

Obsessive thoughts think “I’ve got to have this.” Enslaved thoughts say “I can’t live without this.” When we can’t think about something else we cannot have peace.

Guarding Our Minds

We do have a control mechanism for determining what we will think. Any child of God who takes a willful stand against harmful thought patterns is going to be provided a way of escape. The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Philippians gives us direction. (Philippians 4:6-7)

He tells us that prayers offered to God with faith and thanksgiving will assure us inner peace no matter what trials we face. We can make a choice-involve God in our lives through prayer and acts of faith or we can go it alone. If we want the “peace of God” we have to focus our thinking on what is true, noble, virtuous, lovely, pure and praiseworthy. Paul tells us to “meditate” on them. To meditate means to fill our minds so that our minds are constantly rehearsing, repeating or restating what is good. Meditate is not a passing thought but means to ponder something deeply, to analyze it, consider it thoroughly and seek to fully understand it. (Philippians 4:8-9)

When we choose to think about the majesty and glory of God, we rely upon Him with increasing faith and trust. Ultimately the truth resides in God alone. Think about how God has been faithful to us in giving us so many good things, far more than we can number.

We must guard our prayer life.

We must guard our thought life.

We must seek God and all that is godly.

God’s Word promises that when we fill our mind with what is virtuous and praiseworthy, “the God of peace will be with you.” (Philippians 4:9)

correct in our assessment of other people, but sometimes we aren't. It is important that we make certain that our perceptions are accurate. What we perceive to be a manipulative attitude may actually be a desire to help. What we perceive to be pride may actually be confidence. We must make sure our perceptions are accurate.

We may also have errors in our thinking about God's Word. Three of the biggest errors are:

- a. I've sinned too much to be saved. God always stands ready to forgive us. His mercy endures forever. He never gives up on us.
- b. I've committed the unpardonable sin. To do this means we have no desire to know God or have a relationship with Him.
- c. I'm not sure my salvation will last. When we are saved, we are sealed forever.

4. Unrealistic Thoughts

Anytime we set goals for our lives that require great striving, intense frustration, repeated failures and manipulation of others – is an unrealistic goal. It is beyond God's plan and purpose for our lives. Any idea we pursue that is contrary to God's purpose for our life, His commands in the Bible, or the plan of salvation is an idea that is not rooted in reality. It is an idea that has a built in flaw and will cause us agitation, not peace.

5. Rebellious Thoughts

Those who engage in rebellious thinking are those who say, "I know what God's Word says, but I'm going to do what I want to do anyway." Most of the impulses of the natural man are rooted in selfish desires-greed, lust, a craving for power and control. We are operating apart from God's plan and He cannot give peace or blessing on a plan that is contrary to His will. Anytime we have an idea that just "feels right" in our emotions or "feels like the natural human thing to do", stop yourself.

A form of rebellion we really need to be on guard against is "exception rebellion." This is saying to God, "I surrender all of my life to you, except this area." This is still rebellion and no amount of good works or financial giving can make up for the fact that we are disobedient. There is no peace for a rebellious heart.

6. Obsessive Thoughts

Obsessive thoughts are thoughts that harass and dominate us, dividing our minds and fracturing our thinking. We cannot focus on anything other than the desired object or goal. It may be revenge or getting even, the way we look, what we drive, where we live. Obsessive thoughts are rooted in the attitude "I've got to have this" or "I've got to experience this." Many things can so easily become obsessive thoughts; work, food, money, debt, etc.... Obsessive thoughts always lead to making someone or something more important than God. We will not have peace in our lives as long as we allow ourselves to be consumed by any obsession.

7. Enslaved Thoughts

Enslaved thinking is one step beyond obsessive thinking. This is when we want to think about something else and can't. For example addicts are victims of enslaved thinking. They cannot escape thinking about the thing to which they are addicted.

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(Romans 12:2)

Many people's way of thinking is like a little concrete, all mixed up and a extremely rigid. It is a mixture of both good and bad thinking. They have confused fleshly desires and have hardened their hearts to any godly change. The Word of God refers to these as "stiff-necked" or as having a "heart of stone." They are stubbornly intent on living their lives according to their own rules and emotional impulses, with very little regard for the ways in which they hurt others, and almost no regard for what God desires.

The Bible calls us to a "renewal" of our minds. This means change, trading in our old perceptions, old opinions, old ideas, and old self-centered attitudes on a new set of perceptions, opinions, ideas, beliefs, and attitudes that God develops in us. Believers are urged not to conform to the world but to be "transformed by the renewing of our mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:2) It all begins in the mind, with what we choose to think about and what we choose to dwell upon.

Seven Categories of Peace-Destroying Thoughts

There are seven categories of thoughts that will do great damage to our peace:

1. Sinful Thoughts

These thoughts include lustful desires for power, money, prestige, or sex outside marriage. Lust and peace cannot inhabit the same heart. Lust is a controlling desire- lust both entices and compels a person to do what is contrary to God's commandments. Sinful thoughts also include anger, resentment, envy, bitterness, hatred, hostility, controlling fears, and thoughts of revenge. The Bible refers to these as "wicked" thoughts. Persons with sinful thoughts are not peaceful people.

2. Self-Limiting Thoughts

Self limiting thoughts are rooted in deep feelings of rejection, lack of worth, or lack of love. Many of these feeling originated during childhood. For example a person says, "I know God has this for me, but I'm not worthy to receive it." The more we put ourselves down, the more we deny God's power to raise us up. A self-limiting person is restless, frustrated and anxious inside, there's a part of us that longs to be used but we keep holding back. The result is no peace.

3. Erroneous Thoughts

Sometimes we think "incorrectly" because we are ignorant. We don't know the motivation of a person, the truth about a circumstance, of the facts of a situation. If we think a person is bad, untrustworthy, unworthy of our time or attention, without value in God's eyes, dishonest, hurtful or evil- we are not going to be in a relationship with them. We are going to be anxious or fearful about them. Sometime we are