



Week 2 – Whole Soul

"²³May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NIV)

The goal of this study is to understand that our soul - our thoughts (mind), choices (will), and feelings (emotions) – is the primary arena where sanctification is taking place, and to learn about our role in that process. Sanctification is a battle in which we choose who will have rule in our souls, God's Spirit or the world (unredeemed humanity around us), the flesh (unredeemed desires within us), and the devil, as described by Jesus in John 3:6 and Paul in Romans 8:5.

John 3:6 (NIV)

"⁶Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."

Romans 8:5 (NIV)

"⁵Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires."

The question this discussion leads us to all ask ourselves is, 'are my thoughts, feelings, and choices coming from God, my circumstances, the enemy, the opinions of others, or myself? Sanctification is choosing day by day, moment by moment to pursue the thoughts, feelings, and decisions that come from God. This is how Jesus lived – 'I only speak and do what the Father is speaking and doing.' This is what it means to 'Walk in the Spirit', **Galatians 5:16.**

CONNECT

- Are you more of an optimist, pessimist, or realist?
- As a teenager, were you normally part of the 'in' crowd, an 'outsider', or just a 'regular joe'?
- In general, are your thoughts more or less positive than your words?

WORD

¹"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." **Colossians 3:1–2 (NIV)**

³For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

2 Corinthians 10:3–5 (NIV)

THOUGHT

Man is made up of three parts, spirit, soul, and body. Our bodies make us aware of the physical world around us through the 5 senses. Our spirits connect us with God. And our souls connect us with the human world and are comprised of our mind, will, and emotions. They are the primary agent by which we build or destroy relationships. Today, our focus is on how our souls become whole. We'll discuss how our mind, will, and emotions get damaged and how they can be healed and restored to wholeness, functioning the way God originally intended.

Our focus here is on the faculties of the soul and how to bring them under the influence of the Spirit of God.

The faculties of our body and soul are much better defined than the faculties of the spirit of man. Some have described the spirit faculties as conscience, fellowship, and intuition, however, our spirits are not well understood and it is difficult to define them in human terms.

DISCUSSION

- 1. Scripture confirms that the soul is made up of the mind (it knows & remembers, Psalm 139:14, Lamentations 3:20), will (it chooses & refuses, Proverbs 21:10, Psalm 77:2), and emotions (Psalm 35:9 & 42:5). It also points out that we can determine the state of our souls. "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things." **Philippians 4:8 (NIV)** To illustrate, what are some of your favorite good memories? What do you focus on to help you feel better or turn your day around?**

The focus here and in the next point is reiterating the scriptural basis for the soul being our mind, will, and emotions and that we can choose what we let affect our souls. We don't want to confuse scriptural principle with pop psychology or self-help therapies.

- 2. Jesus taught that evil comes from within, out of our soul. **Mark 7:21–23 (NIV)** ²¹For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, ²²adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. ²³All these evils come from inside and defile a person."** What are some of the sources of bad thoughts, ideas and memories in your life? What percentage of what you take into your mind would you label as good and what percentage would you label as bad?

3. Becoming whole in our spirits, 'born again', is a singular event, but becoming whole in our souls is an ongoing process that will take a lifetime. Joyce Meyer in her multi-million selling book, 'Battlefield of the Mind,' describes this process as a battle. So does scripture. ⁴"The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 (NIV) What are some of the ways that you have demolished 'strongholds', 'arguments', and 'pretensions' that set themselves up against God? How have you taken thoughts captive and made them obedient to Christ?

The emphasis here is to help define what in our souls is not of God – memories, feelings, ways of thinking, decisions, philosophies and principles we adhere to, opinions we have about ourselves, others, the world around us – and that it will take work, it is a battle, it takes making tough choices to begin to bring our souls into alignment with Christ.

4. Colossians 3:1-2 (NIV) tells us that one of the weapons we have in this battle is to 'set our minds on things above.' What does it mean to set our mind on things above?

Quite simply to think about God and what God has taught us through scripture, prayer, the testimony of others, and life experience.

5. Another weapon we have is prayer. Philippians 4:6-7 tells us, ⁶"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Prayer can turn anxiety to peace. How have you used prayer in this battle?

An opportunity for sharing testimonies of answered prayer as well as sharing different ways that people pray. Might also emphasize the importance of both regular prayer - quiet time, as well as spontaneous prayer as needs and thoughts arise.

6. Romans 12:2 (NIV) "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." In what ways are you being conformed to the world? In what ways are you being transformed?

Here people can track and describe how the ongoing process of sanctification is taking place in their lives.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

- What can you do this week to lessen the negative inputs into your soul and increase the positive inputs?

- Are there any thoughts you need to take captive and make obedient to Christ this week?
- What will you do this week to increase prayer in your life?
- What will you do to increase your time spent in the scriptures?
- What steps will you take this week to be less conformed to the world and more transformed by renewing your mind?

PRAYER

- Ask God to show you any negative sources of input into your soul.
- Ask God to show you any strongholds you might have in your soul.
- Ask God to help you recognize when your thoughts, feelings, or decisions (mind, emotions, and will) are not godly or from God.
- Ask God to speak to you through prayer and the scriptures and show you where you are being conformed to the world and where you need to be renewed in your mind and transformed into the image of Christ.

NOTES
