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**SERMON TITLE** Capture Your Thoughts

**SERIES**

**DATE** 3/30/2025

**KEY SCRIPTURE** 2 Corinthians 10:5

**SYNOPSIS** Capturing ungodly thoughts requires an intentional, continuous effort.

**HIGHLIGHTS**



## ☞ Capture Your Thoughts

### **Pastor's Parable of the Pigs**

*Pigs are stinky, dirty animals. I grew up on an acreage just west of Jefferson, not far from Deal's Orchard. We weren't really farmers but on occasion did have some animals to tend to. One year we had a few pigs which, to my recollection, were up to Dave and I to monitor. Those pigs were kept in a relatively small pen with a watering tank. It was one of those tanks that held a lot of water and had a low to the ground opening with a float valve so the pigs could drink frequently without emptying the tank all at once. Well, as I said, pigs are stinky dirty animals.*

*You've heard the phrase, "root hog, or die?" Well that's because pigs are animals that dig to find roots for food. But they don't dig like a dog with their feet. They use their snout, so they are almost always dirty. Plus, they seem to love being covered in mud. I think it's because they don't have much fur, so the mud prevents sunburn and helps regulate body temperature. So, again, pigs are dirty animals.*

*One of the worst parts of taking care of the pigs was cleaning that waterer. The tank itself stayed relatively clean, but the opening where the pigs would get their drink was often full of junk, because, you guessed it, the pigs' snouts were so dirty. So, occasionally we would have to reach into that opening and pull out all the junk. It was nasty. There were remnants of their feed in there, plus the mud they always had on them, not to mention, since it was a small pen, that mud was not exactly just mud, if you know what I mean. And, during the summer, that small opening for water would warm up while all that junk was in there... peeeww!*

*So, have I mentioned that pigs are stinky, dirty animals? Well, that's not all. They're pretty smart, too. They can manipulate gates and locks if the mechanism is too simple. We may have learned that the hard way, because one time those pigs got out of their pen! So, they were running loose in the yard and we risked them getting completely away.*

*Now, those dirty, stinky, smart animals are also pretty quick on their feet. It was a bit of a circus trying to corral them. You ever been to a rodeo? Sometimes they will have a kid's event where the kids try to catch a young pig. In those instances, they actually grease up the pig so that it's even harder to hold on if you happen to catch them. Even without the grease those buggers are hard to catch.*

*At the time we had two dogs on the acreage and of course they got in on the circus. Our Brittany Spaniel, Ginny, only seemed to understand that we were chasing pigs, which probably didn't really help. If she got close to the pigs, she would nip at their ears, but it didn't have much effect. It was just another obstacle for us and the pigs.*

*The other dog was Jack. Now, Jack was a stray that just happened to stay at our place. He was a Blue Heeler. There's a reason that particular breed is named a heeler. It's not because they make sick things well. It's because they instinctively nip at the heels of livestock. So, when Jack got into the mix, he would bite the pigs' heels and they would immediately drop to the ground. Now, that*



*proved to be very helpful. As Jack would drop the pigs, that gave us an opportunity to get ahold of them.*

*So, the circus continued for a while, but we did eventually get those pigs back into their pen. And, I think we made some modifications to the gate and lock, so it would not happen again. And, I don't think it did. So, the pigs were contained, but they continued being stinky and dirty. And, that's the Pastor's Parable of the Pigs.*

So, what does that all mean? Just like any other parable, there are some parallels we can draw, but we need to keep the main point in mind. Not every part of the story makes a point. But, in this case, the point is this: **sometimes our thoughts are like those pigs** – dirty and stinky, making a mess of things. And, they need to be contained. If not, they can get out and cause all kinds of problems.

Have 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? Or, sometimes, a sinful thought enters the mind and finds a way to run around for a while. Just like the pigs, those thoughts need to be corralled.

#### ☞ **2 Corinthians 10:5 NIV**

**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.**

#### **2 Corinthians 10:5 KJV**

☞ **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;

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. 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 while others are complete fabrications of our minds, and we must deal forcefully with these thoughts.

**Demolish/Casting down = to take down with force; to refute; to dethrone.** Ginny nipped at the pigs' ears and had little effect, but Jack bit their heels and brought them down. Those wild imaginations and sinful thoughts need to be taken down with force. A related word is used in verse 4, where it says we demolish, or pull-down strongholds. Here's the deal... those wild imaginations can become strongholds if we don't control them. A stronghold in this case, is thoughts which are completely wrong, contradicting the truth and the nature of God. And, they



can turn into fortified opinions with little to no basis in reality. Those thoughts must be demolished.

The word for “demolish” is in the present tense, meaning it is on-going. This is not a “one and done” event. It is something we must continue to do over and over again. The word is also in the active voice, meaning it requires effort. You have to be intentional and forceful over and over again in order to demolish those imaginations, arguments and pretensions. We couldn’t just call those pigs back to the pen. We had to run after them and forcefully put them back where they belonged.

☞ All of these ungodly thoughts must **cast 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.

Then, there are other thoughts that may not become strongholds, but just aren’t right. These need to be captured and controlled. This capturing of thoughts also requires on-going, intentional effort on our part. Taking them captive means to restrict them and bring them under control. Pigs in a pen are still dirty, but they’re confined.

--David Guzik... *We are not helpless victims or recipients of our thoughts. We can choose to stop our thoughts and bring **every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ**. Thoughts of lust, thoughts of anger, fear, greed, bitterness, evil thoughts — these all must be brought **into captivity to the obedience of Christ**.*

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

### ☞ **Catalog 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. 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. As I have said the last couple of weeks, **think about what you think about**. Pay attention to what you are saying to yourself. You might actually make a list of those thoughts that are frequently intruding. Then...

### ☞ **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. As Christians, we believe that Scripture is 100% ☞ truth. **So, if God’s Word says one thing and your mind says another, your mind is the one that is wrong — not Scripture**. There are no exceptions. No ifs, ands, or buts.



--Guzik... Carnal and worldly ways of thinking are **arguments** against the mind and methods of God. They want to debate God, saying they have a better way. They exalt themselves **against the knowledge of God**. They think of themselves as smarter, more sophisticated, more effective, more powerful than God's ways. Carnal, worldly minds think they know more than God does!

But, God is always right. Verse 7 says to stop judging by mere appearance, which suggests we need to dig deeper to find the truth. So, compare your thoughts with scripture. Some of those thoughts are driven by feelings and don't line up with the Word. A good friend of mine often says, "Your feelings will lie to you." Sometimes your feelings and thoughts are actually just lies, and you don't have to believe them anymore.

### ☞ **Proclaim the Truth**

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

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

- Feeling discouraged over **past sins** and mistakes? Then quote **Romans 8:1**: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"
- Struggling to say no to **temptation**? Then quote **1 Corinthians 10:13**: "When you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."
- Worried about your **finances**? Then quote **Philippians 4:19**: "And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."

You can create sticky notes or posters to hang around your house so that you can easily quote them. Then...

### ☞ **Practice, practice, practice**

The old adage is "practice makes perfect," but that's not really true. What is true is that "practice makes progress." 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. You choose to ground your thoughts in the Word of God. And, you keep on choosing to do that.

When you hear those 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're thinking new thoughts based on God's Word.



Sure, it won't be easy at first. Not at all. Dr. Caroline Leaf says that with these efforts you're literally rewriting your brain's neurological pathways. But **the more you do it, the easier it will get** - just like practice does with sports and the arts. Research shows it takes around 21 days to 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. This will begin to establish a pattern for dealing with ungodly thoughts.

When you make it a pattern to capture negative thoughts, it will eventually become a normal 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. And, to top it all off, according to **Ephesians 4:23 the Holy Spirit is also working in you to renew your thoughts and attitudes.**

Remember the big picture: We want to be more and more like Christ. To become more like Jesus, we must be transformed, and transformation begins by renewing our minds – changing the way we think. So, those wild imaginations, those untrue, ungodly thoughts must be cast down, captured and controlled. We can partner with the Holy Spirit, trusting him to multiply our efforts to change the way we think.

I don't want any dirty, stinky pigs running around my neighborhood. Do you?

**Cast down those imaginations and capture those thoughts.**  
**Catalog your thought life and compare your thoughts to scripture.**  
**Proclaim the truth, and practice, practice, practice until it becomes a pattern.**