

OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

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SERMON TITLE

Choose Your Thoughts

SERIES

DATE

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KEY SCRIPTURE

Romans 7:15-25

SYNOPSIS

There's a conflict in our minds between the sinful nature and the spiritual nature, but we can choose our thoughts.

HIGHLIGHTS





☞ CHOOSE YOUR THOUGHTS

Review: We are transformed into Christlikeness by renewing our minds - changing the way we think. What we think about has the power to affect our attitudes, behavior, and even the people around us. We need to think about what we think about. And, last week we talked about capturing and controlling our thoughts before they become strongholds which are opposed to God.

--Joyce Meyer... *Once I realized that right thinking is vital to victorious living, I got more serious about thinking about what I was thinking about, and choosing my thoughts carefully.*

☞ CONFLICT IN THE MIND

☞ Romans 7:15-25

15 I do not understand what I do. For **what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.** 16 And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. 17 As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. 18 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. 19 For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do — this I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. 21 So I find this law at work: **When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.** 22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law; 23 but I see another law at work in the members of my body, **waging war against the law of my mind** and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God — through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Have you experienced this kind of struggle? I know what I want to do, but I don't actually do it. I know what I shouldn't do, but then I do it. It can be something as simple as diet and exercise. I know I should cut back on sweets, but I can't seem to get control of it. And, I know I need to exercise more, but I tend to just do the minimum. And that is just about physical health. Spiritual health is even more important. You want to read your bible and pray more often, but you don't get around to it. You know that sinful behavior needs to be put to rest, but you can't quite shake it. It's a struggle we all face.

--C.S. Lewis... *"No man knows how bad he is until he has tried to be good."*

Paul's problem isn't a lack of desire – he *wants* to do what is right. His problem isn't knowledge – he *knows* what the right thing is. His problem is a lack of *power*: (*I cannot carry it out v. 18*). There is a conflict in the mind. When you come to Christ and give your life to him, he begins a process of renewal in you. You are born again, a new creation, with a new spirit, but **you still** ☞ **have the old mind and flesh**. Everything about this old flesh stinks of the sinful nature, which is at war against the spiritual nature. The deciding factor is in the mind, which is in constant conflict.



Sometimes we don't know what to do and that simply requires us to look into the Word or seek counsel. But the truth is that we usually do know what to do, we simply lack the ability to actually do it. There are times we aren't motivated enough and we can try to pep ourselves up, but often that doesn't actually work. And there are tons of self-help resources available, but even then, we don't make any progress. There's a real problem here. We don't need a motivational speaker or coach or some guru – **we need a savior**, and that is Jesus Christ, the Lord.

--David Guzik...

*There is victory in Jesus! Jesus didn't come and die just to give us more or better rules... The ☞ message of the gospel is that there is victory over sin, hate, death, and all evil as we **surrender our lives to Jesus** and let Him live out victory through us.*

☞CONNECT WITH GOD

24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God — through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So, if Jesus is our savior who gives us victory over this conflict in the mind, then we need to lean into him and draw on his strength. We need to connect with God to win the conflict in the mind. We must choose to draw closer to the Lord. We must choose to love him wholeheartedly.

Matthew 22:37

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'

To love God means to feel strong affection for him and to express those feelings in word and action. To love God is to be completely content with him, no matter what else happens in life. And to love God means an absolute **commitment to him**, regardless of circumstances.

God expressed this kind of love for us in John 3:16. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." The Lord showed his feelings of affection in action, and it was a huge commitment to send his son. God chose to demonstrate his love for us.

☞We also, can **choose to love God with all our heart, soul and mind.**

Loving God fully includes not just feelings and actions of obedience, but also thinking in a way ☞that honors God. The mind has to do with **reasoning**. We can systematically and logically look at the ways God has worked in our lives and then express gratitude for it. Taking the time to analyze God's work in your life will help you to love him.

The mind also includes memories. Memories lead to gratefulness and worship. When we use our ☞minds to **remember** His kindness, faithfulness, patience, peace, etc. we love God with our remembrance. It's the same in relationships... sometimes you may not feel all lovey-dovey, but if



you stop and think about how that person has positively touched your life, it can rekindle some feelings. So, love God through reasoning and remembering.

And then, to love God with all our mind also involves taking time to fill our mind with God's Word, by reading and **research**. Knowing truth and loving God are deeply connected. Jesus is the Truth. As our mind grows in the knowledge of Jesus, we are liberated to love Him more.

The problem is that our minds get filled up with a lot of stuff. There're bills to be paid; there's to-do lists; there's long-term planning; there's even just daydreaming and wild imaginations. Our hearts and minds can be so easily distracted from focusing on the Lord and connecting with him.

Jeremiah 17:9

The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? NLT

This verse reaffirms the fact that there is an inner conflict for all of us. And it adds the clarifying truth that we can't really trust ourselves, because our **hearts and minds are deceitful**. In fact, in several places the bible talks about deceiving yourself. Therefore, we must choose to connect with God. The Lord is the only one who can properly deal with the battle in our minds. So, our minds need to connect with him.

☞ CONCENTRATE ON HEAVENLY MATTERS

This train of thought – conflict in the mind and connecting with God – continues into chapter 8 of Romans.

☞ Romans 8:5-6

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but **those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.**
6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.

Colossians 3:1-2

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, **set your hearts** on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **Set your minds** on things above, not on earthly things.

Interestingly, there's actually two different words that are translated as "set." In verse 1, the word is "zeteo," which suggests to "keep on seeking with your heart." In verse 2, the word is "phroneo," which suggests to "**keep on thinking (about heavenly matters) with your mind.**" It's an ongoing, purposeful action. Choose to keep on seeking; choose to keep on thinking about the Lord.

Psalms 27:4

One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.



☞ This speaks of a **high priority**. This is the main thing. Think, meditate and reason on the things of God. Read your bible; dig in and study it. Pray, asking the Holy Spirit to focus your attention on spiritual matters. And, there's a reward for this – the mind controlled by the spirit is life and peace.

--Dallas Holm...

Some people say you can be too heavenly minded

To be of any earthly good

But I don't think you can be too heavenly minded

In fact, I think that thinkin' bout Heaven is good

So I think about...

Heaven, Heaven

Heaven, it's always on my mind

Concentrating on heavenly matters is more than just imagining eternity in heaven. It's about focusing on spiritual truths instead of earthly values. Set your minds on things above – those things are greater than the natural. It's easy to focus on the negative and get caught up in sinful thinking. We must make an effort to concentrate on godly matters. You can choose what you think about.

☞ **Philippians 4:8-9**

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever 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.

It's a matter of the mind. There's a conflict in our minds between the sinful nature and the spiritual nature. We cannot win the battle in our own strength, so we must connect with God and concentrate on heavenly matters. We can choose our thoughts.