

# WHEN SPIRITUAL IS NOT ENOUGH

## (#2) NEW YEAR 2023

**Introduction:** Last week – guard the affections of your heart

- We saw our world becoming polarised
- Western culture now in 3 categories:
  - Post Christian – those who once believed but now don't
  - Believers – those who still believe
  - Pre-Christian – ones who have no understanding of Christianity
    - May class themselves as “spiritual”
    - Will have secular ethics
    - These are the ones who will be questioning.

**Proverbs 4:23** *So above all, guard the affections of your heart, for they affect all that you are. Pay attention to the welfare of your innermost being, for from there flows the wellspring of life.*

- “Wellspring” refers to the seasons of life.

### 1. Your Thoughts Reflect Your Season

- We all go through different seasons, but the battle is with the mind.

(a) *Focus your mind on the big picture:*

**Matthew 6:19-21** *Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.*

**Colossians 3:2** *Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth.*

(b) *Bring your anxious thoughts to God:*

**Psalms 139:23-24** *Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.*

- Let Him test you and lead you.

ILLUSTRATION: Nicola Olyslagers (nee McDermott) story<sup>1</sup>.

Nicola was awarded silver in a nail-biting Olympic high-jumping final at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021. Yet being an Olympic medallist does not define her – Nicola finds her worth in the Creator of the universe, and believes she has been given the platform that



comes with a medal to tell more people about Jesus Christ..." *I don't have a filter anymore,"* Nicola explains. *"I would say, 'well when God told me about this; and then the Holy Spirit revealed this to me; then I realised that this song was really important...' and I found that nine times out of ten, it just leads to more questions."*

She explains that during the 2020 covid quarantine, she had worked on a discipleship course to encourage athletes. *"It was like, I can't wait to make the Olympic Games so I can disciple athletes... it doesn't matter how I compete. But I just felt God say, 'I want you to go for gold next year.'*

*"I was thinking, 'getting a medal would be amazing, but I can't even think about getting gold.' And then I really felt god saying, 'you need to train as if you're going to get the gold medal and believe in your head that you can do it.' For me, that meant changing everything I did. To make the Olympics might require this much effort – it's really, really hard. But to get an Olympic medal and beat everyone else that you're versing in the Olympics, I would say is almost twice the effort."*

She goes on, *"And I said, 'Lord, I'd have to change my habits, my sleeping, my eating, my training, my social life if I really believe that I can get the gold medal. It's going to require this much work.' And I just felt God give me the grace and say, 'It's going to come through prayer'."*

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<sup>1</sup> Penny MULVEY. (Eternity Magazine Nov 2022 - P7)

**Philippians 4:6-9** *Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank Him for all He has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand.*

*His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honourable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.*

*Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me – everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.*

- Don't worry
- Tell God what you need
- Peace will guard your heart and mind.

## **2. The Word Highlights Your Motive**

*Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires.*

- Highlights our true thoughts and motives.

### **ILLUSTRATION: Anna's story<sup>2</sup>**

- Domestic violence
  - Stalked, abused, subjected to prolonged violence
- How did she forgive
  - her ex-husband
  - Police who did not believe her
  - Lawyers that demolished her testimony
- God's Spirit spoke to her – to forgive.
  - Many times, the Word reminded her so she could press in.

<sup>2</sup> From personal letter from Anna, dated May 1996

### 3. The Spirit Energises & Moves the Will

**2 Corinthians 10:3-6** *For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.*

- Energised with divine power
  - Breakthrough attitudes
  - Captive every thought
  - Make it obedient to Christ.
  - The power of agreement
- The only way forward for Anna was putting the Word into practice.
- Nobel Laureate<sup>3</sup> writer Toni Morrison said her grandfather read the Bible back-to-back 5 times.
  - Reading the scriptures was like taking back power; was like resistance
- Stan Grant<sup>4</sup> – *“I remember one Christmas in my Grandmother’s tiny home, seeing my uncles kneeling around the bed and praying with an intensity I had never seen before. It scared me then. These are the prayers of the afflicted. They were praying to keep us alive.”*
- My father (Roy Johnston) was converted just before World War 2. While in the army, he would kneel beside his bed in the barracks to pray – while others threw things at him.
- Just being “spiritual” is not enough

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-12-25/nick-cave-faith-suffering> quoted from conclusion to article on Nick Cave performance at Opera House by Stan Grant.

<sup>4</sup> *Ib id*