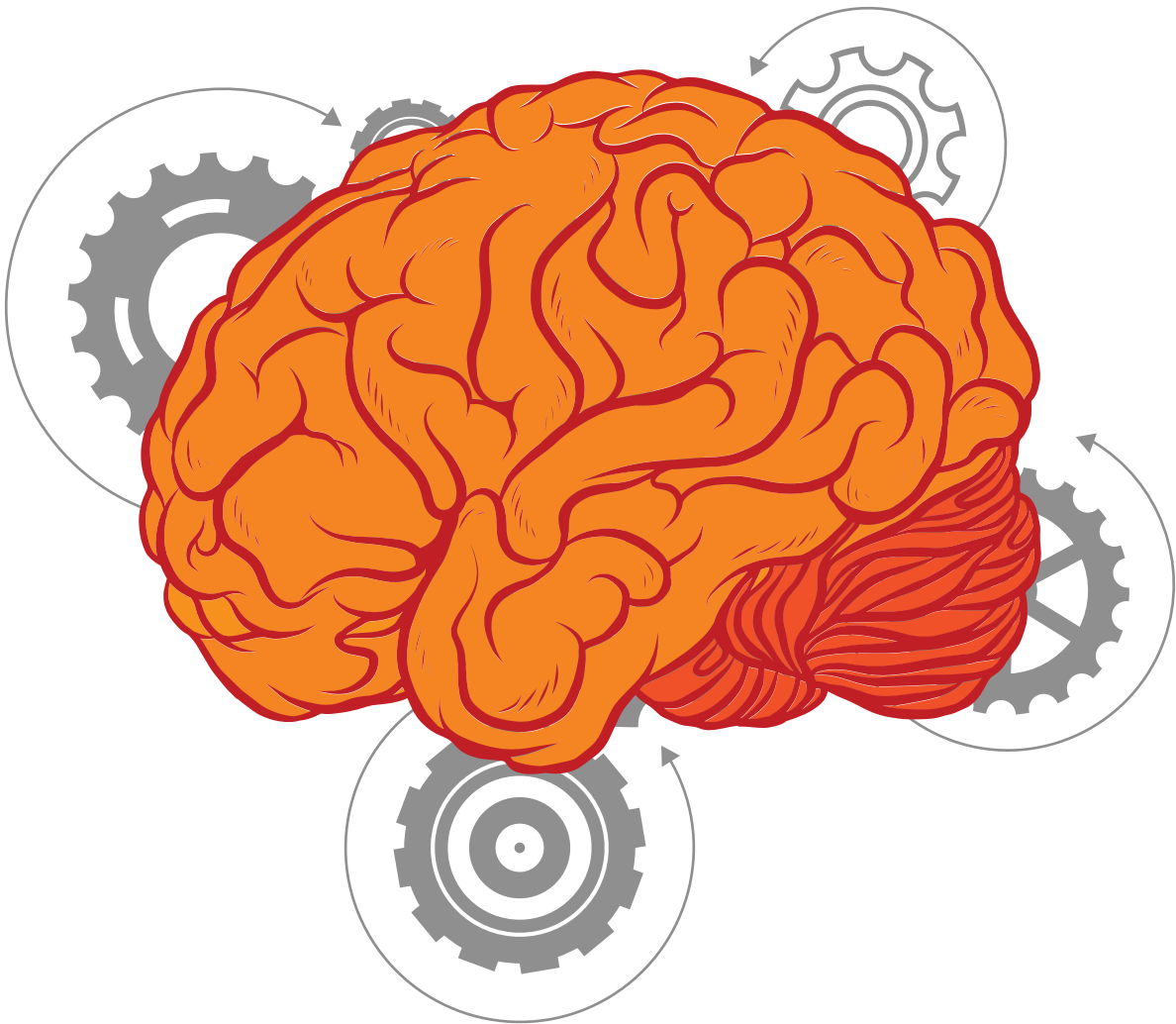


THE IMPACT OF  
**OUR THOUGHT LIFE**



STUDY BY RICHARD ELWELL





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WHY IDEAS MATTER.

[www.ultimateoutcomes.org](http://www.ultimateoutcomes.org)

Ultimate Outcomes is a non-profit organization founded on the fruit of the 30 plus years Pastor Richard Elwell and his wife Marty spent in church ministry, developing studies that would help their congregants discern and apply God's truth. Richard was a firm believer that the outcomes in our lives are a result of what ideas we choose to believe and follow.

After Richard died of a rare liver disease in 2018, Ultimate Outcomes has taken on the mission of sharing the Elwells' insights with all who desire to live a better life and are willing to look to God for understanding of the way they are to go. To that end, it makes available for free download on its website: Bible studies, Sunday school curriculum, and sermon podcasts.

Richard earned a Master of Divinity degree from the International School of Theology and was the founding and senior pastor at University Park Church, San Bernardino, CA for over 30 years. His passion was always to make God's truth understandable and applicable to all who hunger for it. Marty holds a Master's Degree in Teaching Processes from Claremont Graduate University. Her passion has been to train women and provide curriculum for parents who want to raise their children up in the ways of the Lord.

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# THE EFFECTS OF OUR THOUGHTS

## INTRODUCTION

### WHAT ARE THOUGHTS?

#### Illustrations:

- **House Guests:**  
Our thoughts are the companions of our minds, like house guests who we talk to and spend time with.
- **Computer Software:**  
Our thoughts are like the software of the computer. Software has no material substance but it is what determines what the computer does. With bad software the hardware would still be the same but wouldn't function correctly.
- **Road Map:**  
Our thoughts are like a road map that sets the direction our lives are going to take. Our thoughts choose the road we are going to travel on.

#### Explanation:

Our thoughts are the internal influences that lead to our decisions and actions. They are the immaterial aspect of us that controls the material aspect. They are the foundation of what becomes realized in our lives. They are the invisible source of what become our visible beliefs, attitudes, emotions, and behaviors. **Our thoughts are the most powerful determiners of who we become and the way we perceive reality.**

## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

### HOW DO OUR THOUGHTS AFFECT US?

#### **Romans 8:5-6**

*<sup>5</sup>Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. <sup>6</sup>The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.*

1. What is a mindset?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What does our mindset determine?

**Luke 6:43-45**

<sup>43</sup>No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. <sup>44</sup>Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. <sup>45</sup>The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.

1. What do we store in our hearts?
2. How does what is in our heart relate to our mindset?

**Proverbs 4:23**

<sup>23</sup>Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

**Proverbs 6:20-23**

<sup>20</sup>My son, keep your father's commands and do not forsake your mother's teaching. <sup>21</sup>Bind them upon your heart forever; fasten them around your neck. <sup>22</sup>When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you. <sup>23</sup>For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life.

1. What is a wellspring?
2. How are we to guard our hearts?
3. Why should we guard what we store in our hearts?

**Isaiah 59:4**

<sup>4</sup>No one calls for justice; no one pleads his case with integrity. They rely on empty arguments and speak lies; they conceive trouble and give birth to evil.

**Proverbs 6:14-15**

<sup>14</sup> (He) who plots evil with deceit in his heart-- he always stirs up dissension. <sup>15</sup>Therefore disaster will overtake him in an instant; he will suddenly be destroyed--without remedy.

1. What do evil thoughts give birth to?
2. What makes something evil?
3. Why can't we think evil thoughts and not bring harm to ourselves and others?



Our thoughts create the climate of our present life's experiences as well as being the foundation for our future life's experiences. What we dwell on has the single, most profound effect on how we experience life. If we want to change our lives then we need to change our thinking. Our daily prayer should be for God to help us have a right view of things.

### ILLUSTRATION: WRONG THOUGHTS

If you're having a bad day, it is because you are thinking wrong thoughts about what is going on. If you are anxious or upset, it is because you are thinking wrong thoughts.



## THINKING IT THROUGH

1. Are we subject to our thoughts or are our thoughts subject to us?
2. Do God's thoughts (truth) or the world's thoughts (deception) more easily take us captive? Why?
3. Why do we allow false ideas or wrong thinking into our minds?
4. How do we recognize wrong thinking?
5. What do we do once we recognize wrong thinking?
6. How do we protect ourselves against wrong thinking?

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

### ⚙️ THINKING ABOUT THOUGHTS

#### **Matthew 15:18-19**

*<sup>18</sup>But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man `unclean.'<sup>19</sup>For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.*

What do these verses say about our thoughts?

#### **2 Corinthians 10:3-5**

*<sup>3</sup>For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. <sup>4</sup>The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. <sup>5</sup>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.*

What do these verses say about our thoughts?

### ILLUSTRATION: LIES

A lie has just as much power as the truth if we believe it. For example if someone calls fire in a theater and people believe it even if in reality there is no fire, it will cause them to act.

We are subject to our thoughts but our thoughts are also subject to us. If we change our thoughts we will change what we are subject to. What are examples of this?



### ⚙️ CHANGING OUR MIND

#### **Isaiah 55:7**

*<sup>7</sup>Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.*

What does it mean to forsake our thoughts and turn to the Lord?

## PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE



### PERSONAL EVALUATION

1. Do I see myself as the gatekeeper of my mind?

Do I look at most ideas as not being neutral but as being right or wrong?

Do I recognize what thoughts I need to keep out?

2. Do I want the consequences of the thoughts I like to think about; is it a path I want to go down?

Are my thoughts taking me down a path I want to go on?

3. Do I want to purify my thought life by filling my mind with truth, reading the Bible and meditating on God's word?

Am I looking for true and life-changing ideas through God's word?



### PRAYER

Write out a prayer for greater awareness of your thoughts and how they are affecting you.



## LESSON 2

# VAIN THOUGHTS

## INTRODUCTION

### REVIEW

1. What are thoughts?  
  
House guests  
Software  
Road map
2. What do the three illustrations show us about our thoughts?
3. How do our thoughts affect us?

### LESSON FOCUS

This lesson will study how to identify and avoid vain thoughts. Vain is defined as empty, useless, fruitless, worthless and aimless, without profit or benefit. What are vain thoughts?

## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

### THE CAUSE OF VAIN THINKING

(As you read the following passage, underline the causes of vain thinking.)

#### **Romans 1:18-32**

*<sup>18</sup>The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, <sup>19</sup>since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. <sup>20</sup>For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*

*<sup>21</sup>For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup>Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools <sup>23</sup>and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.*

<sup>24</sup>Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. <sup>25</sup>They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

<sup>26</sup>Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. <sup>27</sup>In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

<sup>28</sup>Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. <sup>29</sup>They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, <sup>30</sup>slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; <sup>31</sup>they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. <sup>32</sup>Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

1. What causes vain thinking?

Vs. 18

Vs. 21

Vs. 22

Vs. 23

Vs. 25

Vs. 28

Vs. 32

2. What is at the heart of all vain thinking?

3. What is the ultimate outcome of vain thinking? (vs. 29-32)



## AVOIDING VAIN THINKING

(As you read the following passage, underline what we do to avoid vain thinking.)

### **Ephesians 4:17-25**

*<sup>17</sup>So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. <sup>18</sup>They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. <sup>19</sup>Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. <sup>20</sup>You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. <sup>21</sup>Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. <sup>22</sup>You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; <sup>23</sup>to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup>and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. <sup>25</sup>Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.*

What are we to do to avoid vain thinking?

Vs. 22

Vs. 23

Vs. 24

Vs. 25

## THINKING IT THROUGH



### WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF VAIN THOUGHTS?

Write out what characterizes each of the following types of vain thought. Then write examples of that type of vain thought in the bubbles on the next page.

Fearful thoughts:

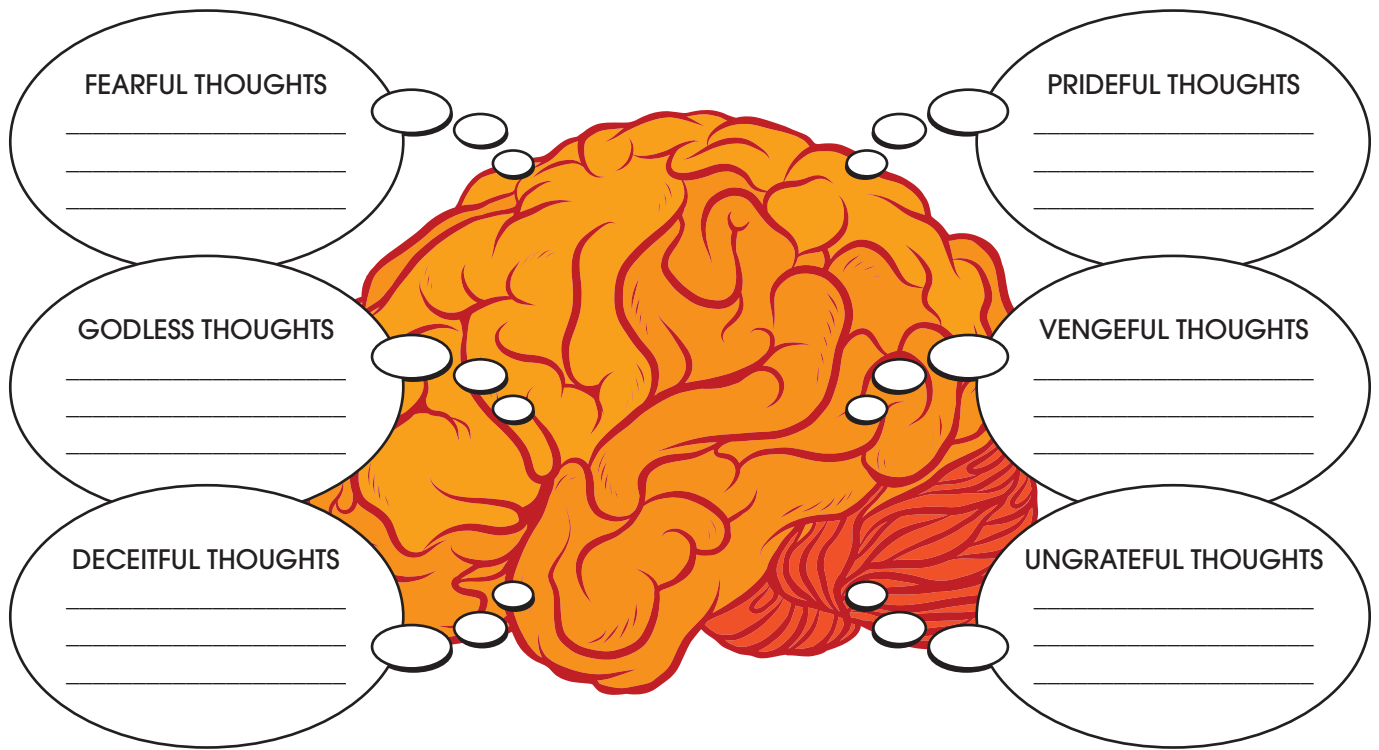
Deceitful thoughts:

Godless thoughts:

Ungrateful thoughts:

Vengeful thoughts:

Prideful thoughts:



1. Why do people engage in these vain thoughts?

2. What do these vain thoughts lead to?



## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

### HARBORING VAIN THOUGHTS

#### **Jeremiah 4:14**

*<sup>14</sup>O Jerusalem, wash the evil from your heart and be saved. How long will you harbor wicked thoughts?*

1. What does “harboring” wicked thoughts mean?
2. According to this passage how is salvation related to our thought life?

## PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

### PERSONAL EVALUATION

1. Would you associate with a person who would publicly promote the same thoughts you ponder privately?
2. Why would you feel repelled by the wicked words of a vile person, but at the same time be unmoved by your private musings?

### PRAYER

Write out a prayer to uncover and overcome vain thinking in your life.



## LESSON 3

# FRUITFUL THOUGHTS

## INTRODUCTION

### REVIEW

1. What is the outcome of what we think about?
2. What are vain thoughts?

### LESSON FOCUS

This lesson will reveal the relationships between a good life and good thinking. If our thoughts can lead us into empty futility, they also can lead us into abundant blessing.

What would be fruitful thoughts?

## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

### MEDITATING ON GOD'S LAW

#### **Psalms 119:97-104**

<sup>97</sup>Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. <sup>98</sup>Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. <sup>99</sup>I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. <sup>100</sup>I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts. <sup>101</sup>I have kept my feet from every evil path so that I might obey your word.

<sup>102</sup>I have not departed from your laws, for you yourself have taught me. <sup>103</sup>How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! <sup>104</sup>I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path.

1. In general, what do God's laws and statutes teach us?
2. What does it mean to meditate?

3. What are the benefits of meditating on God's law?



## IDEAS FROM HEAVEN

### **James 3:13-18**

<sup>13</sup>Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. <sup>14</sup>But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. <sup>15</sup>Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. <sup>16</sup>For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

<sup>17</sup>But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. <sup>18</sup>Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

1. How do we measure the fruitfulness of our thoughts? (vs. 13)
2. What are worldly ideas like? (vs. 15-16)
3. What are ideas that come from heaven like? (vs. 17)
4. How do ideas from heaven differ from those that don't come from heaven?
5. What do ideas from heaven produce? (vs. 18)
6. What is a harvest of righteousness?

### **Philippians 1:9-11**

<sup>9</sup>And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, <sup>10</sup>so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, <sup>11</sup>filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ--to the glory and praise of God.

1. What was Paul's prayer for the Philippians? (vs. 9)
2. What would be the result of that? (vs. 10)

## THINKING IT THROUGH

### PLANTING THE SEED

#### Luke 8:4-15

<sup>4</sup>While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable: <sup>5</sup>"A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. <sup>6</sup>Some fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. <sup>7</sup>Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. <sup>8</sup>Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown."

When he said this, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

<sup>9</sup>His disciples asked him what this parable meant. <sup>10</sup>He said, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, " though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand."

<sup>11</sup>"This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. <sup>12</sup>Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. <sup>13</sup>Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. <sup>14</sup>The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. <sup>15</sup>But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

1. What is the seed? (vs. 11)
2. What is the soil? (vs. 12)
3. What is the relationship between the heart (soil) and the mind?
4. Is there any difference in the seed that is sown in the different types of soil?
5. What is necessary for the word of God to take root?

#### ILLUSTRATION: PLANTING A GARDEN

To plant a productive garden the soil first has to be plowed and made ready. If the soil isn't fertile and prepared and the weeds continually removed, the seed will never grow into a productive plant. How does the planting of crops relate to our thoughts?



## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

### THE PROTECTION OF THOUGHTS

#### **1 Peter 4:1-2**

*<sup>1</sup>Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. <sup>2</sup>As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.*

1. What was Christ's attitude toward suffering? (vs. 2)
2. How would having the same attitude toward suffering as Christ protect us?
3. How does having Christ's attitude relate to fruitful thinking?

## PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

### PERSONAL EVALUATION

1. What seeds of truth do I plan to intentionally plant in my heart this week?
2. What vain thoughts do I have that are threatening to choke out my fruitful thoughts?  
What kind of weeding do I need to do?
3. What actions am I going to take to plant good thoughts and root out vain ones?

### PRAYER

Write out a prayer for a discerning heart that is receptive to seeds of truth.

# CONTROLLING OUR THOUGHTS

## INTRODUCTION

### REVIEW

1. What are thoughts and how do they affect us?
2. What are vain thoughts?
3. What are fruitful thoughts?



**Remember:** All thoughts are like seeds that germinate and produce something.

### LESSON FOCUS

The focus of this lesson is taking control of our thoughts. Since our thoughts are the underlying determiners of our emotions, our beliefs, and our actions, the most important choice we can make is the choice of what we choose to think.

## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

### TAKING CAPTIVE OR BECOMING CAPTIVE

#### **2 Corinthians 10:3-5**

*<sup>3</sup>For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. <sup>4</sup>The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. <sup>5</sup>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.*

#### **Ephesians 6:10-12**

*<sup>10</sup>Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup>Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. <sup>12</sup>For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*



**Note:** The word for schemes in verse 11 is *methodeia* which means craftiness, seductive tricks or false teaching, beliefs, or ideas.

1. What is the nature of the battle we are engaged in? (vs. 5, 11-12)
2. What are we to fight against? (vs. 4-5)
3. What is the divine weapon we fight with?
4. What are we to do with our enemy? (vs. 5)
5. How do we take our thoughts captive and make them obedient to Christ?

### Colossians 2:8

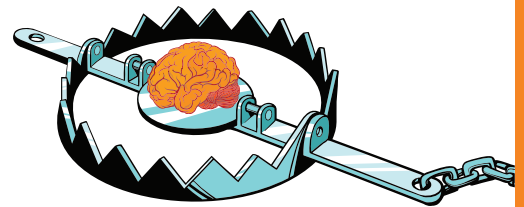
*<sup>8</sup>See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.*

1. What can false ideas do to us?
2. How does that relate to 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 in terms of captivity?

### ILLUSTRATION: TAKE CAPTIVE OR BECOME CAPTIVE

Israel was told by God to completely conquer the land. In fighting for the land Israel did not destroy all the people there as God had instructed. The peoples that Israel didn't conquer caused her problems throughout her history.

We will either take false thinking captive or we will become captive to it. We become subject to the thoughts we subject ourselves to. The question to ask in terms of our thoughts is, "Do I want to be a servant to this thought?"



## RIGHT THOUGHTS

### Philippians 4:8-9

*<sup>8</sup>Finally, brothers, 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. <sup>9</sup>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.*

1. What do the things we are told to think about consist of?

True thoughts:



Noble thoughts:

Right thoughts:

Pure thoughts:

Lovely thoughts:

Admirable thoughts:

Excellent thoughts:

Praiseworthy thoughts:

2. What would the totality of these thoughts represent?
3. What does thinking about and practicing the truth result in? (vs. 9)

## THINKING IT THROUGH

1. Why is deceptive thinking able to take us captive?
2. Romans 8:5 says, *Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.* What do we do to keep ourselves from being taken captive by wrong ideas?
3. How does thinking about what is right and true protect us?
4. Why can't the truth be in our mind and God be absent?
5. Why can't God be in our mind and truth be absent?

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

### INTERNAL OR EXTERNAL CONTROL

#### **Psalm 32:8-9**

*<sup>8</sup>I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you. <sup>9</sup>Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.*

There are the two forces that control our actions, internal conscience (understanding) or external force (bit). What does God want us to be controlled by?

Why?

## PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

### PERSONAL EVALUATION

1. Identify a thought that has taken you captive.
2. Form a battle plan for taking that thought captive and bringing it into obedience in Christ.

### PRAYER

Pray that God would reveal to you wrong thoughts that have taken you captive. Pray that you would want to fill your mind with God and his truth.

## LESSON 5

# THE POWER OF GRATEFUL THINKING

## INTRODUCTION

### REVIEW

1. How is it that we are subject to our thoughts and our thoughts are also subject to us?
2. How do we take our thoughts captive and bring them into obedience to Christ?

### LESSON FOCUS

This lesson will look at the power of grateful thinking. Gratitude can change everything before anything about our circumstances has changed.

1. Why doesn't gratitude come naturally?
2. If we nurture grateful thoughts what happens to us?

## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

### THE JOURNEY OF GRATITUDE

#### **Psalm 50:23**

<sup>23</sup> "He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God."

1. According to this passage what does thankfulness accomplish?
2. Why does the psalmist use the word sacrifice in terms of thank offerings?

**Psalm 100:4-5**

*<sup>4</sup>Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.  
<sup>5</sup>For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.*

According to this passage what does thankfulness accomplish?

**Colossians 2:6-7**

*<sup>6</sup>So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, <sup>7</sup>rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.*

According to this passage what does thankfulness accomplish?

**Philippians 4:4-7**

*<sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! <sup>5</sup>Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup>Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

According to this passage what does thankfulness accomplish?

**2 Corinthians 4:13-15**

*<sup>13</sup>It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, <sup>14</sup>because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence. <sup>15</sup>All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.*

What does God desire from us as a result of his grace?

**The Journey of Gratitude**

Gratitude p\_\_\_\_\_ us to enter into God’s way of salvation.

By gratitude we actually e \_\_\_\_\_ into God’s way.

Through gratitude we c \_\_\_\_\_ in God’s way.

With gratitude we are p \_\_\_\_\_ from being pulled from God’s way.

Ultimately it is gratitude God d \_\_\_\_\_ from us as a result of traveling in his way.

## THE JOURNEY OF INGRATITUDE

### **Romans 1:21**

*<sup>21</sup>For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

How does the result of ingratitude compare with the result of being grateful?

## AN EXAMPLE OF THE JOURNEY

### **Luke 17:11-19**

*<sup>11</sup>Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. <sup>12</sup>As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance <sup>13</sup>and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"*

*<sup>14</sup>When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.*

*<sup>15</sup>One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. <sup>16</sup>He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him--and he was a Samaritan.*

*<sup>17</sup>Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? <sup>18</sup>Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" <sup>19</sup>Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."*

1. What effect did gratitude have on the one leper who returned?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. If the leper had already been healed physically, what did Jesus mean by "your faith has made you well"?

## THINKING IT THROUGH

1. What does gratitude show about us?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Why do we engage in ingratitude?

3. What happens if we subject ourselves to ungrateful thinking?
4. What do we do to rid ourselves of ingratitude?
5. If gratitude prepares us to receive God's grace and if it enables us to enter into and remain in his grace, how do we nurture thankful thoughts?

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS



### THANKSGIVING, OUR PROPER RESPONSE

#### Hebrews 12:22-29

<sup>22</sup>But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, <sup>23</sup>to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, <sup>24</sup>to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

<sup>25</sup>See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? <sup>26</sup>At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." <sup>27</sup>The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken--that is, created things--so that what cannot be shaken may remain.

<sup>28</sup>Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, <sup>29</sup>for our "God is a consuming fire."

1. What does it mean to refuse God? (vs. 25)
2. What is our acceptable response to God? (vs. 28)
3. How are reverence and awe an important part of thanksgiving?

## PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE



### PERSONAL EVALUATION

1. What are grateful thoughts I harbor?

What are the results of those thoughts?

2. What are ungrateful thoughts I harbor?

What are the results of those thoughts?

3. What do I need to do to rid myself of ungrateful thoughts?



### PRAYER

Thank God for who he is and all the wonderful things he has done for you. Pray that you would learn to focus more on what you have to be grateful for.





## LESSON 6

# THE INFLUENCE OF OUR THOUGHTS ON ONE ANOTHER

## INTRODUCTION

### REVIEW

1. How do our thoughts affect our destiny?
2. Fill in the blanks to describe the journey of grateful thinking.

Gratitude p\_\_\_\_\_ us to enter into God's way of salvation.

By gratitude we actually e \_\_\_\_\_ into God's way.

Through gratitude we c \_\_\_\_\_ in God's way.

With gratitude we are p \_\_\_\_\_ from being pulled from God's way.

Ultimately it is gratitude God d \_\_\_\_\_ from us as a result of traveling in his way.

### LESSON FOCUS

This lesson focuses on the influence of our thoughts on others and the thoughts of others on us. Just as we underestimate the effect of our own thought life, we also underestimate the influence of our thoughts on those we associate with and the influence of their thoughts on us.

If we had never learned anything from another person what would we be like?

The difference between who we would be and who we actually are is the influence of other people. We are going to be influenced by others; our choice is who we will let influence us.

## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

### THE WORDS OF LIFE

#### **1 John 1:1-7**

*<sup>1</sup>That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. <sup>2</sup>The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. <sup>3</sup>We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>We write this to make our joy complete.*

<sup>5</sup>This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. <sup>6</sup>If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. <sup>7</sup>But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

1. How is life transmitted? (vs. 1-2)
2. What does like-minded mean?
3. What is the result of believers being like-minded? (vs.3)
4. What creates fellowship of any kind?
5. When is our claim of fellowship with Christ false? (vs. 6)
6. Why can't we have fellowship with God when we walk in darkness?
7. What does it mean to walk in the light?

#### **Matthew 5:14-16**

<sup>14</sup>You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup>Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup>In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

How do those who have the light of Christ transmit that light?



## THE WORDS OF DEATH

#### **2 Timothy 2:14-17a**

<sup>14</sup>Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. <sup>15</sup>Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. <sup>16</sup>Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. <sup>17</sup>Their teaching will spread like gangrene.

1. What is quarreling about words?
2. What does quarreling about words result in? (vs.14)

Why?

3. What are we to avoid and why? (vs. 16)
4. What is godless chatter?
5. What does false teaching spread like? (vs. 17)
6. What do you have to do with a gangrenous body part and why?
7. What do you have to do when someone in your sphere of influence is spreading false teaching?

### Matthew 16:11-12

*<sup>11</sup>How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." <sup>12</sup>Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.*

### 1 Corinthians 5:6-11

*<sup>6</sup>Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? <sup>7</sup>Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast--as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. <sup>8</sup>Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.*

*<sup>9</sup>I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people-- <sup>10</sup>not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. <sup>11</sup>But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.*



**Note:** Before the Passover meal the Jews rid their homes completely of any speck of yeast. Yeast was likened to sin.

1. What is the yeast that can easily spread in us?
2. How much yeast is too much?
3. Who are the people we should not even eat with and why? (vs. 11)



**Remember:** Life and death is transmitted from one person to another through the influence of ideas. We can't avoid being influenced by others or influencing others ourselves. Our only choice is who we are going to let influence us and what kind of influence we are going to have on others.



## THE COMING OF GOD'S KINGDOM

### Isaiah 32:1-8

<sup>1</sup>See, a king will reign in righteousness and rulers will rule with justice. <sup>2</sup>Each man will be like a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm, like streams of water in the desert and the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land.

<sup>3</sup>Then the eyes of those who see will no longer be closed, and the ears of those who hear will listen.

<sup>4</sup>The mind of the rash will know and understand, and the stammering tongue will be fluent and clear.

<sup>5</sup>No longer will the fool be called noble nor the scoundrel be highly respected. <sup>6</sup>For the fool speaks folly, his mind is busy with evil: He practices ungodliness and spreads error concerning the LORD; the hungry he leaves empty and from the thirsty he withholds water. <sup>7</sup>The scoundrel's methods are wicked, he makes up evil schemes to destroy the poor with lies, even when the plea of the needy is just. <sup>8</sup>But the noble man makes noble plans, and by noble deeds he stands.

1. When God's kingdom is fully established what will there no longer be? (vs. 3-4)
2. Before God's kingdom is fully established what does the fool who is called noble and is highly respected do? (5-6)

## THINKING IT THROUGH

1. What are foolish ideas prevalent today that we should avoid at all costs?
2. Who are the "respected" people that are promoting those wrong ideas?
3. Why have those ideas spread?
4. Why do those ideas leave people who are hungry empty?
5. How do we avoid being influenced by those ideas?



**Remember:** If we don't know and incorporate the truth of God into our thinking, we will follow the pervasive ideas of the culture.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

### FOLLOW THE RIGHT TEACHER

#### Proverbs 6:20-24

*<sup>20</sup>My son, keep your father's commands and do not forsake your mother's teaching. <sup>21</sup>Bind them upon your heart forever; fasten them around your neck. <sup>22</sup>When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you awake, they will speak to you. <sup>23</sup>For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life, <sup>24</sup>keeping you from the immoral woman, from the smooth tongue of the wayward wife.*



**Note:** Solomon, the one who spoke these words of wisdom, was led into foolishness by his many foreign wives. God had warned him of that.

1. What is the responsibility of parents?
2. What is the responsibility of the child?
3. How will following the right teaching be of benefit to both parents and children?

### PREACH THE TRUTH

#### 2 Timothy 4:2-4

*<sup>2</sup>Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction. <sup>3</sup>For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. <sup>4</sup>They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.*

1. What does it mean to preach the word out of season?
2. What do we have to do to be able to preach the truth?

## PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE



### PERSONAL EVALUATION

1. Consider who is influencing you:

a. Who do I admire?

Do I want to go where that person I admire is going? Explain.

b. How is the example of others affecting me?

c. Are there any people in my life whose influence needs to be more limited?  
Why?

d. Are there any people in my life whose influence needs to be increased?  
Why?

2. Consider who you are influencing:

a. Am I being a good influence on those I'm close to? How?

If not, what are the ideas I need to stop sharing?

b. Are people gaining life as a result of being around me? How?



### PRAYER

Pray that you would become more aware of the influence of wrong thinking on your beliefs. Pray that you would be convicted of any wrong way you are influencing others.

## LESSON 7

# GOD'S KNOWLEDGE OF OUR THOUGHTS

## INTRODUCTION

### REVIEW

1. Are our thoughts subject to us or are we subject to our thoughts?

2. How is our destiny connected to our thoughts?

3. Fill in the blanks to describe the journey of grateful thinking.

Gratitude p\_\_\_\_\_ us to enter into God's way of salvation.

By gratitude we actually e \_\_\_\_\_ into God's way.

Through gratitude we c \_\_\_\_\_ in God's way.

With gratitude we are p \_\_\_\_\_ from being pulled from God's way.

Ultimately it is gratitude God d \_\_\_\_\_ from us as a result of traveling in his way.

4. How do the thoughts of other people affect us?

### LESSON FOCUS

This lesson will look at our thought life from God's perspective. God knows our thoughts and is affected by them.

How is productive or fruitful thinking aided by the knowledge that God knows our thoughts?

Being in the presence of others modifies what we say; knowing that God hears our thoughts should modify our thinking.

# SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

## GOD KNOWS OUR THOUGHTS

### **Genesis 6:5-6**

*<sup>5</sup>The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. <sup>6</sup>The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.*

1. How did God know that every thought was evil?
2. Why was God grieved?

## GOD CARES ABOUT OUR THOUGHTS

### **Psalm 139:1-2, 23-24**

*<sup>10</sup> LORD, you have searched me and you know me. <sup>2</sup>You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.*

*<sup>23</sup>Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. <sup>24</sup>See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*



**Note:** An anxious thought is any thought that does not trust God.

1. What did David know about God? (vs. 2, 24)
2. What did David ask God concerning his thought life? (vs. 23-24)

## GOD JUDGES OUR THOUGHTS

### **Hebrews 4:12-13**

*<sup>12</sup>For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. <sup>13</sup>Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

1. What happens to every thought? (vs. 13)
2. How should the knowledge of our accountability for every thought affect us?



## THINKING IT THROUGH

1. Why does God care about our thoughts?
2. How do our thoughts affect God?
3. Why will God judge our thoughts?



**Remember:** God knows our every thought. He is affected by what we think. Because God loves us, we grieve him when we entertain evil thoughts. We please him when our thinking is right. We are accountable to God for our thoughts and will be judged according to them because they reveal what is true about us. We can be covered by the blood of Jesus by putting our faith in him, or we can be judged on the merit of our own thoughts. No one can stand before God justified based on his own thoughts. Everyone needs his heart to be made clean. Everyone is in need of a savior.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS



### GOD BLESSES THOUGHTS OF TRUTH

#### Psalm 1:1-3

*<sup>1</sup> Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. <sup>2</sup> But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. <sup>3</sup> He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.*

What happens to the person who thinks thoughts that please God?



## PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE



### PERSONAL EVALUATION

1. What are thoughts I think that please God?
  
2. What are thoughts I think that grieve God?
  
3. Do I care about how my thoughts affect God?

In what way?

4. Am I willing to seek God's help in purifying my mind?

How?



### PRAYER

Pray that you would become more aware of how your thoughts affect God and truly want to rid yourself of thoughts that displease him.

# THINKING GOD'S THOUGHTS

## INTRODUCTION

### REVIEW

1. What would our lives be like without our thoughts?
2. How often do we appreciate how much our thoughts affect us?
3. What makes some thoughts fruitful and other thoughts vain?
4. How does gratitude affect us?
5. Can we control our thought life or does it control us?

### LESSON FOCUS

This lesson will look at God's thoughts and how we are affected by them.

Without the influence of God's thoughts, what would we be like?



# SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES



## LIKE RAIN FROM HEAVEN

### Isaiah 55:7-13

*<sup>7</sup>Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.*

*<sup>8</sup>"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. <sup>9</sup>"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. <sup>10</sup>As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, <sup>11</sup>so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. <sup>12</sup>You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. <sup>13</sup>Instead of the thornbush will grow the pine tree, and instead of briars the myrtle will grow. This will be for the LORD's renown, for an everlasting sign, which will not be destroyed."*

1. What are God's thoughts compared to? (vs. 9-10)
2. What is the harvest that God's thoughts produce? (vs. 11-12)
3. What does that mean should happen to us when we read God's word?
4. Why aren't God's thoughts equally productive in all people?
5. If there is an absence of peace and joy in your life, what do you need to consider?



## PLANS TO PROSPER



**Note:** The Israelites were exiled to Babylon for seventy years because they had disobeyed God. They had hard hearts. God spoke to them through the prophet Jeremiah.

### Jeremiah 29:10-13

*<sup>10</sup>This is what the LORD says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. <sup>11</sup>For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. <sup>12</sup>Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. <sup>13</sup>You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."*

1. What were God's thoughts toward his disobedient children? (vs. 11)
2. What can we extrapolate from what God told the Israelites?
3. What is the promise in this passage? (vs. 13)

**Summary:** If we seek God, we will receive the blessing and refreshment of his Word. If we fellowship around his thoughts, we will receive the joy and delight he wants to give. If we seek him, we will find him and his word will produce fruit in us.



## GOD'S THOUGHTS TOWARD THE UNRECEPTIVE

### **Isaiah 65:2**

*<sup>2</sup>All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations—*

1. What are God's thoughts towards those who are unreceptive to him?
2. What are the unreceptive pursuing instead of God?

Where will that lead them?



## NO ROOM FOR GOD'S THOUGHTS

### **PSALM 10:4**

*<sup>4</sup>In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God.*

1. Why are God's thoughts unproductive in some people's lives?
2. What does having no room for God produce?



## GOD'S PLAN FOR US

### Psalm 40:5

*<sup>5</sup>Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders you have done. The things you planned for us no one can recount to you; were I to speak and tell of them, they would be too many to declare.*

### Psalm 33:10-12

*<sup>10</sup>The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. <sup>11</sup>But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations. <sup>12</sup>Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people he chose for his inheritance.*

1. What are God's plans for us? (vs. 12)
2. How enduring are God's plans for us? (vs. 11)

## THINKING IT THROUGH

1. How does thinking God's thoughts affect God's plan for us?
2. If we have no room for God's thoughts, how does that affect God's plan for us?
3. How can we more fully realize God's plan for us?

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS



## BEING LIKE-MINDED

### Philippians 2:1-5

*<sup>1</sup>If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, <sup>2</sup>then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. <sup>3</sup>Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup>Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup>Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:*

1. What did Paul say would make his joy complete? (vs. 2)

2. In Isaiah 55:12-13 it says, "You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. <sup>13</sup>Instead of the thornbush will grow the pine tree, and instead of briars the myrtle will grow. This will be for the LORD's renown, for an everlasting sign, which will not be destroyed." What will be the outcome of being unified with Christ and like-minded with other believers?

## PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE



### PERSONAL EVALUATION

1. What do my current priorities reveal about how much room there is in my heart for God's thoughts?

2. Am I willing to change my priorities to make more room for God's thoughts?

How?

3. Do I have a full appreciation of the potential benefits of thinking God's thoughts?

In what ways?

4. Am I full of self or full of God?

In what ways?



### PRAYER

Thank God that he has revealed his thoughts in his Word to bless and benefit you. Pray that you would seek to know his thoughts more and live them out in your life.

