

Did you hear about the barracuda that starved to death in a tank full of minnows? The barracuda was born and grew to maturity in a spacious tank with hundreds of minnows to feed on. One day, after stuffing himself on minnows, he went to sleep. The researchers then scooped out all of the minnows, put them in a glass container and re-submerged the container in the tank.

The next time the barracuda got hungry; he charged at the nearest minnow and got the shock of his life. Instead of the tasty morsel he anticipated, he bashed his snout on the invisible glass container and experienced pain. When he recovered from the shock, he tried again, and again, and again.

Finally, after several painful, unsuccessful attempts his primitive brain got the message and developed a new paradigm of himself and minnows: "Minnows = pain. Therefore, I can't have minnows!" With the dawning of this new mental pattern, the barracuda lost his natural urge to chase after the little fish. He stopped trying. When the researchers saw that, they released the minnows, allowing them to swim freely throughout the tank as before.

But even though the minnows swam freely in the tank, the barracuda avoided them. Never again did he try to eat a minnow. That part of his brain shut down. Thus the barracuda starved to death – in a tank full of minnows that were actually, physically available to him!

How many people do you think do the same thing in areas where they once experienced some kind of pain and then formed a subsequent negative paradigm as a result of it that kept them stuck for the rest of their lives?

Each of us has developed what we might call a "mental structure". As life's circumstances come toward us, they automatically flow through our mental structure like water flows down through the predetermined course of a river bed. The river bed determines where the water will go. Our mental structure determines how we will process our circumstances and ultimately what our behavior will be.

The vast majority of "religion" is focused on trying to change our behavior. But changing behavior does not work. You cannot maintain the same processing system and expect to get different results.

Real transformation that results in lasting change, rather than just a futile attempt at a forced behavioral change, takes place when we dredge out a new mental riverbed for our circumstances to flow through. The Apostle Paul stated it this way, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will." Romans 12:2

When we step back away from the "tank" of life that we are swimming in and get a different perspective of our lives, we often find that we look a lot like the barracuda. Most people are living their lives so focused on trying to avoid some type of pain, that they are missing out on life.