

AN UNCONTROLLED THOUGHT LIFE

Youth Bible Study

- **QUESTIONS**
 - Does it matter what we think about?
 - When is daydreaming wrong?
 - Can we control our thought life?
 - How do we control our thought life?
- **Quotes**
 - "What a wee little part of a person's life are his acts and his words! His real life is led in his head, and is known to none but himself. All day long, the mill of his brain is grinding, and his thoughts, not those other things, are his history" (Mark Twain).
 - "A man is what he thinks about all day long" (Ralph Waldo Emerson).
- **Hope Against Darkness by Richard Rohr**
 - 90-96 percent of our thoughts are repetitive and generally negative
 - many believe that their thoughts are so strong that they cannot control what they think about
 - our thoughts have much to do with the formation of our character
 - thus, we must be EXTREMELY concerned what goes on in our thought life
 - our thought life is the avenue to our soul
 - must guard the gates of our mind against invasion of sinful thoughts
 - avoid reading, seeing, or listening to things that cause impure thoughts
 - We must safeguard our mind against aimless wandering
 - "Don't let your mind go a wandering" (kids song)
 - how to do this?
- **A MULTITUDE OF THOUGHTS**
 - Experts believe – average person thinks 50,000 to 70,000 thoughts every day
 - at least one thought every second you are awake
 - What do these thoughts consist of?
 - What happens if little or no effort is made to filter, prevent, discard these thoughts?
 - Everything we see, hear, or read – has the potential to shape our thinking
 - thoughts affect us physically and emotionally
- **THE DANGER OF UNCONTROLLED THOUGHTS**
 - What are some dangers? (Discuss/Consider)
 - **revenge**
 - **getting the best of others**
 - **rehearsing hurts**
 - **saying something you'll regret**
 - Job 20:2 – "Therefore do my thoughts cause me to answer, and for this I make haste."
 - upsetting thoughts might make you hurry to answer (not careful)
 - **discouragement**
 - **fears**

- **pride**
 - 1 Corinthians 3:20 – "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise [educated, skilled, learned], that they are vain [worthless, pointless]."
 - Esther 6:6 – "Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?"
 - look at Haman's actions – result of proud thoughts
- **fantasizing** (about something you can't or shouldn't have or do)
- **thinking back to the old life** (looks attractive, missing it)
 - Israelites thinking about Egypt
 - "We remember ..." (Numbers 11:5-6)
 - what did they remember? (fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, garlic)
 - Lot's wife
 - "But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt" (Genesis 19:26).
- temptation begins with the thought life
 - No one commits outward sins without having first committed them in his mind.
 - Acts 26:9-10 – "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did ..."
 - Joshua 7:21 – Achan said, "I saw ... I coveted ... and took"
 - look at the process – thought, desire, action (sin)
- thought life determines who you are and who you will be
 - Proverbs 4:23 – "Keep thy heart [thoughts] with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life [your life is shaped by your thoughts]."
 - "The ideas and images in men's minds are the invisible powers that constantly govern them" (Jonathan Edwards).
- **TOXIC THOUGHTS**
 - as high as 95 percent of all illnesses are attributed to be a direct result of toxic thoughts
 - thoughts influence emotions, which often cause a physical reaction
 - "Nearly every mental illness and psychological disorder is the result of a toxic thought life" (Professor Donald Ekstrand, The Transformed Soul).
 - Study after study show that clinical depression and anxiety disorders ... cause measurable changes in key areas of the brain" (Psychology Today).
 - Note: there are predispositions for mental illness or depression
 - Question to consider: what promotes or enhances depression and anxiety?
 - a toxic thought life
 - "Toxic thinking literally wears down the brain and the rest of the body" (Dr. Benson, president of Harvard Medical School's Mind-Body Institute).
 - Toxic thoughts affect our DNA
 - The Institute of Heartmath – research
 - thinking and feeling – anger, fear, frustration
 - caused DNA to change shape
 - DNA tightened up & became shorter & switched off some DNA codes
 - reduces quality emotions
 - negative emotions – feel "shut down" or withdrawn

- these changes can be reversed
 - thoughts and feelings of love, joy, and gratitude
 - researchers found HIV patients with positive thoughts & feelings
 - had 300,000 times the resistance as those who didn't
- Toxic thoughts are "poor thinking decisions"
 - poor quality thoughts are interpreted by the brain as STRESS
- **TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR THOUGHT LIFE**
 - you **CANNOT** control the events in your life
 - you **CAN** control your reactions
 - you **CAN** control what you think about
 - **Recognize and Identify Thoughts From the Enemy and Fight Them (Resist) With the Word**
 - **Discouragement**
 - comes from a lack of faith
 - "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).
 - quote Scriptures
 - read (out loud) Scriptures
 - hear Scriptures (preaching, audio Bible, in songs)
 - fight discouragement with the Word & prayer
 - **Fear**
 - recognize it is not of God
 - thus – must be from the enemy
 - "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).
 - **Worry**
 - what if ...
 - I can't ...
 - Psalm 37:1 – "Fret not ..."
 - Worry about clothes, food, drink – "take no thought" (Matthew 6:31)
 - "do not worry or be anxious" (AMP)
 - "for your heavenly father knoweth that ye have need of these things" (Matthew 6:32)
 - worry is **DISTRUST** – failing to trust God
 - **Lies**
 - Lies we tell our self:
 - "I will never be able to do this."
 - "I'm a loser."
 - "I'm not good enough."
 - "My past defines me."
 - "It's all their fault."
 - A victim-mentality (you can never succeed because of ...)
 - Some people enjoy their misery
 - "Unsuccessful attempts at changing one's thought patterns often result

from an unwillingness to change them because they enjoy misery, woundedness, negative thoughts more than they desire godliness" (Dr. James Porowski).

- "I could do this if so-and-so ..."
- "Money will make me happy"
- "He or she will make me happy"
- "I'll do it later."
- If you allow them, Satan's lies:
 - determine your emotions
 - determine your actions
 - distract you from God's plan
 - ultimately lead to sin
- Identify the source of these thoughts – Satan
 - John 8:44 – "there is no truth in him ... for he is a liar"
 - "Replacing Satan's lies with God's truth is not really difficult; it just takes intentional and consistent effort through the study of the Word" (Dr. Don Colbert).
 - Satan's lies = bondage
 - John 8:32 – "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
 - free from "toxic thoughts"

DISCUSS/CONSIDER: "It is impossible for any Christian who spends the bulk of his evenings, month after month, week upon week, day in and day out watching the major TV networks or contemporary videos to have a Christian mind" (Pastor Kent Hughes, Disciplines of a Godly Man).

• **INFLUENCES ON OUR THOUGHT LIFE**

- Have you ever heard a song that you couldn't get out of your mind?
 - everything you read, listen to, and watch has the ability to influence your thought life
- "The food that enters the mind must be watched as closely as the food that enters the body" (P. Buchanan)
- To maintain a pure thought life
 - safeguard the areas you **CAN** control – unhealthy input will corrupt anyone's mind
- **literal food**
 - reading labels – ingredients
 - long list of unknown ingredients – probably shouldn't buy
 - you might have some splurges (foods with little or no nutritional value)
 - must have daily high nutritional value food, recognizable ingredients
 - should strongly limit "zero nutritional value" foods
- **spiritual food**
 - how about "reading labels" spiritually?
 - **How?**
 - remove anything known to be sinful or that promotes the wrong thoughts

- books, magazines, movies, music, games
- might be an ongoing process
 - as you grow spiritually – "this needs to go"
- look up movie and book reviews – before watching/reading
 - Psalm 101:3 – "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes"
 - "wicked" = worthless, unprofitable (Strong's Concordance)
 - "wicked" = **morally worthless or vile** (commentary)
- **identify** weaknesses & create a safeguard
 - certain foods – you might not be able to have in the house (little or no self control)
 - If something is polluting you or tempting you, get rid of it and make plans on how to avoid it in the future.
 - your weaknesses might not be the same as others
 - let God work with you in your weak areas
- **fasting**
 - a proven successful method for breaking drug, alcohol, and food addictions
 - spiritual fasting from something for a set amount of time
 - benefits:
 - a spiritual **detox** (detoxing your thought life)
 - evaluating the **influences** on your thought life
 - use this time to focus on good spiritual food
 - Colossians 3:2 – "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."
 - prayer
 - Bible reading/study
- **An Intentional Thought Life**
 - **#1 – Must Have Daily Quiet Time With the Lord**
 - interact with the Lord
 - make your devotions more than something on your "to-do" list
 - talk to Him
 - ask Him questions while reading His Word
 - share your heart with Him
 - "God, I don't understand ..."
 - "God, I'm very afraid ..."
 - remember – this is a relationship
 - a conscious awareness of His omnipresence
 - **#2 – Safeguard Your Mind**
 - **control/remove influences**
 - media (books, movies, music, internet)
 - conversations (in person, phone, texting, messaging)
 - **remove temptation**
 - "Casting down imaginations" (2 Corinthians 10:5)
 - removing things that work "against the knowledge of God"

- "bringing into captivity every thought"
 - consider a alcoholic standing in the doorway of a bar ...
 - "I'm not going to drink" – how wise is this?
 - if it's a weakness for you – identify and remove it
- **don't let your mind go a wandering**
 - 1 Peter 1:13 – "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind"
 - "get rid of loose and sloppy thinking" (Enduring Word Commentary)
 - be deliberate in your thought choices
 - vain thoughts (worthless, immoral, unprofitable) are against God
 - Psalm 119:113 – I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love."
 - this verse is a form of parallelism (opposite thoughts)
- **#3 – Replace Toxic Thoughts With Scripture**
 - Isaiah 55:7 – "Let the ... unrighteous man [forsake] his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord."
 - just as Jesus used the Word – "it is written"
 - find a verse to fight the toxic thoughts trying to set up camp in your mind
 - the more you do #1 – the easier this will be
 - this gives you confidence that these thoughts are not of God
 - when you realize worry and fear is from the devil ...
 - "the word of God is ... a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).
 - read or listen to preached messages, Godly music, testimonies, etc.
- **#4 – Choose Good Thoughts**
 - Recipe for Developing a Christian Thought Life: 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."
 - Proverbs 23:7 – "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he."
 - in the Bible, "heart" = thoughts, emotions, will
 - this is the inner man
 - "the hidden man of the heart" (1 Peter 3:4)
 - Isaiah 26:3 – "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."
 - Romans 8:6 – "... to be spiritually minded is life and peace."
 - An old Indian Christian was explaining to a missionary that the battle inside of him was like a black dog fighting a white dog. "Which dog wins?" asked the missionary. "The one I feed the most," replied the Indian. Paul says, "Feed your mind on the pure truth of God's Word."
- **#5 – Ask for Help**
 - Prayer
 - Psalm 139:23 – "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts."
 - Psalm 139:2 – "... thou understandest my thought afar off."

- Get advice (and prayer)

"Our mind will either be our best friend or our worst enemy – it all depends on how we choose to use it" (Leaf).

"To change our thoughts is to change our life"
(Source Unknown).