

Mind Control

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Unscrupulous characters in many walks of life, including religion, seek to control other people's minds. Their tactics include manipulation, brainwashing, and coercion. We ought to reject any and all efforts by other people to control our minds.

God's word teaches that we control our own minds. The fact that He tells us to renew our minds and set our minds on specific things shows that not even God Himself overrides our free will.

Why would we need to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (as per Romans 12:2 and Ephesians 4:23)? Why would Colossians 3:1-2 exhort us to set our minds on things that are above? God's word provides the answer from several angles:

Before we knew Jesus, we were *"alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works"* (Colossians 1:21). Hostility toward God begins in the mind! Only by renewal of the mind can we be reconciled to Him.

When people reject knowing God, the Lord *"(gives) them over to a debased (unapproved) mind"* (Romans 1:28). Because they don't approve Him, He doesn't approve them! The mind must be renewed before God will accept them.

Enemies of God, not wishing to know Him, naturally have *"corrupt minds"* (1 Timothy 6:5). Titus 1:5 makes the same point speaking of both mind and conscience being *"defiled."* Such minds focus not on things above, but earthly, carnal matters. Unless the mind is renewed and refocused, eternal destruction surely awaits!

Who controls your mind? Do you need to renew your mind?

It's Your Responsibility

Do you remember the first time that your parents gave you responsibility? If you were like me, it may have been to clean your room, make your bed, or put away your clothes. If you had a pet, it may have been your responsibility to be sure the animal was fed and watered.

As we came to our teenage years, we were given more and more responsibility. When I got a car, it was up to me to check the coolant, oil, and air in the tires. I remember my first job as a cook at a popular chicken restaurant. I was responsible for keeping up with my schedule and getting to work on time. This childhood training taught us that we are accountable for ourselves; therefore, we learned to take responsibility for our successes as well as our failures.

Just as in life, Christians have spiritual responsibilities, and we are accountable for our spiritual success or failure. As members of the body (church) of Christ, we have certain responsibilities according to abilities with which God has blessed us, as taught in Jesus' parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30). The Lord doesn't expect us to do things we're incapable of doing; however, He expects us to serve within our capacities. *"So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do'"* (Luke 17:10).

So then, men, if you are responsible to teach, serve in worship, or care for church facilities, it is your duty to accomplish that calling. If you are unable to do so, it is your responsibility to assure that someone will take your place. Ladies, if it is your responsibility to teach a class, prepare communion, or provide benevolence, then you, just as the men, must assure the work is complete. God's people are not lazy nor irresponsible, but are diligent and enthusiastic in spirit, serving the Lord. (Romans 12:11)

--Jay Launius (Maud, TX)

A Glimpse Into The Future

False prophets claiming to speak in the name of the Lord ought to be held accountable for their misguided predictions. When their *prophecy "does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him"* (Deuteronomy 18:22). But what if the prophecy comes true? What then? If the prophet is counseling rebellion against the Lord, he must be rejected. Moses explains: *"If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you to find out if you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul"* (Deuteronomy 13:1-3).

Correcting the mistaken belief that the Lord had already come, Paul writes the Christians at Thessalonica, telling them that certain things must happen first, including the appearance of the lawless one who would deceive those who had not received *"the love of the truth so as to be saved"* (2 Thessalonians 2:10). These are further described as those who *"did not believe the truth"* but chose, instead, to *"believe what is false"* (vv. 11-12). Ultimately, our protection from deception consists of loving and believing the truth.

Most anyone can make general, non-specific predictions about the future. Dark clouds and a clap of thunder motivates us to seek shelter even before it begins raining. Business ventures are precipitated by anticipating a need and providing a desired product to meet that need. These are not prophecies but educated guesses. "Ten Predictions for the Year Ahead" might be an attention-catching headline, but it hardly passes muster as a word from the Lord. *"The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law"* (Deuteronomy 29:29). For any reliable glimpse into the future we are dependent upon divine revelation. "Secret things" suggests that there is much we will never know, at least in this present life. But we have all that we need — *"everything pertaining to life and godliness..."* (2 Peter 1:3).

--Glen Elliott (Greenbriar, AR)