then you know how to set your mind on something. This is a step in living for God.

Romans 8:5

> 5Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.

Verse 5: What do you set your mind on? Every thought comes down to two categories: sinful nature or Spiritual nature. That is it. It is either one or the other. Take time to ponder all the thoughts you have had in the last hour. In which category would the majority of them fall?

Of course, some people may think this hard line is too strict. How can thoughts be sinful or Spiritual but not anything else? Couldn't there be a less extreme category? By the Word of God, there are only the two choices. Remember, the battle is in the mind. We are either winning or losing the battle at any given moment. Each thought we have either takes us closer or further away from victory. There is no neutral ground. The enemy would like you to think that there neutral territory because it would keep you from the fight! But the truth is, the battle is raging and to minimize the power of your thoughts will keep you losing. The consequences of our thoughts are more potent then you might realize.

Romans 8:6

> 6The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;

Verse 6: Sinful thought are death. Spiritual thoughts are life and peace. Which would you rather have in your life? In other words, sinful thoughts are destructive. They are also futile and lead to nothing. Spiritual thoughts bring change in a situation. They lead to harmony. In any situation, you have the ability to choose your thoughts which then will lead to actions. But be warned. God is only pleased with one response.

Romans 8:7-8

> 7the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

Verse 7-8: The sinful nature is hostile to God. Anytime we join in on thoughts that are not Spiritual we are being hostile toward God. If thoughts are not neutral but are either Spiritual or sinful, how often are you having thoughts that are hostile toward God? Besides showing hostility, you are not pleasing God with those thoughts. It is time that we evaluate what we are thinking. The results are death verses life. This is no small matter of the mind.

DAY 3

Application

Ask God to help you evaluate your thoughts. Ask Him to show you His perspective on how you think throughout the day.

How does it feel to know that there are only two categories of thought: sinful or Spiritual?

How can you know which category a thought falls into? Some or obvious but some are not. How can you discern between the two?

Have you ever considered that your thoughts may showcase hostility towards God? How will this realization help you change your thought life?

DAY 4

The Word

Today's Scripture: Romans 8:9-11, 1 John 3:10, Ephesians 1:4-6

If thoughts are either sinful or Spiritual, how do we think thoughts that will please God? The answer is found in discovering who is in control.

Romans 8:9

> 9You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

Verse 9: When you believe in Jesus as your Lord, you no longer belong to the enemy but to Jesus Himself. He gives everyone who belongs to Him the Spirit. The Spirit indwells the believer and helps the believer live a God-controlled life. This often makes our "independent" American thought cringe. For we do not like to be controlled. We want to control our lives and our destinies. But in truth, we are always controlled, the difference is who is controlling us: God or satan.

1 John 3:10

> 10This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.

Verse 10: We are someone's child physically, and we are someone's child spiritually. Your father is either God or satan.

Ephesians 1:4-6

> 4For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— 6to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Verse 4-6: If you are adopted, that means that you were originally born to someone else. Yet, another adult chooses to take over the responsibility of parenting you. When we are born, our father is satan, spiritually speaking. We are living in the sinful nature, which is his evil nature. Yet, God chooses to adopt us. He pays for the adoption with the blood of His Son, Jesus. After the adoption takes place, we become the children of God. The adoption secures us the inheritance of our Father, which is eternal life. But it also secures us life now.

Romans 8:10

> 10But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.

Verse 10: Our old self, the ways of our old father, Satan; is dead. We have been given the life of our new Father, God. He is righteousness. His perfection was given to us because His Son was given our sin. This exchange brings us life. We can live in a perfect heaven because we have been made perfect in Christ. But we can also learn to live a perfect life now because the Spirit of righteousness that lives within us. This Spirit is powerful.

Romans 8:11

> 11And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

Verse 11: Ponder this: the Power that raised Jesus from the dead is within you. The Spirit lives within you. He is able to help you overcome the sin nature which is still within you. His Life within you will help you conquer the death which is still within you.

This death is your sin nature. The power that can raise the dead is accessible to you to help you in your fight against sin and to enable you to live for Righteousness!

DAY 4

Application

Thank your Father for adopting you! Thank Him for the evidence of your adoption which is the Spirit within you.

What are your thoughts about someone is always in control over your life: either God or satan?

What excuses do we have for not changing our sin life?

How do these excuses deny the power of the Spirit within us?

If you truly believe that the Power that raised Jesus from the dead lives within you, how will you approach temptation in the future?

DAY 5

The Word

Today's Scripture: Romans 8:12-17, Hebrews 2:17-18

We have been adopted by God Himself. We are the children of God. As children, we have a responsibility to our Father.

Romans 8:12-14

> 12Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. 13For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, 14because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Verse 12: As adopted children, we are obligated to live for God. This is not because we are robots, forced into doing what is right. Instead, it is a motivated by love and gratefulness. If we fully understand what we have been saved from and the cost it took for us to be redeemed, then we will want to show love back to the Father for all the love He has lavished upon us.

Romans 8:15-16

> 15For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

Verse 15-16: Sadly, many people live "for God" because they fear Him. They think they must live a certain way so bad things will not happen to them. Their lives are wrapped up in rules and regulations. This is a life of fear. That is never what God intended. He freed us from our sin nature so that we might be children of God. Children love their Father and obey Him just to make Him happy. They respect and honor Him for Who He is and all He has done. But mostly they just delight in the love that He so lavishly gives to them. He is our Abba, or in our language, Daddy.

Romans 8:17

> 17Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Verse 17: To be a child of God means to be a co-heir with Jesus Christ. Everything the Father gives to His only begotten Son, He gives to us, His adopted children. We have a

glorious future awaiting us. But until that time, we can deal with the sufferings of day to day because Jesus did. He understands the struggles we face.

Hebrews 2:17-18

> 17For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. 18Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Verse 17-18: Jesus suffered under the weight of temptation but never gave in. He can help you when you suffer as well. You do not need to be ashamed because of the temptation you are facing. Go boldly to Him and talk to Him about it. He will sympathize with your pain and will help you overcome it. James MacDonald, a pastor in Illinois, illustrated it this way, “Which weightlifter fully understands the pain of the weight the one who picks it up but drops it or the one who lifts it overhead? The one who has victory over the weight has fully experienced the suffering of it.” Jesus had victory over sin but He felt the full weight of temptation. He can help us to have victory as well. In your mind, know this as true. We can be victorious because He was victorious. This is a vital step to win the war. We must believe that Jesus can help us overcome. Since He has made a way for us to be victorious plus all else He has done for us, we have the privilege to be obedient to Him. Our love for Him obligates us to live by the Spirit. Then, we will have life and peace.

DAY 5

Application

Ask God to help you win the battle in the mind. Thank Him that you are His child and that as a Father He wants to lead you to victory!

How does a right understanding of God as our Father enable us to live a life that pleases Him?

Jesus can sympathize with your weaknesses. How does knowing this truth help you? Do you believe that Jesus can help you overcome any temptation? If you do, what actions prove your belief?

What battle in your mind do you need to bring to Jesus? Pray to Him about what you are struggling with. He understands.