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## 22: THE IMPORTANCE OF BELIEF AND FREE WILL

The keys to emotional and cognitive health and spiritual wholeness are "what we believe" and "to what we set our wills". Human beings have been designed to use words to create meaning. How we think really does affect how we feel and behave. In 2 Corinthians 10:5, it says, "We take captive *every* thought to make it obedient to Christ". The "struggle" referred to in Ephesians 6:12 is the battle for the mind, which is where the thoughts are. The struggle is not a power encounter, but rather an issue of whether we are seeking to know truth and live in truth.

### What We Believe

Jesus is the way and the truth (**John 14:6**). As we struggle to discern between truth and lies, Satan tries to lead us astray. He is the deceiver and the father of lies. So, our minds become the battleground for this encounter between truth and lies. As human beings, we have the power to choose between good and evil. What we think and what we believe is more than just the power of positive thinking. The spiritual realm and the physical realm intersect in the mind. What we think affects whether we will be spiritually free or not. Freedom flows from truth. "*Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free*" (**John 8:32**). And Jesus is the source of truth. "*So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed*" (**John 8:36**). The fruits of the Holy Spirit emanate from truth. As we commit to truth, we experience, "*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control ...*" (**Galatians 5:22**). So, we need to seek Jesus through His Word and through a personal relationship with Him to be able to know His truth for our lives.

### Committing our Will

God designed each human being with a "free will". This fact is central to the struggle described above. Commitment implies more than just belief. Jesus helps us understand when he tells us to, "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind*" (**Matthew 22:37**). We are to commit all our mind to truth with an intensity that is stronger than just thinking. In **Romans 10:9**, it says, "*That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord', and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*" The believing in one's heart is stronger than just saying the words with your mouth. The salvation experience requires the human "will" to make a commitment by inviting Jesus into one's heart. Jesus will not come in unless invited. He stands at the door and knocks, but patiently waits for the will of the person to invite him in. When called, he comes, but he will not provide salvation without the active participation of the person's will. Similarly, the sanctification process requires the active involvement of the human will. In **James 1:13**, it says, "*nor does he [God] tempt anyone.*" God does not even tempt us to do good. We must do good out of our own will. Again we see that the sanctification process is about truth. "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth" (**John 17:17**). As we take all our thoughts captive to the truth, the next step is then being obedient to that truth. This obedience is where the "will" becomes involved. Do we want to do what

## Articles

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*Do we want to do what we know to be truth?*

While Jesus requires our free will to work with us, it is interesting to learn that, similarly, Satan requires the involvement of our free will to be able to access us. Satan needs a stronghold to be able to attach to our humanity. In **2 Corinthians 10:5**, it defines a stronghold as, "*an argument and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God.*" Arguments are words in the mind. Pretensions are claims not supported by fact or truth. If Satan can get us to believe a lie that is against the knowledge of God, then he has a foothold in our life. If we then commit our will to that belief, then he has a stronghold. So the battle for the mind is about truth versus lies and to what we commit our "will". As we commit our heart and will to truth, we will experience freedom and the fruits of the Holy Spirit. As we commit to lies and arguments that are against the knowledge of God, we open ourselves up to Satan and his forces to lead us into destructive behavior and feelings of depression and worthlessness. We have the power because we have the ability to choose. The responsibility is left up to us to choose good. God respects us enough to give us the freedom to choose. But, scripture exhorts us, "*But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather serve one another in love.*" (**Galatians 5:13**).

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