

Chapter 2

WHERE TO FOCUS

“Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is.” **Romans 12:2** (NLT)

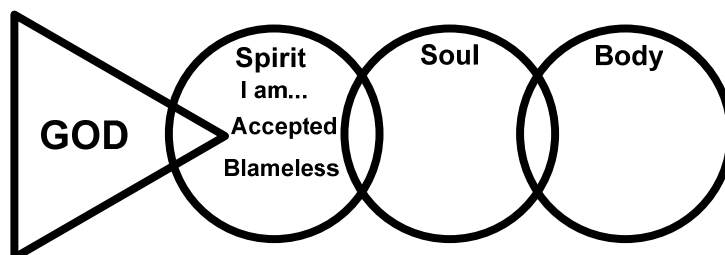
The last chapter illustrated how vital it is to know God and His love for you. When you believe those truths, you are able to trust God in spite of life’s troubles.

This chapter will point out how much your thinking affects how you feel. If you experience frequent emotional ups and downs, your feelings *reveal* where your mind is focused.

Your Spirit

In the following diagram, the three interlocking circles represent a person as a three-part being. God is in this person’s SPIRIT.

When God is in you, your spirit is alive. God tells you that you are **accepted** and **blameless** before Him.



You are **accepted** because of what Jesus Christ did for you. God says He accepts you regardless of how you look, what you can do or your past failures.

*“...We have the free gift of being **accepted** by God, even though we are guilty of many sins.” Romans 5:16 (NLT)*

God also says you are **blameless**. Jesus bore your punishment for sin and rebellion against God. You are chosen, holy and without fault.

*“...Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and **without blame** before Him in love.” Ephesians 1:4 (NKJ)*

Q1. Do you believe you are accepted and blameless?

Q2. If not, what **do** you believe about yourself?

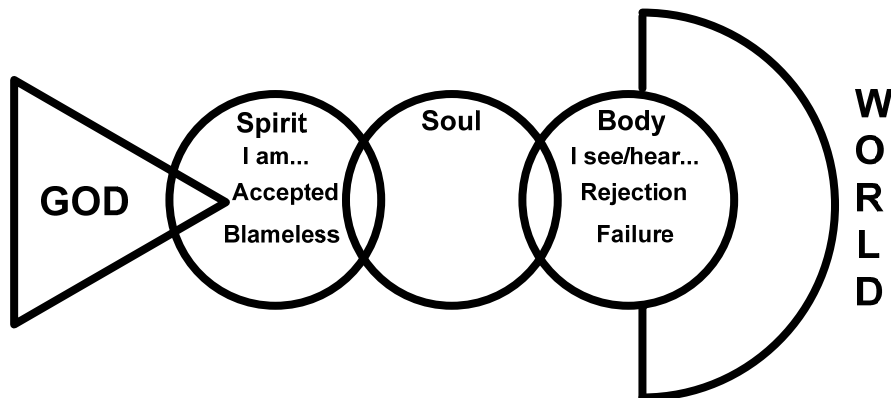
If you don't believe you are accepted and blameless, it could be because you are receiving input that is contradictory to what God says. Where is the source of this contradictory input? It's coming from the world and you receive this input through your body.

Your Body

You receive information from the world through your body's senses.

Satan is at work in the world to deceive you, and your senses are receiving this input. Even though God approves of you and says you are accepted and blameless, Satan wants you to believe you are rejected and a failure.

Notice in the following diagram how the body might receive negative input from the world. “I **hear** rejection” or “I **see** failure.”



Not every message you receive from the world is true, so you cannot trust your sense data. God wants you to experience life and victory. Satan wants you to experience death and defeat.

"The thief's [Satan's] purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give life in all its fullness."
John 10:10 (NLT)

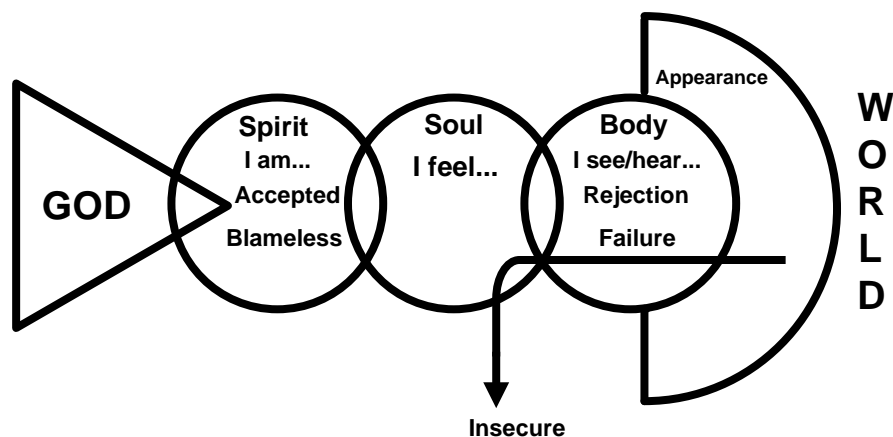
God communicates victory to you through your spirit. Satan communicates defeat to you through your senses.

Your Soul

Satan tries to persuade you to look for approval from the world. When your mind is focused on things in the world, you will experience negative feelings in your SOUL.

Appearance

The world gives approval based on your **appearance**. Are you attractive enough? Are you too fat, too thin, too weak, too old, the wrong height or not fashionable enough? When you are not attractive enough, the world rejects you.

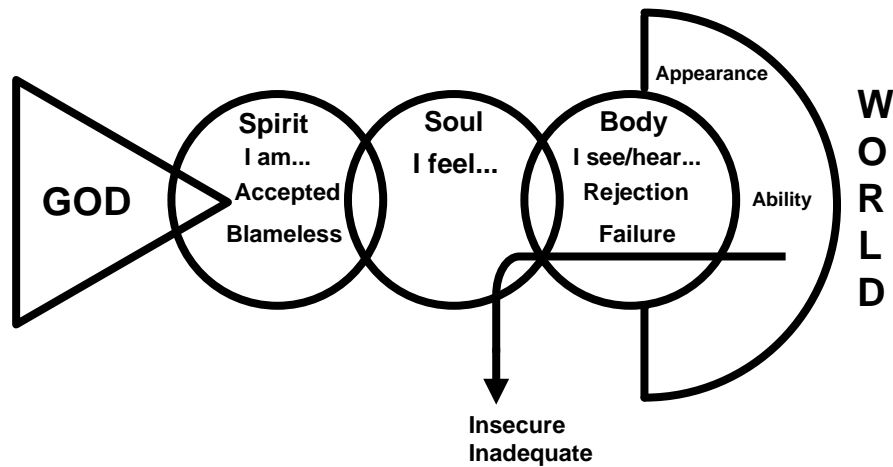


Focusing on your appearance will leave you feeling **insecure**. If you look to the world for approval and agree with the importance placed on appearance, a feeling of insecurity is a natural outcome when your appearance doesn't measure up to the standard of the world.

- Q3.** Is there something you wish you could change about your appearance? Explain.
- Q4.** Do you spend large amounts of time or significant portions of your budget to improve your wardrobe, stay fit, or use surgery to improve your appearance, believing that it will cause you to feel less insecure? Explain.

Ability

The world also gives approval based on your **ability**. Are you talented enough? Is there someone who is smarter, more artistic or athletic, better organized or more successful than you are? When you aren't talented enough, the world rejects you.



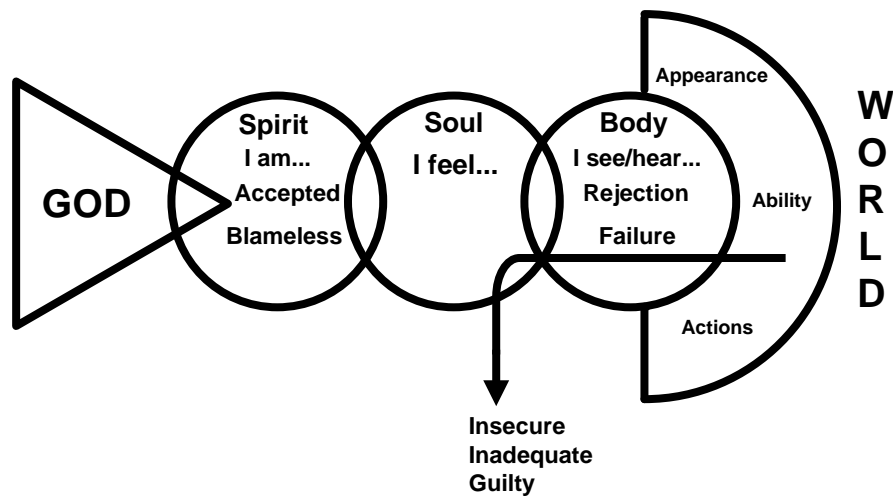
Focusing on your abilities will leave you feeling **inadequate**. When you believe you have to deal with every challenge in life with only your abilities, a feeling of inadequacy is the natural outcome as you realize you can't do something or can't do it well enough.

Q5. What do you think and feel when you are asked to do something you don't know how to do?

Q6. How do you feel when you can't do something very well? Give an example.

Actions

The world gives approval based on your **actions**. But have you always done everything right? Have you been a good parent, spouse, boss, employee, student, citizen, and friend? When you fail, does the world forgive you?



Focusing on your actions may leave you feeling **guilty**. Guilt is the natural outcome of failing and not experiencing forgiveness.

Q7. In what ways have you felt guilty as a result of your actions?

Q8. Do you see yourself as a failure? Explain.

Mind Set on the Flesh

The things that are true in your *spirit* come from God; you *are* accepted and blameless. However, when you focus on the world, what you feel in your *soul* will seem to contradict this truth. It is easier to believe what your *body* sees and hears.

If you have a tendency to believe your feelings, as opposed to what God says about you, you will be frustrated. The life God has for you will never become your living experience. Focusing your mind on the world is the same as your mind being set on the flesh.

“For the mind set on the flesh is death...”

Romans 8:6 (NASB)

Do you experience emotional ups and downs? When your mind wavers between believing God or your senses, you become confused and unstable.

“...He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”

James 1:8 (NKJ)

Consequences in Your Soul

Your mind can either be set on God or the world, the Spirit or the flesh, truth or lies. *You* decide. When your mind is focused on the world, your soul will experience wrong thinking, wrong choices, and negative emotions.

Which of the following do you experience in your mind, will, and emotions?

☐ **Fears**

Fear occurs when you focus on the unknown or things outside of your control.

☐ **Fantasies**

Fantasies are a way of dealing with problems by escaping from reality.

☐ **Obsessive thoughts**

These are thoughts that haunt or trouble the mind on a continual basis.

☐ **Wrong decisions**

Decisions based on what you see and hear, not what God says.

☐ **Depression**

Depression occurs when you focus on the negative experiences of the *past*. You have lost hope.

☐ **Anxiety**

Anxiety occurs when you focus on the uncertainty of the *future*. God is not being trusted.

The conflict between what is true in the spirit and what is experienced in the soul can be a source of frustration and/or shame to most Christians.

It is embarrassing when you say you believe you are a new creation in Christ but fail to live like it. With each failed attempt to “live out” who God says you are, the frustration increases. You begin to believe you are a “failure” and then you do and say more things that bring about failure.

Q9. Can you relate to this conflict in your own life? If so, how?

It is as though there is a blockage that stops the good things in your spirit from affecting your soul. Actually it is just a problem with your focus. Negative thoughts, feelings, and choices are indicators that you have been focused on the world.

Input from God

How do you change your focus and listen to what God is telling you? God uses His Spirit and His Word to speak truth to you. You *can* hear His voice.

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them and they follow Me.” **John 10:27** (NKJ)

You have Christ dwelling within you giving you power to change your focus, make godly choices, and obey His commands.

“For God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey him and the power to do what pleases him.”
Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

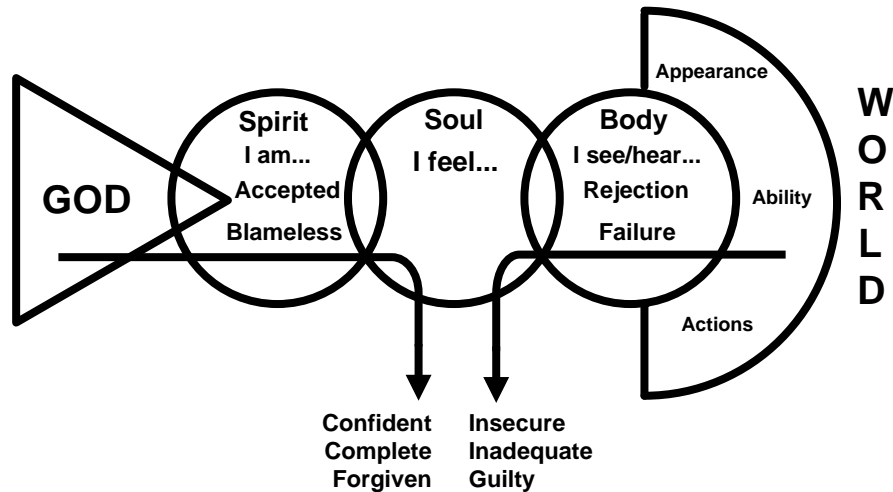
When you quit focusing on the world for approval, you can start focusing on the approval that God has already given you. It’s hard to hear what God says when your mind is focused on input from the world.

Believing what God says changes the way you feel in your soul because God speaks words of encouragement to you.

Q10. What is the Spirit telling you when you listen?

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” **Romans 8:16** (NKJ)

This next diagram illustrates how your soul is affected when you focus your mind on the Spirit and believe what God says.



The input from God is always the same; you are accepted and blameless. The input from the world is always the same; you will get approval if your appearance, abilities, and actions are good enough. You may still see and hear rejection and failure.

However a big change takes place in your *soul* when you quit focusing on the world and focus your mind on what God says instead.

Confident

Instead of feeling insecure, you feel *confident*. You no longer base your acceptance on what the world values but on what God says.

*“This **confidence** is like a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls...”* **Hebrews 6:19** (NLT)

Your confidence comes from understanding you have God’s favor.

“What can we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us?”
Romans 8:31 (NLT)

Q11. How does knowing that you have God’s favor affect you?

Complete in Christ

Satan wants you to think you are defective or missing something, and therefore you are inadequate. God wants you to know that because of your relationship with Him, you are *complete*.

*“...You are **complete** through your union with Christ...”*
Colossians 2:10 (NLT)

Q12. Do you believe there is anything still lacking if you are “in Christ?” Explain.

God doesn’t expect you to face life with your own abilities. He says your adequacy comes from Him.

*“Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our **adequacy is from God.**”* **2 Corinthians 3:5** (NASB)

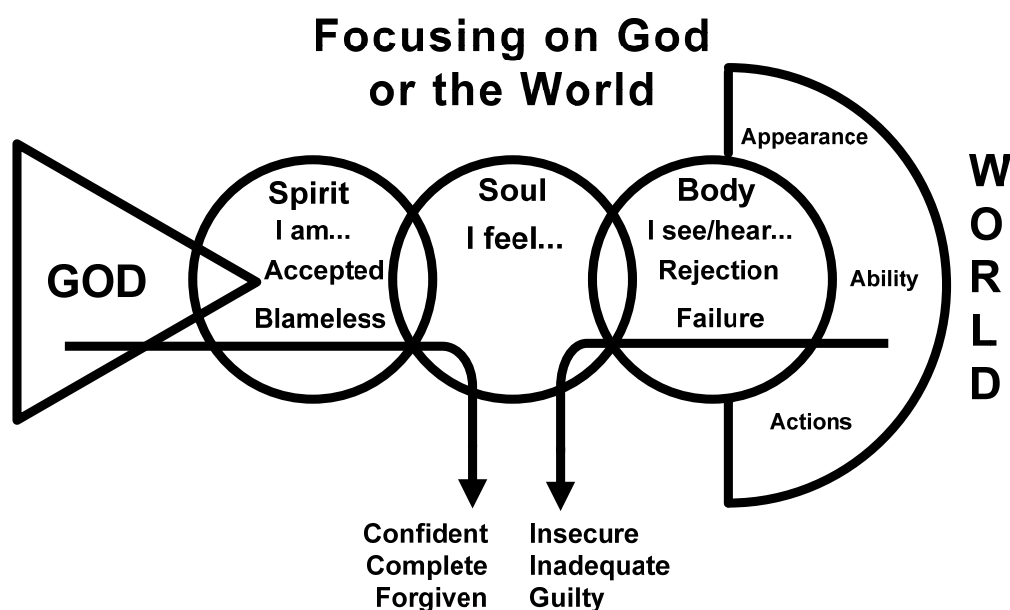
Forgiven

Satan wants you to be living in guilt over your sins, failures, and actions. Jesus has already been punished for your sins and failures so you can experience *forgiveness*.

*“I am writing to you, my dear children, because your sins have been **forgiven** because of Jesus.”*
1 John 2:12 (NLT)

Q13. Do you feel guilty? Why?

Q14. Do you believe you were forgiven because of Jesus? Explain.



Your *mind* is renewed each time you *chose* to believe what God says instead of what the world says.

*"And do not be conformed to this world, but be **transformed** by the **renewing of your mind**, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."* **Romans 12:2** (NKJ)

Your *will* is able to make right choices when your mind is focused on the Spirit and you are depending on God.

Q15. How are your mind, will, and emotions affected when *you* listen to and believe what God says?

You are no longer unstable but stable. Your mind is set on God's truth and His truth doesn't change.

"You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, whose thoughts are fixed on you!" **Isaiah 26:3** (NLT)

Conclusion

Ask God to reveal to you how the world and/or Satan have influenced you. Write the things He shows you.

Repent of the ways you have looked for approval from the world through your appearance, abilities, and actions. Repent of lies you have believed about yourself.

Accept the truth about who God says you are and begin focusing on Him instead of the world.

Thank God for what He has given you.

Focusing on God or the World

Diagram

Notes

