

Message Extras

a little something extra to keep you connected to Jesus this week

Message Extras accompany the [weekly message](#).

One thing that sets human beings apart from the rest of the animal kingdom is that we can have thoughts about our thoughts. Self-talk is part of the human reality.

I believe this self-talk began in the garden of Eden. Right after Adam and Eve greedily snuck a bite of a red delicious apple, their Edenic experience of beauty, joy, hope, and love were ambushed by second-guessing, guilt, blame and self-protection. Genesis 3:8, “When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife *heard* the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they *hid* from the LORD God among the trees.” (See Genesis 3:1-13 for the whole story.) Separated from God by a willful act(s) of disobedience, we are or can be plagued with problematic internal dialogue – thoughts leading to self-condemnation or acts of sin.

Thoughts do matter. This has been a topic of much commentary and “thought” over the centuries. In 270 AD, one monk left the city to live in the desert seeking a life of meditation and “thoughtfulness.” Thousands of Christians eventually went to the deserts of Egypt to shun the world and to think about and contemplate holiness and godliness. These thoughts, passed on through their writings, still impact Christian ideas and understandings today. Specifically, a monk named John Casian wrote, reflecting on James 1:14-15 and other scriptures, about how one thought leads to a second thought. It is the stream of thoughts which create feelings. Feelings energize desires; desires become passions; passions become actions. This process can happen in a split second – a reaction – or over time like a teapot of water coming to a full, whistling boil.

Some thoughts lead to righteousness or right living. We hear something or see something. That creates in us a desire to respond with a helping hand, like opening a door, or a kind word or encouragement or prayer.

Some thoughts do not lead to right living! A glance leads to a thought, thoughts, and unless redirected or distracted, move us to behavior. The glance can be a car, a person, clothes, or food. James describes the process in James 1:14-15. The glance can move us from lust or greed, jealousy, or anger...

The good news is that we humans reflect the image of God, which means we are not locked into sinful patterns. We can think about our thoughts and modify, change, or fix our thinking. We can put to death the desires of the flesh, the natural tendencies and rise to new life in truly Christlike ways. We can substitute negative self-talk and thoughts that give birth to evil. This is the power of transformation through the grace given to us.

Thoughts do matter.

Read Romans 12:1-2. Surrendering our lives to Jesus Christ as living sacrifices guides us to a new way of living. We are now worshipping God with our heart, mind, soul, and strength. Surrender and worship teach us to change the way we think.

What does this passage say about the connection between our thoughts and our actions?

How can this help you redirect your thoughts?

Read Colossians 3:1-2. Another way to put God first in your mind involves focus.

1. On what do you set your mind?
2. What are “things above”?
3. How does setting “your mind on things above” change the direction of your thinking?

Read Philippians 4:8-9.

Jot down the list of ideas the verse says “fix your thoughts on...”

How do these very positive thoughts challenge you or what you normally think about?

Take a moment and think of the times when you **do not** think these things. In other words, take each phrase and write down its opposite.

What is untrue or a lie you believe about yourself or another?

What is incorrect or not right about...

To put God first in your thoughts takes a conscious choice to redirect untruth to truth, from impure to pure, for instance. The sooner you catch yourself in the thoughts, the easier it is to redirect.

To put God first in your thoughts pushes us to scripture. Scripture redefines us or the situation we are in. Scripture is the antidote to the poison of lies and schemes of the evil one. Quoting scripture’s truth about a subject or a thought moves the thought from a lie to truth. Maybe you have been told you’re just a screw up. The Bible says you are God’s child,

joint-heir, brother or sister of Christ, beloved, in the family of God, ambassador of reconciliation. And, that's the short list! We must reinforce our identity in Christ.

To put God first in your thoughts we need to understand who Jesus Christ is. Jump into Colossians 1:15-20.

How does this passage help you think about who Jesus is?

Then, what do verses 21-23 tell us about what Jesus thinks about you?

Go back to Colossians 3:1-4 and think again about how to redirect, redefine or keep God first in your thoughts?

What is one thought you'd like to address in your life?

What scripture will be most helpful to redirect and redefine and think godly thoughts about that issue?

