

# How to bring every thought to the obedience of Christ?

By Ingo Breuer

Is your thought life in tune with God's Word or do you harbor any secret areas in your mind that are not ruled by Christ, but still under the rule of old King Self? For example, there might be thoughts of pride, hatred, lust, love of money, materialistic addictions or idolatry. When you are a born again Christian, you need to be totally surrendered to Christ because now you are God's property. As a saved person you are about to experience a transformation process. In Romans 12:2 the Bible tells you not to be conformed to this world, **"but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."** God wants to rule your mind. An old proverb states that you are not what you think you are, but you are what you think. Your thoughts are the roots of your actions. If Jesus Christ is truly your Lord, then you need **thought discipline**, or you will be vulnerable to temptation, and you will have great difficulty to obey God - to be Christlike - because your mind is preoccupied with something else that is not of God.

The fleshly Christian thinks that his thought life does not matter to God, so he is only concerned about the outward appearance of his life. But God looks on the very motives in your heart. **"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."** Hebrews 4:12 In the key Bible verse above we are told about an actual war for the minds and souls of mankind.

God Almighty wants you to have pure and honorable thoughts. Your conscience will convict you, if you ponder about something sinful. You must realize that sinful actions start with an evil thought. For example, that is where adultery and the modern-day divorce craze start. Jesus, in His explanation of "Thou shalt not commit adultery", told us that adultery does not begin in a courthouse with a divorce attorney, but it already begins in the mind, when someone lusts after another person (Matthew 5:28). If we let God control our mind, we can fight sin at its very root. Listen to how Jesus explains this in Luke 6:45, **"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh."** Also he says in Mark 7:20-23, **"That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications ... All these evil things come from within and defile the man."**

We can see tremendous changes in our life, if we let God get ahold of our heart, surrender our mind to Christ, give up our selfish ways of thinking, and let His Holy Spirit renew us thoroughly because we are the temple of God that is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Jesus even added this promise: **"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."** (Mt. 5:8) That is a great incentive for total thought purity. Let us foster this consciousness of keeping our thoughts clean, so our Lord will rejoice over us, and we will be molded and formed more into His image.

The Scriptures give us a wealth of hints on how to keep our thoughts clean. Let us start with this

admonition in I. Thessalonians 5:22, "**Abstain from all appearance of evil.**" The world bombards us with moral filth, profanity, blasphemy and tries to compel us to partake of evil deeds. It might be foul-mouthed or fraudulent colleagues at work, an advertisement anywhere, or the mass media. **Do all you can to avoid situations, people, and places that could bring temptation and sin.** Tempting thoughts can burn their way deep into the subconscious and can do great harm to character. **Quit watching TV** because that is where most of the filth comes from. When you watch soap operas and gossip talk shows, for example, you can never get your mind right before God and become sanctified. These programs are mainly focused on adultery, fornication, uncleanness, blasphemy, and materialism. **God has nothing to do with that! So do you!** So many programs show graphic displays of behavioral patterns that do not belong into a Christian home or a Christian mind. They might show a shooting in a movie. God says, thou shalt not kill!!! So why did you watch that? Turn off that TV and burn those video tapes with godless movies for the honor and glory of God. Amen. Your thinking would be right in God's eyes, if you watch something that shows true agape love.

By the way, soap operas disrupt your picture of good friendship and holy marriage. You better go to the Bible, instead of allowing the soap opera mentality to destroy your marriage, courtship, or friendships. TV has become the pulpit of Satan because it programs people's minds in the wrong way. I have experienced that when I quit watching TV, most of the sources of offensive thoughts are gone. No Christian needs to watch crime, murder, rebellion, fighting couples, etc. Remember to abstain from evil thoughts. Then you can start to fill your mind with treasures of good. Let us look at two Scriptures:

**"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."**

**Colossians 3:16**

**"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Ephesians 5:19**

The word of Christ should dwell in you richly. This can be accomplished by regular study and meditation in the Bible, by memorizing Scriptures, by church attendance, and through committed obedience to Christ's teachings. It also says to teach and admonish one another. This requires the fellowship of other mature Christians who can set an example for you. Do you have a Christian colleague at work that you can talk with? The primary place for teaching and admonishing one another is the church. Some churches even have mentoring classes where the older, more experienced believers mentor a young person who goes to school or college. If you have no Bible-believing church in your area that can teach and admonish you, then you can still listen to a Christian radio stations. If you are in a totally non-Christian, solitary environment, then use the address on the bottom of this page, so I can send you some free teaching tapes. Both of the above verses state that you can be taught and admonished - even speaking to yourself - by psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Refresh your thought discipline through music. Not just emotional melodies. Music is meant to teach us a message. Speaking to yourselves also means reading the Bible out aloud, so you can remember it much better by hearing. Memorize some Christian songs and sing them and keep them in your mind. While we learn to make melody in our hearts to the Lord, then we must, of course, abstain from all kinds of music that draw our mind away from God's holiness. Sadly, most of the popular music today is made by unsaved people and deals with subjects that are only of interest among those who do not know the Lord. We can not be so unthinking that we constantly keep the radio playing country or rock music which caters all kinds of evil thoughts (drinking, divorce, etc.) to our mind. The best thing we can do is to totally abstain from that music and let our minds be utterly unaffected by it. Our priority is to let the word of Christ dwell in us.

The last verse I want us to examine with regards to how we can bring our thought life to the obedience of Christ is probably the most revealing. **Philippians 4:8, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are**

**true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.**

Can you focus your mind on these qualities and traits? God does not want our minds to be focused on the ugly and abominable. Rather, He wants us to be focused on the godly, as we can read in Matthew 5:48, **"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."** This is the only kind of positive thinking the Bible knows. Let us list those qualities again from Philippians 4:8: **true, honest (venerable), just, pure, lovely, good report, virtue, praise.** Try to bring these qualities into the situations and circumstances of your life. The Bible contains many stories that display just, pure, and lovely actions, especially in the life of our Lord Jesus. But you can also look into the lives of faithful servants of God in our time. For example, I like to listen to Paul Harvey's radio commentaries wherein he sometimes announces the wedding anniversary of a couple that is married 50, 60, or even 70 years. In this culture of easy divorce this is surely a wonderful accomplishment to stay faithful to each other for this long time. This makes me rejoice to hear such good news and I think about this for a long time. These stories are true, lovely, and of good report, indeed.

What is on your mind? Outward religious appearance is not what God wants. He wants you to be a thoroughly cleansed and sanctified person. First, you come to Him through repentance and faith. Then, when you know you are saved you want to follow the Lord in obedience to His commands. Therefore, keep your thoughts pure and you will not be disturbed by the guilt and condemnation of a carnal mind.

## Factors in Character Building

### Positive and Negative Qualities

A character is the expression of its positive and negative qualities. By Positive is meant the good, and by Negative the destructive, qualities. The cultivation of the positive qualities makes for constructive, wholesome character. In the measure in which negative qualities dominate, character is weak, ignoble or base. The character of the discreet man, for example, is not vitiated by imprudence. The nurturing of hopefulness and cheerfulness saves character from disintegrations of despair and despondency. How to attain the good and virtuous, to bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ," and avoid evil and destructive propensities is set forth by the Bible by which we perceive and appraise the true, the beautiful, the good, that characterizes the life invested with the saving truths of the Word of God.

*"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." - Proverbs 23:7.*

Abstinence	Indulgence	Industriousness	Idleness
Altruism	Egoism	Justice	Injustice
Ambition	Laziness	Kindness	Ungraciousness
Approving	Censoriousness	Liberality	Stinginess
Charity	Ungenerosity	Love	Hatred
Chastity	Lust	Loyalty	Treachery

Cheerfulness	Despondency	Meekness	Pretension
Concentration	Inattention	Merciful	Cruelty
Conscientiousness	Inattention	Modesty	Shamefulness
Considerateness	Thoughtlessness	Obedience	Insubordination
Constancy	Fickleness	Optimism	Pessimism
Contentment	Dissatisfaction	Order	Confusion
Courage	Cowardice	Patience	Uneasiness
Decision	Indetermination	Patriotism	Perfidy
Diligence	Slothfulness	Peacableness	Quarrelsome
Discretion	Imprudence	Perseverance	Inconstancy
Economy	Extravagance	Politeness	Discourtesy
Efficiency	Carelessness	Prudence	Improvidence
Endurance	Weakness	Refinement	Coarseness
Energy	Inaction	Reliability	Untrustworthiness
Enthusiasm	Apathy	Self-Confidence	Dependency
Faith	Unbelief	Self-Control	Impulsiveness
Forgiving	Unmerciful	Self-Denial	Indulgence
Fortitude	Faltering	Self-Respect	Debasement
Frankness	Deceitfulness	Sincerity	Hypocrisy
Friendliness	Enmity	Sympathy	Antipathy
Gentleness	Harshness	Temperance	Dissipation
Gratitude	Untahnkfulness	Truthfulness	Falsity
Heroism	Fearfulness	Unpretentiousness	Egotism
Honesty	Dishonesty	Veneration	Irreverence
Hope	Despair	Virtue	Impurity
Humility	Haughtiness	Wisdom	Foolishness

*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." - Philippians 4:8.*