

Changing

Hello reader, whose name we don't yet know! Nice to meet you.

First read **Matthew 12:9-14**

What is needed in order to change?

If we were to say to you: "A masked man sticks a knife into the belly of a woman", what would you think? No - don't read straight on, think of your answer first...

We don't know how vivid your imagination is - and no, we don't need you to send us your answer :) Most people to whom we ask this question 'live' say that what comes to mind is the sinister image of an attacker, taking the life of innocent women in a dark alley. That was the first image that we got, too, when this question was first put to us.

It's interesting- apparently this sentence carries the same association for many people. At the same time, most of them will have never witnessed a scene like this with their own eyes, except perhaps the few that have been raised in a criminal neighbourhood. Most of us have only seen this in movies, or comics, or books.... yet still the image somehow stays with us.

There are always more interpretations

But this isn't necessarily the only possible interpretation. What if we tell you that the mask is green? Usually the 'live' faces start to look a bit confused - what has that got to do with it? (And what effect does this new information have on your own association?). And then it starts to dawn on some, but others only see the light when we tell them that the scene takes place in a hospital. Ah, so it could be a surgeon, starting to operate! Suddenly the image changes from something negative to something positive - and all because we've added just one or two new pieces of information.

This is how our (and your) mind works. When information comes in (in this case one sentence), your mind tries to connect meaning to it. It uses the 'old' images already present in your memory as a frame of reference. The more familiar these 'old images' are, the easier it is to connect new information with them.

Your thinking is determined by what you feed it

This is not a new insight. Psychologists use these kinds of exercises to discover what you feed your mind (and, in a certain sense, yourself) with. That is important, because how you act is largely determined by how you think. If, for example, your mind is fed with anger, you will probably act angrily. When you're serious about your Christian lifestyle, you don't want that. And so the answer seems to be: *think differently*, because then you will *act differently*. It is not for nothing that Paul calls upon his readers (Christians!) to *renew their thinking*.

Unfortunately that is easier said than done. Renewing your thinking is about more than just adding some new data to your mindset. In our example above, adding 'green' and 'hospital' seemed to be enough for a new insight into that one sentence. But what about the effect on your *thinking*?

How about a second test? What do you first think of when reading this sentence: "He took aim and shot, and hit him right in the face"? If you had that sinister image with the first sentence, just like we did, there is good chance that this second statement makes you think of a gunshot. Or have our preceding paragraphs warned you to such a degree that you're now trying to think of alternatives? Maybe you're thinking: "No, it must be something else!" Hmm...something *else*? Instead of *what*? If you are thinking about alternatives, you are looking for *another* frame of reference, rather than the one you're familiar with....

Jesus knows God's intentions

For statements like the one in the paragraph above, all of this doesn't seem too important. But how about statements about God? We see this in today's text. Jesus asks a question on the Sabbath. This is not to start a theological or legalistic debate - because of His unique Divine origin He knows more than anyone what God's original intention is for the Sabbath, and He doesn't want to question this in any way whatsoever. But Jesus also observes how the Pharisees treat the Sabbath (how they *act*), and that this way of acting doesn't fit with God's intentions. For that reason Jesus addresses the Pharisees' *thinking*.

Rom 12:2
Eph 4:23

Mt 5:17
Lc 11:39-44
Ex 20:8-10