

Grace Energized Men: Renewing a Reverent Mind Titus 2:1-2

God's constant call to His servants in His Word is for their minds to be His dwelling place. That is why Paul called the early church to begin training older men in the godly habit of living reverently for God. That is the second character quality laid down for grace-energized older men in Titus 2:2.

Grace-energized men think and live reverently as they walk through each day of their lives. They are men who try by choice and conviction to worship nothing but God. Reverent men understand that nothing in life is neutral, nothing in life is harmless. Everything in life is either for God or against Him. Everything is either promoting God's Glory or opposing it.

Men, how are you doing at guarding your heart? Your heart (as the mind is referred to in the Bible) is the entry point of God's grace, the communication channel for worship and prayer, and the spiritual battle field. Is your mind daily placed under God's control—or not?

Proverbs 4:23 Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life. NKJV

Proverbs 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. NIV

A mind given to God is reverent, and God wants reverent men. Men regarding Him with awe, devoted to honoring and obeying Him—while living in a sin-energized world. Reverent men think much and often about God. Remembering what God's Word says: 'as a man thinks...so is he' (Pr. 23:7)

And since everything starts and ends with our minds, these reverent men start by keeping their minds under God's control, and that involves a life-long response to God's call to...

Guard your Mind

Reverent Minds are guarded minds. More than anything else God wants to saturate, influence, dominate and control your mind. If God has your mind--He will also have your body, your emotions, your appetites, your time, and your money . . .

Whatever controls your mind, controls you. The battle each day is for our minds. At salvation Christ began to dwell in our minds, and we were given the duty to guard, protect, and properly nourish our minds.

The world, our flesh, and the Devil all seek to neutralize our godly minds. Grace-energized men of reverence know that Christ wants to inhabit their thoughts; and they never forget Him as they assess the daily patterns and habits of life.

How does Satan neutralize believers? He attacks their unguarded minds. Please stand with me and listen to Peter's impassioned plea to all believers in I Peter 5:8-9:

1 Peter 5:8-9 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith... NKJV

Satan devours believers by way of unguarded minds. And never before has he had so many ways to do so. Take our current habits of entertainment.

According to media expert Dr. Ted Baehr, teenagers watch fifty movies a year in the theater and view another fifty a year on video. Eighty percent of these movies are PG-13 or R-rated.¹

Brain researchers conclude that we have stored **three trillion "videotape" images in our brain** by the time we are thirty years old. Sadly, there is no delete button for our minds, and once the images are there, we must then live with the spiritual consequences of those stored images. Given the known content of much of the media that is being recorded into the minds of Americans, irrevocably loaded into the memory banks of our minds we need to do whatever it takes to renew and purify our minds.

⇒ What images, words, and feelings are stored among those three trillion memory video clips in your mind this morning?

⇒ And have you pondered what can Satan do with them?

Getting serious about God-honoring, reverent thinking means a mind that is guarded and purged of anything that invites Satan's devouring powers to be at work. Here is a test to see what happens when every part of our life is not reverently God's.

Symptoms of an Unguarded Mind

There are three regular ways that an unguarded mind gets attacked, and these are the symptoms of a mind being devoured by Satan.

¹ Adapted and quoted from Ted Baehr, "Miracle on Main Street?" *Focus on the Family*, April 1995, p.2.

1. **Have you lost your Spiritual Appetite?** When a believer is feeding their mind with spoiled, tainted, or poisoned food, they begin to show these symptoms:
 - Is it hard to read the Word after you watch certain movies?
 - Has your music collection become more precious than your Bible?
 - Do you seem to NEVER get anything out of the Bible or church anymore?
 - On any given day do you feel unable to stop thinking, imagining, and replaying thoughts that displease God?
 - Does God feel distant as His Spirit is grieved by your doubts about His Word, and your behavior as His child?
 - **Turn to Isaiah 33:15.** Are you often entertained by action packed movies or games that feature people shot, blown up, and blasted away—as well as grisly, bloodied action heroes that get beaten, tortured and end up taking out whole armies of opponents?
 - God says specifically for us not to enjoy looking upon gratuitous violence. Satan loves to kill and destroy. Who are you honoring by your movie watching and gaming—Satan or God? Beware of Satan the destroyer addicting you to violence. *Isaiah 33:15 He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, He who despises the gain of oppressions, Who gestures with his hands, refusing bribes, Who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed, And shuts his eyes from seeing evil.*
 - As believers entrusted with guarding Christ's dwelling place in our minds, we should be very uncomfortable around horror images, sensual images, and occult images. And avoid capturing into our long-term mental storage movies that are foolish, coarse, filthy, and dishonoring the holiness of our Great God who lives within.
 - ***Solution: repent of any tainted or spiritually poisonous videotapes recorded in your mind, and ask God to fill you anew with hunger and thirst after the pure milk His Word.***

2. **Have you lost your Conviction over sin?** Here are symptoms of spiritual insensitivity:
 - Have you slowly started to question whether some sins are really not that bad? Did words that used to offend you no longer offend you?
 - Do images that used to trouble your conscience as displeasing to God no longer trouble you?
 - Do places you used to feel dishonored the Lord no longer feel that way?
 - Are you sitting in the gates of Sodom like Lot with evil just playing out in front of your eyes—without your righteous soul being vexed?
 - Does the crowd you run with slowly get you further and further away from God? Is it harder and harder to say no to sin?
 - Is there an endless list in your mind of things you wish you could get that others have? Like cars, houses, clothes, electronic gear, trips, money, and so on? Do you sit and try to find ways to get those things? Are you willing to sacrifice for them? Do you ever sacrifice time with God, time with the saints gathered at church, time in His Word, time in prayer—in order to get those things? Do the desires for those things sometimes push God right out of your thoughts?

- **Turn with me to the last verse of I John (5:21).** Idolatry is ANYTHING that takes God's rightful place in the life of His children. If work, entertainment, money-making, pleasure-seeking, collection-gathering, body building, beauty-enhancing, and so on have begun to erode God's place in your life that is idolatry. *1 John 5:21 Little children, keep (imperative²; 'guard, protect, avoid, shun flee from') yourselves from idols. Amen. NKJV*
- **Solution: Repent of allowing yourself to get insensitive to God, and grieving His Spirit. Ask for a fresh cleansing and filling of His Spirit.**

3. **Have you lost your Longing for God's Presence?** Here are symptoms of being spiritually lukewarm:

- Have the godless entertainers in music and movies become heroes that you seek after and enjoy? If so, God says you are corrupting your mind (*1 Corinthians 15:33 Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."*).
- Are you slowly accepting defeat in some areas of your life because it is just too hard to obey the Lord, flee from sin, and seek to discipline your body, mind, and emotions because of the torrent of sin that is all around us each day?
- **Turn to I John 2:15-17.** If we believe God's Word is the ultimate truth we are guided closer each day towards what God loves; if we are strangers to His truth then we are drawn further away from what pleases Him, glorifies Him, and magnifies Him. There are only two sources of wisdom—above and below (James 3). Where is yours coming from? Do you know how to test truth, verify truth, and confirm truth? Only God's Word is the unfailing source of all truth needed for pleasing God. If you are not being filled by God through His Word with His truth—then you are being filled with counterfeit truth, not from God, nor pleasing Him.
- Loving the world (anything that doesn't please God) is the sure road to confusion, corruption, and emptiness. *1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh (cravings of the body), the lust of the eyes (lustings of the eyes), and the pride of life (boastings of the mouth)—is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. NKJV*
- **Solution: love God with all your heart, love God with everything you do, tell Him the most important thing is loving Him.**

This morning if your appetite for God's Word is waning, if your sensitivity to sin is lessening, and your passionate pursuit of God is a thing of the past-- I urge you to re-examine what you are thinking each day in life and why.

² This same word phulasso is used of shepherds watching their sheep (Luke 2:8) and Herod's soldiers guarding Peter (Acts 12:4).

Hold up all of your habits, desires, hobbies, spare time, recreation, sports, pursuits, collections, appetites, and all else **to the scrutiny of God's Word**. And then consider...

How to Reverse the Erosion of a God-controlled Mind

The only way to recover from an eroded mind, a mind that has gotten neutralized, where evil seeps in a bit more each day, is to pursue personal sanctification:

- 1. Grace-energized Men Abstain from Lust Promoting Activities** (1 Peter 2:11).
If there are specific areas you know right now are sin, you must repent of them.
Stop now!

1 Peter 2:11 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, NKJV