

*Therefore, putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with humility the **implanted word**, which is able to save your souls. But be **doers of the word**, and not only hearers, deluding your own selves. For if anyone is a **hearer of the word and not a doer**, he is like a man **looking at his natural face in a mirror**; for he **sees himself**, and **goes away**, and **immediately forgets what kind of man** he was. But he who **looks into the perfect law of freedom**, and **continues**, not being a hearer who forgets, but a **doer of the work**, this man will be **blessed** in what he does. If anyone among you **thinks himself to be religious** while he doesn't bridle his tongue, but **deceives his heart**, this man's religion is worthless. **Pure religion and undefiled** before our God and Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained by the world. (James 1:21-27)*

***In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving**, let your requests be made known to God. And the **peace of God**, which surpasses all understanding, **will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus**. Finally, brothers, whatever things are **true**, whatever things are **honorable**, whatever things are **just**, whatever things are **pure**, whatever things are **lovely**, whatever things are **of good report**; if there is **any virtue**, and if there is **any praise**, **think about these things**. The things which you learned, received, heard, and saw in me: **do these things**, and the **God of peace will be with you**. (Philippians 4:6-9)*

*The good man out of the **good treasure of his heart** brings out that which is good, and the evil man out of the **evil treasure** of his heart brings out that which is evil, for **out of the abundance of the heart, his mouth speaks**. "Why do you **call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and don't do the things which I say?** Everyone who comes to me, and **hears my words, and does them**, I will show you who he is like. He is like a man building a house, who dug and went deep, and laid a foundation on the rock. When a flood arose, the stream broke against that house, and could not shake it, because it was founded on the rock. (Luke 6:45-48)*

*Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but **he who does the will of my Father** who is in heaven. **Many** will tell me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name, in your name cast out demons, and **in your name do many mighty works?**' Then I will tell them, '**I never knew you. Depart from me, you who work iniquity.**' "Everyone therefore who **hears these words of mine, and does them**, I will liken him to **a wise man**, who built his **house on a rock**. (Matthew 7:21-24)*

Is it **merely the words** we speak that are important? Many rehearse '**right**' words, subscribe to '**right doctrines**', profess allegiance to what they **sincerely believe** to be a **right framework of beliefs**; they may even be experts in **proving their rightness from the word** of God. So **what is the connection** between what we **profess**, what we are **thinking** in our heart to **how we act** and relate to others?

Check out **one of the most common 'proof texts'** we often hear on this **issue of identity**. As I recall it went something like this: **As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he**.

I have heard this my whole life used to **emphasize the importance** of the **mind-heart connection**. That is certainly an important principle. Yet what is **subtly embedded** in this entrenched **traditional proverb** is a hidden **presumption** that our **identity is based on how we think** internally and is **confirmed by how we act**.

I was shocked when I went to **locate** this verse **for myself** for use as a reference for reinforcing this very assumption, only to discover that upon closer examination it does **not actually support this perception** readily, and in fact seems to be nuanced a different way.

*Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats: For **as he thinketh in his heart, so is he**: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee. The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words.* (Proverbs 23:6-8 KJV)

*Don't eat the food of him who has a stingy eye, and don't crave his delicacies: for **as he thinks about the cost, so he is**. "Eat and drink!" he says to you, but his heart is not with you. The morsel which you have eaten you shall vomit up, and lose your good words.* (Proverbs 23:6-8 WEB)

*Do not eat the bread of the stingy; do not desire their delicacies; for **like a hair in the throat, so are they**. "Eat and drink!" they say to you; but they do not mean it. You will vomit up the little you have eaten, and you will waste your pleasant words.* (Proverbs 23:6-8 NRSV)

*Do not eat the food of a stingy man, do not crave his delicacies; for **he is the kind of man who is always thinking about the cost**. "Eat and drink," he says to you, but his heart is not with you. You will vomit up the little you have eaten and will have wasted your compliments.* (Proverbs 23:6-8 NIV)

Clearly **there is a vital link** between what we **think at the heart level** and **how we act** towards others. Just as clear is the fact that **what we say** is **often not** what we are **really thinking**, and for various reasons. We might be **afraid of what people might think** about us if we expressed openly what we are thinking. We might have a **hidden agenda** for ourselves that we want to keep private so as to **manipulate others** for our advantage while **masking** what we are thinking inside. **Most people are not transparent** about what is going on inside, and that is **not always wrong**. But to live in the kingdom of heaven requires a **level of transparency** far beyond what our flesh is willing to disclose.

Everything that Christians do should be as **transparent as the sunlight**. **Truth** is of God; deception, in every one of its myriad forms, is of Satan.... We can not speak the truth unless our **minds are continually guided** by Him who is truth. {SD 64.5}

What we need is a radical **exchange of our selfish** way of thinking and living for a life of **truth, love and authenticity**. Jesus calls this **denying ourselves** – our **false perceptions about our identity** – in order to **embrace His identity** as our own.

Paul defines this new life as being **dead to sin**, free from sin and **alive to God in Christ Jesus**. But this goes **beyond merely hearing** and **believing with our head** the truths of the gospel we hear presented to us. In other words, it is **not enough to merely assent** that the **gospel is true**; for to **have our soul saved** we must **allow the Word of Life to be implanted** into our **hearts** where it can **take root** and **replace the entire way we think** about everything. In short, without **replacing our source of identity**, we will never be able to fully enter into the **intimacy of joy** and mutual trust with the One who died to save us.