

CHANGING PICTURES

The pictures that hang around in our mind become part and parcel of how we view life, how we feel about our self and how we'll respond to others and to life in general. Even misconstrued images from our childhood can gain the status of gospel truth, though they bear no resemblance to the facts. Our minds can become cluttered with a rogue's gallery of misinformation that actually taints our present life and exerts strong control over us. I believe bad pictures are behind bad reactions and guess who is behind the bad pictures!

As we look into the power of mental pictures, we'll see how we can use this valuable, God-given capacity, to walk in victory as believers. The pictures in our minds can make us fearful or empower us with faith. The sobering truth is that we are held accountable for the kinds of pictures we allow to hang on the walls of our mental gallery. Jesus said that if a man looked at a woman and developed the wrong picture, he would be guilty of adultery! Paul prayed for the eyes of the believers at Ephesus to be opened so they could receive the resurrection power of God:

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe... Ephesians 1:18, 19a

If we could only see what is right at our fingertips, we would not get depressed or shrink back in defeat. Read the story in 2 Kings 6:8-17 sometime soon and note who got new vision. Being a realist is not just seeing in three dimensions!

How many of our problems would shrink if the eyes of our heart were opened, and we could see the real picture as God sees it instead of Satan's cheap horror story? Doesn't the Word say "No weapon formed against you shall prosper (Isaiah 54:17)? We need the kinds of pictures in our minds that agree with that which is eternally real, not the subject-to-change, fleshly world (2 Corinthians 4:18). Elisha had pictures in his mind of an awesome God who could do anything. His servant had pictures based on natural conclusions.

Ephesians invites us to be seated with Christ in heavenly places (2:6) and to make requests of the Father, expecting Him to answer with more than we could even hope for because of His power which works inside us (3:20). This sure is a different picture than the one Satan paints for us. He tells us we're never going to make it, that so-and-so will never change, and that we might as well give up. Which picture is more to your liking? Whose painting will you buy? When we take negative, hopeless pictures, we have bought from the enemy of our soul. Like Snow White, we often take Lucifer's tainted apple and bite into poison that brings the sleep of death. If we are held accountable for the pictures in our minds and if power is related to these pictures, then we need to major on changing bad pictures for new, effective ones.

The Lord destroyed mankind in Noah's day because *“every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”* (Genesis 6:5 KJV). We can see part of the reason for God's serious treatment of the pre-flood world when we consider the power of drawing mental pictures. In Genesis 11:6, God says... *now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do (KJV)*.

The same deadly force was being released at the time of the Tower of Babel as it was in Noah's day. Power to do the impossible was being tapped by the unity of wicked men who were using their imagination for the devil. Their hearts were filled with evil continually, and thus their imaginations would produce wickedness of a great magnitude!

According to Genesis 11:6, the Lord said if the people could imagine something, they could make it! Of course there are limits, but the seriousness was of such a nature that God confounded the speech of man to avoid any more catastrophes such as that which led to the flood.

Woe to those who scheme iniquity, who work out evil on their beds. When morning comes, they do it, for it is in the power of their hands. Micah 2:1

What we soak on in our mind will flavor what we do. The intensity of our daydreams is a major factor. The enemy of our soul paints pictures in our mind of things that we just can't live without. As we meditate on these images, somehow, a way suddenly

becomes available to have what we covet! Surprise? Not really. We've merely tapped the force of faith, and because it's based on selfishness, we've also put on the devil's handcuffs.

“Hey, wait a minute. I've dreamed all my life of wanting a million dollars, and I haven't seen much of it yet. What goes on?”

If you had spent that time meditating on how to make the million instead of how to spend it, you'd probably be roiling in the dough by now!

If you struggle with the power of painting mental pictures for positive benefits, perhaps you can believe it in the negative. Psychosomatic illness is a proven fact, and it's nothing less than the mind creating disease. Destructive power is released in the physical body of the person who meditates on negative pictures. Not everyone who says negative things really believes them; but the one who meditates on bleak mental images is in for problems!

There's much more to this subject, so please don't throw this pamphlet down and start imaging yourself owning a new Cadillac. I'm far more concerned with our using this God-given faculty for the propagation of the gospel and for setting ourselves free to live the abundant Christian life, than with our developing a technique for expanding our coffers. We have a world to reach for Jesus, and it will necessitate our using every tool He has. Mental pictures are a part of faith, and like it or not, we are either using them for our good or the enemy is using them to beat us up!

AN INGREDIENT OF FAITH

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Hebrews 11:1

The word “assurance” depicts strong mental persuasion. The King James Version uses the word substance. An important stage in the development of faith is when thoughts become an inner substance or reality. We hear a Bible promise, we receive it, and then it begins to incubate inside our mind. When a clear picture is formed, the substance of faith is birth. At this point, a power outside of ourselves joins in to produce our miracle. This is not mind power, it's faith power.

The mind can do very little except tap into faith's power. Faith

alone is what Jesus said could do the impossible. When people talk about the power of the mind, they are probably describing the results that are produced by faith.

Here's another one of my theories that I can't prove, but I think it makes sense. The mind by itself can't do much beyond the body it lives in, but there are other forces that can. When we are tricked into exerting faith by the enemy, he is licensed to use evil spirits against us. The opposite of this is God using angels to answer our prayers.

What I am suggesting is that demons, as well as angels, respond to the faith that our minds produce. Faith in Satan's pictures can release actual forces that will literally produce destruction!

POSITIVE THINKING?

Is there power in positive thinking? I may be getting technical here, but I feel the power lies in the faith which the positive thinking releases.

What if someone thinks a positive thought that is contrary to the Word of God, such as homosexuality is OK? Here's another one: a person should have the right to choose concerning their own body. What I'm getting at is, though positive thinking may attempt to tap into the power of faith by making mental pictures, it can get one into as much trouble as the folks in Genesis 11:6 if it's not within the boundaries of Scripture!

Positive thinking can release the entrapping power of hell. For example, Joe decides to begin picturing himself as the most successful salesman for Ferd's Widget Company. As he concentrates on this mental image, his faith begins to be released. The laws of faith respond, but his motivation, being basically self-centered, aligns with Satan's kingdom rather than God's. As the success starts coming his way, bondage from the ruler of darkness appears. Joe thinks he needs more possessions to feel fulfilled. He needs more attention from the opposite sex. Strong dependency on drugs and alcohol begins to torment Joe. Yes, he has success, but at the expense of his soul. He is no longer free. Making mental pictures and birthing them by faith may cause problems unless they fit into God's program.

REPLAY: Let's say Joe is a born-again Christian and he goes to the Lord in prayer. "Father, please give me the picture for success

that you desire. And, Lord, keep the entire focus of my life centered on you.” God answers Joe's prayer by giving him a mental picture of being the Widget Company's best salesman, giving all the glory to the Lord, and increasing his financial commitment to missions. Joe latches on to this image. As he responds accordingly (faith without works is dead), success starts coming his way. Joe begins to double tithe, then triple tithe. As a result, his church is able to begin supporting new missionaries. The blessings of God fall on Joe's children. Health fills his home. He flows in wisdom and happiness. Unreal? If you have trouble believing this is possible, you'd better reread your Bible, especially Proverbs and Malachi.

THE SCREEN THAT COULD SAVE

If King David could have seen the consequences of his sin with Bathsheba at the same time his hormones were pulsating, I believe he would have taken a cold shower instead. As I read the accounts of what happened in David's life after he fell into adultery and murder, I see over twenty thousand people dying, and their deaths can be traced back to the bad seed sown by David's sin with Bathsheba. If right behind the picture of temptation, the temptee could see a video of judgment day playing on a 50 foot screen, don't you know they would try a little harder to resist the temptation! The replays on judgement day need to show us seeking the mind of the Lord for life-giving pictures that will stimulate victory and growth!

SELF-IMAGE

What is the picture you have of yourself? What people or things in life influenced your picture the most? If your self-image is non-productive, then it's time for a change. Don't just take down the old pictures and hang up new ones of your choosing, otherwise you might put up ones that God can't bless. The enemy would have us replace old failure paintings with new, fleshly ones that will maintain our bondage in spite of a different appearance. Our new self-image must come from the Word of God.

What do you think a biblical self-image would be for you? Here's one from the Scriptures:

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world...
Ephesians 1:3, 4a*

This picture takes us back to before the beginning of time as we know it. The loving Father is deciding that one day He will make YOU, just as you are. He sees, through His vision of faith, the day you personally accept His Son to be your Savior (1 Peter 1:2). You may have some old photos in your mind of rejection by parents or siblings, but which is more real, their bias or God's everlasting opinion? Will you cling to memories of the kids on the playground mocking you years ago, or will you receive and value the picture of God personally designing your body, talents, etc.? The loving Heavenly Father says you are wanted and are gifted. Will you receive His beautiful portrait?

New scriptural pictures can break the failure/ rejection syndrome. You are not a mistake; it is not true that nobody wanted you. You were planned, even if your mother was unwed at the time you were conceived. Your parent's family may have been too large and your arrival added a burden, but God planned your birth! See in your mind a calendar of the month and year you were born. Picture the date of your birth circled in red ink. Imagine Jesus excitedly telling the angels that this is the day that you, His very own creation, will enter life.

Read Psalm 139:13-18 and apply it to you. Do you have a problem accepting any of it? You've just read the inspired account of what God thought of your birth. He has a vast number of thoughts concerning you. This is how God operates. He has a picture, and by faith He brings it to pass. If we will agree with His pictures, we complete the cycle, and His Word does not return to Him void (Isaiah 55:11). If we refuse to agree with His pictures for us, His seed (Word) does not conceive and bring forth the life He designed. We abort God's promises by our unbelief.

The person with a poor self-image has received destructive seed-

thoughts from the enemy – the one who wants to kill, steal and destroy (John 10:10). He begins to feed them lies from the time they were conceived in the womb. He uses people to tease them, mock them, tell them they're ugly, fat, stupid, unwanted. His minions constantly paint stinkin' thinkin' portraits in their mind. He will play back embarrassing moments and point out, as a rude coach, where they looked the better part of a fool. This master evil-artist will line their gallery with some pretty disgusting images.

What can we do but accept this harassment from the accuser of the brethren? The average believer does not know that he is to take every thought captive to Christ, and few Christians have renewed their minds with the Word. Consequently, when they receive Satan's lies, negative faith actually begins to make them into the grotesque caricature Satan painted them out to be. We can become, by devil-faith, a defeated, unwanted reject. This negative faith can even activate the demons. Soon it becomes true that we can't do anything right; we've empowered the demons to see to that! An evil force field emanates around those who have bought the enemy's dark pictures. No, it's not their aura, it's their faith-servant creating the disaster they birthed in their mind. They received the devil's lies and produced honest-to-goodness failure!

People can tell us that we shouldn't have a bad self-image, but the fact is, we've had an integral part in producing a Frankenstein. This monster of our making does not disappear at the wave of a psychologist's magic wand. It must be destroyed with the scriptural images Jesus gives us in His Word. Allow the Holy Spirit to paint some glorious murals for your life. His won't be self-centered vignettes, with wealth and luxury, but life-giving, purposeful, meaningful ones. The Lord's picture for you is one of joy so deep that your toes will tingle (John 15:11)!

What the world calls a hardened criminal, I believe, is none other than a person created in God's image who bought the devil's warped pictures. The solution for rehabilitation is both simple and difficult because we are dealing with the human will. If the criminal would replace the destroyer's lies with God's truth, he would be born again and on the way to a radically new life. Jesus shared a story of a shepherd leaving 99 sheep to go looking for one lost lamb. Can you

see the terrified, endangered lamb, and the shepherd reaching out to it? When the hardened sinner gets that picture down into his soul, he will weep and repent. Jesus steps in and the greatest miracle takes place... CONVERSION! He came to seek and to save the lost. The only person who is unsalvageable is the one who shuts the door on Jesus. When we cling to the pictures the enemy hangs in our mind and refuse the new ones the Lord offers, there is no hope!

A PICTURE OF HEALTH

“A-h-h choo! Oh, please excuse me. I guess I'm getting a cold. I always get one around this time of year.” Sniffling and sneezing, our friend swallows a couple of cold pills in desperation. Could his frequent bouts with poor health be linked to pictures in his mind? There has been too much substantiation by researchers to deny the obvious connection between our emotional state and our health. And, our emotional state is the child of our mental pictures! Therefore, our health is directly linked to the pictures we have in our mind.

Some dear people are dogged by fear that they will contract a family disease. Doctors don't help us much along this line when they probe into our family tree looking for bad genes. Their job requires they ask these questions, but the fact that Uncle Harry had high blood pressure or mamma had diabetes, can start a bad picture. If my premise is true that faith is released by the mental pictures we hold to, and that this faith can elicit the destructive participation of evil spirits, then we had better spend time making new pictures concerning our genealogy.

Is there the least sliver of concern in your mind because a relative or perhaps several, have encountered serious health problems? If so, then start now to paint a faith picture of health as the Word outlines (see I Peter 2:24; Matthew 8:17; Psalm 103:1,2; Exodus 23:25; Proverbs 3:1-8). Ask the Lord to give you an image of your organs, glands, back, etc. being renewed by His anointing.

Another theory of mine is that the sicknesses of the parents can be visited upon their children similar to how the sins of the parents are visited upon their children. Because we learn by what we see

demonstrated in front of us, the way our parents reacted toward ill health will usually predispose how we respond. If our parents accepted every pain in their body as though it were the beginning of a fatal disease, we, too, will no doubt be hypersensitive to life's normal growing pains. If they glory in the hideous details of every relative's afflictions, we may have a job on our hands to clean up our mind's gallery or should I say infirmary.

When a loved one is set aside with sickness, the enemy may try to plant fear in our mind of the same thing happening to us. We may fear dying at an early age just like Uncle Seymour.

When the first symptoms of a cold hit, the enemy will paint a picture of us losing time from work, huddled in bed with a thermometer stuck into our mouth. We can see the box of Kleenex nearby and a tall glass of water poised, ready to help the antihistamines float into our exhausted body. Wouldn't it be better to stop whatever you are doing when the first symptom hits, sit down, close your eyes, and reach out to Jesus? First check to see if you opened the door to the enemy by a sinful response. Check your usual list: anger, resentment, lust, pity, etc. If you let something in, then clean house! Ask the Lord to release His healing in your body.

Draw the power of God. Picture it flowing in you! Stay quiet for a few minutes as you actually, by faith, make a withdrawal from your heavenly account. I'm not talking about pretending; I'm suggesting you release your faith through the proper kind of mental picture. If you don't construct a healing picture when the first symptoms start, you will more than likely accept one that will actually help the development of the sickness.

Why is it so hard to replace negative images with pictures of healing? Because the mocker is telling us how stupid it is! Don't expect any slack from the destroyer!

How can we handle negative pictures of disease from our genealogy? First make sure there's no resentment toward God, as though it were His fault our kinfolk had sickness. Also, check to see if there is resentment toward any sick relative. Then, look for any fear that may be hiding in your noggin that you'll catch what they have or had.

Go to work by faith to build two new pictures. The first one is for the sick relative (if they are still living). Ask Jesus to go to them with healing and comfort. See Him doing just that. Get a picture of Him standing at their bedside, placing His hand on their forehead. Hold on to this picture and give the Lord thanks for answering your prayer. Responding with faith pictures can help prevent the buildup of frustration which comes when we feel helpless. Your prayers and faith pictures can release a force that can't be bought in any pharmacy!

The second picture needs to be one of Jesus ministering His healing to you. Ask Him to take your face in His hands and breathe healing into every cell of your body. See in your mind, the Lord's anointing enveloping you as a cloud (like in Matthew 17:5) or as oil being poured over you. Stay in His presence for a season while He releases a healing treatment into you. See Him touching your kidneys or liver, or whatever part that is not functioning properly. Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you in this faith exercise.

This is not “new age” theology or witchcraft, it's the releasing of your faith. The occult will take us away from the Blood of Christ and loyalty to the Word of God and replace it with crystals and vibrations. New age teachings should raise the hair on your neck because they are designed to draw people into a trap. Run from it! It's the enemy's counterfeit. We need to remember that the deceiver uses near truth and imitations to draw the unsuspecting away from the Lord. Expect him to try to synthesize biblical faith and preach “another gospel” (Galatians 1:6f).

While we're on this matter of new age; it's almost funny how some will mock the material in this chapter, calling it occult, and turn right around and use the negative side of this all the time and destroy their very own health! What they're saying in their ignorance is that it's okay to have mental pictures, devil-painted-pictures, as long as they are negative! They would say they don't, but listen to them for awhile, and you will hear coming out of their own mouth, a description of the negative pictures that are in their mind! Not smart!

Any old pictures of ill health need to be replaced with new faith pictures. If you've feared kidney stones because your dad had them, then you probably already have a picture (at least in your subconscious mind) of little rocks trying to grow inside your kidneys. I'm not asking you to be weird, but to work with the Lord for your best, not against yourself in conjunction with the destroyer. God works by calling into being that which does not exist (Romans 4:17), and so must we. We're commanded to imitate Him (Ephesians 5:1)!

I love the story of Gideon (Judges chapter 6). The Angel of the Lord appears to trembling Gideon and calls him a mighty man of valor! God was seeing that which did not exist as though it did. His faith words over fearful Gideon turned him into exactly what the Lord had envisioned him to be!

Jesus said, "As your faith, be it unto you." Doesn't this sound as though He is throwing the ball back to us? If we construct faith pictures that are in harmony with the Word of God, they become our faith, and Jesus will honor it! If we only meditate on negative mental images (because the positive ones are silly or too hard for us to agree with) then we will license the thief who steals, kills and destroys. It's our choice!

Experiment with this method for developing faith. When you receive a healing or stop depression or eradicate fear because of this technique, no one will be able to convince you how silly it is – not even the father of lies. Most of all, the fruit of the Spirit will be released in your life because you are growing in faith. Your love level will rise, and an inner peace will envelope you, even through storms and disappointments. Gentleness and self-control will also increase in your life. The greatest thing I have found is the devotional love for Jesus that rises in one who takes time to "see Him" in their everyday problems (Psalm 16:8). This kind of imaging can't be of the devil; he wouldn't chance dividing his house by allowing the side effects of love and devotion for the Lord. No, this kind of imaging is straight from the Holy Spirit!

ANGER MANAGEMENT

I want to share something I came across in the book, “Self-talk, Imagery, and Prayer in Counseling,” by H. Norman Wright. He is imparting to counselors some insight on how to encourage people to master anger with imagery.

I find that imagery exercises work very well in the control and reduction of anger. Ask your counselee to indicate in order of importance the five most anger-creating situations he is currently experiencing. Then have him close his eyes and imagine becoming angry as he is accustomed to doing. Suggest that he hear the statements he usually says to himself, see himself responding in anger in the usual way, and feel the emotion of anger in his body.

Now have him take a minute to relax and imagine himself in the same situation, but this time making rational, calm statements. Ask him to see himself responding in the way he would like to respond... see himself putting into practice the scriptural guidelines of “being slow to anger” ... feel himself responding in a relaxed and calm manner... hear himself making calm, balanced statements. He will be able to change his angry reactions if he will spend time in advance visualizing a response in the desired fashion.

Suggest that the counselee practice this new version of the experience in his mind again and again until he feels comfortable and competent. When he confronts the real situation, a new response is possible. Have him take each of the angry situations he has identified and go through the same process he just completed.

Norman Wright is a tremendously effective Christian counselor and professor at Talbot Seminary in La Marada, California. He is

conservative and very biblical. He uses imagery because it fulfills the sense of the Scriptures of hiding God's Word in our hearts. When we see ourselves acting in obedience to the Word, in our mind, we are literally “treasuring” His Word in our hearts (Psalm 119:9). This Christian brother is adapting a highly effective tool for helping the saints gain mastery over their emotions.

This tool has been used by athletes for some time, and is described in such books as “The Ultimate Athlete,” by G. Leonard, and “Inner Skiing,” by Gallway and Kriegel. I can remember my weight training coach telling of the importance of seeing the weight successfully lifted. So many believers walk around with minds filled with pictures of “I can't do...”, it's no wonder they fail in the pressing issues' of life!

A FAMILY PORTRAIT

How do you picture your kids? Has the resentment-maker sold you one of those package deals with 20 wallet-sized photos of the little rug rats – all negative? Do you see the children as your opponent? As drainers of your time and finances? Can the enemy make you exhausted just thinking about putting up with them today because there's no school? We may need to hang some new pictures of our children in our gallery.

If you have children, what kinds of pictures do you have of them? The enemy will try to convince us that what we see in our kids now will be magnified in the future. He wants us to panic and either lose heart at the task before us, or get us to overpower them in an effort to make them shape up. Child abuse results when adults meditate on bad pictures of their children.

Parents, we have the most powerful tool for raising kids, right at our fingertips – ACCEPTANCE! People are motivated by many forces, such as fear, physical pain, etc. Some of the techniques we were raised with may have worked on us, but those that motivated us by unreasonable fear or harshness, left a bad imprint.

Surely you've heard the old song sung by those who had religion crammed down their throat, “I don't go to church because my parents made me go every time the church doors were opened.” It's not a real pretty tune, but many are singing it. This is a reminder that force does not always produce the fruit we desire for our kids.

There is a better way to raise children – the faith way:

FAITH DOESN'T FORCE, IT PICTURES!

Everyone needs love and acceptance. We will do crazy things to try to gain attention. The twister will help the little ones, if they lack imagination, on how to stay in center stage, even if it's with detention or swats or verbal rebuke. But, the sad truth of the matter is, when kids use an improper method for getting attention, they generate the opposite – rejection.

The only way to receive love and acceptance is by first giving it. Children do not know this biblical truth unless they are taught it or see it demonstrated. So, what we find happening is, Bernie the Brat demands attention by totally unacceptable means, and as a result, he receives just what he did not want: isolation and rejection!

If the unacceptable behavior of our Child reminds us of an adult we know who is a social outcast, fear can arise that our precious progeny will also turn out to be a misfit. We can come under pressure to save them from this fate worse than death; however, this pressure usually quenches the love of God that alone provides the resources for change. Frustration builds and separates the family. Shoot-from-the-hip father knows that the best way to stop this foolishness is to beat it out of the kid. Mom witnesses unloving discipline and it triggers her protective instincts. Soon the parents are divided on how they are going to keep their delinquent from marauding the streets. Tempers flare and love dies, all because the parents bought the wrong pictures.

Let's go back to what created the frustration in the first place. Spend some quality time with the Lord concerning the picture He

wants you to have for each of your children. He made them in His image that they would be vessels for honor. Get His faith picture for them as He had for Gideon – great men and women of God. Begin to speak these pictures over your children. Tell them frequently that they were made by God to be successful ambassadors for the Lord Jesus. Tell them that they can do all things through Christ (Philippians 4:13). Give them purpose for their life by your words.

If little Bernie is seeking acceptance the wrong way, then please make sure he gets it the right way. Kids can appear to be bottomless pits when it comes to requiring love, but there may be a reason for this. The spiritual law is that what we sow we reap; the measure that we use to deal out to others is what determines that which we will receive.

Children are basically selfish, therefore, they will probably be sowing bad seed. They can't receive much of the love and acceptance you give them because they are not sowing proper seed. It's like the diabetic whose system can't process food properly therefore they crave extra sugar. The key is to help your child change their pictures. The world does not revolve around them. Other people have needs and they can be part of God's plan for meeting those needs. The new pictures we help them adopt needs to be built upon this eternal law of sowing and reaping.

Teach your children at an early age how to feel good by planting kindness. Help your children imagine as many ways as possible to make other people successful. When your son or daughter plants good seed, give them gobs of love and acceptance. They will now be able to receive love because they are giving love'. They won't be able to accept your love when they are misbehaving because they are planting bad seed.

We need to help our children change survival pictures for overcomer pictures. When they back away from the center of the stage of life (which is true humility), the Lord promises that He will personally see that they are exalted, lifted up (1 Peter 5:6). Isn't

that exactly what you desire for your children?

When you have to spank your child, please take long enough to cool off so you are not enjoying it. Following the application of the “board of education” to the “seat of learning,” spend quality time with them and share the faith pictures you have for their life. Let them know of your love, and also of the consequences of bad behavior. Tell them that you believe that you will not have to be spanking them much more because they are learning that there is a better way to try to meet their needs. Paint a picture for them of your love and acceptance.

If you find yourself beginning to feel pressurized concerning your children or being at odds with your mate concerning child rearing, check your images. Meditating on the faith pictures God gives can help restore peace in the war zone. “Speaking of that which is not as though it were” can build acceptance and trust inside your children. Talk over with your mate the kinds of faith pictures each of you would like to have for your children. Story telling is one way a generation passes on it’s values to their children. Help you child draw mental heros to imitate! Bible heros!

THE POWER OF GRACE

Have you tasted the sweetness of grace? Romans 8:3 says that *what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did by sending His Son*. Amazing Grace is a favorite hymn, and it's also the only remedy for sinful man, right? If grace was your only hope for victory over sin and failure, what about your children? Do you allow room for your kids to be human? Is there space for failure around your house? The devil would tell us that unless our kids respond perfectly, they will never make it in life. If they are sloppy now, he says they will be worse later. But, what about grace? Is there any room for hope, for growth, for change? Faith can paint new pictures!

How much grace and mercy are you using with your children?

If you were raised by mean or demanding parents, you will have to fight being the same way toward your kids unless you change pictures. Grace will paint a new one for you. Some harshly disciplined children grow into non-disciplinary adults. The result is almost as bad. True love disciplines, but always within the boundaries of compassion. Mercy gives room for tolerance because it sees a different picture. Faith sees possibilities!

UNREALISTIC PICTURES

Do you find your vocation frustrating because of unrealistic pictures? “Without me, this place would fall apart.” Not only is this likely not true, it also opens the door for pride, anger, weariness and frustration. The truth may be, “without Jesus and you the place would fall apart,” but keeping the Lord in the picture makes the difference. See Him at your side, enabling you to accomplish what really needs to be done. When “powers that be” ignore your noble sacrifices, let Jesus encourage you with “well done, thou good and faithful servant.” Ask the Lord to work overtime for you so you can go home and get some rest. When the pressures rise, spend your coffee break with your eyes closed, in conference with your Divine Counselor. He knows how to get your work done with half the effort.

Success is measured by some with the yardstick of accomplishment. God measures success by what we are.

Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels of wood and earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if a man cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful for every good work. 2 Timothy 2:20, 21

In the above verses Paul says whether or not we're a vessel of

gold, held in honor by God, depends upon cleanliness. Jesus made it clear that true holiness is that which comes from the heart (Matthew 15:18-20). The pictures you allow in your heart will either keep you close to His love or contaminate you. What are you permitting to pile up inside? Worry will deck our halls with cobwebs. Cutting corners to “perform” can let in contamination. We are in a day of great pressure to get results. The salesman of the month title goes to one who closes the most deals, sometimes regardless of how much the truth was trimmed. The key to staying fresh and winning the race is the picture we have of who is filling the grandstands, watching us. Is it the Board of Directors (flesh and blood) or our Heavenly Father?

*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **fixing our eyes on Jesus**, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Hebrews 12:1,2

The writer of the book of Hebrews knew that we would have a mental picture of pleasing someone with our performance. He suggests that we go for the gold before the righteous witnesses in heaven. These verses also let us know that this is how Jesus maintained inner joy even through the ugliness of His crucifixion. He held the final outcome in His mind. He had a faith picture of His Father's Word to Him, and He clung to it despite the physical pain. Though men were mocking Him, His faith picture had Him sitting at the side of God Almighty! We are to do the same thing! One translation renders the word “perfecter” as “pioneer.” Jesus blazed the trail for us using the faith-building tool of imaging. Verse two actually commands us to “fix our eyes on Jesus.” The

only method God has for our victory is for us to fill our mind with Jesus! *“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 2:5 kjv.); “Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on the earth” (Colossians 3:2).

If we live our life as unto clients, friends, or family members, it puts pressure on us to perform. Sometimes we may even wonder who the real “us” is. Use your servant, faith, to remove this pressure. I suggest you spend quality time with the Lord each morning asking Him to assist you in planning out your day. “Lord, I know what the boss is expecting, but what do You want?” This will relieve the pressure of trying to please people who can never be pleased and it sends faith ahead to pave the way for US.

IRREGULAR PEOPLE

Joyce Landorff wrote an eye-opening book called, “Irregular People.” She told how we will never be able to win with some of those who are the closest to us. She hit the nail on the head with her description of the problem. I know many who have agreed with her premise yet still labor under the heavy burden of trying to grab the unreachable prize. I think they have a picture inside that needs to be changed. We must see the Lord accepting our irregular person as they are and us as we are. You don't need the approval of flesh and blood when you know the Lord is pleased with you; however, your reaction to their continual irritations must be to switch to better pictures. You may be saying, “I can't believe it. No matter what I do they are never pleased.” Instead you must respond, “Thank you Heavenly Father that you love and accept me just as I am. And, I accept (fill in the blank) just the way they are.”

The enemy will feed you suggestions on how you can win with this stubborn person. Perhaps there are two irregular people (maybe you're their's): Back off from trying to change this person and see them as Jesus sees them. Give Him thanks that you don't have to win this contest! Release this person to be just the way

they are. Instead of being shocked that you can never please them, be shocked (pleasantly) if you ever do please them!

Do you have an irregular person in your life? What kind of pictures do you have of them? How much is enemy distortion?

PICTURE OR PERISH

Why do we fail? The Scripture says it's because of what we don't see in our mind, our lack of vision.

Where there is no vision, the people perish.

Proverbs 29:18a kjv

What is your faith picture for your life? Your family? Your ministry? I trust that these words will prod you into filling your mind with God's pictures for success. Look for bad paintings on the walls of the gallery of your mind. Spend whatever time it takes with the Holy Spirit to redecorate! Soak in the book of Ephesians and sketch some new pictures, remembering that Paul's concern for the believers was that their "eyes would be opened." Here are some verses from Ephesians to start with:

1:3 - Get a picture of abundance of blessings being poured out on you!

1:13f - Hide under His seal of protection.

1:18a - Receive an abundance of hope.

1:18b - Ponder God's great resources.

1:19 - Draw from His abundance of power.

1:20f - Rely on His limitless authority.

2:6 - See yourself seated next to Jesus.

3:10 - Break the good news to your enemy:

3:18f - Bask in His sea of love.

3:20 - Picture your cup overflowing.

4:14 - See yourself weathering every storm

4:16 - Picture spiritual gifts flowing.

4:22-5:1 - See the new you walking just like Jesus.
5:18f - Let the Holy Spirit control your every action.
5:22-33 - Picture yourself as the ideal mate.
6:1f - See yourself as the perfect parent or child.
6:5f - Picture yourself as the best employer/employee.
6:10f - See yourself fully armed, beating the stuffing out of the devil!

Hallelujah!

Some folks have a picture of God's Word that resembles a paddle. To them, the Scriptures are always warning or chastening. If this is how you see the Bread of Heaven, then please change your lifestyle so you can come to the Word for pictures of life! Some kids are always in trouble because they are always naughty. If this applies to you, then do yourself a favor and turn from seeing how much you can get away with to how much you can receive, that God may be glorified in and through your life.

Holiness does not result from strict Parseeism or legalism; it comes from being wholly dedicated unto the Lord. Acts 26:18 says that sanctification comes from faith! Honor God's Word as the source of faith; hide it in your heart and it will actually keep you from sin (Psalm 119:11). Meditate on Proverbs chapters 2 and 3 and rehearse for yourself what God wants to do for you through His Word.

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a

better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them. Hebrews 11:13-16

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen. Hebrews 11:24-27

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Please send your comments and insights:

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