

**Sanctification: Transformed Into the Image of Christ**  
**Lesson 23**

**I. Introduction**

- a. The human brain is the best organized, most flexible, and highest functioning object in the known universe. It is composed of over one trillion brain cells, 100 billion of them neurons, with vast ensembles of neural circuits numbering in the hundred of millions.
- b. It possesses intricate wide-area networks crisscrossing its various regions, with a large number of strangely shaped sub-cortical structures housed just beneath the cerebral cortex, all working together .
- c. We now know that we learn throughout the life cycle from everything the mind perceives (at any age). Our brains build and strengthen neural pathways no matter where we are, no matter what the subject or the context.
- d. Since experiential sanctification involves the work of bringing these brain structures and processing under the influence of the Holy Spirit, a clear understanding of the brain's development, functions and processing strategies is helpful.
- e. After all, it is within the locus of the brain that all sinful thoughts and behavior reside and have their roots. A basic understanding of brain structure and functioning will be incredibly helpful in overcoming sinful responses.

**II. Fearfully and Wonderfully Made Ps 139:14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made:**

- a. In a developing human fetus, brain cell production reaches a peak production period during which brain cells are produced at the amazing rate of over 250,000 every minute.
- b. Physiologically, learning is the formation of cell assemblies and phase sequences. Children learn by building these assemblies and sequences.
- c. Adults spend more time making new connections and arrangements than forming new sequences.
- d. At the neurological level, anything that is learned appears to be made up of exceedingly intricate arrangements of cell materials, electrical charges, and chemical elements.
- e. The number of neural pathways inside the brain will constantly expand or contract based on the quantity and the richness of our experiences.
- f. When new learning occurs, it literally changes the very architecture (size and shape) of the human brain.
- g. Healthy brain cells will be "pruned away" or "reassigned" to another function if they fail to find a job to perform.
- h. For instance, if a child does not hear human language by the age of nine or ten, he will encounter enormous difficulty in learning to speak any language at any subsequent time, if he learns to speak at all.
- i. The human brain is capable of creating trillions of interrelated neural networks rendering our capacity to learn virtually limitless.

**III. Creation of Learning**

- a. New neural connections are created within approximately 18 seconds as the brain makes a functional determination regarding whether or not to lay down a memory trace for new information.
- b. There is no single place in the brain where pictures are stored for later recall. Instead, when any "picture" enters the brain during the active processing of seeing, the first thing the brain does with this incoming sensory information is to "deconstruct" it.
- c. Each element is sent to a different part of the brain for processing. Color, movement, shape, line orientation, etc are all processed separately by different areas of the cerebral cortex.
- d. The brain is a "pattern-detecting device," aggressively searching for those patterns which will help give meaning to new or incoming stimuli. This is why mental models are formed in the brain.
- e. The "pieces" or elements of the object that is in view later get recombined after being successfully "matched" with comparable elements, patterns, or traits recognized from previous experiences and stored along the well-established neural networks.
- f. If the feedback from this "deconstruction and matching" loop has identified no discernible match with elements composing an existing neural network, the incoming information will likely be discarded.
- g. Or, alternatively, it will become part of a dormant record to assist in a similar analysis at a later time. The brain in essence says, "That was interesting, but it also seemed quite irrelevant."
- h. Multisensory experiences further extend these plentiful and precious connections throughout the entire cerebral cortex and they form additional links with other sub-cortical structures inside the brain.
- i. Conversely, reducing the quantity and/or quality of experiences and learning opportunities diminishes the brain's neural pathways.

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**IV. So What?**

- a. What this boils down to is that in the life of the believer the evidence is quite clear that any believer regardless of age **is able to** impact his or her own brain functioning.
- b. Since the brain is the organ of the body that gives rise to the sinful impulses and reactions to situations encountered in our day to day environment, this must mean that the believer is able to rein in those **sinful** impulses.
- c. What is also evident from the research is that such control over the operation of the brain is not an **automatic** process but rather what we have seen is that control must be wrested from the brain processes by the operation of the mind, the house of the will.
- d. We know that by interdicting old brain responses and replacing them with new responses which conform to Biblical injunctions that such new behavior will in fact cause the brain to **habituate** to new ways of responding.
- e. These practiced Biblical responses if carried out consistently and consciously for **30 days** will literally change the size, shape and internal workings of the brain itself.
- f. The task for the believer who wishes to rein in his old sin nature and put on Christ then becomes to learn and to practice the **steps** leading to new habituated behavior as challenging / sinful situations arise.

**V. Mental Force**

- a. The preparatory step in reining in the old sin nature is to create a positive mental force in the brain. This mental force is like a stated **intention** that activates mental circuitry that must be firing before the mind can interdict the brain.
- b. This is analogous to one's ability to pick out cars that are like the one you just bought. The fact that you just bought the car makes that make and model **relevant** to the brain.
- c. Because the brain pays little attention to information that it feels is **irrelevant** it is necessary to create this mental force in order to activate circuitry which sets the entire process in motion.
- d. This mental force is a **willful** consciousness which in this case, brings a biblical thought circuitry on line for activation.
- e. Interdicting automatic brain functioning is **unlearning** and requires the expenditure of energy. Therefore in order to "unbind" the old habituated patterns of sinful behavior a concerted effort is required.
- f. The **attentional** mechanisms in the brain (those things selected for activity) function primarily based on an orientation for survival. If an object threatens our survival, then it is important enough to warrant our attention.
- g. Having **purposed** in your heart (mind) that you do desire to be obedient to Christ as a matter of spiritual survival sets up this circuitry.
- h. Additionally, the realization of spiritual obedience creates **feelings** of satisfaction/success. This too, is sufficient to stimulate the attentional mechanisms of the brain.
- i. However, the "good, bad, and the ugly" are stored along a completely different neural circuits. If the brain does not get the message that, "This is important. We'd better remember this", the full experience can degenerate and the pathway **disintegrates**.
- j. High levels of **focused attention** on a subject will increase neuron development and therefore will significantly increase its surface area providing more of a 'landing field' for other incoming neural messages" coming in from other active neurons.

**VI. Application: Ways to Increase the Presence of Mental Force**

- a. Envision yourself before God's Throne: In prayer directly to Him, reinforce the **conscious intention** that this moment you are living is sanctified for the purpose of bringing glory to Christ.
- b. **Consciously** commit your thoughts, your words and your deeds to His glory. In your mind approach His throne and place your thoughts, your words and your deeds at His feet as an offering.
- c. Review Scripture which reaffirms your **intention** to live Christ
  1. John 8:31 *Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;*
  2. John 12:26 *If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.*
  3. John 13:16-17 *Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.  
17 If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*
  4. John 14:15 *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*
- d. Create an **awareness** that your spiritual enemies are all around you. Seek to identify them. 1 Peter 5:8 **Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: KJV**
- e. Pay **strict attention** to any hint of temptation that may arise. 2 Cor 10:5 *Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;*