

CHAPTER 3

DISCIPLINING YOUR MIND AND BODY FOR SUCCESS (e²)

"Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize" (1 Corinthians 9:24-25 NLT).

In August of 2004 I arrived early for a doctor's appointment and thumbed through the latest issue of *Time Magazine* which was lying on the waiting room table. An article featuring American Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps caught my attention, and I began to read about him. In the U.S. Olympic trials held the previous month, Phelps had become the first swimmer to qualify for six individual events. (Phelps went on to win three gold and two bronze medals in the 2004 Athens's Olympics; and in Beijing in 2008, he did something no one else in the history of the Olympics has ever been able to do - he won an unprecedented eight gold Medals.) In the article his coach Bob Bowman described Phelps as being "born to swim"—blessed with a sinewy, whip-like body, a long torso and large hands and feet, plus a 6-ft.-7-in. arm span that extends 3 in. beyond his height (the usual ratio is 1 to 1). "Phelps is as close to an ideal swimmer as you can get," he believed. The article went on to say that Phelps would get up 6 a.m. every day and go into the pool, where he swam seven miles a day, 365 days a year. The author of the article, Alice Park, quoted Phelps as saying "Christmas morning, I am at the pool." Phelps maintained that in order for him to be a champion, he had to change the way he swam every single stroke. Michael Phelps' coach called him "the motivation machine." There are probably thousands of nineteen year-olds that can match Phelps' physical qualifications, but none of them possess his desire to be a world champion. I was greatly impressed by the discipline and the motivation of this nineteen year-old swimmer. He was willing to change, and he was willing to submit his mind and his body to a torturous daily discipline in order to win the Olympic gold, a prize that at best would be forgotten in a few years.

Several days after finishing the Phelps article I was sitting in a restaurant eating lunch when my thoughts returned to his story. I was thinking about the incredible discipline that Michael Phelps was willing to exercise to win the prize, when suddenly the Lord spoke the following words in my spirit: *"That's what you have been doing by meditating on My Word every day; you have trained your spirit to win."*

You see, since May of 2003, I have disciplined myself to spend an hour or more each day meditating on (thinking upon and confessing) God's Word. Every day I arise early and meditate on God's promises to prosper me, to heal me, to protect me, to guide me. I meditate on the authority over Satan that Jesus has delegated to me as a believer. I meditate on my rights and privileges as a citizen of the kingdom of God. When I first started this daily routine I faced a major financial challenge in my business. (I discuss this challenge in detail in later in this book.) As I meditated on God's Word, my spirit began to grow stronger; and as faith in God's promises became established in my heart, that faith produced a fifty percent increase in sales over that of previous years, and it generated the highest annual profit that my company had ever experienced. Without realizing it I was training my spirit for the big event—not the Olympic trials like Michael Phelps, who competed for a temporal prize, but for an eternal prize. I am still amazed at the boldness that this daily meditation on the Word of God has produced in my spirit.

WE ARE TO DISCIPLINE OUR BODIES LIKE AN ATHLETE

"So I run straight to the goal with purpose in every step. I am not like a boxer who misses his punches. I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:26-27 NLT).

When you were born again, your spirit (your inner man) became a new creation and the old man passed away (2 Corinthians 5:17). But there was no change to your body or your mind; they remained in the same condition that they were before you accepted Christ. If your body

craved rich, fattening foods before you were born again, it will still crave rich fattening foods after you were born again. If your body was involved in sensual sexual activity before you were born again, it will want to engage in sensual sexual activity after you were born again. Your body will have the same fleshly, carnal nature it had before you were born again, which is why Paul said, "...present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God..." (Romans 12:1).

Your born-again spirit, the inner man, is to discipline your body, take control over your body, and bring it into submission to the Word of God. In order for your spirit man to take control of your body, it needs the cooperation of your mind. But your mind is still in agreement with your body, because it was originally trained by the body's five physical senses.

OUR THOUGHTS DETERMINE OUR DESTINY

How well I remember a phrase from a secular success motivation book which I read some thirty-five years ago..."Thoughts are things and powerful things at that..." Yes, thoughts are powerful! Positive, faith-filled thoughts can put you ahead in life, while negative, fear-filled thoughts can hamper your success and even make you sick.

Your "spirit man" (the inner man) will translate into reality a thought driven by fear just as readily as a thought driven by faith. "For as a man thinks in his heart (his soul) so is he..." (Proverbs 23:7a). The Hebrew word *nepes*, translated *heart* in my Bible, is translated *psyche* in the Greek and should have been translated *soul* in the English. It refers to the mind, will, and emotions.

From the time you arise in the morning until the time that you fall asleep at night, your conscious mind is occupied with thought impulses. Your mind receives these thought impulses from four sources:

- ✦ First, these thought impulses—either positive or negative—come through stimuli received from the five senses, particularly the sense of sight and hearing.
- ✦ Second, you may receive thought impulses from the demon forces of darkness that sit on your shoulder and impress their negative and devilish thoughts on your mind.
- ✦ Third, the recall of your memories stored in your soul tends to strengthen the influence of thoughts upon your mind. When thought impulses from various sources reach your conscious mind, they are sorted, filed, and recorded in your soul, similar to the way that a computer stores and retrieves information provided to it. When we wake in the night and think upon the negative things that have happened in our lives, those memories strengthen their hold on us.
- ✦ Fourth, if you are a born-again Christian, you may receive thoughts from the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God dwells in your spirit, and therefore His thoughts will rise up from within you. (Being able to hear the voice of God in business is so important that we will spend an entire chapter on the subject later in this book.)

Any thought that an individual allows to dominate his conscious mind will eventually find itself believed and acted upon by his spirit man. Through some powerful principles that God has not deemed necessary to divulge, the dominating thoughts of one's mind influence what they believe in their spirit.

The Manufacturer's Handbook says it this way, "... let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think." (Romans 12:2b NLT). In another place it says that when you were born again your "inward man" (your spirit) delights to do the law of God, but your body is controlled by another law which wars against your mind and your spirit and keeps you in captivity to the law of sin (Romans 7:22-25). In these passages, Paul says that your spirit (your inner man), which is inhabited by the Spirit of God, wants to do what is right; but your mind, which has been programmed by the five senses, has a carnal (body-ruled) nature which tempts you to sin.

But Paul doesn't leave you without hope; he tells us that you can transform your mind, by changing the way you think by "... bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). (Christ **is** the Word of God.) Simply stated, we are to reprogram our thinking by meditating upon (thinking upon and confessing) the Word of God day and night until we think like Christ thinks. **"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that that proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).**

YOUR HEART- MOUTH AGREEMENT SHAPES YOUR LIFE

Earlier in this chapter I related how by meditating upon (thinking upon and confessing) the Word of God, I used the law of faith to change the condition of my business from near bankruptcy to prosperity. Like all spiritual laws, the law of faith will work either positively or negatively depending on the thoughts that we have allowed to dominate our conscious mind.

That is why the devil loves to play games with your mind and your emotions. He delights in filling your mind with lies, accusations and negative thoughts concerning your life, your family, and your business. He knows that if he can get you to meditate on his devilish, negative thoughts then eventually you will begin to believe them in your heart. And once you believe them in your heart, if he can coax you into confessing those negative thoughts from your mouth, they will come to pass in your life (Mark 11:23). But be encouraged, God has given mankind a will, and you have the ability to exercise your will to control your thoughts!

But tragically most men never exercise control over their thoughts or over their mouth, and in failing to do so they allow Satan and his devilish imps to control their lives. Many years ago I heard Kenneth Hagin, the founder of Rhema Bible Training Center, express this principle in the following words, and I have never forgotten them:

- ✦ **The way you think...**
- ✦ **Determines what you believe in your heart (Proverbs 23:7a),**
- ✦ **Which determines the way you talk (Mathew 12:34b),**
- ✦ **Which determines what you have in life (Mark 11:23).**
- ✦ **Watch your thoughts; they become words**

Recently I was in the reception area of a medical clinic and I noticed a decorative plaque hanging on the wall that reflects the same principles mentioned above from a secular viewpoint:

- ✦ **Watch your words; they become actions**
- ✦ **Watch your actions; they become habits**
- ✦ **Watch your habits; they become character**
- ✦ **Watch your character; it becomes your destiny**

WE ARE TO BE TRANSFORMED BY RENEWING OUR MIND

Paul entreats us to submit our body as a living sacrifice to God, and he encourages us to not be conformed to the pattern of the world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our mind (Romans 12:1-2). In this computer age we would say, "Take control over your body—don't think like those in the world think, and be transformed by the 'reprogramming' of your mind." We know from experience that if we program our computer with wrong information it will produce wrong results. The same is true of our mind. Most people's minds have been programmed by their physical senses to operate in a "sense-ruled" physical world. It has been programmed to believe what it sees, hears, feels, tastes and smells; therefore, it has difficulty operating in the faith realm. It's all right to believe your senses when you are crossing a busy street, but when your senses contradict God's Word, you are to believe His Word. We have to reprogram our mind daily with the Word of God so that we think like Christ thinks. We need to think in line with God's Word in order to operate in cooperation with His spiritual laws.

Just as Michael Phelps was willing to submit his mind and body to a daily regimen of physical exercise to become an Olympic champion, so we are to submit our minds and our bodies to a daily regimen of meditation on the Word of God, in order that our inner man, our spirit man, may become strong and filled with faith.