

How Should We Think

Introduction

Most of the time our thoughts seem to drift at random and perhaps a topic like "How Should We Think" seems odd, but God has given us some guidelines that will help us in this area. What he has told us in his word is much more than just a list of "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not" items. He has given us instructions on how to live, how to have an abundant life.

John 10:10 I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.

What Should We Think About

The Bible tells us in several places what types of things to think about, one of my favorites is in Phillipians. We are given some good general directions on where we should focus our minds.

Phillipians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.

Notice that this isn't just an idea or suggestion, but a command, "think on these things". Often we find our daily lives distracting us into many things, we are tempted to spend too much time thinking about work, or sports, or TV, or whatever, and while these aren't bad things they do seem to fall short of what is expected in these verses. We know from 1 John 5 that God's commands are not burdensome. If we would follow this command to let our mind dwell on good things, I think most of us realize that we would be happier.

Things that are pure and honorable may still seem a bit vague, so you may wonder, what specific good things should I think about? An example from the Old Testament helps here.

Joshua 1:8 The book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.

Here God's people were instructed to meditate on God's word day and night. It is to be with us at all times, not just when we gather together or at other "religious times". It should be ready in our mind as we go about everything in our daily lives. Keeping God's word in our mind helps us to be ready for whatever we face. A very powerful example of this in the Bible is the temptation of Jesus.

Matt 4:3-11 And the tempter came and said to Him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones become bread." But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'" Then the devil, took him into the holy city; and he had him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If you are the Son of God throw yourself down, for it is written, 'He will give his angels charge concerning you'; and 'On their hands they will bear you up lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to him, "All these things will I give You, if you fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Begone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" Then the devil left him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to him.

How Should We Think

We see that Jesus had a ready answer from God's word for the temptations that he faced. Such a focus on God's will would also help us with the temptations we face.

We Must Also Put It Into Action

The things we think about are the things that come out in our lives. If we think about bad things, the result will be bad things that we say and do. If we think about good things, that should result in saying and doing good things.

Matthew 12:35,36 The good man out of his good treasure brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings forth what is evil. And I say to you, that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment.

What is important to us, what we treasure is what we think about. Most of us realize this even from childhood, when we can't stop thinking about some treasure we "must" have. In Matthew we are instructed to be sure that our treasures are in heaven.

Matthew 6:20-24 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal, for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

Sometimes we seem to think not doing wrong things is enough, but we are told in Hebrews that God's word is able to judge our thoughts and the intentions of our heart.

Hebrews 4:1 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Conclusion

In Romans we are taught that we are DEAD to sin. How tempted are dead people? That is what we should be like.

Romans 6:2-4 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

December 1998, Mark May