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SERMON TITLE Capture Your Thoughts

SERIES Matters of the Mind

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KEY SCRIPTURE 2 Corinthians 10:5

SYNOPSIS Think about what you think about, and when your thoughts are not in line with Scripture, choose to believe God's Word. Capturing ungodly thoughts is an intentional, continuous effort.

HIGHLIGHTS



☞ Capture Your Thoughts

You ever let your thoughts run away? Do you get caught up in over-thinking a situation? How about this: do you ever have a complete argument with somebody in your mind before you even talk with them?

Years ago, I was on my way to an appointment with my boss after he called to schedule a time to meet. He did not say what the meeting was about, so I could only imagine. I was sure it was about a particular assignment, and I figured he had some concerns about my performance. So, the internal thought processes kicked into high gear. I imagined meeting up with my boss and facing each other across his desk and, in my mind, he was none too happy with my work. He was going to bring up the assignment and highlight how I had fallen short of his expectations. His expectations were so unrealistic. Nobody could ever meet those kinds of standards. I had done my best, but he would never see it that way. If I tried to defend myself, he would only see it as defiance and then he would get angry and lose his cool. I would either have to suck it up and just take it or risk losing my job. Why couldn't he see how hard I had worked for him? Why was he forcing me to make such a difficult decision over a simple assignment? ...But wait. None of that was true. Everything I just shared was a figment of my own imagination. I was playing out a scenario before it even started and had gotten myself all uptight over what might happen. In the end, the meeting was actually alright. He gave a balanced review of my performance, with only a couple of recommendations for improving. He was actually satisfied with my work. All that stress over nothing. Crazy, huh? But I don't think I'm alone in this. Most everybody has these kind of wrestling matches in their own minds.

☞ 2 Corinthians 10:5

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. NIV

2 Corinthians 10:5

☞ Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; **KJV**

I actually prefer the KJV here as it uses the word “imagination.” I think we all struggle with our imaginations going wild, especially when they are ignited by fear. We often have a brain that is like an author of fiction. It wakes up in the morning and writes its own novel with situations and scenarios, plots and plot twists for us to become engrossed in.

Sometimes we even imagine things that have no basis in reality. In the extreme, it can be something like hearing sirens and convincing yourself they are coming for you. We might laugh, but that can actually happen for some with overactive imaginations. For most, it's much more subtle. Someone looks at you with a smirk on their face and you are sure they are making fun of you or are upset with you. Even more subtle is when someone passes by without saying hi. “They must be mad at me” or “they really don't like me.” These are imaginations. Some are exaggerated truths and some are complete fabrications of our minds and we must deal forcefully with these thoughts.



Demolish/Casting down = This verb has the four main senses **a. "to take down," b. "to tear down," c. "to destroy," and d. "to dethrone."**

The word is in the present tense, meaning it is on-going. This is not a "one and done" event. It is something that continues and happens over and over again. The word is also in the active voice, meaning it requires effort. This is not something that will "just happen." You have to be intentional and forceful over and over again in order to demolish ungodly thinking. Remember also, that ungodly thinking is not simply "anti-God" thoughts, which most believers would easily overcome. Rather, ungodly thinking is anything that is not in agreement with God. Again:

You think it's impossible. That's an ungodly thought because God says nothing is impossible.

You have thoughts of fear. That's ungodly because God has not given us a spirit of fear.

You think you're all alone. That's ungodly because God says he will never leave you.

All of these ungodly thoughts must come down. And they only come down with **intentional, on-going, strenuous effort**. They must be dethroned and destroyed. We often try to simply divert them. We distract ourselves with something, but the problem is as soon as that distraction wears off, those ungodly thoughts are right back at it. They must be brought down and destroyed.

"Take captive" is also in the present tense with an active voice. Here again, to capture our ungodly thoughts requires on-going, intentional effort on our part. Taking them captive means to restrict them and bring them under control.

So, how can we cast down these imaginations and capture these thoughts?

☞ Catalogue your Thoughts

GI Joe said, "knowing is half the battle." We all have an inner monologue. If "crazy" people talk to themselves, then I guess we are all crazy because we all talk to ourselves. I remember as a kid actually having an imaginary group of friends listening to me. It was my way of talking to myself.

As I mentioned last week, we have the ability to sort of stand outside of ourselves and look in to observe our own thoughts. That's what I'm talking about. **Think about what you think about.** Pay attention to what you are saying to yourself. Pay attention to what kind of thoughts are passing through your mind.

Action Step: What thoughts are you (or Satan) telling yourself on a regular basis? Take a few days to listen in. Make a list. Write them down.

☞ Compare your Thoughts with Scripture



2 Timothy 3:16 says, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness”

Once you’ve identified the thoughts that fill your mind on a regular basis, it’s time to take them to Scripture and see how they compare. After all, as Christians, we believe that Scripture is ☞ 100% truth. **So, if God’s Word says one thing and your mind says another thing, YOU’RE the one who is wrong — not Scripture.** There are no exceptions. No ifs, ands, or buts. The Scripture does not apply to “*everyone but you.*”

This means that many of the negative thoughts in your head are just lies, and you don’t have to believe them anymore. In fact, you’re morally obligated NOT to!

- Lie: No one will ever love me. Truth: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” — John 3:16
- Lie: Resisting [this particular sin] is too hard. I can’t do it. Truth: “I can do all this through him who gives me strength.” — Philippians 4:13
- Lie: I’ve messed up too bad. I’m a failure. Truth: “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” — Romans 8:37

Action Step: Head over to Google and type in “Bible verses about [whatever you’re dealing with].” For example, Bible verses about God’s love, Bible verses about how God takes care of us, Bible verses about worry, etc. What does the Bible have to say about the lies you’ve been believing?

☞ **Proclaim the Truth**

So, you’ve catalogued your thoughts and you’ve compared those thoughts with the Scripture in order to identify the real truth. Now, it’s time to proclaim that truth. This is making your thoughts obedient to Christ.

John 8:32 says, “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

☞ Basically, you **choose Bible verses and speak them out loud, with authority**, as often as you need to until you believe them. (*Yes, you can say them in your head too, but out loud is way more effective.*)

- Feeling judged or discouraged over past mistakes? Repeat after me: Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus - Romans 8:1
- Struggling to say no to temptation? Repeat after me: No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what



you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. - 1 Corinthians 10:13

- Worried about your finances? Repeat after me: And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. - Philippians 4:19

Action Step: Speak meaningful Scripture verses out loud, repeat them over and over again, write them down and post them all around your home, do whatever you need to do to replace the lies in your head with God's truth.

☞ Practice

Not many people understand the need to train your mind. Just as athletes wouldn't know the team's playbook without practice, your mind won't know how to think good thoughts unless you train it to do so.

Have you ever been involved in practice? In sports, there are daily practice sessions. In the arts, ☞ there are regular times of practice. What is a key element in practice? **Repetition. Do it over and over and over.**

Now, I wish I could say this is a quick fix, and as soon as you take every thought captive and start proclaiming truth over your life, you'll believe it fully and everything will change right away. Unfortunately, it probably won't. Remember this "casting down" and "capturing" is an on-going, intentional effort.

☞ This means:

- **Choosing** to say "God, I trust you" when you're tempted to worry.
- **Choosing** to say "Thank you for providing for us" BEFORE the blessings arrive, because you have full confidence that He WILL provide - in His perfect timing.
- **Choosing** to say "I am a child of God. I am loved," when you're tempted to berate yourself for your faults and failings.

When you hear these faith-filled words coming out of your mouth, your thoughts will begin to drift in that direction. The more you speak God's promises, the more your thoughts will have to go in the direction of your words. You'll worry less about the doctor's report because you're no longer letting that thought roll around in your head. You're thinking new thoughts based on God's Word.

Sure, it won't be easy at first. Not at all. You're literally rewriting your brain's neurological pathways here. But **the more you do it, the easier it will get!**

☞ Make It a Pattern



Now, this “casting down” and “capturing” is a labor-intensive process until you establish a pattern. Once you establish a pattern, your God-given nature to be habitual will kick in and it will become easier to worry less and speak faith more.

Research shows it takes around 21 days before you break an old pattern of behavior and begin  to establish a new one. So, I challenge you to **take three weeks to practice capturing your thoughts** in an area of thinking that is not aligned with the Word. After that time passes, I believe you’ll see the action of capturing your thoughts become less driven by labor and more driven by reflex.

When you make it a pattern of life to capture negative thoughts, you won’t need to wear out  your willpower in order to change. It will become part of what you do. So **be consistent** in capturing your thoughts and turning them over to Christ. The more consistent you are, the easier it will become to keep your mind aligned with God’s Word.

Anything that doesn’t align with God’s way of thinking is ungodly.

Cast down those imaginations.

Capture those thoughts.

Catalogue your thought life.

Compare your thoughts to scripture.

Proclaim the truth.

Practice, practice, practice until it becomes a pattern.