

Lifebyte 76

A Kingdom Mindset Developing Spiritual Headwork

“Those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in His presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored His name. ‘They will be mine,’ says the LORD Almighty, ‘in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him. And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not’” (Malachi 3:16-18)



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“For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse” (Romans 1:20).

When was the last time you took in the limitless starlit heavens or marveled at the intricacy of a butterfly’s shimmering wings? All creation declares God’s handiwork, eliciting praise from all who know Him and love Him. From the microscopic to the grand He made all things “good” (Genesis 1:4,10,12,18,21,25,31).

Interwoven within the amazing infinite splendor of what He has fashioned is the awareness that He is also a ***very practical God***. For example, everything on earth has its place and purpose even if we don’t understand what that is. (Wouldn’t you like to know why mosquitoes are part of His plan?) And just as each part of your body is coordinated so that the whole of your being works together as a unit, so has He designed all His creation to function in harmony.

Whether through personal experience or “scientific discovery,” the more He makes known, the more we come to appreciate the goodness in His creation when we use it as He intended.

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work”
(2 Timothy 3:16,17).

Father purposed that His Word be used in a ***very practical way*** — not to conceptualize or theorize about Who He is, for He’s very clear about His character and nature! Nor does He intend that you

just study and memorize it as an academic exercise. God’s Word, through teaching, rebuking, correcting and training, is to be applied as a way of life.

Living His Word as your way of life doesn’t mean that you club others with it in a hypocritical display of personal virtue. Far from it! Father intends that your practical life applications of Scripture *display His wisdom* to the people around you, standing in stark contrast to the world’s ways of doing things: “*Observe [My commands] carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people’*” (Deuteronomy 4:6).

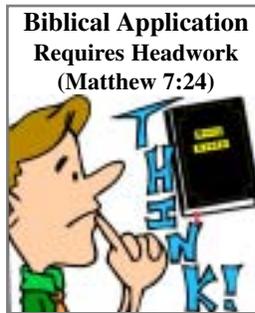
We discussed in our article, ***Mutually Growing Christ-like Relationships***, that the authority our Lord Jesus gives to each of His followers entails *putting His commands into practice*. He has given His own the *mind of Christ* so that in response we will walk in His ways:

“I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be having been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be having been loosed in heaven. Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about whatever they ask, it shall be to them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three having been assembled in My name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:18-20, literal).

Along with this authority to apply His commands, Jesus promises to be with you when two or three come together in His Name. What is the nature of this authority He has given you? Jesus is bestowing on you the responsibility to take God’s commands in the Bible and apply them individually and collectively to your lives. That is, out of love for Him as your Lord, you make them a way of life as you serve as His ambassador.

“*To bind*” applies to what you *don’t* do that would violate God’s commands and will. “*To loose*” is to make your way of life the Christ-like motives and actions found in the Bible. In this manner you’re a living reflection of Christ to others as you personify the Spirit of Jesus Who is within you. A biblical command is mere words to you unless people can see it as *your way of life.*”

To put God’s commands into action in your life you must use **spiritual headwork**. You’re able to think through a situation or problem by seeking a biblically-



based application. As you continue to do this, you learn to increasingly rely on the Spirit of Jesus within you to reveal *wisdom*, which is perceiving everything from *God’s perspective*. He wants

you to grow in your responsibility to Him as His loving and obedient child so you will authentically represent Him to the world by the way you live. As you apply His commands using spiritual headwork, you’re becoming someone who’s “***thoroughly equipped for every good work.***” What you *do* that aligns with God’s Word is something others can see and respond to.

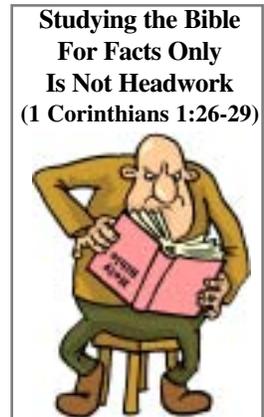
You reveal the wisdom of God through the teaching, rebuking, correcting and training from God’s Word and from biblical input from others that you practice in your daily life. In essence, you’re reflecting the *spiritual headwork* your Father wants to mature in each of His children.

What *is* headwork? If you don’t know, then you won’t understand why God has made clear through His Word *how* His people are to live in obedient trust.

Think of *headwork* as the mental labor you employ so you’ll arrive at a wise conclusion. Headwork requires a questioning mind. It is more than just knowledge about a subject. It’s the process of *problem solving* by which you apply established principles that lead to a useful consequence. The wisdom of your headwork as well as the outcome will be evident to others.

As you purpose to apply God’s Word to your life and to that of your family and fellowship family, each person involved

has an opportunity to be trained in spiritual headwork. Just reading Bible verses doesn’t produce headwork; even the foolish can quote Scripture! Like the man who built his house on sand, if you don’t *hear* from a biblical sense—if you don’t *put it into practice*—devastation results (see Matt. 7:26,27). Even reading Christian biographies only makes you vicariously aware of how *others* made God’s commands their way of life.



In order to develop spiritual headwork you need to apply biblical commands to your daily lifestyle and decisions. The headwork involved as you live out God’s Word ultimately leads to Christ-like character development. Spiritual headwork causes you to think through situations with the mind of Christ, seeking to respond as He would. You’re also willing to *ask questions* so you can learn from others. It doesn’t take long before you discover how truly practical God’s Word is in guiding your interaction with the people you encounter each day.

Most of the commands in the Bible teach you *relational responses*—how to

**Human Intellect
Is Not Headwork
(Proverbs 16:18)**



interact with others from Christlike motives. The basic foundation for interpersonal headwork is this: *“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets”* (Matthew 7:12).

Jesus’s command calls for you to *think through* how you interact with others. How

would *you* want to be treated? As you mature in the love of Christ through applying the Bible to your life, you’ll find yourself going beyond the mandate of this verse to sacrificially treating others as Jesus would treat them. You’re responding by being the heart and hands of the Spirit of Christ in and through you.

God’s *teaching*—His commands for His people to live out His wisdom—find application in a variety of ways. Ponder His directives below and think about how *you* might put them into action:

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves” (Philippians 2:3).

“Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited” (Romans 12:16).

“Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality” (Romans 12:13).

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs” (1 Corinthians 13:4,5).

God’s Commands/Man’s Application

One particular Sabbath day Jesus and His disciples were hungry. Plucking a few heads of standing grain to eat, they found themselves accosted by some disapproving Pharisees. To counteract this unwarranted attack Jesus recounted when Ahimelech the priest allowed David and his famished men to eat the bread set apart for priests (see 1 Samuel 21:6):

“Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions” (Mark 2:25,26).

Why did Jesus cite this specific example? It has to do with the *practicality* of our God, and in doing for others what you’d have them do for you. In both cases, David’s men and Jesus’s disciples were hungry. (Keep in mind that God created man to have to eat!) The priest did for David and his men what he’d have wanted them to do for him—he gave them food.

Jesus and his hungry men certainly in no way violated God’s law: *“If you enter your neighbor’s grainfield, you may pick kernels with your hands, but you must not put a sickle to his standing grain”* (Deuteronomy 23:25). The Pharisees, however, lacked God’s heart. They had little concern for a man’s need to eat even on a Sabbath.

Here’s another example of the practicality of Jesus as He applied God’s command to meet the needs of others

**Biblical Application
Requires Headwork
(Proverbs 31:10-31)**



**Biblical Application
Requires Headwork
(Proverbs 22:6)**



through this Proverb: *"Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act"* (3:27; see also James 2:14-17). Jesus had the power to heal. Luke 13:10-17 recounts a woman crippled for eighteen years being present in

the synagogue on the Sabbath. Out of loving regard Jesus healed her, incurring the indignation of the synagogue leader. Jesus responded passionately, knowing that the devil had inflicted pain for so long on this needy woman—a pain to which the religious among them had been oblivious: *"You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?"*

Luke again offers an example of Jesus healing on the Sabbath. In the face of opposition by the religious leaders He stumps them with a question: *"I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?"* (6:9). It's always appropriate to do good

when it's within your power and is God's will for that person.

In Matthew 20:1-16 the owner of a vineyard goes out all through the day to offer men work for a denarius, a day's wage. No matter the

number of hours they labored, they were all paid the same at the end of the day. Why do you think the owner did this? For one thing, He was displaying the generosity of God in caring for people. The man was putting into practice Leviticus 19:9,10, God's concern for the well-being of the needy: *"When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God."*

On a more personal level is a recent testimony from our nephew, who has been applying God's Word to his life and family for some time. Try to picture yourself in his predicament:

"After spending 4 days on the road I wrapped up my work early in northern Iowa and found out I could fly back to Philadelphia 3 hours earlier by changing my flight. My colleague and I went ahead and made the changes even though the fees and additional charges were another \$300 each. It was Friday and we just wanted to get home.

After arriving at the airport and checking in to get a seat assignment, we went through security and made our way over to the gate to await boarding. One of the two gate agents called over the intercom, "Is there a Lee Dowgiewicz in the gate area?" I looked at my colleague and said, "This can't be good." I went up to the counter and said to the agent, "Well, I'm sure this is going to be bad news for me." He confirmed my suspicion and informed me that they needed my seat. I took a deep breath and said, "OK, I'm not going to give you a hard time about it, but I really do need an explanation. For you see, I fly a great deal for my job and when I have a ticket with an assigned seat in my hand and

**No Headwork: Not
Planning Ahead
(Proverbs 17:12)**



**No Headwork: Not
Taking Advice
(Proverbs 23:9)**



I'm sitting at the gate waiting to board, I've always assumed I'd be getting on that plane. Now you're now challenging my paradigm." He responded, "We have another passenger who needs the seat." I said, "So you somehow booked two passengers into the same seat?" He answered, "Not exactly." I reiterated that I wasn't trying to give him a hard time but I did need to know "exactly" why I had to give up my seat. He said that the airline had a flight crew of 5 people who needed to get from Minneapolis to Philadelphia for a 5am flight the next morning and that it was company protocol that the crew would take precedent in these situations.

Apparently 4 other passengers had already agreed at the kiosk when they checked in to take the airline up on their offer: to get the next available flight out (7:15 the next morning), a \$600 flight voucher credit, one night's lodging and dinner. The agents had been making additional requests in the gate area and nobody else wanted to volunteer. Their procedure was to then work backwards up the flight manifest and take the seat of the last person to check in for the flight, and that was me. The agent further explained that as a result they really *hadn't* technically double-booked the same seat and that the same offer of voucher, hotel and dinner would be extended to me.

I thanked him and told him I understood the situation, but that I had a new piece of information to add to the problem: I'd paid an additional \$300 to change my flight reservation to this earlier flight and the \$600 flight voucher was essentially negated by 1/2 because of this, and that he'd have to come up with a better offer. At this point the other gate agent began the boarding process. The gate agent I was speaking with did say that there was a chance I could still make this flight. Apparently, another passenger was delayed and had a 15-minute time frame to get to this flight. He was presently arriving at

Concourse F and we were in Concourse C and this is quite a walk. I told the gate agent I'd wait it out. My colleague felt bad for my situation and offered to stay behind with me, but I insisted that he continue with the flight.

The plane was now boarded by everyone in the gate area, and it was just a matter of seeing if that late arriving passenger made it. A young man then came around the corner from the concourse. He strolled up to the gate agent, who gestured to me that this was *not* the individual who was running late. He then told the young man that they had another passenger who'd like to get on this plane and that if he was willing to give up his seat, he'd get the \$600 voucher, the night stay and dinner, and the morning flight out. Listening for moment the young man replied slowly but firmly, "Ma'am, I've been on deployment in Iraq for 8 months. I just want to go home." With that, I looked at the gate agent with a nod to indicate that I wasn't looking for him to press this issue. The young man boarded the plane and the gate area was completely silent with all of us, I think, reviewing this guy's honest plea.

A wave of self evaluation came over me as he spoke, with the overarching thought being, "What makes *me* more important? This guy has just spent 8 months at war defending our freedom and I was looking to get home early only because I felt I deserved it and had spent a little extra to make it happen. I lifted a quiet prayer to God in the gate area, 'Lord, I don't need to be home tonight. I don't know what's going on in other people's lives. Please make sure this last seat is put to good use.'"

It was now at the point that the flight doors should be shut. By FAA rules, the late arriving passenger must give up his seat. So the first gate agent called me over and said, "Well, it looks like you're in luck!" However, before they would check me in, the other gate agent insisted that he walk to the end of the

gate area to see if anyone was coming in a hurry. Soon afterward he announced to his colleague, "We have a runner!" My heart sank for a moment, but I remembered the prayer I'd just made and asked God that His will be done. The second agent asked the first if he could tell if the "runner" looked "Asian". He said he couldn't tell, but then queried, "Why do you ask?" "Because the late passenger's name is Mr. Chin."

Sure enough, a very slight 70-80ish-year-old Asian man came around the corner into the gate area moving as quickly as he could. This was obviously Mr. Chin. Immediately I thought as I saw him that there was no way this older gentleman who put in a lot of effort at his age to get to this gate was going to give up his seat. The agent went into his sales pitch to Mr. Chin about another passenger trying to get home this afternoon on this flight and that if he was willing to fly out in the morning he would get the voucher, hotel room and dinner. After taking a few seconds to catch his breath, Mr. Chin accepted the offer to give up his seat. I thanked Mr. Chin and, with a bit more humility than earlier, the gate agent.

As the agent walked me down the jet bridge he told me he'd only arrived 45 minutes earlier and that the flights out were a mess and that in fact the 4:30 flight I was originally supposed to be on had been cancelled. As I got to my seat I thanked God for the lessons He'd taught me.

"The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight; for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair; for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young—let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance"
(Proverbs 1:1-5).

The collection of proverbs inscribed as part of God's Word has very practical value for all stages of life—IF they are put into practice. These describe the *headwork* you need in all areas of your life, whether in the physical or the spiritual realm. Practical application of headwork, however, requires "skill training."

When I (Mike) was being trained to be a Navy pilot, one of the points students were graded on was "headwork." I observed that most of the students who failed in the flight program didn't fail because they couldn't perform the prescribed skills; rather, they lacked headwork to think through unexpected situations not included in their training.

The Navy knew that a pilot couldn't be trained for every contingency he'd encounter. That's why the operating manual included this dictum: "In the absence of any specific guideline, a pilot will be judged by what a **prudent person** would do."

The Bible lays out God's principles for relational interaction. All of His commands concern how to relate to Him or to one another according to His will and purpose. But realize that He doesn't regard His Law as a set of rules. Rather, out of love for humanity He has given instruction in His moral and ethical guidance. Even if you can't recall any specific biblical guideline for a particular situation, *prudence* dictates that you at least treat others the way you would want to be treated. As you grow in the love of Jesus, you then progress into laying your life down for them (see John 15:13; Mark 9:35; Philippians 2:3,4).

We want to share an anecdote that illustrates the difference between biblical headwork and foolish lack of prudence:

During our years of teaching at a retreat center we'd occasionally challenge youth

groups to come up with a biblical basis for dating. After the teens spent hours going through Scripture together, ALL concluded that dating was *not* biblical. Out of integrity they devised plans for group activities together as friends to forestall the temptation of one-on-one situations with the opposite sex.

This conviction lasted until the **imprudent mothers** of those kids stepped in. Fearful that their children would be social outcasts if they didn't date, these mothers pressured their teenagers to resume dating. Sadly, they didn't take into account that their "romanticized" view of dating from their own past experience was nothing like the sexually-charged atmosphere of contemporary social life. A study done over 30 years ago found that almost all girls will have intercourse within 3 years after they begin dating—even "churched" teens.

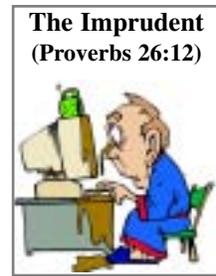
These mothers can share the blame with their husbands and pastors who have neglected to apply God's Word in their families. Thus their sons and daughters are lacking the key biblical qualities of wisdom and discipline that



would lead to a disciplined and prudent life. Other impediments hamper prudence from becoming a way of life. Public education, for instance, deters Christian parents who are trying to nurture practical and spiritual headwork in their children. Staffed by teachers who've been steeped in the amoral, "just do what feels good for you" influence of secular humanism, public schools have little regard for instilling what is right or wrong. Therefore any absolute standard of behavior that emanates from the Bible is rejected as intolerant and judgmental.

erant and judgmental.

Consider too the method of instruction used in public education—an *indoctrination* that teaches content in order for the student to pass a standardized test. This type of education doesn't let a child think for himself through focused problem solving. Any questions he might have must deal with clarification of the topic rather than exploration of life application of the material.



The Imprudent (Proverbs 29:1)



of the topic rather than exploration of life application of the material.

Your heavenly Father is relational. He wants you *and* your children to value deep within your heart both Him and His Word. But this can only be accomplished as you stir yourself to question and work through what you truly value. He is the "Pearl of great price." By using headwork that's love-motivated and Spirit-empowered, you can hold fast to that truth.

Character Qualities Of Those Who Apply God's Word

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Luke 10:27).

The more you yield to and rely on the Spirit of Jesus within you as you apply God's commands, the more you'll respond in love as you put them into action. Your *love* for God and for one another begins as a *heart* motive that impacts your *soul* and prompts you to take action through your *strength*.

And notice that in this command Jesus interconnects the *mind* with love. In His desire for intimacy with His peo-

ple, He realizes the effect that the mind has on the choices we make and on the memories we allow to influence us. He's not calling His own to be robots; rather, He knows that a mind that's guided by His Spirit and purposes to trust and obey Him will express that love by a life that's lived for His purposes.

As you go through the character qualities below, see which ones depict you and which ones indicate that you need to develop more spiritual headwork:

- The way you live evidences that your character is growing in biblical convictions that you've genuinely internalized. Your heart is motivated to live a Bible-based life which pleases your Lord, not because you're trying to earn rewards or avoid punishment but because your grateful love for Him impels you (1 Thessalonians 4:1).

- You evaluate experiences, people and situations by the *internalized Word of God*. As a result you can discern what is counterfeit and dishonest. While generally kind and patient, you confront boldly those who are hypocritical, pretentious, pompous or self-inflated so that you might lead them to repentance (Matthew 21:31,32).

- Your trust in Lord Jesus is so complete that you don't fear the unknown, and you

refuse to entertain doubt or uncertainty. New or unfamiliar situations or circumstances don't threaten your peace (Isaiah 41:10).

- You're not dismayed by the ongoing battle to crucify the influence of your sin nature. Your human frailty reminds you that you're absolutely dependent on your Lord's grace (2 Corinthians 12:10).

- Out of love for your Lord you're "obedience-based." Instead of focusing on a perceived outcome, you're motivated by a willingness to obey as the Spirit of Jesus guides. Undergirding your motivation is your loving trust in Lord Jesus and your desire to grow in His likeness to express that love for Him (1 John 3:23,24).

- Because of your love for Jesus you can identify with and share sympathy and affection in your close relationships as well as have empathy and compassion for people in general (Philippians 2:1,2).

- Because of Christ's love you've cast down any innate prejudices. You're not dismayed over the spiritual darkness in other people, since you recognize that you yourself once walked in darkness. You're friendly toward all regardless of their religion, education, political beliefs or ethnicity. Humble in your childlike status before your heavenly Father, you respect everyone as made in God's image and for whom Jesus died (Matthew 18:10).

Sin Nature Response versus Biblical Spiritual Headwork

"If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also.

If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic" (Luke 6:29; see 1 Thess. 4:15).

Your sin nature may cause you to retaliate, whether by action or attitude, when your feelings are hurt. Follow the arrows and see which sequence of responses best describes you.

<u>My Sin Nature Response</u> <i>(Doing it my way)</i>		<u>His Actions</u>		<u>My Spiritual Headwork</u> <i>(Doing it God's way)</i>
I defend myself	←	1. He slanders me	→	I examine myself "Blindspots"
I discredit him	←	2. He plans revenge	→	I discover his needs and wait
I envy his prosperity	←	3. He prospers	→	I rejoice in God's goodness
I rejoice in his downfall	←	4. He has setbacks	→	I quickly meet his needs
I cover up my problems	←	5. He is convicted	→	He seeks my counsel and prayer