

The Mind Resists Spirit

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How much time do you spend in your head? Almost all of the time, I imagine. Most of us identify with our minds and thoughts. Why shouldn't we? Our minds are running constantly, unaided, like our beating hearts. Our minds are active even when we sleep and create the symbols of our dreams.

Our minds also get in way of God. They trip us up because they can't grasp the infinite.

Has it ever occurred to you that your mind isn't the only place to inhabit? Many of us spend our entire existence in our heads, detached from the rest of our bodies. People who inhabit their bodies are more in touch with their physical selves and are more open to intuition. Intuition comes to us via our bodies, not our minds. If we recognize that our minds are only one component of who we are, we will be more open to other ways to receive information.

The spiritual world is non-physical and beyond the reach of our finite minds. God is spirit. Spirit has no volume or dimension or substance. It is invisible, yet it can affect the physical world like the unseen wind disturbs everything it blows against.

Our Logical Minds

Our western rational minds balk at the unseen and unfathomable. We need to understand the universe and its rules. But the spiritual world does not operate according to the same rules. We can't make sense of it, so we reject it. Our minds, by their logical nature, resist what they can't understand. Most of the time, we overlook the spiritual world entirely because it's not perceived by our senses. The spiritual world is hidden behind a vast curtain that we cannot locate nor lay hold of. But this spiritual world is no less real.

Our minds require logic. Things must make sense. If things don't, then we reinterpret the data until it does make sense. For a couple of years, our church group volunteered to feed people at a homeless shelter. On one occasion, we brought a big pot of soup. We brought bowls, but forgot spoons. The shelter had a large coffee tin in which plastic utensils were stored. That was the first place I looked, but I found no spoons. When I asked the staff about spoons, they said they don't normally stock spoons. So how were we to feed the homeless? We had no other food. I told God about our problem and he said,

"Look in the tin can." I responded by saying, "I already looked in the can. There are no spoons in it." God said, "Look again." So I looked in the can a second time. I found a cluster of spoons in the can and pulled them out. Then I pulled out another cluster of spoons, then another. We had enough spoons to feed over forty people.

So either I had completely overlooked forty spoons in the coffee tin or the spoons magically appeared in the can. Both were inconceivable to me. My mind refused to believe that spoons could materialize like that. But why is that so hard to believe? Is that beyond God's capabilities? Why do we limit God? When the tax collectors asked whether Jesus paid the temple tax, Jesus instructed Peter to go fishing, to open the mouth of the first fish he caught where he would find a shekel he could use to pay the temple tax for both of them (Matthew 17:24-27). Can you imagine how Peter felt having to fish in order to fetch a coin? What an illogical way to make money. If God told you to obtain your rent money by fishing, you would immediately toss out that thought as crazy. Our minds resist the Spirit because we resist what is illogical.

Our Fixed Minds

Sometimes, our minds resist the Spirit because we resist what doesn't fit our understanding. We tend to hold fast to what we know. Our knowledge of life or God defines the limits within which God is allowed to act. Anything outside those limits is suspect or discarded. The more we know, the more we mistrust what falls outside our knowledge. Our knowledge defines, dictates and restricts how the spiritual world can intersect our lives. Much of the time, we suppress the spiritual world because the spiritual world doesn't operate according to our rules or understanding. We trust our knowledge more than God, instead of having a loose grip on knowledge, which should always be open to revision.

The disciples of Jesus believed that God's salvation was only for the Jews. When God acted contrary to their belief by giving his Spirit to non-Jews, they had to revise their belief and that wasn't an easy shift for them. Don't be surprised when God acts contrary to your belief and blesses people who you think shouldn't be blessed.

I once prayed for a lady named Angela who had been raised in an unloving home. During prayer, I prayed out loud that she would have the courage to sit on God's lap and believe that God would not open his legs to let her drop. She wept on hearing that. Afterwards, she told me that her father used to do that very thing. He would open his legs and she would fall through and he would laugh. As we talked, I felt compelled to tell her to ask God for a hug. I told her that God gives hugs that she can physically feel. She had no frame of reference for that statement. The next time I saw her, she was so excited to tell me that God had given her a hug. Most people will say that God doesn't give hugs because their knowledge, belief or experience denies it. By thinking so, they limit their experience of God.

Our Noisy Minds

The primary reason our minds resist the Spirit is because we're always thinking. Our thoughts are non-stop. Can you observe when you're not thinking? If you try, you'll find that you're thinking that you're not thinking, and that, too, is a thought. God plants messages into the empty spaces of our minds or imaginations. His messages form within the void that exists within us, if it exists. Our minds are endlessly broadcasting and those signals cancel any signals that might be trying to come in.

Stillness and emptiness are qualities we would do well to learn. Of greater value is to learn how to turn our minds off. Our minds might be due for a break after running for so long. So how do we turn our minds off? Meditation has many goals, but one desirable goal is to achieve the state where thoughts are absent. Most people focus on something to distract their minds, such as their breathing, a phrase, a sound, or an object. I focus on an empty blackboard in my imagination. I allow it to remain black and I try not to conjure anything in that space. Or I place my attention onto my inward center, the center of my being, which has the effect of shifting my consciousness out of my head and down toward my spiritual center. I suggest any of these approaches when you are lying in bed and your brain is doing overtime and refuses to be silent.

When our minds are quiet and our souls are still, we position ourselves to receive. People mistakenly think they should expect messages in the form of instructions or directions for life. Most of the time, what we can expect are incoming virtues such as peace, confidence, love, affirmation, renewed trust,

assurance, or wellbeing. As children, those are the things our Father knows we need the most. So don't get hung up on seeking direction when God is wanting to give you something else. He wants us to trust in his love for us and believe he is directing us even when we feel directionless. What has more importance to God is our relationship with him today, not our plans for tomorrow.

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