

Session #4

Recovering an Authentic Faith. Why is it Important?

With Bob and Judy Pardon

2021 FFCS Weekend Virtual Conference

Fellowship of Former Christian Scientists

Are you ok?
Yeah, I'm just tired.



(T)orn apart
(I)nsecure
(R)eally faking my smile
(E)xtremely sad
(D)rowning in my tears

What is Authentic Faith/Trust?

- **Belief in Biblical Christianity (or religion) is often portrayed as:**

  - Blind
  - Anti-Rational, Anti-Intellectual
  - Un-Scientific

The implication is that faith is a blind hope that something is real. It is the opposite of a fact based, repeatable experimentation.

Trust or faith in any person, belief or thing actually consists of three components that are important to identify. Three Latin words have been used to identify these three components:

- *Notitia*, or "Knowledge"
- *Assensus*, or "Assent"
- *Fiducia*, or "Trust"

Knowledge *(Nottia):* This is the person, belief, or object that is actually believed in based on the study of information such as historical documentation, eye-witness accounts and/or experimentation.

Knowledge is made up of:

- Factual evidence
- Circumstantial evidence
- Multiple eyewitnesses

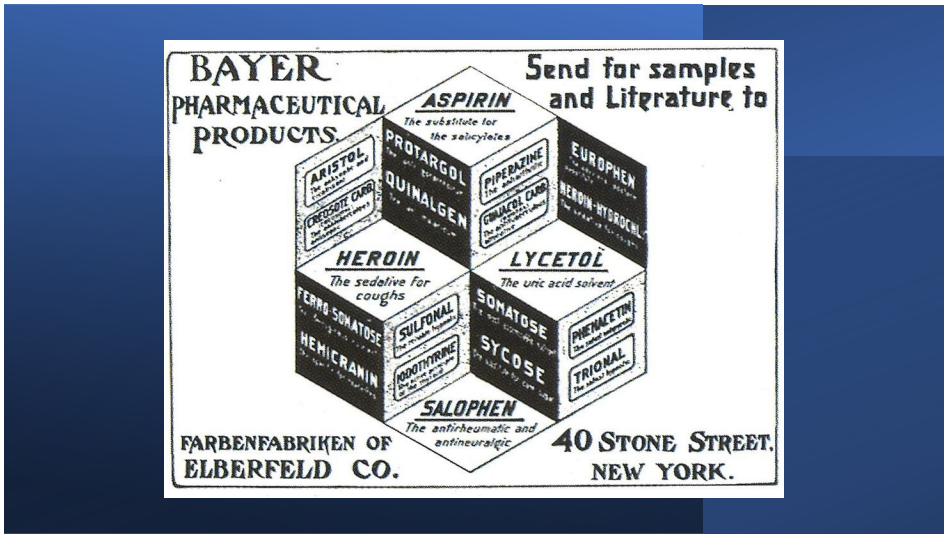
Assent *(Assensus)*: It is not enough to just know something (person, belief, thing), so assent is the conviction that the knowledge is true.

Trust *(Fiducia)*: Trust takes the knowledge assented to and incorporates it into a complete reliance or dependence. This is a worldview.

"It is important to realize that all humans, indeed it is the essence of being human, operate with some 'faith system'; either explicit or implicit, known or unknown, thought through or not thought through."

Meadow Haven

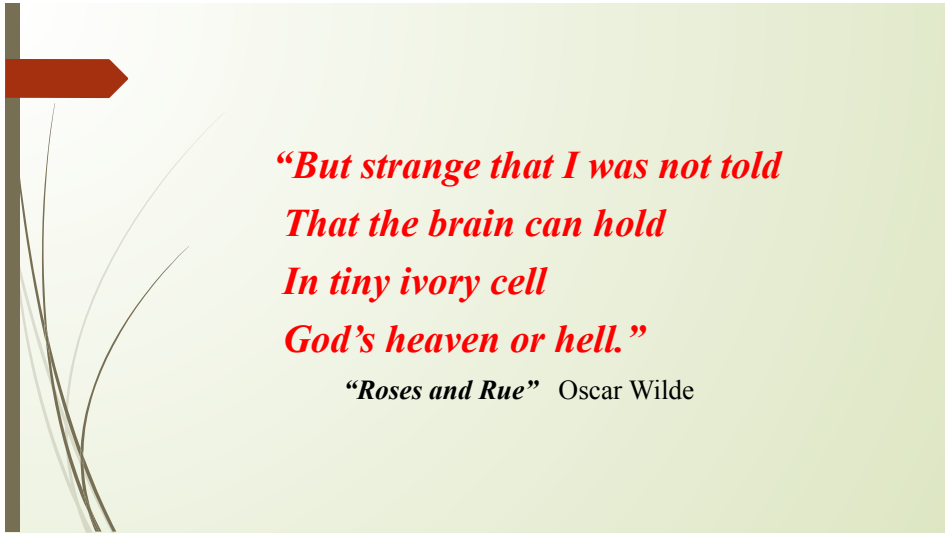
"Change Your Thinking, Change Your Brain!!!"





Aspects of the Christian Science' Worldview

- Entire material world is unreal, illusory
- Matter has no real existence even in the mind; it is an illusion held by an illusion: Mortal Mind
- The senses are deceitful and false and the "only sources of evil and error"
- Sin and evil are no-thing, unreal and delusion
- Suffering, disease and death are illusory and only appear to exist due to lack of faith
- True faith eliminates pain, suffering and death



"But strange that I was not told
That the brain can hold
In tiny ivory cell
God's heaven or hell."

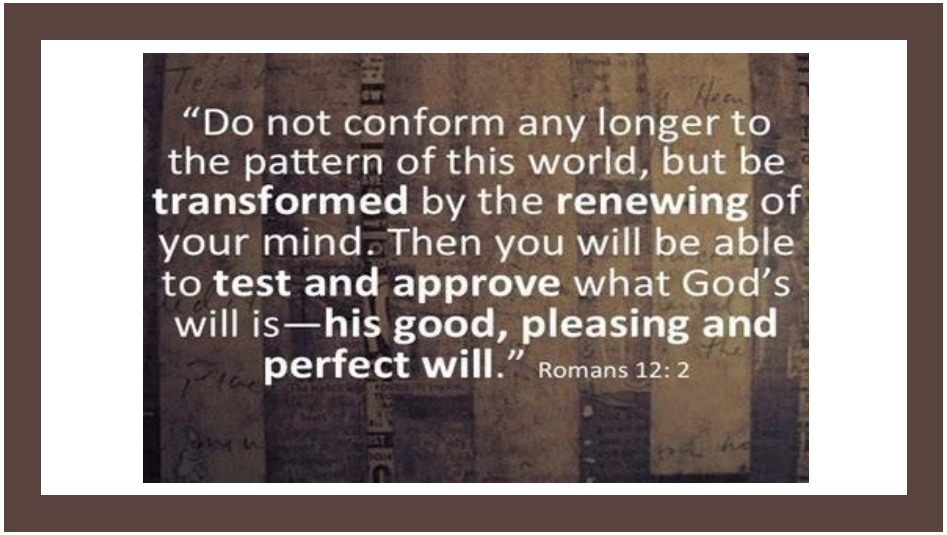
"Roses and Rue" Oscar Wilde

INTRODUCTION: *The Mind/Body Connection*

1. Understanding some basic neurobiology can help you understand that your brain is not *"the real you"* – the brain is an organ that houses the real you.
2. Your brain is constantly being wired and rewired by the environment around you. This began in-utero.
3. If that environment is a healthy environment (love, support, care, etc.) your brain adapts positively to this.
4. Once a person leaves a cult their brain is *still wired* for surviving in that cultic environment.
5. If the environment was a negative environment (life in CS) your brain adapts negatively, *it adapts to survive*.
6. This is why a person reacts to 'triggers'. *"First comes the bodily reaction, then the cognition."*
7. This is why a person can often feel that there is a war going on inside. They struggle to understand their behavior.

Point:** Understanding basic neurobiology gives a hard science understanding as to ***why trauma therapy is so critical for MGAs! It helps reinforce…

1. *"There is nothing wrong with you…"*
2. *"You can't change what you don't understand."*
3. *"As you think, so you are."*



The Seven Brain Rules

Tenet #1

"Change can only occur when the brain is in the mood."

Tenet #2

"Change strengthens connections between neurons engaged at the same time."

Tenet #3

"Neurons that fire together, wire together."

Tenet #4

"Initial changes are just temporary."

Tenet #5

"Brain plasticity is a two-way street and we can either drive change positively or negatively."

Tenet #6

"Memory is crucial for learning."

Tenet #7

"Motivation is key factor in brain plasticity."

Where the Struggles Lie:

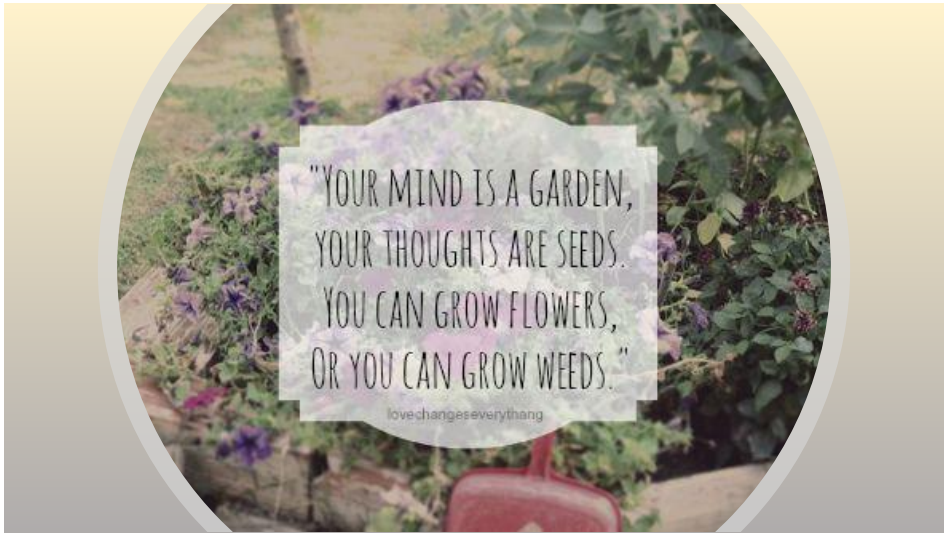
1. **Difficult to trust self**… *Results in feelings of guilt and shame; needing to forgive self and others*

2. **Difficult to trust any authority**… *Results in feelings of condemnation (God); Bible only condemning, Churches/Christian groups places of abuse*

3. **Difficult to trust others**… *Results in suspicion, paranoia, anger, isolation and withdrawal*

Five Questions for Challenging Mistaken Beliefs

1. ***What is the evidence for this belief? Looking objectively at all of my life experience, what is the evidence that this is true? If I had never been involved in Christian Science would I still accept this belief and Worldview?***
2. *Does this belief invariably or always hold true for me?*
3. ***Does this belief consider the whole picture? Does it take into account both positive and negative consequences?***
4. *Does this belief promote my well-being and/or peace of mind?*
5. ***Did I choose this belief on my own or did it develop out of my experience of growing up in my family? From Christian Science?***



There is life after Christian Science!

"There is life after Christian Science, and it is wonderful! This material world is good, it's bad, and it's everything in-between. It's so liberating to not have to deny any of it." **EX-CS site**

"I keep reminding myself that God made physical creation and he loved everything He made. He kept saying, 'Behold it is very good!' The real Jesus came to affirm and embrace human life, and to feel all of it with us. If you look hard you can find some people in any town who know the real affirming Jesus, who was a real man with a real body. May you find happiness and enjoy having a body!"

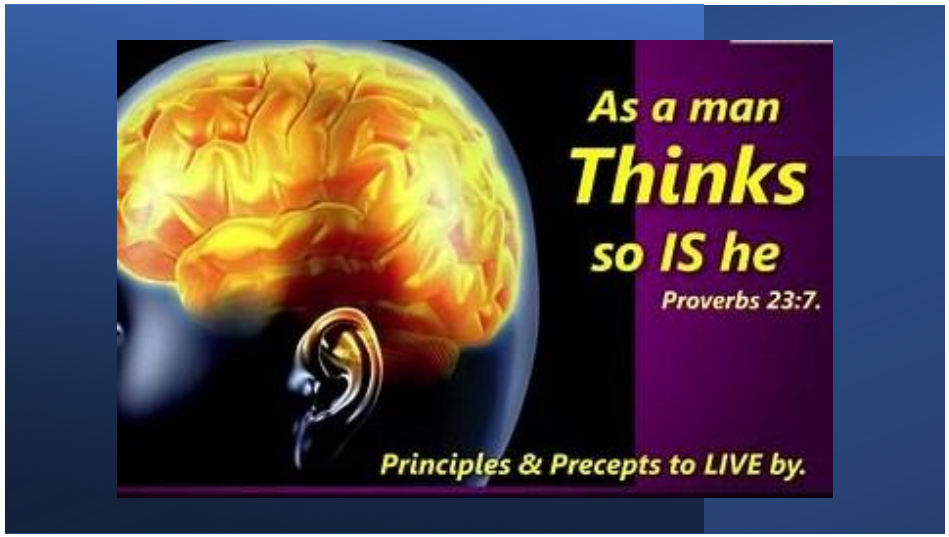
EX-CS site

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Line Up Your Self-Image With God's Image Of You

Your self-image has been greatly shaped predominantly by the messages you received in Christian Science and internalized from others, from your experiences, and from your own self-talk. When you were a child, you did not have control of those in authority over you. While in the Christian Science you may not have had control either, but since you are an adult (and out of the group), that is no longer the case. You are now able to *choose* those with whom you associate, and you can certainly control your self-talk. Therefore, you can take an active part in changing the distorted view you have of yourself.

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"THE FOUR STEPS TO FREEDOM"

- **Assume** that the confusion, fear, and distress you are feeling has been triggered by something in the present but is connected to being raised in Christian Science.
- **Connect** the confusion, fear, and distress that has its roots in your formative years in Christian Science by noticing where they fit in your life narrative.
- **Identify** the *internalized* Christian Science beliefs that developed as a result of being raised in that environment.
- **Challenge** the old Christian Science "programs" so that you can create the new beliefs needed to live in today's reality.

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"I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away the disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each one of you night and day with tears." **Acts 20:29-31**

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Recovering Faith After Christian Science

Necessary Considerations for Those Born and Raised in Christian Science

1. It is critical to understand Christian Science through the Bible and not the Bible through Christian Science. Like many Bible based cults the Bible is not the true authority, the writings of the founder are.
   - Use conservative Biblical Commentaries, there are many good ones.
   - Buy a good conservative Bible Dictionary.
2. It is critical that the *"Scientific Statement of Being"* be replaced with the historic creeds of the Church. Both are worldview statements. This is a necessary step to rewire your neural network. *"As a man thinks, so he is."*
   - Memorize the Apostle's Creed and the Nicene Creed.

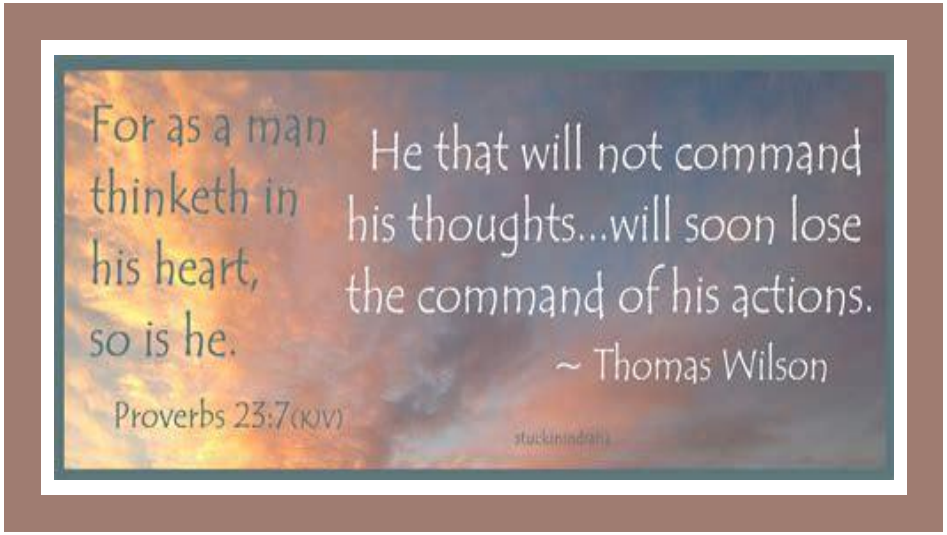
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3. It can be helpful to study/read about heresy in the early Church and how those issues were worked out. Remember, *"There is nothing new under the sun."*

4. The Bible is not just a collection of verses. There is a system, a theology that helps understand Christian doctrine in a topical and wholistic way.
- A good one volume theology is Wayne Grudem's "Systematic Theology".

5. Attend a Bible study at Church or with a small group.

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"I know many who are still hurting even after many years out. Trust is crucial. Not only trusting others, but even more, it's difficult to trust yourself. Everything: feelings, decision making, discernment capacity, even your own senses. Upon what basis now do we trust? After being so sure for so long that this was absolutely, without a hint of a whisper of an innuendo of doubt, "IT," and then to find not only was it NOT IT, but in fact was deadly: to be so deceived on so decisive an issue...you become a little shy. Many find other former members to buddie up with and that is very helpful. Easier to trust. It doesn't matter what group or class of group (high demand groups are in a smorsgasbord of flavors, as I'm sure you know). The victimization process is nonetheless similar. And so is recovery." **Spoken by former member**

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Nine Truths

Accept Yourself

- Stop striving for *perfection* or trying to be like someone else.

- Realize that the true God made you for a purpose, and He designed your personality and gave you the gifts and abilities He wanted you to have in order to accomplish His purpose for you.

"Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails." (Proverbs 19:21)

Accept The Compliments Of Others

- To discount the positive comments of those who have heartfelt appreciation for you is to discount their opinions and their desire to express their gratitude to you.

- Practice graciously accepting compliments and turning them into praise to God for the affirmation that He is at work in you and producing good "fruit" through you.

"This is to My Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples." (John 15:8)

Thank God For Encouraging You

- Acknowledge and praise God for the abilities He has given you and the things He has accomplished through you.

- Engage in Biblically-based, encouraging self-talk and mute the condemning critic inside your head.

"May our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who loved us and by His grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word."
(2 Thessalonians 2:16-17)

Release The Negative Past And Focus On A Positive Future

- Refuse to dwell on negative things said or done to you while in Christian Science release them to God.

- Embrace the work God is doing in your life now and cooperate with Him by focusing on Him and on His character. Trust in His promise to fulfill His purposes in you.

"It is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose." (Philippians 2:13)

Live In God's Forgiveness

- God has extended forgiveness to you for all of your sins (past, present, and future). Confess and repent of anything offensive to God. Do not set yourself up as a higher judge than God by *refusing to forgive yourself*.

- Lay harsh judgment of yourself aside and accept that you will not be made "fully perfect" (without sin) until you stand in the presence of Christ and are fully conformed to His image.

"We are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." (l John 3:2 3)

Benefit From Your Mistakes

- Realize that you can learn from your mistakes, as well as from the mistakes of others, and decide to view your mistakes as *opportunities* to learn needed lessons.

- Ask God what He wants to teach you from your mistakes, listen to Him, and learn from Him. Then move forward with a *positive attitude* and practice actions based on the insights you have gained.

"We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)

Form Supportive, Positive Relationships

- Realize that people who hurt others are hurting people who project their own feelings of inadequacy onto others in an attempt to ease their own emotional pain.

- Minimize the time you spend with negative, critical people, whether family, friends, or coworkers, and seek out those who encourage and support you both emotionally and spiritually.

"He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm." (Proverbs 13:20)

Formulate Realistic Goals And Plans

- Seek the help of others to identify your strengths/weaknesses and the gifts God has given you, plus the things you are persuaded God has called you to do.

- Prayerfully set some reasonable, achievable goals that capitalize on your strengths and make a plan as to how you will set about to accomplish those goals.

"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such away as to get the prize." (l Corinthians 9:24)

Further Strategies To Reconnect With God

1. Try to find a competent therapist/pastor who understands thought reform and Biblical self formation

2. If possible, find a support group (Call FFCS or ICSA, talk with friends, look on the internet, etc.)

3. There are many good books available that deal with recovery from cultic abuse

4. Try and read a different version of the Bible than was used in the group; read devotional books, etc.

5. Try to go to a Church that is healthy (interview pastor, get annual report, sit in back, don't immediately get involved, etc.)