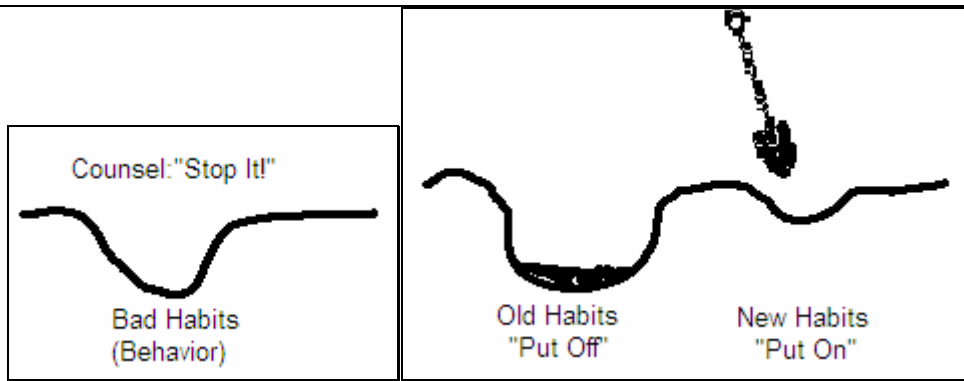


IV. THE BIBLICAL PROCESS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH – Ephesians 4:22-24

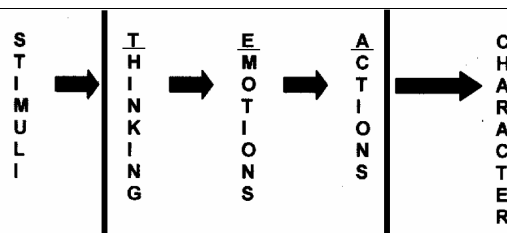
- Fundamental to our change is a purposeful and habitual putting off old behavior putting on new behavior by the renewing of the mind (or thinking).
- We are by nature creatures of habit. If we were not, think about what life would be like.
- We have ingrained (almost hard-wired) us not only certain patterns of behavior, but also of thinking. We have learned to respond to things around us from our childhood in certain ways. The way to change this is by a purposeful and repeated re-thinking and re-behaving.
- According to this verse, there is one primary thing, the changing of the inner man, then the secondary thing, the change of behavior.
- We act and live and respond according to what we believe and how we think. While there is a place for dealing with behavior (and it is an important place), eventually or at the same time the issues of the heart need to be dealt with (again, we will come back to this).
- Romans 12:1-2 We are to be transformed by the renewing of the mind.
- At this point I want us to consider the issue of “put off/put on” – This is description of a kind of rehabilitation of our regular (i.e. sinful) ways of thinking and acting, and replacing them with the right ways. This takes thought and hard work, and it is initially much easier to revert to the things we have habitually done.
- This is especially true when there have been years, even decades, of thinking and responding in certain ways.
- Illustration: Two ditches. Only make progress as we fill old ditch with dirt from new one.

DIAGRAM 1 AND 2

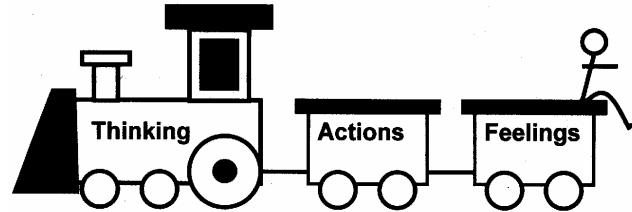


- Change doesn't happen in a vacuum, or merely by trying to stop thinking/doing something. The wrong must always be replaced by the opposite right. The vice must be replaced by Spirit-empowered virtue.
- Discuss examples: worry/anxiety, anger, lust, bitterness, discontentment, impurity, fear, depression, corrupt speech, contentiousness, self-centeredness, guilt, failure, conflict. What are their opposites?
- Questions: What about my feelings or emotions? Isn't it hypocrisy to do those things I don't feel like? What if it isn't in my heart?
- Stimuli – things “outside” of ourselves, or beyond our control
- Thinking – we are essentially interpreting beings. What do we think, how do we respond? Does it come through a biblical grid? In Scripture the heart is not primarily the emotions, but rather a synonym for the inner man, our thinking, our soul or spirit. It is that which is distinct from our mere material nature. (More later, to demonstrate exegetically)
- Emotions – the “energy” produced from our thinking. It must not be forgotten that we are totally depraved, that is fallen in every dimension of our humanity. This includes the emotions. Many speak
- Action – What we do in response to our interpretation of the stimuli. This is the fruit of the tree, showing what it is.
- Character - The product of these three dimensions. It is what a person is described as (angry, anxious, bitter, fearful, etc.). One's character cannot be separated from their real and demonstrable actions.

DIAGRAM 3



- The problem is that we live in an entire culture which turns things around. In an important moment in a movie or television show or book, someone is asked "what does your heart tell you?" In movies influenced by Eastern thinking like Star Wars and the Last Samurai, the continued directive is "let go of your mind" and "use your feelings." Most of the problems I deal with as a pastoral counselor (and in my own life) is connected to living this way instead of biblically.
- We resist being principle-oriented, doing the right things out of a desire to please God more than ourselves, but being feeling-oriented. This ends up messing things up and causing problems in our lives.

DIAGRAM 4

- The concepts we are looking at today are absolutely essential to Spiritual growth. These are things that we should not only learn, but deeply embed into our thinking, and seek to consciously live by.
- We will see as we go along how these things apply to specific problems