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Encountering Christ Helping Others

CAUGHT THOUGHT

**Do you want the GREATEST change in your Christian walk?
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I cannot escape the importance of conveying this information any longer! The ravages upon our society have skyscraped to new levels. Many people have ignored the importance of taking their thoughts captive. The dominant presence that this should occupy within our lives has been relegated to unimportant and rarely discussed. The evidence of this neglect is now manifesting everywhere. Wild and crazy thoughts, once dismissed as nonsense, are now considered and acted upon routinely. The moral compass of many people, which had historically aligned with Biblical principles, has been set by the wayside. The “anything goes” mentality has swept humanity like a rushing wind. This has created a barren landscape in our psyche without any anchor points to ground us.

Consequently, self-centeredness and lack of compassion for others are the norm. We are reaping the fruits of this neglected principle coupled with walking away from the one true living God. Our

society is now spiraling into a bottomless pit of darkness, possibly to levels never experienced before.

We must take control of our thoughts, especially in this current paradigm. The benchmark established eons ago desperately needs to be implemented again. Our science and technology cannot fix this problem no matter what man thinks he can achieve. There are supernatural forces at play that have largely been dismissed as fantasy. Our thoughts are fluid and ever-changing, more often than not affecting our eternal destiny. Many forces feed into the stream of thoughts. Some of them are not good at all and should be rejected immediately. We must gain the ability to manage the thought stream and only act upon what will give us the desired results, which is the true character of Jesus Christ. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control. How would you like this existence to describe your life every day? An awareness and understanding of our thought stream are much more important in our lives than we could possibly imagine.

Christians like myself are largely to blame for the catastrophic effect on our society. We don't practice taking our thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ, on a regular and consistent basis. We have miserably failed and are failing daily. This cascade effect of failure has permeated all of our society whether

you're a believer or not. Because the Christian collective has failed in such a monumental way all of civilization is quaking in the wake. If we were navigating the thought stream as intended by our Creator, the impact on society would be evident. That in itself is proof that we have failed.

By faith, there will be some who receive what is written here and be able to take their thoughts once again captive. If you are a sincere-hearted follower of Jesus, this is a must-do daily responsibility that we have. This will convince you that there are forces at play in this world that we don't fully understand. After you have contemplated what is said and tested some of these principles yourself you may realize the great importance of the connection to Jesus. After all, I wholeheartedly believe He is the way, the truth, and the life. There is no one else to fulfill that role except for Lord Jesus!

For much of my life, I neglected or even considered spiritual matters to have any significance or importance. Through countless real-life situations, the importance of this principle began to manifest in my mind. The staggering importance of taking our thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ is accelerating in my awareness in an unstoppable fashion. The understanding that I have now is elegantly simple but massively complex and has a far-reaching impact. When

taking our thoughts captive is considered in nearly every circumstance there seems to be an application that exists.

With a surrendered heart and a sincere desire, we can be on the path to being more Christlike. This process becomes exponentially enhanced when we begin to master the art of taking our thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ. To be completely successful, we can only do so through the power of the Holy Spirit operating in us. I don't know if there's anything else I can point to that has impacted intimacy with the Lord more than this, except of course learning to love the Lord with all my heart, mind, soul, and strength. As believers, we are under a constant barrage of ill-intended thoughts propagated in a fallen world that wants to do everything it can to prevent us from manifesting the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. When we realize that multiple thoughts/roadblocks have been actively at play in preventing us from hearing the HIS voice we should do everything possible to stop it.

Here's an interesting question to ask yourself. How many times do you get a crazy thought in your mind and you wonder where in the world did that come from? I can think of many times this has happened to me. Sometimes, I have had quite disturbing evil thoughts that would come out of nowhere and enter my normal thought stream. A lot of us just chalk it up to noise in our heads that somehow comes

from something we've seen or experienced. This was my assumption for most of my life, even though some darker thoughts left me contemplating where they came from. But now, my thought stream and conscious awareness are experiencing a level of peace that never existed in my life before.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6 NASB1995

*Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised against the knowledge of God, and **we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ**, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.*

This verse serves as a place marker for many other verses to be tied to. Our beloved Savior Himself was a Master at this practice during His earthly ministry. Can you imagine after fasting for 40 days and being tempted by the devil the thought wash your mind would've been exposed to? The ability to focus on a single-minded objective would be impossible, but not for Him. How wonderful that our Lord sent the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth. Because of this, the same

strength operating in Jesus Himself can operate in us. The issue is, that we don't know how to resist the enemy and take our thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ!

Inquiring of the Holy Spirit is the first step in a much closer relationship with the Lord. This process should become a lifestyle choice that encompasses nearly everything that we do. When we master the act of inquiry, it has to be in partnership with submission. Merely asking the Holy Spirit for guidance and direction in all situations is not enough. We have to be submitted to **His** authority in our lives. Coupling these two actions together is what helps solidify a deeper relationship with the Holy Spirit. The outcome of this coupling is receiving supernatural guidance and direction. There are other similar indications in Scripture. Knock and the door will be open. Seek and you will find. A compelling verse that should be memorized by all, fits into the same category.

1 Corinthians 10;13 NASB1995

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

This verse also demonstrates the principle of inquiring, submitting, receiving, and obeying. Once we have a conscious awareness that we are being tempted, inquiry into the way of escape is paramount. Upon receiving the way of escape i.e. prayer, Bible reading, talking with another mature believer, or whatever the Holy Spirit recommends is the best way to avoid trouble. By our submission, we ended up receiving it. What do we receive? The ability to endure it through obeying! Thank you, Lord Jesus! We can see in this verse the application of taking our thoughts captive. The more we allow our minds to be cluttered with unnecessary or even evil thoughts the more difficult it is to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit.

The realization that our minds are the battleground is evident in Scripture. Paul tells us in Ephesians that we do not fight against flesh and blood but against principalities, powers, and dominions. Even though we do not see these things in the physical realm they exist and largely manifest themselves as thoughts to get their will done. This means anything they can do to draw us away from God and cause destruction in our lives, they will do. We should guard our minds as closely as we would our children in a room full of pedophiles. Imagine how alert you would be in such a situation. **Is that alertness still at play with your thoughts?**

We must remember the methodical nature that the enemy implores to get us into a weakened state. As our weakened state increases his ability to push more destructive thoughts also increases. This is how someone can spiral down into suicidal thoughts. The devil is a coward and will use any despicable method necessary to achieve his goal. They are all introduced into the thought stream and if we are not diligent in discerning the good and evil intent behind these thoughts we most definitely will be tripped up. Many Scriptures can help strengthen us in this area. Two in particular can act as our guide rails to keep us on track.

Galatians 5:22-23

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control; against such things, there is no law.

Philippians 4:4-9

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice! let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in

Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of a good report, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, please do, and the God of peace will be with you.

The fruit of the spirit was first demonstrated by Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus also said we will know them by their fruit. Our actions at all times and all places should be able to be viewed as someone demonstrating the fruit of the spirit. The only way this is possible is by continuously inquiring, submitting, and receiving the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit. We will fail every time without Him. What is the root of that failure? Not looking for a way of escape and inquiring. Lack of exercise of our free will correctly leads to disobedience to our Heavenly Father. Which results in grieving and quenching the Holy Spirit. His desire to lead us in difficult situations is present and continuous. We should desire wholeheartedly to live no other way than this. I regret the time in my life that I rejected His continuous counsel. But now I am here to testify that there is real transforming power in these principles. They are His principles, found in the Word, now replacing mine. If I had not experienced it myself, I absolutely would not have believed it.

There is a chance that we can act out this behavior under non-stressful circumstances. A false persona can be put forth and in many situations seem convincing. In high-stress events where unpredictability exists, our true nature will be revealed. I have never seen anyone be that good of an actor who can mask the true conditions of their heart in a highly stressful situation. Only true ignorance would believe that we can fool God with any of our human antics. When we are in a relationship with the Lord the pure unadulterated truth of who we are is seen before Him. When this reality becomes something we are very thankful for, our growth will accelerate. We should continuously ask the Holy Spirit if our actions align with the description of what the fruit of the Spirit should be. And when it doesn't we should gladly and cheerfully accept corrections to be more in line with them. Taking our thoughts captive, which would lead us astray from demonstrating the fruit of the spirit is critical. I am thankful that Paul gives us such a concise and simple description in **Galatians 5:22-23**.

In Philippians, we have multiple examples of taking thoughts captive. These verses are worthy of dissecting particularly in the area we are discussing. Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice. Aren't we instructed here always to rejoice? This would imply that any thoughts that come to our mind contrary to this should not be considered. Be anxious for nothing. How many of us violate this daily?

I have failed in this area nearly my whole life. But now, I diligently pursue taking those thoughts captive. We are to come to the Lord with prayer and supplication letting the request be known to God. What is the result of this? The peace that passes all understanding will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. That sounds amazing and something we should pursue, but do we?

When we begin to consider the importance of taking our thoughts captive as we read all Scripture, the magnitude of its importance begins to emerge. Let's focus for a moment on Philippians 4:8. I will slightly paraphrase this. These are the things that we should think about. Things that are true, honorable, righteous, pure, lovely, whatever is of good report, anything that is excellent and worthy of praise think on these things. For the most part, this should become a rigid hard stop of where we allow our thoughts to go. When we do this it becomes a training tool for our minds to be captive takers instead of thought gluttons.

How many times have you found yourself on the hamster wheel of intrusive unproductive thoughts? The enemy loves to get us there and keep us there. When he is successful, we become nearly useless for the Lord. After having this happen to us repeatedly, it seems as though we would get smart and avoid his tactics. Instead, we continue in almost total defeat, never experiencing consistent

victory in taking thoughts captive. The realization that we are to be holy as He is holy should give us a tangible filter system. This filter system can be very basic and only capable of separating the biggest chunks of wrong thinking. Or it can be a continuous path of improvement that is far more effective. We should want our filter system so advanced that the smallest micron size wrong thought is strained out. Especially, those that come against who we should be as servants of the Highest. Praise the Lord, He has provided, and that's why we are instructed to take our thoughts captive.

Psalms 119:9-11 NKJV

*How can a young man (or woman) cleanse his (her) ways?
By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.*

Without directly saying it, this verse certainly talks about the ability to take our thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ. Think about it, the destructive action of sinning always starts with a thought. Let's take a look at the filter system that we have once again. During the construction process of this filter i.e., adding God's word to our heart. This means we don't operate as **I know His Word but as I do His Word**. Knowing and doing are vastly different realities. For most

of my life, upon hearing different Scriptures I would think," I've heard that, I know that," but rarely do I do that. Praise the Lord I handle this much differently now. Through the constant training of the Holy Spirit, every sermon I listen to, every Scripture I read, and every challenging comment from a brother or sister is now processed as, am I doing that? In other words, am I completely obedient to the Word?

When we allow the Holy Spirit total access to our hearts, we can have a running checklist as to whether we are doers of God's word or hearers only. If we are doers then there is a continuous sanctification process in our lives to become more Christlike. This is imperative. The interesting thing that the Holy Spirit has revealed is this. During the process of making a multilayered filter system, i.e., shrouding ourselves with the Word of God, the filter becomes self-sustaining. What do I mean by this? As we hide God's Word in our hearts we are being transformed more into His image. Jesus did who He was. There was never a time that He pondered a thought long enough to lead to sin. As we become more Christlike in our behavior we too can experience that. We just do who He is. This is a process however and will never take place unless we have a sincere surrendered and committed heart to follow in His footsteps.

The process of doing can only take place when the Holy Spirit is firmly in control of our surrendered will. This is a marvelous

inspiring existence to experience. Deep humility must accompany this awareness knowing that it's only possible because of Him. Thank you, Lord Jesus! As we become little children, the ability to go from one awe and wonder event to another is anticipated. The only place that we can experience the peace that Jesus gives us is in the constant awareness of the Holy Spirit operating within us. I desire to convey the most concise way possible concerning doing, instead of knowing. When this takes place in us the lessons concerning being a kingdom thinker are much more readily available. There is a paradigm shift of great magnitude. The gift of free will is demonstrated in one of the greatest magnitudes when we learn to push the pause button on our thought stream. At that moment, once we hit the pause we invite the Holy Spirit to interject. This is a natural and continuous process for our Lord Jesus. He was always inquiring as to the Father's will. Lord help us do as You did!

During our Lord's ministry here on earth He had direct interaction with His disciples. This interaction is very revealing as we become more aware of the importance of taking thoughts captive. Peter was very much wholehearted and exuberant in his actions concerning the Lord. Because of this, we find him smack dab in the middle of situations resulting from not taking his thoughts captive.

Matthew 16:22-23 NASB1995

Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." but He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

Our Lord's response to Peter is quite forceful. But now, with the mindset regarding the importance of taking our thoughts captive, it seems entirely appropriate. The phrase, "for you are not setting your mind on God's interest," is significant for us to understand. We must know how easily we can be tricked into thinking the wrong things. What's even more startling is that, just before this, Jesus had made some amazing revelations. They were to Peter concerning the knowledge he had regarding Jesus being the Messiah. I believe there is something important here for us to learn. Humanity has some extreme vulnerabilities, especially in the area of pride. Since this issue was not addressed directly, I will present it as a possibility. Let's look at what Jesus said to Peter just before this exchange.

Matthew 16:15-19

He (Jesus) said to them this, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God." And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."

If the Messiah spoke these words to me, I would feel lots of pride at the doorstep knocking. Did Peter receive these words from Jesus which caused pride-induced confidence? If so, could he have become emboldened to respond to Jesus later the way he did? Regardless, it is clear that Peter's mind was focused on things in this world and not on the kingdom. How many times do we jump right back into worldly thinking, instead of keeping our minds fixed in the kingdom thinking mode? This is very easy for us to do, so that's why continual conditioning to be kingdom thinkers is a must. There are other areas we could evaluate Peter's behavior to gain further insight into taking thoughts captive. Walking on water and denying of Christ would be good examples. I believe by faith that the Lord does not

want me speaking of things that I myself have not first gone through the fire or am going through the fire now. The importance of our testimony brings the most honor and glory to His name. Failure in my strength leads to victory in His strength. Through this understanding, we can humble ourselves and know the absolute importance of being surrendered to His will in our lives.

Colossians 3:1- 1-10 EASY

*God has raised you with Christ to a new life. So you should want more and more of the things that belong to Heaven. That is where Christ is now. He sits there at God's right hand. So think about the good things that are there in Heaven above. **Do not think only about things that are on the earth. Remember that your old nature has died.** God is keeping your new life safe with Christ. You have that new life because you belong to Christ. One day, Christ will show Himself clearly to everyone. Then everyone will see that you are with Him. They will see that you are also great like He is. Your old nature likes to do bad things that belong to this earth. But your old nature is dead, so do not do these bad things anymore. Do not have sex with someone that you are not married to. **Do not think bad, disgusting thoughts.** Do not want to have sex in the wrong way. Do not want to do any kind of bad things. Do not want to have many things for yourselves. That shows that you worship those things as*

*your idols. God will certainly punish people who do those kinds of bad things. At one time, you lived like that. You did those kinds of bad things. But now you must refuse to do all kinds of things like that. Do not become angry with people or shout at them. Do not do anything or say anything that will hurt other people. Do not speak any bad or disgusting words. **Do not deceive each other with lies.** Remember that you have taken off your old nature, like an old coat. **As a result, you can stop doing all the bad things that you liked to do before.***

When the inward born-again process picks up momentum within us, how we treat others becomes much more Christlike. Because of this, the Lord had prepared me to handle situations with an individual that previously in my life would've been impossible. When we see evidence that our behavior has drastically changed, then we can do nothing but glorify the Lord for His presence manifesting within us! The compassion for humanity that had to be in place, dealing with this individual was many levels beyond anything I could muster. Because of this, I was able to experience the awe and wonder moments of the Lord as I dealt with this person. We will call him Tom from this point forward.

Tom was incarcerated for 17 years starting at the age of 17. There had been many short-term stays in juvenile detention before his last stay. He was plagued with anger issues, drug abuse, gang

affiliation, and several other troubled behaviors. The attempted murder of a police officer with a knife started his long-term incarceration. In prison, according to his own words, he got into over 200 fights. While in prison he had solitary confinement totaling nearly seven years. I can't even begin to imagine how that much solitary confinement would play on someone's psyche. Tom reported that it was only because of Jesus that he could get through that time. In addition to this, according to him, he ran different gangs inside the prison. The demonic strongholds that had developed inside of him were multiple. He would get this cocky grin on his face when this demonic presence would speak to me. He told me that Satan hated me and hated the fact he couldn't get to me. I believe there are many reasons for that, but all of them fall under the category of thank You Lord Jesus it's because of You.

I want to highlight some situations involving Tom not taking his thoughts captive. So here's a bit of a back story to help you better understand my interactions. Tom was a perpetual liar and manipulator. Sadly, even his mother and brother stated this during conversations with them. My wife and I spent much time with him, both in person and on the phone. We got to know him in that time more than we would someone we had known for six years. We began to hold him much more accountable regarding the words he spoke. He did not like this and made threats to our well-being multiple times.

There was one night, in particular, that stood out. He had threatened to send his gang of associates out to care for us. This guy had been involved in serious evil. In fact, according to Tom, Satan's disciples had been tattooed on his back. This was the name of one of the gangs he was affiliated with. Also, he had cut himself multiple times nearly leading to his death. At least one time he lost so much blood he had to be taken to the hospital and have many pints of blood transfused. I believe all of this was a form of sacrifice to Satan, the one he served. Regardless of these things, there has been a love and deep concern for this guy. Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit, gave me the ability to do that. I never would've been able to endure his antics on my own. Thank you, Lord Jesus!

One night he threatened us and I had to battle fear that something bad was going to happen. My wife didn't seem to be bothered by it one bit. **No thoughts of fear were allowed to take root in her mind.** For me, It was pretty much a sleepless night. I looked out the windows and down our driveway multiple times expecting someone to roll up. I kept this hidden from my wife as much as possible. About three hours into this I received revelation, this was a spiritual battle largely centered **on taking thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ.** After continued prompting by the Holy Spirit, I rejected the fear and sense of vulnerability that was looming over me. I believe this was the first time I sensed such a massive relief and

thankful heart when those thoughts were taken captive. It was like turning the light switch off. **The fearfulness that was allowing those thoughts to continue had been disconnected.** This probably marked the point in my life that taking thoughts captive would be a daily priority.

I realized the whole event surrounding us has multiple layers of lessons. The underlying reasons for my behavior were rooted in a lack of faith. Now I can say, the fear of anything happening to my wife and me is gone. Trusting in the Lord in all things is now part of our operating system and is on a daily basis. When I think of the thousands of hours wasted in my lifetime on useless, unproductive thoughts, I am grieved. I desperately want to share this new understanding with others. **Taking our thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ is a real and tangible reality that drastically changes our lives.** Everyone who has ever experienced victory in this area will attest to the goodness of the Lord. Before moving on, I would like to make a few more comments about Tom. Typically, I would've given up on him a few days or weeks into the relationship. But, I believe the Lord wanted to demonstrate a type of unconditional love that He had instilled in me towards Tom. When I look back on all the difficult situations, I can say beyond a shadow of a doubt, that this compassion that operates in me now is not from me but, from my Father in Heaven. When people ask me how I know if God or Jesus is

real, “This is how I know!” This essential missing ingredient of “unconditional love” from our beloved Father in heaven is exactly what we need to have implanted in our inner most being as we face each and everyday.

The Lord has prepared me over the years to be fully transparent, by doing this it puts me at a high risk of being judged by others. I was guilty of the same kind of behavior, judging others, most of my life. But now, I operate under a different paradigm. I will gladly be a fool before man than a fool before God. The power of our testimonies is based on what Jesus is doing in our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit. The next situation that we're going to discuss, I would never have been ready for, if it wasn't for the combination of many experiences that the Lord had me go through. Had the Lord not allowed me to experience these things, I would have been useless and unable to have the understanding that was needed. Knowing what eternal love, the Corinthians chapter 13 type, is of the utmost importance.

This world is blanketed with a demonic presence which tries to infiltrate and seep into every crack and crevice of our being. Primarily this darkness manifests itself as intruding thoughts which go against God's ways.. We know our battles are not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of

darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. (Ephesians 6:12) All the evil we see in this world has its starting point as a thought. **Without the ability and knowledge to take thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ, our lives can become shipwrecked on the island of despair seemingly with no way of escape.** I believe this is a primary reason why suicide is so high in this world, especially in western culture. The Lord allowed another situation to come into my awareness involving a husband and wife.

When the details behind this learning opportunity were revealed, I must say it was quite shocking! It would have been easy for me to take sides, showing either favoritism or condemnation to each one. The situation unfolded and the ability to love them equally was demonstrated. This too, was just as shocking! I knew the kind of person I had been for decades and how I would've responded, instead, a vastly different loving response unfolded. Without the perfectly crafted lesson plan the Lord had prepared me with, this wouldn't have been possible. I believe by faith, the Holy Spirit had prompted me to start writing about taking thoughts captive several months before I became aware of what was going on with them. The burden of communicating the importance of this to others took on a far greater dimension as time passed.

Our beloved friend was the catalyst that brought all this to the forefront. This man is gifted with the presence of the Lord uniquely operating through him. He has just as in-depth a relationship with my wife and me as he does with many others. We marvel at how the Lord brought him into our lives and has used him in so many instrumental ways. We are thankful that this brother in Christ also has a strong relationship with the two I speak of. The Lord has a unique way of preparing those who want to serve Him. These two individuals in particular had an accelerated learning program that the Lord needed them to go through. I believe that is why this particular situation was of a substantial nature that had to be dealt with to serve the Lord wholeheartedly.

My wife and I ended up doing a 10-week discipleship program with these individuals, in a very unconventional way. We had them act as the teachers discussing with my wife and I as if we were the students. I do believe by faith this is what the Holy Spirit wanted. Through this time together, we have seen a substantial transformation, although it is still in its beginning stages. The vulnerability that is still at play is not taking thoughts captive consistently. Fortunately, the Lord has given me just enough understanding to realize how massively important this is, because I've experienced these things firsthand in many in-depth ways. I desperately want others to experience the power of the Holy Spirit

empowering us beyond what we can imagine. **The paradigm shift in behavior is squarely a result of taking your thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ.**

Since the Holy Spirit has kept my thoughts and emotions in check consistently. I'm able to look at their relationship interaction and see things that need to be adjusted by both parties. In fact, at times it becomes very obvious that taking thoughts captive needs to be developed so that breakthroughs can occur. What an incredible opportunity they have at such a young age! When they allow the Holy Spirit to solidify the importance of taking thoughts captive, a much deeper understanding will await them. I desire to understand, in the simplest terms, how to love the Lord the most I can and how to serve Him the most I can. I will try to illustrate how the Lord wants me to operate.

Imagine our thought stream as a river. In that river is every thought that comes and goes from our minds. The Lord has given us a great filter system for this river. Earlier in this writing I mentioned something important enough to revisit. We live in a world where filthy demonic thoughts run everywhere. This is like polluting toxic water and where does this sewer water run? Right into our thought stream. Unless, we focus diligent attention to prevent it from happening, this means there must be impenetrable barriers that will not allow this to

happen. It seems like an impossibility, but it's not. I am not yet at the stage where I can say this happens to me all the time. However I have seen enough victory through the power of the Holy Spirit to know this is the right path to be on. On this path, truly experiencing the peace that passes all understanding it does becomes reality. This is the barrier the Lord has had me place in my consciousness.

First and foremost, I realized that the word of God has all the necessary tools. As was stated earlier in Psalms 119:9-11, we cleanse our ways by absorbing God's word and converting it into action. What does this mean? We must be dead to ourselves! Resistance to God's ways must no longer exist within us. In the beginning, this was very difficult. Our self wants to maintain control between our flesh and the enemy. Many thoughts will enter our minds to distract us from being all we can be in Christ. When we begin to taste the goodness of our Lord, on ever-increasing levels, supernatural transformations happen! **We realize there's no better place to be than as close to Him as possible. To do this we must be actively and consistently taking our thoughts captive.** Below is a diagram of what should capture our thought stream.

This side lies in **Galatians 5:22** and always demonstrates these characteristics:

Love – joy – peace – patience – kindness – goodness – faithfulness – gentleness – self-control

Our thought stream Our thought stream Our thought stream.

This side **Philippians 4:8** think and speak on these things:

Whatever is true – noble – just – pure – lovely – good report – virtue – praiseworthy

When we keep our thought streams encased with these two scriptures the majority of taking our thoughts captive is done. When we decide to love God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength then adapting scriptural to guidance becomes much easier. Then the cluttered overpowering thoughts that are so invasive in our minds melt away. This is truly a different way of existing. Every child of God owes it to the Lord and themselves to have a focused, peaceful existence where the Creator of the universe is the centerpiece of our lives!

The Lord continues to unfold the **absolute necessity of taking our thoughts captive**. I would say, beyond a shadow of a doubt, it is the number one weapon of warfare against the enemy. Satan's main tactic is to feed us thoughts to get us to do his will. Which, in most cases, elevates pride within us so that we become

useless to Our Father's Heavenly Kingdom. When pride continues to manifest in our lives, we fit quite nicely into the beast system or satan's kingdom which is dominant on this earth right now. We must disassociate our connection with this earthly reality as much as possible.

When we submit to God and resist the devil, he will flee from us. Then we can start exercising the upper hand against his tactics. Not only does it come in very useful when we are dying to the flesh but also in picking up our cross daily. It even goes further than this in quite an astounding way. The Lord has been putting on my heart in a major way the importance of not being offended. I'm sure that many individuals who are close to me have grown quite tired of hearing about it. We have a home church group that meets during the week. There have been three situations where one individual was offended by things that were being said, to the point of becoming confrontational.

The Lord has been training me not to fight against flesh and blood. I want to be effective in causing fear in the enemy by having authority over them. I have to focus on the battle against principalities and powers and dominions that rule in this world. Consequently, I back away from confrontational situations very rapidly. My battles are primarily spiritual for the life of the brothers and sisters around me. Let

me make it clear right now that it's the power of Jesus Christ working in me and the finished work of the cross that makes this battle against the forces of darkness even possible. Christ's heroic efforts that involve us already have claimed victory. The enemy is eternally defeated and has been sentenced to life in the lake of fire. The only thing is that his sentence has not begun yet, so we are left here to contend with him. Thank goodness the Lord Jesus says He will never leave us or forsake us.

The Lord gives us everything we need to be overcomers. That means, believe it or not, overcoming all willful and conscious sin in our lives. If we are not achieving this, it boils down to a lack of two things. **A total surrendered heart to our Lord Jesus and always looking for a way of escape when tempted.** I asked the Lord to give me clear-cut Scriptures that I could point to regarding the imperative nature of not being offended. Thank you, Lord Jesus, He indeed showed me and it had far greater ramifications than I could've imagined.

Matthew 24:10-13 AMPC *And then many will be **offended** and **repelled** and will begin to **distrust** and **desert** Him whom they ought to trust and obey and will **stumble** and **fall away** and **betray** one another and **pursue one another with hatred**. And many **false prophets** will rise and **deceive** and **lead many into error**. And **the***

love of the great body of people will grow cold because of the multiplied lawlessness and iniquity, But he who endures to the end will be saved.

I must say I was quite shocked at the revelation of this Scripture. The word offended was also used in several other versions. But the AMPC version gives us a more fitting description of how serious the condition of being offended truly is. It seems to indicate by the Scripture that we open ourselves up to many other things through offense. It is almost as if it gives the enemy an access point to us on several different levels. The action of being offended is the kickoff event that will lead to several very evil un-Christlike behaviors. The word is used to connect repelled, distrust, desert, stumble, fall away, betray, pursue one another with hatred, false prophets, deceive, lead many into error, the love of the great body of people will grow cold and multiplied lawlessness and iniquity. **All of these behaviors are a result of not taking thoughts captive.**

Matthew 24:10-13 NKJV And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

The NKJV Scripture is a bit less descriptive but still a shocking revelation. After being offended we will betray one another, hate one another, more false prophets, many will be deceived, lawlessness will abound and the love of many will grow cold. I had considered offense in my heart for quite some time. For most of my life, I fell victim to the tactics of the enemy and was offended often. By the continued impressions put on my soul by the Holy Spirit, I paid greater and greater attention to it. Now it becomes crystal clear why. Do we want to put ourselves in such a vulnerable spot where our offense could lead to so many sinful actions?

I listened to a testimony of a former warlock explaining the tactics that were used by the demonic realm. This person met with high-ranking members of a satanic order to plan ways of disrupting the body of Christ from interfering with their evil plans. Most likely, there were fallen angels, or principalities, powers, and dominions, who were directly involved. There was one pastor and 20 illiterate women who joined together for six hours a day to come against the forces of darkness. This group had made a commitment before the Lord to pray 6 hrs a day for 90 consecutive days. They were located in Ghana where witchcraft is quite strong. and I can attest to this personally because of an affiliation with an organization that has worked in Ghana. Where demonic things have occurred.

This satanic cult gathered together in Sicily to orchestrate a plan of action against these prayer intercessors. The prayer intercessors were dedicated to six hours a day, but they also swore to a covenant before the Lord concerning their 90 consecutive day commitment. It was a very very serious undertaking that they had all agreed upon. The strategy of the satanic cult was to infiltrate this group in the most kind and helpful way possible. They were instructed from the beginning to find the person, from the prayer intercessors, that they could get to be offended. **The strategy that the enemy came up with relied upon offense to do the dirty work.**

It was discovered that one of the women who was a intercessor had unforgiveness in her heart towards her mother. She had never fully dealt with this unforgiveness before the Lord. With this information the satanic cult could now take action, so a couple of women volunteered to join the group. After getting cozy with everyone their diabolical plan was put into play. One of the days when they gathered together, one of the plants from the enemy launched the plan. She went to the woman that had been offended years ago in emotional distress telling her how her mother had done something horrible to her. In an instant, the woman who had never forgiven her mother was offended. This initiated emotional responses which led her to lash out at the pastor causing the group to disband from their

covenant of 90 days of prayer. The awful thing about it was they were at day 89, one day short of the promise.

In the situation I just shared with you, I have no absolute proof that what was stated was completely accurate. After listening to this three-hour video, I felt that it was truthful. Our Lord Jesus tells us plainly what offense will lead to if we allow it to take root. In addition, this Scripture cautions us even more. When we tell the Lord yes, we will do something, or no, we won't, there should be zero wavering.

Matthew 5:37 NKJV: But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes' and your 'No' be 'No.' For whatever is more than this is from the evil one.

When we set a difficult commitment before the Lord and make a covenant with Him, He takes it very seriously, as He expects those who made it to be also. Because this was a difficult and longer duration commitment by the prayer intercessors, great restriction in the demonic realm would have been the outcome. The satanic cult was convened in Sicily on day 69. The intercessors prayers were beginning to send shockwaves through the demonic realm. Had they completed their covenant the restriction on evil would have been far-reaching and powerful. Imagine this great outpouring of the Father's power, which was ready to be unleashed on the demonic realm, but it was stopped because of offense. **This is why we must diligently**

learn to be an overcomer and never be offended. The Lord could call upon us any day to do a mighty deed and most likely the enemy will come at us and try to get us offended. We have no excuse to allow that to happen. Thank you, Lord, for making it clear to us the chain reaction that can be initiated by offense.

I believe, through the word of God and the multiple situations I have experienced, I can make this statement. We will not fulfill the perfect will of God until we realize the necessity of always taking our thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ. This is the foundational reality in spiritual warfare. The cluttered chaos the enemy wants to push into our minds can be completely stopped. When it is, the peace that passes all understanding becomes our new reality. This is the pathway of living fearlessly against the forces of darkness. When we remove Satan's primary battle tactic we can understand this Scripture more fully.

Colossians 2:15 NKJV *Having disarmed principalities and powers, made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them.*

The only way to live in the victory that our Savior secured for us is to take away the biggest weapon the enemy uses against us, which is the continuous machine-gunning of wrong thoughts. We must rely on the Holy Spirit to give us ultimate control over our thought

stream. Only then can we exist in the power and might the Lord intended us to walk in. From this day forward every time you read Scripture ask yourself this question. Does this indicate the necessity of taking our thoughts captive? I'm going to list several scriptures that talk about peace and rejoicing. When I was pressed in my spirit to look at Scripture from that standpoint, it became clear why there has been such a paradigm shift in the reality that I now live.

Philippians 4:6-7 **Be anxious for nothing**, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Our clear assignment here is," Do not think about anything that causes you to be anxious." When we exercise this completely, the result is experiencing the peace of God that surpasses all understanding. This has now become the norm in my life, not the exception.

1 Peter 5:6-7 **Therefore humble yourselves** under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

The enemy is constantly looking for entry points into our lives through pride. We must be vigilant at taking any thought captive that doesn't demonstrate personal humility. Remember, God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

***Isaiah 26:3 AMPC** You (God/YAH) will guard him and keep him in perfect and constant peace **whose mind, both its inclination and its character, is stayed on You**, because he commits himself to You, leans on You, and hopes confidently in You.*

Is there the slightest possibility that we could experience this without taking our thoughts captive and only staying fixed on the Lord? Taking our thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ is demonstrated in this verse.

***John 14:27 AMPC** Peace I leave with you; my peace I now give and bequeath to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. **Do not let your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.** Stop allowing yourselves to be agitated and disturbed, and not permit yourselves to be fearful and intimidated and cowardly and unsettled.*

How can we possibly not let our hearts be troubled or afraid unless we diligently take our thoughts captive? Nearly the whole versus, stated above, talks to us about what thoughts we should take

captive. The way I read this, these are must-do things if we want to experience the peace that our Lord Jesus is talking about.

Colossians 3:12-15 NKJV *Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, **put on** tender mercies, kindness, military, meekness, long-suffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, **you so also must do**, but above all things **put on love**, which is the bond of perfection. And **let the peace of God rule in your hearts**, to which also you are called in one body; and **be thankful**.*

Think about these verses from this perspective. Any thoughts that come into your mind that would prevent you from doing these things need to be taken captive. Maybe now you can begin to see that many scriptures assume we can take our thoughts captive. Remember we are to come against any thoughts that prevent us from following the obedience of Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:16:22 *Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, **and give thanks in everything**; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecy. Test all things; **hold fast to what is good. Abstain from every form of evil**.*

Imagine following these Scriptures as much as humanly possible. Our life would experience a gigantic paradigm shift. But why hasn't it? Because we have not mastered the wonderful tactic of taking our thoughts captive. This is a primary ingredient of exercising our free will. How many times do the thoughts we let in our minds come in direct conflict with what the Scripture says?

Matthew 5:11-12 NKJV *Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

Let's be honest here. How many of us can go through persecution and have all kinds of evil things spoken about us and not have it affect us? I certainly need continuing training in this area to exercise it, as stated. But I know this to be true; taking our thoughts captive is the gateway to rejoice and be exceedingly glad.

Romans 12:14-16 AMPC *Bless those who persecute you and are cruel in their attitude toward you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, sharing others' joy, and weep with those who weep, sharing others' grief. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, snobbish, high-minded, or exclusive, but*

*readily adjust yourself to people and things and give yourself to **humble** tasks. **Never overestimate yourself** or be wise in your conceits.*

The following verse tells us many things that we should not do. Again, this is only possible if we take our thoughts captive, the ones that do not fit into this framework. I know this seems a bit repetitive, but it's imperative to realize how important this concept is, especially when it comes into play when battling against the enemy.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a NKJV *Love **suffers long** and is **kind**; love does **not envy**; love does **not parade itself**, is **not puffed up**; does **not behave rudely**, does **not seek its own**, is **not provoked**, **thinks no evil**; does **not rejoice in iniquity**, but **rejoices in the truth**; **bears all things**, **believes all things**, **hopes all things**, **endures all things**. **Love never fails**.*

We have all heard this verse from Philipians many times and probably at some weddings. But how well do we do at taking our thoughts captive so that this kind of love can manifest within us? Instead of forcing ourselves to be obedient to Scripture maybe we should remove the thoughts that come against it instead. I believe this path would lead us to obedience to Christ.

Philippians 4:8-9 NKJV Finally, brethren, whatever things are **true**, whatever things are **noble**, whatever things are **just**, whatever things are **pure**, whatever things are **lovely**, whatever things are of **good report**, if there is **any virtue** and if there is anything **praiseworthy**—- meditate on these things. **The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.**

Do you believe that there's any possibility that I am exaggerating concerning taking your thoughts captive after reading these verses? The Word clearly states we are to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. I would say more than 90% of my failures before the Lord inadvertently were because I did not take my thoughts captive. Until I experienced these things firsthand, I realized the simplicity and power of God's Word when we utilize it as intended. Once the Holy Spirit gives you victory in one area of your life you will have an insatiable appetite to apply it to all areas. Executing this principle is the only way to effectively battle against the enemy and become all we can be in Christ Jesus.

2 Corinthians 10:5

Be ready to wage war against any thoughts that try to interfere with anything our Lord Jesus said or did. And don't give up until you have

vacated those thoughts from your premises/mind. Then we will be able to walk as He walked!

Paraphrase Matthew 24:10 AMPC

Don't ever be offended! If you do, you become a target for satan. He will try to get you to distrust, desert, fall away, betray one another, and pursue one another with hatred. Don't give him this chance ever!

I am blessed with several individuals in my life with whom the Lord continuously knits us together in one accord. This is a beautiful and fulfilling blessing we experience as a body of believers. It can never truly exist if there is any dominant person who is driven by pride. When humility is a general characteristic shared by all the Holy Spirit can simultaneously work through a group of individuals. You will know when this occurs as the Lord will speak through each person in a way that compliments the message the Holy Spirit is trying to deliver. This rare and precious experience hinges on the focus being placed on Jesus Christ and everyone's actions collaborate to keep the focus there. We must learn to walk in the spirit continuously or this will never happen. When we experience this as a group, the group gets to experience the awe and wonder of the Lord together! This should be our desire every time we gather.

You may wonder, how this fits into taking our thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ? When the Lord shows us fruit that comes from being in one accord, we can receive an unexpected revelation in a powerful way. My brother and I were going to be discussing a topic in a group setting. Normally he leads with a topic and I follow with continued teaching the same subject. Almost instantaneously there seems to be one accord between us with hardly much discussion whatsoever. On this occasion, when he shared his thoughts, I didn't have an instant direction from the Holy Spirit like I normally do. My reaction was not to quickly challenge or question him, but to allow the Holy Spirit to reveal to me what my role was to be in it. Most of my life the response would've been not spirit driven. As I gain more understanding in the area of taking thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ, I realizing more and more the implications it has on our walk with the Lord in almost everything.

The topic he started with was how church hurt or just being hurt by someone can lead to unbelief. So when my brother told me this, I never questioned him whatsoever because I trusted the Holy Spirit would bring me up to speed. I started looking up scriptures about being hurt and unbelief. After a short time, I believed by faith, I was to look up Scriptures about rejoicing, joy, and thankfulness. I must say, at first it seemed a bit odd, but I trusted the Lord and was thankful for His guidance.

As it turned out, I believe by faith I came to a deeper understanding. Our awareness of having the right attitude when we may not have direction can largely affects how we respond and to be fruitful and it. Allowing the Holy Spirit to guide and direct us in responding is the best way to handle a situation. It prevents the enemy from interfering with our Father's will. When we truly realize that God causes all things to work together for good for those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose, It is if we shift to another conscious awareness where His peace that passes all understanding is a prevailing reality. This is a glorious place to be and I have a strong desire to always stay in.

Luke 6:22-23, *Blessed are you when men hate you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. **Rejoice** in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.*

Colossians 1:24, *I now **rejoice** in my sufferings for you and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church.*

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, **AMPC** *Be happy, in your faith, and **rejoice** and be glad-hearted continually always; Be unceasing in prayer, praying perseveringly; Thank God in everything no matter*

what the circumstances may be, be thankful and give thanks, for this is the will of God for you who are in Christ Jesus the revealer and mediator of that will.

James 1:2-4 NKJV, *My brethren, count it all **joy** when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*

Isaiah 29: 19, *The humble shall also increase their **joy** in the Lord, and the poor man shall **rejoice** in the holy one of Israel.*

Habakkuk 3:17-19 AMPC, *Though the fig tree does not blossom and there is no fruit on the vines, though the product of the olive fails and the fields yield no food, though the flock is cut off from the fold and there are no cattle in the stalls, Yet I will **rejoice** in the Lord; I will exalt in the victorious God of my salvation! The Lord God is my Strength, my personal bravery, and my invincible army; He makes my feet like hinds' feet and will make me to walk, not to stand still in terror, but to walk and make spiritual progress upon my high places of trouble, suffering, or responsibility!*

Colossians 3:17 NKJV, *And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus **giving thanks** to God the Father through Him.*

Psalms 100:4-5 AMPC, *Enter into His gates with **thanksgiving** and a thank offering and into His courts with praise! Be **thankful** and say so to Him, bless and affectionately praise His name! For the Lord is good; his mercy and lovingkindness are everlasting, His faithfulness and truth endure to all generations.*

Colossians 2:7 AMPC, *Have the roots, of your being, firmly and deeply planted in Him, fixed and founded in Him, being continually built up in Him, becoming increasingly more confirmed and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding and overflowing in it with **thanksgiving**.*

May you realize how important it is to **take our thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ!** Especially when the enemy/sin nature is lurking at the door to come in with negative sinful thoughts daily. When we rejoice, give thanks, and experience the joy of the Lord, we are taking a stance against the enemy and not allowing any of his fiery darts to penetrate our thought stream and disrupt who we are in Christ. In the past, I would agree, in principle with the Scriptures

that I listed, however, now I understand more fully the importance of my obedience to what the word of God tells us.

The enemy does not want to stay around when every negative thought he tries to get us to adopt as our own is rejected and replaced with thankfulness. I suspect this really grinds him, and he will flee. Many times, I have mentioned how the Lord only wants me to write about things that I have experienced firsthand. In compliance with His will, He has allowed me to experience some physical ailments most recently. This has resulted in seven months of being unable to sleep in a bed. I have sensed the enemy's barrage of thoughts attacking me with intentions of disrupting my peace in the Lord. I am very thankful to the Lord for allowing me to experience physical pain without any disruptions in His peace that passes all understanding.

The Lord's faithfulness has allowed me to endure a situation and stay focused on the lesson, not the circumstances. We serve a wonderful Holy Presence! When we discard all the wrong thinking, destructive attitudes, self-pity, and negative thoughts the enemy throws our way, our understanding of what the Lord is trying to teach us becomes much clearer. The most amazing thing about this experience is that when we implement these principles from the Word, we all have the opportunity to enjoy the peaceful outcome. Having greater peace means we can become a more usable servant with

increasing discernment from the Holy Spirit, and experiencing a new reality based on our Lord's peace that passes all understanding. This is available to all of us. Thank you Lord Jesus for the finished work through You completing the Father's will perfectly. **WE LOVE YOU!**

Please answer yes or no to the following questions

1. Do you allow lustful images and thoughts to be considered in your mind?
2. Do you allow anger to cause you to act in an un-Christlike way?
3. Do you consider yourself better than anyone else?
4. Do you love money, and what can it do for you?
5. Do you think you deserve special attention?
6. Do you place your love for anything in this world above your love for Jesus?
7. Do you live for yourself more than you do the Lord?
8. Do you ever think about ungodly repetitive thoughts?
9. Do you entertain thoughts of not being worthy before the Lord?
10. Do you find yourself getting offended easily?
11. Do you make excuses for your actions instead of taking responsibility?
12. Do you always look for the fault in someone else before you do yourself?

13. Do you like it when it seems as though your answer was received the best in a group?
14. Do you secretly enjoy it every time you're complimented?
15. Do you ever allow yourselves to be glorified by others?
16. Do you feel stubborn and sometimes don't want to submit to Scripture?
17. Do you ever have envious thoughts about someone else?
18. Do you ever complain because you don't have what so-and-so does?
19. Do you get easily sidetracked when praying or reading the Scriptures?
20. Do you ever want to have revenge on someone?

This is just a shortlist. **If you answered yes to any of these questions** you are a perfect candidate, to begin a spiritual discipline, of taking your thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ. When we understand the power the Holy Spirit wants to unleash through us in this area, our lives will be changed in ways we never imagined possible. The enemy has methodically worn us down almost invisibly. This is causing us to be far far weaker than we need to be. In addition to that fear has crept in. Taking our thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ is one of the most essential tools we must know how to utilize. The Holy Spirit is an endless stream of power that helps us understand this completely. Many people now testify that applying

these principles has been life-changing. All of us can receive because our Savior freely gives. From my perspective, I don't believe it's possible to experience the peace that passes all understanding, that Jesus talked about until we master taking our thoughts captive to His obedience.

Keep reading and rereading this booklet until you completely understand and adopt these principles. Thank you, Lord Jesus. All honor, glory, and praise to You, our beloved Savior! You will be blessed and amazed by the results!

