

GIVING GOD CONTROL OF THOUGHTS

Living for Christ requires having the kind of faith in God that gives Him control over every aspect of your life (Proverbs 3:5-7). One element of giving God control of your life is giving Him control over your thoughts. This lesson will focus on some basics about what this should look like.

ISAIAH 55:6-9

Truly seeking the Lord involves having your thoughts properly directed by God. You must abandon your wicked thoughts if you want to please God. For, God demonstrates that it is possible to sin in your thoughts (Genesis 6:5-6; Isaiah 59:7; Jeremiah 4:14; Matthew 5:27-30; 9:4; 15:19). Any time people focus on their own ways and thoughts, it never leads them in the right paths or results in pleasing God. Rather, God's ways and thoughts are always far above ours! Therefore, we must learn to humble ourselves so that our thoughts are molded by God's words (which reveal His thoughts, 1 Corinthians 2:6-16). This applies to anything you believe or think to be the right thing. Truth is *never* determined by your own thoughts!

COLOSSIANS 3:1-4

Rather than putting your focus on things of this world to find righteousness and religion (2:20-23), you must seek (set your heart/desires/affections on) God and the things above. Particularly, your allegiance must be set on everything that relates to Jesus's reign/rule as King over your life. But, you cannot truly set your heart on the things above and then allow your mind to be set on the things of this earth. That is, you cannot be devoted to serve Jesus as King and then think about things in ways that are shaped by the thoughts and ways of this world. After all, King Jesus teaches that which is counter-cultural to what the world teaches and

practices as "normal." You simply cannot hold on to this old way of thinking if you want to live a transformed life that is devoted to Jesus Christ (as 3:5-4:1 goes on to describe).

ROMANS 12:1-2

It is a big transition to go from a life that was directed by your own thoughts and ideas (that were formed through exposure to many things in this world – i.e. teachings, conversations, traditions, relationships, etc.) to having a life that is directed by God's thoughts and ideas (that are formed through the teachings of His word)! Like is true with your heart (inner person), your thoughts are so connected with your actions that you cannot be transformed into who God wants you to be without a transformation in your mind. For, those who think like the world thinks (i.e. have their minds molded by worldly influences) will also have lives that are molded by the world (i.e. their habits, relationships, conduct, words, religious beliefs and practices, etc.). This renewal of mind comes by focusing on the spiritual things that really matter. Then, this mind wants to know and apply the truth of God's perfect will (His word). Therefore, whatever you used to think about things whenever you were living in the way that was focused on sin must be challenged by the truth revealed in God's word.

PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9

Like your health depends largely on what you eat, your mind is molded by what you allow into it! But, how exactly do things get into your mind? It is through your five senses (see, hear, taste, touch, smell). So, if you want your mind to be renewed and focused on the things of God rather than this world, you will need to set a guard at each of these "entrance gates" to your mind! This passage, then, gives the credentials you should require before willfully exposing yourself to something (i.e. what you watch, the music you listen to, what you read, the places you go for entertainment, etc.). If you truly desire a life that is fully molded by God, you must recognize that anything different from this

criteria actually works against your goal by allowing the devil and this world to plant seeds in your mind that can produce rotten fruit later! However, by using this list as a filter for what you think about, you will give God's word the best possible environment to thrive and transform your life!

2 CORINTHIANS 10:3-6

In the spiritual war we are all fighting, much of the battlefield is in the mind (1 Peter 2:11-12). Unfortunately, there are things that infiltrate our minds that are contrary to God's revealed truth (whether through our own carelessness or things outside our control). These have been used to build strongholds (fortresses) in our minds that work as obstacles for God having control over our lives. For example, these things may have been used to cause you to believe lies and see some particular aspect of the world (i.e. relationships, love, morality, etc.) in a distorted way. Yet, there is hope for demolishing these in Christ! The answer given is to use the powerful weapons God has given for this spiritual warfare. We must fully clothe ourselves with the armor of God and then use God's word as the weapon to tear down these strongholds (Ephesians 6:10-18; Hebrews 4:12)! So, you must evaluate every thought, belief, assumption, etc. you hold by comparing it with the truth God's word reveals. When you are diligent in guarding the thoughts coming in and tearing down the strongholds of thoughts that are contrary to God's word, God will transform your mind and life in ways that only He can!

CONCLUSION

Giving God control of your thoughts is critical to being transformed into who God wants you to be. While your thoughts have been influenced by the ways of this world, firmly establishing God as the only one who gets to mold your thoughts is critical to living a life that pleases Him. Therefore, you must humble yourself to accept and obey these and all of God's instructions about your thoughts.

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

Is it possible to sin in your thoughts?

How can you know what is in the Lord's mind?

What does it mean to set your mind on the things above rather than on earthly things?

What role will transforming your thoughts have in transforming your life?

How should you challenge your ways of thinking?

How do things gain access to your mind?

How should you filter what you allow yourself to think about?

How can you destroy the strongholds in your mind Satan has built?