



Quick Backdrop

Experts say that the human mind can think 50,000-70,000 thoughts per day? That can wear you out just thinking about it! With so many thoughts running through our minds, we have many opportunities for those thoughts to take us places we shouldn't go. Maybe that's why the Bible speaks a lot about controlling our thoughts. Our thought life is the filter between our hearts and our hands—who we are and what we do.

1 Digging In (God, Show Me!)

As you read the passages below, look for these things. You may want to print out the verses or paste them into an e-doc.

1. Underline or highlight the instructions we are given concerning what to do with our thoughts.
2. Circle or highlight any reference to weapons you come across.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (NIV)

³ For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. ⁴ The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵ We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Philippians 4:8-9 (NIV)

⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

2 Timothy 1:7 (NIV)

For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.

2 Taking It Inward (God, Teach Me!)

The above passages are only three of dozens. The Bible has tons to say about the power we're given in Christ to control our minds. But of course, learning to control the mind takes discipline.

Thankfully, just as we discipline ourselves to exercise or eat healthily, we can discipline ourselves to capture wrong thoughts and make them obedient to Christ. Here's a simple way to think of it, which also gives us two easy steps: recognize and replace. In fact, let's try it out.

Recognize and Replace

The first step is to recognize the source of a thought. Is it from God (does it line up with His Word?) or is it from somewhere else (we will say the Enemy because he works to control your mind)? The best way to recognize where your thoughts are coming from is to know the things God would say and the things He wouldn't say. While you can start this process right away, your ability to recognize the source of your thoughts will improve over time as you seek to know God and to know more about God. Or, in athletic terms, as you train.

After you have recognized that a thought might not be from God, replace it with a thought that is from Him.

Example: Let's say you just experienced a failure in some way (flunked a test, got cut from a team, didn't perform well for an audition). A thought might pop into your head: *you are useless*. But you know God wouldn't say this. In fact, you might remember that God said in Ephesians 2:10 (NIV): *You are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so you can do the good things he planned for you long ago.*

Recognize: "useless" is not from God

Replace: "Masterpiece" is from God

Replacing your thought can be as simple as reading the passage over and over again (or saying it quietly in your head if you have it memorized) until you believe it and the old thought has disappeared.

3 Seal the Deal (God, Change Me!)

Now try it out. (Please see next page.)

Fold or Cut



3 Seal the Deal, continued

What is something that you think regarding yourself? Maybe it is something that comes to your thoughts every day or maybe it's something new at this moment. Whatever it is write it down below.

Recognize:

Think about your thought for a minute. Does it line up with the things the Philippians passage tells us to think on? Does it sound like something a loving God would say to His beloved child?

Replace:

If you recognize that the thought is not a biblical or godly thought, replace it with a thought that you know IS a biblical or godly thought. If you need help, many Bibles have indexes of topics addressed in Scripture. You can also ask a youth pastor or someone you trust. Once you've replaced the thought, put it into practice. If you find the answer in a verse, memorize it. If it's something someone says as they direct you to what God would say, repeat it over and over again in your mind. Write your answer below.

Proper thoughts come with dedication and practice. You can control your mind, but you have to discipline yourself to do so.

Fold or Cut