

Shattering our Poverty Mentality

Most of us are *aware* enough spiritually to know that we have had negative mental strongholds and memories from the past. We most likely still have some, even if we are presently unaware of them.

Paul deals with our negative mental strongholds in a powerful passage in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. Paul chides the Corinthians for looking at “*surface things*” because their obedience is not complete (2 Corinthians 10:6-7). When we came to Jesus and were born from above, God never pushed “*reset*” on our mind and memories. We must now obediently process these as we become *aware* by partnering with the Spirit of God. God calls us to transformed minds.

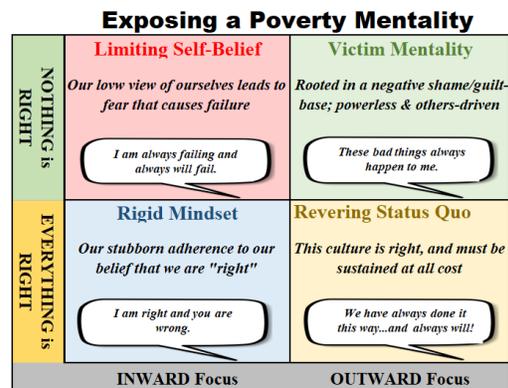
Do not conform to the pattern of this world, **but be** transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:2, Compare Ephesians 4:23, **emphasis**).

A quick look at 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 clarifies some key concepts.

- V 3a Although we live in the world, we do not wage war like the world does.
- V 4b Our weapons have divine power from the Spirit to tear down strongholds.
- V 4c-5a These Spirit-wielded weapons demolish sophisticated philosophies, and every proud argument that sets itself up against the Reality of who God is.
- V 5b Then we choose to take every thought and action captive to obedience to Christ.

“*I can’t...*” shuts down our creativity. This comes from the enemy and focuses on supposed limitations. A horrid event in the past may have seared this into our minds. Or significant people speaking down about us over time may have been a catalyst. By contrast, “*I wonder how...*” opens up our natural creativity since we are designed in the image of the Creative One. Be careful though to avoid the pitfall of mere “positive thinking.” We have limitations. Test to discern between the real, and what we project as limitations.

Let’s look at a diagram from a current writer who makes this clearer to me.¹ These mental strongholds are thinking patters where a “*poverty mentality*” raises up, instead of our renewed mental maps. In the diagram to the right, the horizontal axis is inward/ outward and the horizontal axis focus’ on “right,” either nothing or everything, both of which are deceit. This gives us four broad-stroked poverty mentalities. *Are you susceptible to any of these four?* Discern.



- **Limiting Self-Belief:** This is an inward focus with the thought “*nothing is right.*” Our view of our identity in Christ is so low that we actually *cause* many of our failures and then loathe ourselves more.
- **Victim Mentality:** This has the same horizontal focus but is now aimed “*out there,*” outside of me. Bad things happen to me and I can’t do anything about it.

¹ This simple, yet powerful, diagram has been modified from a very similar diagram by an executive coach, Nancy Fredericks. Website: NancyFredericks.Com.

- *Rigid Mindset*: This describes the 1st century Pharisees and many church goers in the 21st century. “Everything is right” and so “what I see is right.” End of discussion. This person is very sure of their rightness, so all who differ are wrong. Right/Wrong is not a Christian mindset. Led by the Spirit is. The problem is our stubborn adherence to our rightness that eliminates input from others. We are stuck because we’ve ceased to become lifelong life-learners.
- *Revering Status Quo*: This is still the “everything is right” mindset without discernment, but now outward focused so battling to keep the current status quo. This person has settled. This also describes the 1st century Pharisees but also many 21st century church goers, especially second or third generation Christians.

God has called us into His Seventh Day rest to rest from all our own self-driven works (Hebrews 4:9-10). It’s for experiencing this freedom that Jesus has freed us by returning often to behold Him (2 Corinthians 3:17-18). He has provided all we need to come free from past destructive memories and present addictions. Draw on His transforming powers, if any of these hit home with you.²

Who or what has power over your life outside of Jesus?

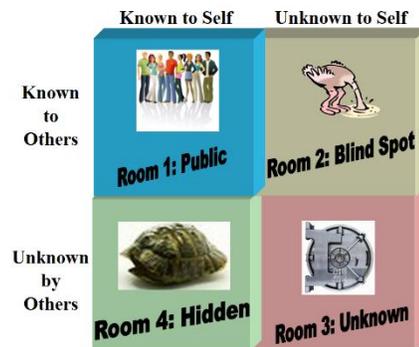
A second diagram also helps me because many are also unaware how these negative mental strongholds affect us. The *Johari Window*³ provides simple, yet powerful, insight for me through the diagram at the right. As the scalpel of God’s Word wielded by the Spirit cuts deeply into our self-life (Hebrews 4:17), the cover comes off. Our Lord exposes aspects we were previously unaware of.

So, how do we respond?

As the gatekeepers of our own hearts, be open ourselves to all of these as *possibilities*. Discern. Don’t hide from ourselves by quickly burying this area again. Acknowledge previously unwelcomed parts of ourselves. Then we partner with the Spirit of God to overcome these.

The *Johari Window* helps me candidly look at my life, using the world as a God-given window. I use this tool, so I don’t hide from myself or from others, but not in a way that is overly introspective.

- *Window 1* is the part of ourselves that we see, and others see (*Public*).
- *Window 2* is the aspects that others see but we are not aware of (*Blind Spots*).
- *Window 3* is the most mysterious part in that the unconscious or subconscious part of us is seen by neither ourselves nor others.



² If you struggle to know how to forgive others effectively who have sinned against you, I highly recommend my book, *Times of Refreshment*, available on Amazon.Com. One section deals with this crucial topic.

³ The *Johari Window* is a technique created in 1955 by two American psychologists, Joseph Luft (1916–2014) and Harrington Ingham (1914–1995). The *Johari Window* helps people better understand their relationship with self and others. Wikipedia has an easy explanation if this is unclear. It’s powerful insight!

- *Window 4* is our private space, which we know but keep from others, not confident to clearly disclose (*Façade*).

One problem is that many of our unknown parts are not known to us but known to others. No wonder we desperately need people who accept us as we are and love us toward maturity in community. They will gently and humbly acquaint us with our Room 2 “*blind spots*.” Such friends will be there for us as we reveal our Room 4 “*hidden*” areas.

To overcome negative spiritual strongholds in us demands **awareness**. **Awareness** is spiritual alertness. With awareness, we are alive to what is happening in and around us through focused attention.

So, how do we respond to each of the four windows?

- Celebrate *Window 1* together with others and increase our desire to expand this room.
- Be aware of *Window 2*, actively looking for *living feedback loops* from one another and also from the world to expose blind spots.
- Acknowledge *Window 3* with the reminder we are all still in process.
- Begin to open up *Window 4* to select others so we don’t allow aspects of our life to lurk in the darkness. Not everyone needs to know everything in our life, but ideally everything will be known by one trusted person, eventually even those dark closets that we seldom acknowledge.

Notice this wonderful description of a portion of the change that transforms us over time as we behold our God at work, using others as His divine means.

“Divine love has slipped into our inner spirit and taken over our habit patterns. In the unguarded moments there is a spontaneous flow from the inner sanctuary of our lives. There is no longer the tiring need to hide our inner selves from others. We do not have to work hard at being good and kind; we are good and kind” (Richard Foster).

When we embrace the Spirit’s evaluation and activate His provision, we are now able to overcome evil as a pattern of life. We now break off the ball-&-chain of harmful past events and people who criticize and attack. Self-acceptance prepares for awareness. *Awareness* brings the hidden into the light and begins to shatter their power over us.

To overcome evil in us demands awareness of and acknowledging previously unwelcomed parts of ourselves.

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

For what are we “thoroughly equipped” through Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17)?

God stretches us in a victorious struggle that fuels growth. We **are** overcomers (1 John 5:4). Oh, not always, but ultimately if we persevere. And often it will not look like our dream of overcoming since God’s thoughts are higher than ours.

Why am I confident of this?

First, Jesus Himself is the Overcomer. In the world we will have troubles and trials. Jesus overcame the world, the devil and our flesh through His life and death, His resurrection and ascension (John 16:33). Jesus is **the** Servant-Warrior, the Strong One, who now battles through us. As Commander-in-Chief of His warrior-army, He delegates His authority and calls His servants into the fray *with Him*. As *Jesus* overcame, so we overcome.

Second, we are learning to depend on Jesus' strong provision and God's Word applied to life. We overcome the evil one *in our own lives*, without becoming darkness-centered. We have a growing confidence in the power of the blood of Christ to cleanse. We openly testify to others how the resurrection of Jesus impacts our daily life. And we are learning to live with an all-in, wholehearted allegiance. Our testimony rings out and we give our lives freely to our specific God-Assignments, come what may. *And we are still very much in-process!* This threefold response is crucial for every "servant-warrior."

They overcame the [accuser of the brothers] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony: they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death (Revelation 12:11).

In 1 Peter, Peter tells us to use everything that happens to us through the world as "living feedback loops," pointing to areas in which God is nudging us to grow. We often need trials and loss to expose subtle strongholds in our lives, then like divine sandpaper to smooth them out. Jesus uses the speck and plank in Matthew 7:3-5 to communicate a similar truth: "others are often a mirror reflecting hidden parts of our lives."

We need the world, and the world needs us. Jesus sent us into the world although we are not of the world (John 17:16-18). If we hang out with Christians all the time, we will think more highly of ourselves than we should since most Christians act nice with one another most of the time. However, the world tends to pick and scratch at the unhealed scabs in our lives. This is an uncomfortable byproduct that brings growing self-awareness as the world exposes Reality to us (1 Peter 2:11).