

VINCE MILLER

mindset
for
Men

A HANDBOOK
FOR HIM





MINDSET

1



Today we're beginning with a lesson entitled **Systems of Belief**.

Fellas, we are fighting in a real war. But it's a war that we cannot see. It's one fought in the mind. It's not a war that's physical, although it has physical consequences. It's not a war of words, although words are a tool that perpetuate the propaganda that we believe in our minds. The real war is against **systems of belief** that establish **strongholds** in our mind. It is exposure to truth that keeps from being captivated by untruthful systems of belief. This is the difference between a life of obedience and disobedience.

Listen to what the apostle Paul says to the believers in Corinth.

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6

We must recognize that we live in the time of disinformation. The Internet, broadcast media, and social media have made disinformation even easier to disperse. There is so much false information and false narrative that whenever I hear anything in the media I am not even certain that I am hearing the truth. Which is dangerous—very dangerous—because media can successfully control what people hear, read, and view that will control how they think, feel, and act.

We shouldn't be surprised: disinformation not a new idea, it's the *oldest* one. It began with the serpent in the Garden. It was his spin on truth (that means *disinformation*) that got us to where we are today.



Goal

Our goal is to define how systems of belief are constructed in our mind, how they are corrupt, and why they control us, with the outcome of inviting God to reveal our corrupt beliefs.

Pray

God, reveal what we believe and why we believe it. Destroy the stronghold in our minds beginning today. In Christ's name—Amen.

Opener Reflection Questions

- What is a corrupted belief you notice that people fall for today? Why do you think people fall for this corrupted belief? (Consider the arenas of business, politics, education, religion, finance, and the like.)
- How have you blown it lately? Consider a negative feeling, action, or outcome. Now reflect on the “corrupt” belief that was driving this feeling, action, or outcome.

Four Principles about Belief Systems

A belief system is the invisible force behind your feelings and actions. It's an ideology, or set of principles, you use to interpret your everyday life. We have belief systems about any number of things, for example religion, politics, government, culture, and relationships to name a few.

But we also know that our exposure to information and social factors will inform and even alter a person's system of belief. The views that come from this exposure are the way we make sense of the world and our role within it.

Here are four principles that I think will help you see the importance of what we believe so we can change how we believe

Principle One: We Construct Belief Systems.

Consider Isaiah 55:8; it reads:

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.

Isaiah 55:8



Fellas, we are believing beings. This is what makes us human and distinct. We have the ability to reason, problem-solve, self-examine, and use complex language to do all the above. Therefore, as we are exposed to data, we make judgments, develop concepts, and, therefore inferences about life that result in two things: **ideas** and **images** that comprise a belief or many beliefs. These ideas and images are compelling.

Belief systems require two things to be constructed. First, a believer, which is the subject that believes. Second, a proposition to belief in, which is the object. So you need a subject and an object, and the subject is you, and the object is any proposition you may construct a belief about.

Slowly, over time, we construct these (as Isaiah 55:8 suggests). A cluster of these beliefs results in what we call a belief system. When we strip this down, a belief system is simply a cluster of **ideas** and **images** about various parts of our life. They influence everything.

Let me illustrate.

Back in the when I was 12 years old, I remember standing on the basketball court with a group of other guys during gym class. I vividly recall another friend coming up and breaking into our conversation, and he began to share with the four of us about what Tony did with Stacy over the weekend. He shared all the details that Tony had told him about his first-time sexual encounter with Stacy, and verbally defiled this young lady. As he finished sharing with us this unsolicited gossip, the gym teacher walked over, and he closed off with this statement, “Guys, I guess Tony became a man—Tony became a man!” Then he dropped the mic and walked away.

Even though a 12-year-old boy does not understand what it means to be a man, this thought was powerful to me. At this moment, a belief and belief system were being built in my mind. Ideas and images were projected toward me. This was perhaps one of the most powerful ideas and images I heard at age 12. Very quickly this formed into a belief and a belief system about manhood and women. You should know this influenced me for most of my teen years. Because I had no dad around and so lacked spiritual direction in my young teens, I believed it.

So let’s restate that first principle. We construct belief systems. They require a subject and a proposition (an object). They form from ideas and images that become beliefs and systems of belief that influence how we think, feel, and act.



Principle Two: Our Belief Systems Control Us.

Proverbs 23:7 says it this way:

For as he thinketh within himself, so is he

Proverbs 23:7 (ASV)

We know this to be true. This is why a beautiful woman thinks she is ugly, or a skinny woman thinks she is fat. Her self-perceptions and the ideas and images she has constructed are now controlling her believing process and her actions.

There are thousands of occurrences of this throughout the Bible. Take, for example, the David and Goliath story. Why did Israel not send a man out fight with Goliath? Because they were being controlled by the belief that they could not defeat Goliath. Goliath's challenge was too great for them in their mind: they believed he was too great to defeat. Until David came along. Then we watch as a 15-year-old boy with an opposing belief system, who does something that seems miraculous.

We could say the same about Noah, who built a boat in the middle of the desert before it had ever even rained a day on the earth. Or Abraham, who was called to sacrifice his son Isaac on Mt. Moriah. Or Daniel, who was thrown into the lions' dens and lived. Or even his three buds, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who were tossed into the fiery furnace and walked out. Shall I continue? Each of these men was being controlled by a different belief system that competed with the popular system of belief of their time. Their ability to trust in God—which is a belief—led them to take steps of faith that looked impossible.

So even though belief systems are what make us human, and what we use to make sense of the world around us, they control us, intentionally or unintentionally in a holy or unholy way. This means these controlling systems of belief reveal what we really believe. So, for example, we can say we believe in the power of prayer, but if we never pray, do we really believe in the power of prayer? The answer, of course, is “no.” What we may believe in, is the idea of the power of prayer, but not the power of prayer. Take note: these belief systems are so controlling they can be subtle and pervasive. So much so that most of the time we often don't even think about them.

**Principle Three: We Have Corrupt Belief Systems.**

Listen to this shocking statement from God, right at the beginning of the Bible. Genesis 6:5 reads:

The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Genesis 6:5

We are all sinful. There is no escape. Why? Because the intent of the heart is misaligned. We have corrupt belief systems at the core. Note that our intentions are wrong, not just our thoughts or behaviors, but the intention of our thoughts and actions. This is wickedness at the deepest level. We can conclude that corrupt belief systems distort everything, including how we view God, spirit, soul, mind, and body. They corrupt our entire being.

What's unique about these corrupt belief systems is that they are not uniform. They are different for every person. This means my corrupt beliefs are different from yours. Yet still, corrupt all the same. This is what is so insidious about them: this corruption can be profoundly personal involving long heritage and culturally acceptable norms that can feel impossible to offend or change. This is why battling a long-term compulsion (like pornography) or breaking a bad habit (like excessive drinking) is challenging. It's because we have years of corrupt patterns, encouraged by cultural acceptance, that reinforce a corrupt way of thinking that are rewarding us.

Changing corrupt belief systems can feel like asking someone to jump into deep-water without a life vest, when they don't know how to swim. For many, this is a paralyzing event. This is why beginning a personal relationship with Christ is often hard for some; they have long held corrupt beliefs that prevent them from understanding the truth of the gospel. Yet for those who do leap, they discover an eye-opening experience that reveals a whole new way to look at life.

Listen to the words of Proverbs 3:5-6:



Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Proverbs 3:5-6

I think this says it all. We are corrupt, but he is not. Therefore, we need to trust in the Lord with all that we are, and when we lean on Him, not on our understanding, then he will make our paths straight.

This leads us to our final principle.

Principle Four: God Must Reveal the Belief System.

Listen to these words from Jesus, because they sum up this point. They are from John 14:6:

*Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through me."*

John 14:6

This bold and divisive statement by Jesus is the revelation of a new way to believe for each of us. Yet this is why Jesus came, to reveal the right way, the truthful way, that leads to life as it was intended to be lived. God saw that our beliefs and belief systems were corrupt and because we could not find the way on our own, God had to reveal it. He does this in the person, work, and message of Jesus Christ. When we listen and respond to him, God reveals the truth.

I have had many moments in my life where God has revealed the truth to me. Moments where I have discovered:

- *God's grace and not just his judgment.*
- *God salvation did what I could not do.*
- *God's Spirit lives within me and advocates for me.*
- *God sees me as a redeemed, adopted, loved, and forgiven son, not sinful.*
- *God is the Lord of my life—not me.*



These discoveries are revealed if I am keeping myself in the God's Word repeatedly. That the closer I live in line with God's Word he destroys the strongholds that have prevented me from seeing his reality.

So here is what we have learned. We have discovered today that God is the creator, and he knows us best. However, we try to do life on our own by creating our own beliefs, which are corrupt, and this results in corrupt belief systems. These corrupt belief systems control us, and unfortunately, they lead us down some unfortunate paths until we discover that God through Jesus reveals a new belief system: the way, the truth, and the life.

Here's your actionable for this week. I want you to ask God to reveal one corrupt belief that you have. One that has been driving your feelings and actions for too long. You may already know what that is, or you may not. If you do not know, pray about it, until God reveals it to you. If you do know, then I want you to name it. Here are some primers to get you thinking:

- *Maybe you have a negative view of a child, spouse, or employer.*
- *Maybe you have a distorted view of yourself that keeps you from making spiritual progress.*
- *Maybe you have an incorrect view of God and the situation he has given you in life.*

Pray about it and then name it. In the coming sessions we will talk more about it!

Reflection & Discussion Questions:

- Which of the four principles most stood out to you?
- What corrupt belief do you have about yourself, others, or God?
- What is the issue that needs to be addressed about this belief?
- What steps do I take?

Call to Action

- Ask God to reveal a corrupt belief about yourself, others, or him.
- Share it in the comment section on the website and/or with a trusted friend.