

Believers' Basic Essentials: Thoughts (Part 3)

Several Areas of instruction are included in the Scripture from Philippians 4.

- I. **Attitudes that stabilize individual believers. :1-6**
- II. **Thoughts that we must dwell on. :8**
- III. **Actions –behaviors must continually practice. :9**

Having walked through the four attitudes...

We realize these to be practical principles vital for Christian stability.

Peace in the fellowship,
Rejoicing in any circumstance,
Humility no matter how we are treated,
 and a Confident Faith that God is near and is able to handle anything.

It's one thing to know about these attitudes, another to maintain them.

I find a need to be constantly reminded of them.

Today we will connect attitudes with thoughts.

⁸Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable,
 whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely,
 whatever is of good repute, **dwell on these things.**

(Phil. 4:8)

I. Thought Life: the importance of right thinking!

How important is it to control our thinking?

What if people could hear your thoughts?

Some thoughts are like the wind that blows random leaves across our path.
 Others are like smoke-filled air that seems to lurk sullenly around us.

Plato said that thinking was 'the soul talking with itself.'

Aristotle defined nothing, as that which 'rocks think about.'

Thoughts are the connection between the sub-conscious mind and the conscious.
 It is the hub somewhere between heart and mind where life makes up it's mind.

Paul wrote this command, "Finally, brethren, ...think [dwell] on these things."

Finally – “it follows then”

Paul knew that a person’s thoughts determine who that person is, his or her attitudes, and how he or she acts towards others.

This section end with ‘***dwell on these things.***’

The NRSV translates it as “think on such things”

or as the J.B. Phillips version says, “fix your mind on whatever is true...”

Logizomai – “to evaluate,” “to consider,” or “to calculate.”

Proper thinking is not optional in the Christian life.

The verb form calls for *habitual discipline of the mind* to set all thoughts on these spiritual values. The why is simple: people are the product of their thoughts.

Pr. 23:7 declares, “For as he thinks within himself, so he is.”

Sow a thought, reap an action.
Sow an action, reap a habit.
So a habit, reap a character.
So a character, reap a destiny.

Jesus’ words in Mark 7:20-23 show this:

“That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.”

In His Sermon on the Mount Jesus speaks of lust as adultery, anger and hatred as murder, responding to evil with good, even to the point of loving enemies.

– making the external commandments internal.

“The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart” (Luke 6:45).

If we don’t control our thoughts, then our thoughts will control us and produce the evil that is in our hearts – *like a food fight in our minds.*

In 1996 an outbreak of cholera broke out in Manila, the capital city of the Philippines. Three hundred people were suffering from acute symptoms of the disease; seven had already died. It was no mystery why, since it was the rainy season and the sewers and street canals had become flooded and clogged. According to an article in the Chicago Tribune, “Flies and cockroaches proliferate, feed on the trash that floats on the surface, and becomes carriers of the cholera germs...”

To combat the epidemic, the Mayor of Manila implemented an idea: he put out a bounty flies and cockroaches: 1 peso for every 10 flies brought in, dead or alive; 1.5 pesos for every 10 cockroaches. Residents brought in thousands and bugs in plastic bags, and were paid on the spot.

“If we kill the flies at once,” said Egminio Espiritu, the chief of the health-department, “We can stop the spread of these diseases.”

Creepy little things can lead to big problems. It was fleas that spread the bubonic plague killing a large portion of the population of Europe a century ago. In the same way little thoughts can be the cause of great problems. The apostle warns us to manage our thought-life.

What should we think about? {Things that drive the bugs out!}

II. Thought List: What to think about.

1. Think on “whatever is true”

alethe – “true” has many meanings – “that which is real”

- it includes facts and statements that are true in accordance with reality (not lies, rumors or embellishments)
- sincere – (not deceitful or with evil motives)
- loyal, faithful, proper, reliable, and genuine
– a characteristic of God. (Rom. 3:4)

How important is it to think about what is true?

In his end-of-life prayer, Agur the oracle offered this,

“Two things I asked of You,
Do not refuse me before I die;
Keep deception and lies far from me,
Give me neither poverty nor riches...” (Proverbs 30:8)

Jesus said, “If you continue in My word then you are truly my disciples,
 And you shall know the truth and the truth will make you free”
 (John 8:31-32).

Later on, speaking to the Pharisees, He added,
 “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of
 your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not
 stand in the truth because there is not truth in him. Whenever he
 speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the
 father of lies.” (John 8:44)

Satan’s whole tactic is to ultimately get people to believe lies.

God is the God of truth

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth

God’s Word is truth.

Jesus said that He was the truth, and that His purpose for coming into the world
 was to bear witness of the truth. (John 14:6; 18:37)

Paul wrote that we were to think on *whatever is true*.

Next...

2. **Think about whatever is honorable**

Also translated ‘noble’ (Gk. Semnos)

Used in 1 Tim. 3:8 “Deacons must be men of dignity...”

Titus 2:2 “Older men are to be temperate, dignified...”

The idea is exalted in character or excellence

“If you look for the best in other people you will find it.”

3. **Think about whatever is right**

(Gk. dikaios) – right or just – meets God’s standards or rightness

Isn’t most of what we hear from the media about what isn’t right?

4. **Think about whatever is pure** – hagnos – free from contamination or blemish;

Pure thoughts are unmixed or unmodified, they are wholesome.

Moral purity is the essence of this word.

Should we allow any form of impurity to enter our minds?

5. **Think about whatever is lovely** – (Gk. Prospiles – thoughts of great moral and spiritual beauty, not of evil.

NRSV – “Pleasing” (combined with beautiful or lovely)

Nature’s beauty is a reflection of God’s beauty and creativity.

6. **Think about whatever is of good repute.**

– Gk. euphemos – “Commendable,” “admirable”-

Thinking these thoughts means to recommend, give confidence, afford approval or praise, reveal positive and constructive thinking.

--Thinking well of others...

If someone overheard my thoughts about them they would feel commended, not condemned.

7. **Anything Excellent and praiseworthy**

if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise,

“**Virtue**” – All Moral excellence, uprightness, godly character

praiseworthy – *What things make you want to praise?*

- Lifts your heart?

What does God view as praiseworthy?

III. **Food for thought: How to think right.**

What we put into our minds determines what we think about and what comes out in words and actions. Paul has just given us instruction in what our mind should dwell on: whatever is **true, noble, right, pure, lovely, commendable, virtuous, and praiseworthy.**

If someone has trouble with impure thoughts, look at our intake of media, music, or visual stimuli. Job said, “I have made a covenant with my eyes not to lust after a maid.” We must replace harmful input with wholesome material.

Paul urged the Romans to “be transformed by the renewing of our minds...”

(Rom. 12:2).

Above all we read God's word and pray.

David wrote,

"How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from your commandments. Your word I have treasured [hidden] in my heart that I may not sin against You." (Ps. 119:9-11)

Paul offers a litany of events in his life his letter to the Corinthians:

"...as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger...**as sorrowful yet always rejoicing...**"

(2 Cor. 6:4-10).

How could Paul remain joyful in difficulties?

At the end of Paul's life Paul was imprisoned, awaiting execution in a dungeon;

He looked ahead, focusing his mind on hope:

"...the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course. I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing." (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

I talked with a man who was bitterly bound to the past. As he spoke he constantly referred to difficult times in his past. Everything he spoke of told me that he was obsessed with bitter memories, which in turn affected every aspect of his life. I told him of this verse on dwelling on things that were true, right, lovely... and challenged him to do what Paul did with his past.

Paul said,

"...one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:13-14)

One chapter later Paul wrote,

"Finally brethren, ...let your mind dwell on these things..."