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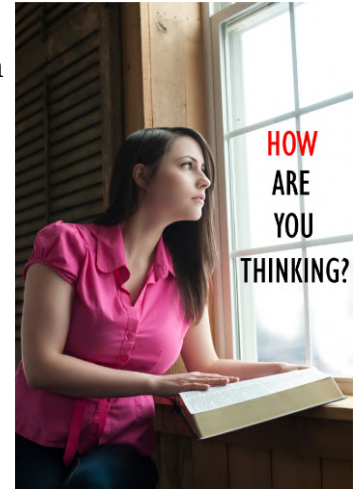
How are you thinking?

Yes, *How* are you thinking?

While this overlaps with “What are you thinking?”, it has its own features.

The familiar words that open Romans chapter 12,

“I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” (verses 1-2)



The apostle Paul urges, begs us to think differently than the world in which we live. It is not just *what* we think about, as important as that is, it also is *how* we think. We know all too well that there is unrelenting pressure for us to conform to the current ways of thinking as well as the substance of our thinking—both the *how* and *what*. This is not new news.

There are a number of ways others try to influence how we think. For example, on the one hand, there is the growing practice and pressure of accepting the current ideas without careful thought. As one person comments, “We can barely find people who question society’s beliefs let alone reject them.”

Then there is the purposeful intent of others to influence how we think. The messaging can come in a direct appeal such as “Eat less meat!”, or in what researchers call a dynamic message, “people are starting to limit how much meat they eat.” However it is done, we all face the messaging, the pressure to change not only what we think, but how we think.

At the same time there is the endless messaging about “my truth”, “your truth”, “our truth.” Before you quickly label that as just the way of the world, please note that there is that same kind of thinking in the organized church. For some decades now there have been some in the broad church community who hold and promote the thinking that we cannot be sure of what is true. We would, as one man wrote, like to believe that the Christian message is true, but we cannot know with

certainty that it is. Others have said that the only truth we have by ourselves or our group is what we have at a particular point in time, not for tomorrow, or at any point in the future.

Let's go back to those familiar lines which open Romans chapter 12. Paul tells us that because of and through the mercy of God we are to undergo a radical transformation—not just a slight modification or update. A radical change. That change begins by how we view ourselves in relationship to God and then the reasonable step of presenting ourselves as a living, holy sacrifice to God. That is the basis then of how we think as well as what we think.

We are called to make this reasonable and radical commitment, and then engage the life long process of allowing God to transform how and what we think. We engage that as we, “Set [our] minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth” (Colossians 3:2). We do this as we base our thinking on God's word, as we fill it with God's word. This is not only different than how the natural mind thinks, it opposite to that thinking where self and this world direct how people think. We are called to swim upstream in a downstream world.

Living that requires daily putting on the “full armor of God” which Paul details in Ephesians chapter 6,

“Stand firm therefore, having belted your waist with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having strapped on your feet the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” (14-17)

This is a spiritual battle. We are to always be on the alert, ready and engaged.

A veteran of the U.S. Navy SEALs described the color-code system they used to indicate levels of combat readiness.

Condition White: The soldier is relaxed and daydreaming, unaware of his surroundings.

Condition Yellow: The soldier is relaxed physically but alert mentally.

Condition Orange: The soldier is physically prepared, mentally alert, and ready to fight.

Condition Red: As in condition orange, the soldier is ready to fight. The difference is experience.

Every believer, each one of us, need to be alert every moment of every day.

Question: What is the level of your *spiritual* combat readiness today? *How are you thinking today?*