



Part 2 – Talk to Yourself, Think Like Christ

☀ **BELONG**

Start the group with an opportunity for community. We want this to be a place where the body of Christ can **belong** by sharing their lives with one another in genuine fellowship.

1. Having thought on last week's lesson, what have you learned about your own thought life?
2. Have you begun to give your mind over to God? Have your thoughts changed at all in a positive way?

☀ **BELIEVE**

Move into the relevant Bible passages and read along together. This is where the body of Christ can learn together to **believe** in Jesus more and love Him better.

As we discussed last week, the single most determinative factor in the direction of your life is the way you think. God's desire is to change our thoughts because our thoughts determine our actions.

Philippians 4:8-9¹

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

¹ The Holy Bible, New International Version (NIV), Philippians 4:8-9

1. Changing our thoughts requires learning to talk to ourselves

When Paul says to “think about these things,” this is more than a sporadic or casual passing thought. The Greek word implies ‘to reckon with,’ ‘to take account,’ or ‘to focus on.’ In other words, you must hold these thoughts in your mind for them to change how you think.

Rather than heeding Paul’s words, many times we are more consumed with worry than with Jesus. We allow the enemy to fill our minds with thoughts of worry and become filled with anxiety. We become discouraged and distracted, and in turn are kept from our calling in Christ. It is of vital importance then that we “put it into practice” the things we have been told.

The main point can be boiled down to this: we allow *ourself* to talk to us rather than allow *us* to talk to ourselves.

We allow the sin inside us to control and lead the conversation. Have you ever considered that it is possible not to be in control of your own life? Once we are honest with the fact that fear and even lies can dictate how we view the world, we can begin to address the problem and allow God to have lordship over our minds.

Romans 12:2²

²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

When we seek and know God, we can discern what “is good and acceptable and perfect,” the kinds of things that Philippians 4:8-9 tells us to focus our thoughts on.

What does talking to ourselves look like? Practically, it involves being open and honest with how we feel deep down. It means allowing yourself to think about, or even audibly express, that:

- “I feel like God has forgotten me.”
- “I am afraid that the ends won’t meet.”
- “I don’t think I can love my spouse anymore.”

It’s okay to have these thoughts. It’s not okay to allow these thoughts to dominate our minds and to not bring them before God. By talking to ourselves, and allowing God to enter our own internal conversations, we can gain a new perspective and begin to fill our minds with the healthy thoughts that Paul instructs us.

Bottom line: what we believe as true in our head is shaping the way we love other people, love God, and ultimately love ourselves. Be open with yourself and have an honest conversation with your mind.

² The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV), Romans 12:2

2. Changing our thoughts requires thinking like Christ

We will not grow into the image of Christ until we learn to think like Christ. We need to learn to talk to ourselves, but once we recognize the evil in our minds and give it to God, what are we to replace it with?

Paul gives us a list. We should think about whatever is “true,” “honorable,” “just,” “pure,” “lovely,” and “commendable.” Paul says, “if there is any excellence,” or “if there is anything worthy of praise,” that is what we should concern our thoughts with.

For the Christian, life is not a passive trip from moment to moment where anything is left aloud in our mind. Every day is work to put into our minds the truths of Christ. The peace of God working in us cannot be produced through passivity. It doesn’t happen naturally, and it requires intentionality to change our thought patterns to that of Jesus.

So how does Christ think? Our thoughts, in a general sense, should be:

- “True” – untrue things should not consume our minds. At the risk of being overly simplistic, the *only* thing we know to be true is God’s Word.
- “Pure” – purity is a sense of holiness, being set apart or separate from the rest of the world. Not only are our actions supposed to be pure, but even our thoughts.
- “Lovely” – think about things that ‘call forth love,’ things that bring love to the forefront of our minds, things that spur us on to love God and others.

This is what it means to think like Christ. The Bible provides specific scriptures we can turn to and dwell on when negative thoughts attack our minds. When you think these things, meditate on these passages (for example):

- I believe I am not good enough, and I will never be enough.
 - 2 Corinthians 12:9
⁹But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.
- I believe I’ll never feel God as a close friend and never know His presence.
 - James 4:8
⁸Come near to God and he will come near to you.
- I don’t think God will provide when I need Him the most.
 - Psalm 84:11³
¹¹For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

Ultimately, God’s presence accompanies right thinking *and* right doing. Knowledge gathered and meditated upon, but not knowledge *applied*, is useless. The reason so many of us fail to experience God is because we’ve crowded him out with improper thinking and wrong living.

³ The Holy Bible, King James Version (KJV), Psalm 84:11

BECOME

Wrap up the discussion by asking some closing questions. We can **become** more like the people God is calling us to be by reflecting on what we've learned and applying it.

1. Why are we so reluctant to speak truthfully with ourselves? Why do we want to keep our sin so hidden that we can't even acknowledge it to ourselves?
2. How would your life be different if you were willing to give God your mind? If your thoughts were 'true,' 'pure,' and 'lovely,' how might your outlook change?
3. What verses from scripture do you need to meditate on to combat wrongful thoughts? What truth about God are you failing to recognize?