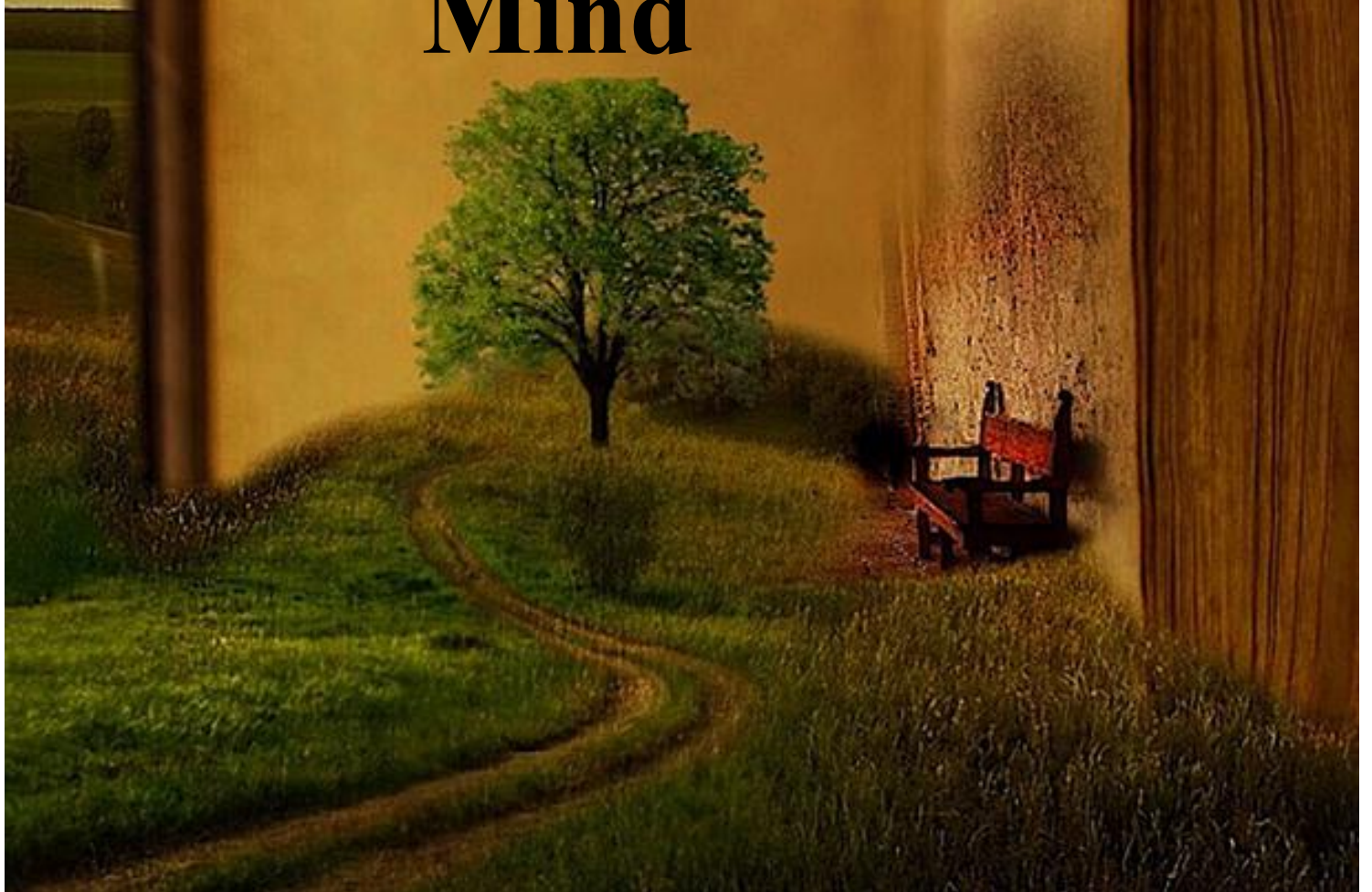


New Christian Growth Series

Topical Study:

Controlling the Mind





Instructions:

1. Please fill in the blanks in these lessons and the review booklet, using a King James Version of the Bible.
2. When you are finished, keep this lesson book and **return the completed review booklet** by U.S. mail or e-mail to:

Plowman's Academy

575 US Highway 250

OR

plowman@mapministry.org

Greenwich, OH 44837

3. When we receive your review booklet, we will grade it, send it back to you, and send the next course in this volume.
4. When you have completed all 12 books in this course, we will send you a certificate.

Plowman's Academy was started to provide the opportunity for teens and adults to study God's Word more deeply, imitate Jesus more closely, and be more sensitive and obedient to God's Holy Spirit—all through the means of correspondence (communication by letters or mail) courses. Jesus taught us that when we set out to follow Him, we ought to do so with no regrets, no second thoughts, and no turning back. We welcome you to join us as we aim to turn from sin, surrender to God, seek Him until He rains righteousness upon us, and then follow Him faithfully and fully forever. Let us look always to Jesus and live always for eternity, for Jesus Christ is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

Thank you for joining us. An academy is a place of study or training in a specific subject or skill. At Plowman's Academy, the subject is Jesus. Put your hand to the plow and do not look back.



And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

~Luke 9:62

Giving Credit and Appreciation to Ray Witmer

Ray Witmer, author of this Bible study curriculum, has given us permission to use his studies taken from the Word of God.

We are very grateful and appreciate Brother Ray's heart for God and his willingness to let us use his resources to spread God's Word among this generation of people.

Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.

~Hosea 10:12

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INSTRUCTION SHEET FOR BIBLE LESSONS

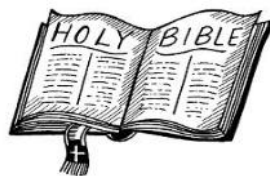
- A. The Bible verses used in this study are taken from the King James Version of the Bible, translated out of the original tongues with the former translation diligently compared and revised.
- B. Before doing each lesson, take time to ask God to open your understanding and show you the truth.
- C. For the best results, do only one lesson each day. Meditate on each day's lesson (there are four weeks of lessons per book).
- D. Keep in mind that these lessons are based on what the Bible says and not on man's opinion.
- E. These lessons are designed to help you to know the truth, to know the Lord in a personal way, and to trust what the Bible says and teaches you.
- F. Remember, it is not what you, I, or any preacher says, but what the Bible says.
- G. You must learn to stand on what the Bible says to "study to show yourself approved unto God, workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15)
- H. Who wrote the Bible? (2 Peter 1:21).
- I. All Scripture is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16).
- J. Regardless of what man says, the believer (Christian) has direct access to the throne of God and is responsible directly to God. This access is through Jesus Christ and Him only (1 Timothy 2:5).
- K. These studies are to help you have peace of mind (Isaiah 26:3-4).
- L. These studies will help you know if you are going to heaven or hell (Romans 10:13).
- M. These lessons will help you with assurance and security; these are not the same. The securing of the believer is God's work. It is a part of God's great work of salvation depending solely upon His infinite grace. Assurance is the believer's acceptance of the security provided for him in Christ. It is the result of the human soul resting in what God has promised in His Word to accomplish. This is why it is important to know what the Bible says (1 John 5:11-13).



**TAKE TIME TO READ BELOW
BEFORE DOING THIS LESSON**

Meditate on the Scriptures of This Lesson and
Ask Yourself These Questions:

1. What do these verses teach me about God and myself?
2. Is there an example here to follow or avoid?
3. Is there a command, a promise, or a warning that I need to apply?
4. What action do I need to take to align my life with this truth?



The Bible is the Word of God

LESSON 1

INFLUENCES OF OUR THOUGHTS

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Romans 12:2

And be not 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.

Once, a pastor decided to test the level of obedience in his church by calling them together and posing the question, "What would you do if you were walking and found a purse full of money lying in the road?" "I'd return it to its owner," said one member. "His answer comes so quickly, I must wonder if he really means it," the pastor thought. "I'd keep the money if nobody saw me find it," said another member. "He has a frank tongue, but a wicked heart," the pastor told himself. "Well, Pastor," said a third member, "to be honest, I believe I'd be tempted to keep it. So I would pray to God that He would give me the strength to resist such a temptation and to be obedient in doing the right thing." "Ah!" thought the pastor, "Here is the man I would trust."

Science has proven that the human mind never shifts into neutral. Every moment of every day, your thoughts are being influenced by the principles with which you surround yourself, whether the principles are of this world's system or of God's kingdom.

One of the most influential and powerful components of your spiritual survival is your thought life. Why? Your life moves in the direction of your most dominant thoughts. Therefore, Satan wages a daily battle to conform your thoughts to the world's way of thinking.

If your thought life is unhealthy and negative, your actions will be unhealthy and negative, producing undesirable consequences. Some counselors call this type of thought pattern "stinking thinking."

"Let the wicked _____ his way, and the unrighteous man his _____: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have _____ upon him; and to our God, for He will _____. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways _____ than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:7-9).

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a _____, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not _____ to this world: but be ye _____ by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of _____" (Romans 12:1-3).

God cares about your thoughts; He wants you to have pure thoughts. He knows what you are thinking, so have good intentions. God will reward the thoughts that you put into action if they are obedient to Him.

Today's Bible reading is Isaiah chapter 55.

LESSON 2

WHAT IS STINKING THINKING?

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Romans 12:2

And be not 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.

“Stinking thinking” is a term some counselors use to describe thought patterns that involve negative ideas about ourselves and others. It encompasses thoughts containing emotionally based perceptions and involves blaming others for the problems in our lives. We are molded by the choices we make, so our thoughts are the determining factor in what shape we become.

A child's clay can be molded into any shape the child chooses. In a way, you are like clay. You are either molded into what the devil has in mind for you or into the image God intends you to become. The devil wants to conform your thoughts and who you are into the ugly shape of the world's materialism, fame, greed, influential power, and sensual desires. These pollute your body, soul, emotions, and mind, and they corrupt and erode your faith.

“(For the weapons of our warfare are not _____, but _____ through _____ to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every _____ to the _____ of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled” (2 Corinthians 10:4-6).

“Be careful [anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by _____ and _____ with _____ let your requests be made known unto God. And the _____ of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are _____, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any _____, think on these things” (Philippians 4:6-8).

Watch your thoughts; they become words.

Watch your words; they become actions.

Watch your actions; they become habits.

Watch your habits; they become character.

Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.

~Frank Outlaw

“Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man _____ himself to be something, when he is nothing, he _____ himself” (Galatians 6:2-3).

Today's Bible reading is Romans chapter 12.

LESSON 3

CHANGING STINKING THINKING INTO GOOD THOUGHTS

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Romans 12:2

And be not 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.

How do I change my “stinking thinking” into healthy thought patterns? The transformation involves aligning your thoughts with God’s thoughts. Scripture is the Word of God, or His thoughts, so studying Scripture renews your mind. Renewing includes separating yourself from all that hinders God’s plan for you. Integrating godly thought patterns might prove to be the most challenging step of the renewal process, yet it is critical for your ongoing transformation.

“If so be that ye have _____ Him, and have been _____ by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye _____ concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be _____ in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the _____, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are _____ one of another. Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the _____” (Ephesians 4:21-27).

Throw off your old evil nature and your former way of life, which is rotten through and through, full of lust and deception. Instead, spiritually renew your thoughts and attitudes. You must display a new nature because you are a new person, created in God’s likeness—righteous, holy, and true. What the mind attends to, the mind considers. What the mind constantly considers, the mind believes. What the mind believes, the mind eventually does.

“He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not He correct? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not He know? The Lord knoweth the _____ of man, that they are _____. _____ is the man whom Thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of Thy law; That Thou mayest give him _____ from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked” (Psalm 94:10-13).

“Unless the LORD had been my _____, my soul had almost dwelt in silence. When I said, My foot slippeth; Thy _____, O LORD, held me up. In the multitude of my thoughts within me Thy comforts _____ my soul” (Psalm 94:17-19).

“Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate Thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against Thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies. _____ me, O God, and _____ my _____: try me, and know my _____: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way _____” (Psalm 139:21-24).

What will you do to help yourself control your mind?

Today's Bible reading is Psalm chapter 139.

LESSON 4

HOW TO AVOID CREATING PATTERNS OF STINKING THINKING

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Romans 12:2

And be not 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.

How does one avoid creating new patterns of “stinking thinking?” Set your affection on things above, not on things of the earth. You can do this by resisting seductive appeals and ungodly influences. There is nothing wrong with making goals and plans for your future, as long as they are balanced with a heavenly mindset. You can do this by:

- Taking daily actions to be filled with the Holy Spirit;
- Remaining spiritually alert;
- Maintaining a holy lifestyle that blocks the enemy; and
- Putting the words of the Lord Jesus Christ into practice.

“If ye then be _____ with _____, seek those things which are _____, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your _____ on things above, not on things on the _____. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:1-3).

The key to the mind is meditation. Although the word can refer to many different practices, Christian meditation is to think deeply about the things of God. It is an essential practice in your walk of faith.

“O God, Thou art my God; early will I _____ Thee: my soul _____ for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see Thy _____ and Thy _____, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary. Because Thy _____ is better than _____, my lips shall _____ Thee” (Psalm 63:1-3).

Simply put, meditation is the practice of thinking and controlling your mind's thoughts about the Lord in all fullness. It involves asking questions and contemplating the answers.

- Who is God?
- How does God work in my life?
- What does Scripture say about Him?
- How has He shown His faithfulness to me personally?
- How has He made Himself known to me?

In times of meditation, God's Holy Spirit directs our thinking as we earnestly seek to know God better.

What will you do to better control your mind?

Today's Bible reading is Psalm chapter 63.

LESSON 5

FOUR TYPES OF MINDS

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Romans 12:2

And be not 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.

There are four types of minds described in today's lesson: the closed mind, the clouded mind, the cluttered mind, and the committed mind.

Closed mind: This type of mind does not exclusively describe nonbelievers. Believers and nonbelievers alike can listen passively to Scripture with no intention of applying what they hear. The seed has no place to grow because the soil's surface is too hard. These listeners may be saved, but they will remain shallow until they decide to pay attention to God and obey Him.

“And great multitudes were gathered together unto Him, so that He went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And He spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds _____ by the way side, and the fowls came and _____ them up:...” (Matthew 13:2-4).

Clouded mind: This type of mind is represented by the rocky soil in Scripture. The clouded mind will hear God's Word and get excited, but then does not take time to study the Word, grow roots, or let the truth sink into its heart. With little doctrinal foundation or knowledge of God's promises, the person with the clouded mind has difficulty withstanding the harshness of life.

“Some fell upon _____, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no _____ of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no _____, they withered away” (Matthew 13:5-6).

Cluttered mind: The worries of life are to the Christian heart what briars, thorns, and thickets are to a garden. A worried mind is a preoccupied mind, with little or no room for God's Word to sprout and thrive.

“And some fell among _____; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:...” (Matthew 13:7).

Committed mind: The committed mind is a teachable mind. This mind is fertile soil, and God can teach it anything. The most intellectual mind in the world, if it is not teachable, will miss the truth of the Gospel—whereas even a young child who is teachable and willing to listen can be transformed.

“But other fell into good ground, and brought forth _____, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 13:8-9).

“For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more _____; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they _____” (Matthew 13:12-13).

Determine which of the above describes your current condition of mind.

Today's Bible reading is Matthew chapter 13.

LESSON 6

HOW TO LISTEN TO GOD'S WORD

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Romans 12:2

And be not 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.

If you've determined to listen well, opening your mind to God's Word, and have seen that there is room for improvement, be encouraged. Here are a few steps that can help you become sensitive to the leading of God's Holy Spirit. Simply and prayerfully commit to:

Listen carefully: By an act of your will, you must choose to listen purposefully when you read God's Word or hear it preached. You must choose to "pray without ceasing" in your spirit as you go about your daily schedule.

"Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be _____ to _____, slow to speak, _____ to _____: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (James 1:18-20).

Resist all outside clutter: One of Satan's strategies is to get our minds so occupied with other concerns that we compromise our reliance upon Christ. So much of what we deem as important plummets down the priority scale when held against the light of truth.

"See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. _____ evermore. _____ without ceasing. In every thing _____: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is _____. Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:15-22).

Evaluate your life against what you're hearing: This means taking the initiative to sift your life through the Truth—God's Word—and agreeing to make any necessary changes.

"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by _____ and supplication with _____ let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your _____ and minds through _____" (Philippians 4:6-7).

Apply the truths that the Holy Spirit impresses upon your heart: This is voluntary and indicates just how serious you are about walking with Christ. You are putting both your faith and what God tells you to do to the test. You can trust Him for the outcome.

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are _____, 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, _____ on _____ things" (Philippians 4:8).

Obey those truths: Every time, without fail, strive to obey Scripture and God's leading. He then becomes responsible for the results.

Today's Bible reading is James chapter 1.

LESSON 7

THE MIND: CONTROL TOWER OF YOUR LIFE

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Psalm 139:23-24

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:
And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Your mind is the control tower of your life. Your thoughts greatly influence your successes, your failures, and the direction of your life, as well as your relationships with God and others. Godliness is derived from thinking the way God does.

“Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so _____ in the _____, my dearly beloved. I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the _____ in the Lord. And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice” (Philippians 4:1-4).

There are several problems that can beleaguer your thought life. One of the most persistent problems is the influence of your past. When you were saved, God gave you a new spirit, a new life, and a new beginning. However, He did not blot the past from your mind—He wants you to be able to draw from your good and bad experiences when ministering to others. He also wants you to appreciate His grace all the more by remembering that from which He rescued you.

“Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be _____ for _____; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your _____ be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all _____, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:5-7).

Another problem is unsuitable input. Though we may think we are immune, what we allow into our minds does greatly affect our thinking. Ungodly input creates an acceptance or appetite for worldly things. It can also lead to hostility; our godly thoughts are at odds with our ungodly appetites, which creates feelings of tension and guilt. As we begin to edit God from various parts of our lives, we allow Satan to get a toehold.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, _____, _____ unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the _____ of your _____, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, _____ of God” (Romans 12:1-2).

That's why God instructs us:

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are _____, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are _____, whatsoever things are of _____; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

He knows that properly programming our mind can protect us from the devil's trap. What are you doing to protect your mind?

Today's Bible reading is Romans chapter 12.

LESSON 8

BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Psalm 139:23-24

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:
And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

The Bible encourages us not to be conformed to the world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Acknowledge that you have the capacity to think rightly: God's Holy Spirit lives inside you if you have trusted Christ as your Savior; His presence enables you to think holy, pure thoughts because He is holy and pure. The very same power that raised Christ from the dead is inside you.

"But the _____ man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are _____ unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is _____ judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him? but we have the _____ of _____" (1 Corinthians 2:14-16).

Seek spiritual things: If you work a muscle, it grows stronger. If you nurture your mind with Scripture and godly input and exercise it by studying and meditating on the Word, it will grow more like Christ's.

"If ye then be _____ with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things _____, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your _____ is hid with _____ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear _____ in glory" (Colossians 3:1-4).

Sift thoughts through the Word and will of God: Too often, even Christians impetuously act without regard for God's concern or instruction. Avidly reading and obeying God's Word and trusting His Spirit's guidance will help you avert much heartache.

"(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but _____ through _____ to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that _____ against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the _____ of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled" (2 Corinthians 10:4-6).

Choose to refuse certain thoughts: Harmful thoughts are among those things referred to as Satan's "flaming arrows." You are not responsible for them, but you certainly are accountable for your response to them.

"Above all, taking the shield of _____, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Ephesians 6:16).

When bad thoughts enter into your mind, you can say something like, "Father, thank You that this thought didn't come from me and that I'm a forgiven child of God, purchased by the blood of Jesus; please take the thought away."

Today's Bible reading is Colossians chapter 3.

LESSON 9

LET THE SPIRIT CONTROL YOUR MIND

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Psalm 139:23-24

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:
And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

A spiritual battle is raging for control of our minds, because the way we think determines how we will behave and act.

If we want to conquer our sinful tendencies, we must learn to see ourselves as God does—as a new creation who is no longer under sin's mastery. Because of the presence of Christ's Spirit, we have the capacity to be "more than conquerors," regardless of our previous sins.

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither _____, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to _____ us from the _____ of God, which is in _____ our Lord" (Romans 8:37-39).

We also need to recognize the enemy's lies that tell us we are weak and will fail again. We are to fight back with God's truth that declares Christ's Spirit is greater than Satan. We are to focus our minds on spiritual things so we will learn to distinguish between what fits us as believers and what does not.

"Ye are of God, little children, and _____ them: because greater is He that is in you, than He that is in the _____" (1 John 4:4).

Finally, we must choose what is suitable and reject what is ungodly.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after _____: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the _____: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in _____: for they shall see God. Blessed are the _____: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake" (Matthew 5:3-11).

The longer we are Spirit-led, the more sensitive we will become to His warnings about temptation, and the greater will be our strength to win the battle for our thought life.

"This I say then, _____ in the _____, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are _____ the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the _____, ye are not under the law" (Galatians 5:16-18).

Today's Bible reading is Galatians chapter 5.

LESSON 10

HAVING A MIND AND HEART FOR GOD

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Psalm 139:23-24

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:
And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

No one is born an atheist or an agnostic. Before birth, a simple knowledge which says, "There is a God" is written upon every person's mind. However, it is possible to ignore or reject this awareness, so that the mind becomes progressively darker until it can no longer see the light of truth. Those who knowingly deny the Lord and worship something or someone else will one day be judged according to His laws.

"The _____ declare the _____ of God; and the firmament sheweth His _____. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard" (Psalm 19:1-3).

But what about the multitudes who have never heard the Gospel or seen a Bible? The only evidence they experience of the one true God is the natural world and an inborn sense of His reality, which their culture may try to deny or manipulate.

"Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath He set a tabernacle for the _____, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race" (Psalm 19:4-5).

All people will be judged according to the truth they received, the opportunities they had, and the way they handled both. Compared to spiritual wisdom and diligence, knowledge and success count for little.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is _____ on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is _____:..." (Isaiah 26:3-4).

You have the opportunity to reach the people in your sphere of influence with the truth you know; that is God's plan for reaching the unreached.

What are your plans for reaching the people in your sphere?

What are your plans for training your mind and heart to think on God?

Today's Bible reading is Isaiah chapter 26.

LESSON 11

FULFILLING GOD'S PURPOSE BY CONTROLLING YOUR MIND

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Psalm 139:23-24

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:
And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

God declared, "For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Besides goal-setting, five steps are needed to fulfill His purposes for your life.

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon Me, and ye shall go and pray unto Me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:11-13).

1. Maintain a cooperative spirit. The ability to work well with others is a key to achieving your goals. You must set aside your pride, which does not want to bend, and develop a servant-like spirit that willingly cooperates with others. Give-and-take is essential in relationships.

"After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have _____ beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been _____ over a _____ things, I will make thee ruler over _____ things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:19-21).

2. Exercise courage. God may ask you to work with difficult people, separate yourself from situations you regard as okay, or give you assignments that seem too large. Each circumstance requires that you exercise courage and move forward.

"He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, _____ and _____ servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the _____ of thy lord" (Matthew 25:22-23).

3. Demonstrate persistence. A determined mind and tenacious spirit are needed in order to follow through when you face temptation, adversity, discouragement, or personal failure.

"Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was _____, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I _____ where I _____ not, and gather where I have not strawed:..." (Matthew 25:24-26).

4. Exhibit a controlled attitude. Having a Christ-centered, hopeful attitude is essential to success. When negative thoughts, doubts, and fears surface, turn to God and reflect on His character, all-encompassing love, and good purposes. Do not allow pessimistic thoughts and emotions to overtake your mind.

5. Consciously depend upon God. You are to rely on Him for wisdom, guidance, and the spiritual training needed to carry out His plans. Self-reliance and independent action will lead you astray every time.

Today's Bible reading is Matthew chapter 25.

LESSON 12

COMBATTING A DOWNWARD SPIRAL OF DESTRUCTIVE THOUGHTS

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Psalm 139:23-24

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:
And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

You fall into bed at the end of a long, hard day. You close your eyes and begin to assess your life. Within a few moments' time, you are brooding over lost opportunities, past mistakes, and chances you never got. Your mind focuses intently on the fact that you aren't as successful as your neighbors are. "If only..." you think.

"If ye then be risen with Christ, _____ those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things _____, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your _____ is _____ with Christ in _____" (Colossians 3:1-3).

If you give into these destructive thoughts, they will take you in a downward spiral that is never-ending. The process evolves like this: A) First, a problem, concern, or issue enters your thoughts. B) Next, when no clear solution surfaces in your mind, you begin to experience destructive feelings like worry, fear, stress, and guilt. C.) Finally, negative feelings take root and produce anxiety, tension, or even depression as you frantically try to resolve your problems or mourn over your failures.

"When Christ, who is our _____, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in _____. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and _____, which is idolatry:..." (Colossians 3:4-5).

To effectively combat the ill effects of this downward spiral, you must learn to submit your concerns to God early in the process. The tighter you cling to the notion that you can completely ordain the course of your life, the more you will slide down the spiral.

"For which things' sake the _____ of God cometh on the children of _____: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; _____, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth" (Colossians 3:6-8).

If you believe that you are entirely responsible for solving every problem you encounter or building your life according to societal specifications, you will inevitably fail; but when you surrender your mind and will to the Lord, you can sleep peacefully with the knowledge that He who began a good work in you is faithful to complete it.

"Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath _____ a good work in you will perform it _____ the day of _____:..." (Philippians 1:6).

Today's Bible reading is Colossians chapter 3.

LESSON 13

TAKING DESTRUCTIVE THOUGHTS CAPTIVE

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Psalm 139:23-24

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:
And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

This is not an age in which to be a soft Christian. Imagine...you glance across the room and notice two of your friends speaking with hushed voices. When you begin to think about it, you recall that neither of them greeted you when you walked into the room that evening. You ruminate over the events of the week. One of the friends was short with you. The other didn't speak to you at all. "They've probably become the best of friends now," you think. "They don't care about me anymore."

"And the peace of God, which passeth all _____, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. 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 _____, _____ on these things" (Philippians 4:7-8).

Destructive thoughts like these can tear apart a good friendship. In reality, you have no way of knowing what the whispering is about, but most likely, it doesn't involve you. A wise person avoids negative thought patterns before they take hold.

"Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you. But I _____ in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your _____ of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked _____" (Philippians 4:9-10).

In the second letter to the Corinthians, the Bible addresses the battle of the mind. The Bible praises the believers at Corinth for their mental successes, saying they were "...bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

"(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into _____ every _____ to the _____ of _____; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled" (2 Corinthians 10:4-6).

What does it mean to take a thought "captive?" It means that you are to examine and compare each thought you have against the standard of thinking set for us by God.

Please name ways that you have learned to control your thoughts and mind:

What does it mean to take a thought captive?

Today's Bible reading is 2 Corinthians chapter 10.

LESSON 14

WHAT DOMINATES YOUR THOUGHTS AND MIND?

This week's Bible verse to memorize: 2 Timothy 1:7

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

What dominates your thoughts most of the time? Do you think about your spouse, children, or past? Do you reflect on books, movies, or a news item for hours on end? Have you ever had a particular song in your head all day long? We all know what it is like to have our thoughts held captive by something, be it a person, song, or something entirely different.

“Now after the death of Moses the _____ of the Lord it came to pass, that the Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore _____, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do _____ to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses” (Joshua 1:1-3).

We often do not consider that what we think about determines the way in which we act. Our thoughts find expression in our actions. If we spend time thinking fondly about someone, the result will be a more loving demeanor around that person. Or, if we find ourselves thinking about a certain movie for a while, the result will be a strong desire to view the film. We simply cannot escape the fact that our bodies will travel in the direction that our minds are traveling.

“From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast. There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not _____ thee, nor _____ thee” (Joshua 1:4-5).

With this in mind, consider the Lord's instruction to meditate on His Word “day and night.” Further, heed the Bible's encouragement to immerse your thoughts only in what is excellent and worthy of praise.

“Be _____ and of a good _____: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest _____ to do according to all the law, which Moses My servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt _____ therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to _____ according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success” (Joshua 1:6-8).

What would happen if you were to focus your thoughts in this way throughout the day?

Would your life be heading in a different direction?

Ask God to keep your thoughts on track so that your actions may not go too far astray.

Today's Bible reading is Joshua chapter 1.

LESSON 15

GOD'S PLANS FOR OUR THOUGHT LIFE

This week's Bible verse to memorize: 2 Timothy 1:7

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

As you search to discover God's plan for your life, you should consider three things:

1. Glorifying God. You are commanded to let your light shine before men, so that you will bear spiritual fruit that glorifies the Lord. As your life increasingly follows the pattern of the Savior's, your thoughts and responses will bring Jesus praise and will point other people to Him.

"But ye are a _____ generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of _____ into His marvellous _____; Which in time past were not a people, but are now the _____ of _____: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (1 Peter 2:9-10).

2. Conforming to Christ's likeness. For each opportunity that you encounter, you must make this assessment: Will it help me to become more like Jesus or will it tempt me in my weaker areas, causing me to turn away from Him? If you submit your mind and emotions to the Lord, His Spirit will build Jesus' character qualities into your life. As you rely on the Holy Spirit, He will help you make wise decisions and will also guide you safely past temptation.

"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, _____ from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your _____, which they shall behold, _____ God in the day of visitation" (1 Peter 2:11-12).

3. Following the Lord's will. When trying to decide how to proceed, ask yourself, "Is this in line with God's known will?" Throughout Scriptures, the heavenly Father has revealed what pleases Him. His commands are clear regarding the way born-again believers should live. Your home, business, and community life are to function according to His will.

"Submit yourselves to every _____ of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by Him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As _____, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the _____ of God" (1 Peter 2:13-16).

Whether it be your family or friends, don't let yourself be pressured into decisions that would displease God. Train yourself to stop and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal whether choices will bring God glory, develop Christ's character in you, and keep yourself in the center of God's plan and purpose. Wait on Him, and don't step ahead until you have an answer. What plans and steps will you take to train yourself to wait on the Lord for the answer?

Today's Bible reading is 1 Peter chapter 3.

LESSON 16

WHY WE LOSE OUR PEACE OF MIND

This week's Bible verse to memorize: 2 Timothy 1:7

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

Your thoughts play a great role in the level of peace in your life. When your mind is occupied with negative, nagging and unproductive thoughts, you invite anxiety and worry into your life. Therefore, you must learn to recognize and replace negative thought patterns before they rob you of peace.

“Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations He hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; He burneth the chariot in the fire. Be _____, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our _____. Selah” (Psalm 46:8-11).

There are seven categories of thoughts that steal peace from us: (1) sinful, (2) negative, (3) erroneous, (4) unrealistic, (5) rebellious, (6) obsessive, and (7) enslaving thoughts. Each category represents a different area in which Satan aims to establish a stronghold in your mind.

“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made _____ by the blood of Christ. For He is our _____, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace;...” (Ephesians 2:13-15).

Whether you are plagued by one or several of the above types of thoughts, it is important to properly extinguish the flames of their fiery path through your mind. Until they are put down, you will be unable to experience God's gift of peace.

“And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through Him we both have _____ by one Spirit unto the _____” (Ephesians 2:16-18).

When these thoughts surface, first reach out to God in prayer. Confess that you're struggling with troublesome thoughts and ask Him to remove your burden. Then, turn your mind's energy to that which is positive, uplifting, and of God.

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but _____ with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, _____ Himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together _____ unto an holy _____ in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:19-22).

Allow God to quench your desire or tendency to dwell on negative thoughts, and replace them with positive thoughts of His plan for peace in your life.

Today's Bible reading is Ephesians chapter 2.

LESSON 17

A CLEAR MIND

This week's Bible verse to memorize: 2 Timothy 1:7

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

You cannot think wrongly and live rightly. If you are thinking properly, your life will be on track because the Holy Spirit will enable you to achieve and become what He has in mind. As a Christian, you have the “mind of Christ,” meaning you have the capacity to think the way the Lord Jesus Christ thinks and to view your circumstances from His perspective.

“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that _____ Him. But God hath _____ them unto us by His _____: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Corinthians 2:9-10).

To see as Christ does is often at odds with how the world sees. For example, to the non-spiritual mind, there appears to be nothing positive about death; but believers know the truth about death and life eternal—for them, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

“(For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be _____ from the body, and to be _____ with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be _____ of Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of _____; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:7-10).

Similarly, when you encounter other hardships, you can be thankful because you know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose (see Romans 8:28). Because the world doesn't understand, they accuse you of being confused, which is not the case. Knowing what the Bible says on the subject means you can understand God's viewpoint, which is truth.

“For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the _____, but the spirit which is of _____; that we might _____ the things that are freely given to us of God” (1 Corinthians 2:11-12).

So how can you keep your mind from being confused by the world, cluttered with its vain philosophies, and corrupted by its system? Just as computers need good software, so you must program your mind with truth. That means daily meditation on God's Word and His principles. Keep the following verse in your mind:

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that _____, and _____, and _____, _____ of God” (Romans 12:2).

What are your plans are to keep your mind pure?

Today's Bible reading is 1 Corinthians chapter 2.

LESSON 18

MEDITATION: THE KEY TO CONTROLLING YOUR MIND

This week's Bible verse to memorize: 2 Timothy 1:7

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

“Meditation” is a word that has been thrown around quite a bit over the years. To some, it is a time of introspection and self-empowerment. To others, it is seen as a mystical practice in which certain people focus on some false god or belief system. For Christians, however, meditation means something else, and despite the different ways the term is used, it is something that we must take seriously in our walk of faith and in the controlling of our mind.

“O God, thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary. Because Thy _____ is better than _____, my lips shall praise Thee” (Psalm 63:1-3).

Simply put, meditation is the practice of thinking about the Lord in all of His fullness. It involves asking questions such as:

- Who is God?
- How does God work in my life?
- What does Scripture say about Him?
- How has God shown His faithfulness to me personally?
- How has God made Himself known to me?

In times of meditation, God's Holy Spirit directs your thinking as you earnestly seek to know God better.

“Thus will I bless Thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in Thy name. My soul shall be _____ as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips: When I remember Thee upon my _____, and meditate on Thee in the night watches. Because Thou hast been my _____, therefore in the shadow of Thy wings will I _____” (Psalm 63:4-7).

Meditation is a time of thinking that is completely dedicated to the Lord. Often, this means arguing with yourself and wrestling with spiritual principles as God builds a firm foundation in your life. It may even be a time of humiliation, as the Lord does what is necessary to humble you in His presence, bringing you into a true Christ-centered frame of mind.

“My soul _____ after Thee: Thy right hand _____ me. But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth” (Psalm 63:8-9).

Meditation is serious business, and believers should never imagine it as a time of thoughtless relaxation. Absolute concentration is required, as the Lord directs your thoughts according to His will. Set aside an hour this week to focus your mind totally on God. He is certainly worthy of your undivided attention.

Will you set aside one hour to clear your thoughts and focus your mind on God? _____

Today's Bible reading is Psalm chapter 63.

LESSON 19

MEDITATION IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE MIND

This week's Bible verse to memorize: 2 Timothy 1:7

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

People frequently ask, “What can I do to really grow in my Christian life?” They are usually looking for a secret path to maturity—something to do, or some specific type of service, gift, or talent; yet, the true key to growing in your relationship with Christ isn’t found in any of these things. In fact, possibly the most important thing you can do to mature in your faith and mind is simply to focus on your relationship with the heavenly Father.

“Now therefore so shalt thou say unto My servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel: And I was _____ whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth” (2 Samuel 7:8-9).

When you realize that genuine maturity and effectiveness are tied to your relationship with the Lord rather than what you can do for Him, your whole paradigm will start to shift. Talents, gifts, and personalities do not matter nearly as much as the commitment to simply know God.

“But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought Him a man after His own _____, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord _____ thee” (1 Samuel 13:14).

King David was known as the “man after God’s own heart,” and yet David himself asked, “Who am I ... that you have brought me this far?” Why was God so gracious to him? What was it about him that God valued so highly? It was that David knew God. He spent time with the Lord. He poured his heart out to his heavenly Father.

“Then went king David in, and _____ before the Lord, and he said, Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in Thy sight, O Lord GOD; but Thou hast spoken also of Thy servant’s house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD? And what can David say more unto Thee? for Thou, Lord GOD, _____ Thy _____” (2 Samuel 7:18-20).

In the Book of Psalms, in psalm after psalm you see David laying everything out before the Lord and seeking His perfect will. David’s strength was in his relationship with God.

Do you want to grow in the Lord? _____

What can you do to grow in the Lord and serve Him? Maybe you need to say, “Here I am, Father. Use me.”

Today's Bible reading is 2 Samuel chapter 7.

LESSON 20

ESSENTIALS OF EFFECTIVE MEDITATION FOR THE MIND

This week's Bible verse to memorize: 2 Timothy 1:7

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

You may wonder, "How can I incorporate genuine meditation into my Christian life and mind?" I believe there are several essentials of meditating that will reap tremendous benefits in your mind and walk of faith.

"God is our _____ and _____, a very _____ help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah" (Psalm 46:1-3).

Season of time: Do you hurry through your prayer time so that you can get to other things? Think about the model Jesus gave us. Did He ever rush through His time with the Father? No, He made His time with the Father the priority, and everything else fell into place around that.

"There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: _____ shall _____ her, and that right _____. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: He uttered His voice, the earth melted" (Psalm 46:4-6).

Stillness: You read the call to stillness in God's Word, yet you may wonder what it means to "be still." Stillness means that you stop everything. This can be difficult for you in this fast-paced, multi-tasking world. You've gotten used to doing a dozen things at once! However, true meditation requires that you focus your mind only on Almighty God.

"Come, _____ the works of the Lord, what desolations He hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; He burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be _____ in the earth. The Lord of hosts is _____; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah" (Psalm 46:8-11).

Seclusion: This is something that the Lord really had to fight for in His ministry, as He was constantly surrounded by people. While always attending to their needs, He also guarded His need for seclusion. Often in the gospels, you see Jesus retreating for some private, intimate time with the Father no matter what else was going on. Jesus always made a point to safeguard time to rest in the Spirit, focus on His relationship with the Father, and build up His strength.

What steps will you take to be secluded? What will you do to be still and listen for God's will?

Today's Bible reading is Psalm chapter 46.

LESSON 21

DISCOVERING THE MIND FOR LIFE PURPOSES

This week's Bible verse to memorize: 2 Timothy 1:7

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

Those who know and follow God's direction will experience peace, joy, and contentment. To discover your life's purpose, the first step, which makes all the other steps possible, is to trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. In other words, you must be saved.

"That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by _____ are ye saved through _____; and that not of yourselves: it is the _____ of God: Not of _____, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:7-10).

Your part in salvation is to acknowledge that you are a sinner—to admit to God that you've lived in rebellion against Him because you wanted your own way. By professing your belief that Jesus' death on the cross fully paid your sin-debt, you're asking for God's forgiveness.

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being _____ by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through _____ in His blood, to declare His _____ for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;..." (Romans 3:23-25).

Recognizing Jesus as personal Savior and Lord, you commit your life to Him.

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we _____ our sins, He is faithful and just to _____ us our sins, and to _____ us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:8-10).

Since He is now in charge, your order and direction will come from Him. After becoming part of God's family, you have His Spirit to help you discover and carry out your Father's plan.

"That if thou shalt _____ with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt _____ in thine heart that God hath _____ from the dead, thou shalt be _____" (Romans 10:9).

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the _____ of the Son of God, who _____ me, and _____ for me" (Galatians 2:20).

Today's Bible reading is Galatians chapter 2.

LESSON 22

A CLEAR CONSCIENCE OF THE MIND

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Philippians 4:7

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,
shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Although we ordinarily think of the conscience as a good thing, it is astonishing how corrupt this moral faculty can become. The Bible talks about wicked and unbelieving men and says that both their minds and their consciences are defiled.

“Unto the pure all things are _____: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their _____ and _____ is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they _____ Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (Titus 1:15-16).

He goes on to describe such men as “detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.” This represents the advanced stages of dissolution for those who constantly reject the voice of conscience; eventually, they become “scared in their own conscience as with a branding iron.”

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall _____ from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking _____ in hypocrisy; having their conscience _____ with a hot iron;...” (1 Timothy 4:1-2).

In contrast to this are those who turn to the Savior to have their conscience cleaned from dead works in order to serve God with their whole hearts.

“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered _____ without spot to God, _____ your conscience from _____ works to _____ the _____ God?” (Hebrews 9:14).

Jesus will purge an impure mind and make it clean, but He wants us to keep it clean. That is what Peter had in mind when he urged his listeners to “keep a good conscience.”

“Having a _____ conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be _____ that _____ accuse your good conversation in Christ” (1 Peter 3:16).

This is the way to avoid the shipwreck of faith that the Bible talks about and is also the way to avoid offending the consciences of others:

“_____ , and a good _____; which some having put away concerning faith have made _____:...” (1 Timothy 1:19).

Don't let offenses pile up and dull your conscience. Be quick to confess your sin, and keep consistent accounts with God; this is the way to have a conscience void of offense.

Today's Bible reading is Acts chapter 24.

LESSON 23

LIVING WITH A CLEAN MIND IN A DIRTY WORLD

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Philippians 4:7

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,
shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

At the end of the day, do you ever feel like you need a bath, not because your physical body is unclean, but rather because your spirit has been grieved by evil things you have heard and seen throughout the day?

“Be ye not unequally _____ together with _____: for what fellowship hath _____ with _____? and what communion hath _____ with _____? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel [unbeliever]?” (2 Corinthians 6:14-15).

Sometimes a few moments spent watching television or reading a newspaper can cloud your mind with the images of violent crimes, scandalous encounters, and acts of social injustice.

“And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for _____ are the _____ of the living God; as God hath said, I will _____ in them, and walk in them; and I will be their _____, and they shall be My _____” (2 Corinthians 6:16).

The Bible offers advice to fellow believers surrounded by immorality and corruption: “Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?”

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye _____, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My _____ and _____, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:17-18).

As a Christian living in a spiritually and morally “dirty” world, you have a decision to make each day. Will you participate in the sinful acts around you or will you separate yourself from evil?

Though temptation is often strong, what can you do to fight temptation?

Who offers each of us the strength to resist sinful urges?

When you experience evil around you, what should you do?

When you resist Satan's attempts to lure you away from that which is pure and holy, your rewards are twofold. You bring delight to your heavenly Father, and you set an effective Christ-like example for unbelievers around you.

What can you do to avoid evil today?

Today's Bible reading is 2 Corinthians chapter 6.

LESSON 24

A TOOL OF THE TEMPTER TO CONTROL THE MIND

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Philippians 4:7

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,
shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

No one likes the idea of being manipulated by another person; when it happens, we are left feeling emotionally vulnerable. Jesus uses the strongest possible terms to warn those who cause another to sin. He tells them that it would be better if they had died than to do such a thing. It is as if Jesus posted a large sign saying, “Danger! Beware! Do not enter!” Causing another to succumb to temptation is serious in God’s eyes.

“At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the _____ in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as _____, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall _____ himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of _____” (Matthew 18:1-4).

“And whoso shall _____ one such little child in My name receiveth Me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but _____ to that man by whom the _____ cometh!” (Matthew 18:5-7).

“Whew,” you think. “I’m glad I’m not one of them.” Are you sure you’re not? Our actions impact others, and who is without sin? We like to think that much of our sin is small—hardly a blip on the screen, not hurting anyone and affecting only ourselves; in this teaching, Jesus reveals the error of such thinking. For example, a lack of forgiveness toward someone could cause that person to be unforgiving in return.

“Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot _____ thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to _____ into _____ halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into _____ fire” (Matthew 18:8-9).

Anger that flares up in us at regular intervals may be copied by someone younger. Lies we tell to get out of tight situations, or conversations full of gossip, can severely damage other people.

Satan, a master manipulator, seeks to trip people up; we can become his tool when we allow ourselves to fall into sin.

What will you do to consider the consequences of your actions and attitudes? What will you do to surrender to His ways?

Today's Bible reading is Matthew chapter 18.

LESSON 25

A MOMENT OF WEAKNESS OF THE MIND

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Philippians 4:7

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,
shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Many people mistake temptation for the actual act of sin; however, they are not the same. If we are to achieve victory in the Christian life, we must learn to distinguish between the two.

“Now all these things happened unto them for _____: and they are written for our _____, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth _____ lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:11-12).

Understand that feeling the temptation to sin does not mean that the act of sin must follow. Rather, temptation involves a process through which your heart, mind, and body are preparing for the act of sin. Interrupting this process can stop the growing temptation dead in its tracks before it becomes a sin.

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is _____ to man: but God is _____, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to _____, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

How does this process flow? It can begin with something as simple as a glance. Isn't that how it all started with David? Once the enticement entered his thinking by way of the eyes, he nursed his desire.

“And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that _____ sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David _____ still at Jerusalem. And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he _____ a woman washing herself; and the woman was very _____ to look upon” (2 Samuel 11:1-2).

Once the image is set in your mind, you make a choice: Am I going to continue with this desire or not? As these thoughts tumble through your mind, you begin to fantasize, and then develop a great desire for the object.

“And David sent and _____ after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? And David sent messengers, and _____ her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house. And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child” (2 Samuel 11:3-5).

You see, sin doesn't happen immediately; it is the result of a process. This means that you have the ability to bring that momentum to halt at any time. Ask the Lord for the presence of mind to perceive these steps as they happen, so that you might put an end to the sinful progression before it's too late.

Today's Bible reading is 2 Samuel chapter 11.

LESSON 26

REVIEW (PART I)

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Philippians 4:7

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,
shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Multiple Choice

Read each question carefully, then mark the correct answer. There is only one correct answer to each question. The questions are based on Scripture and the lessons in this book.

1. Let the wicked:
 - a) Be still
 - b) Be cautious
 - c) Forsake his way
2. Be not conformed:
 - a) To this world
 - b) To drugs
 - c) To your past
3. Be careful [anxious]:
 - a) When praying
 - b) For nothing
 - c) In every area of life
4. Put off:
 - a) Doing wrong
 - b) The old man
 - c) All of your sins
5. I hate them:
 - a) That hate the Lord
 - b) That hate me
 - c) That hate my family
6. My God, will I seek Thee:
 - a) At night
 - b) Early
 - c) In church
7. Christ sitteth on:
 - a) The earth
 - b) The right hand of God
 - c) Beside me at all times
8. Jesus spake many things:
 - a) That were not true
 - b) That the Father told Him to speak
 - c) In parables
9. We should be what kind of fruit:
 - a) First fruit of His creatures
 - b) Good fruit
 - c) Fruit of the vine
10. You should think on:
 - a) What you are going to do before you do it
 - b) Where you are going
 - c) Whatsoever things are true
11. Stand fast:
 - a) In the Lord
 - b) In the way that people see you
 - c) In what you want to do
12. The natural man receiveth:
 - a) Lots of time
 - b) Money
 - c) Not the things of the Spirit of God

Today's Bible reading is Galatians chapter 5.

LESSON 27

REVIEW (PART II)

This week's Bible verse to memorize: Philippians 4:7

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,
shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

True or False

Read each statement below carefully, then enter "true" or "false" in the blank. The statements are based on Scripture and the lessons in this book.

1. If ye then be risen with Christ, you should seek those things which are above. _____
2. Above all, take the shield of love. _____
3. Nothing is able to separate us from the love of God. _____
4. Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall fulfill the lust of the flesh. _____
5. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is on God. _____
6. Good and faithful servants will make thee ruler over many things. _____
7. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are in the world. _____
8. He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus. _____
9. See that you maintain the old man with his deeds. _____
10. The peace of God will keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. _____
11. You should rejoice in the Lord greatly. _____
12. Jesus said, "I will be with thee; I will not fail thee." _____
13. You should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness. _____
14. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. _____

Today's Bible reading is 1 Peter chapter 2.



PLOWMAN'S ACADEMY

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