

# Mind Games



## A Mantour Ministries Bible Study

Join us as we study Philippians 4:8 and see how we can practically apply it to our lives.

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# *Introduction*

Did you ever wish the Bible contained a complete and unedited list of rules and regulations for what a Christian should and should not do?

Don't go here. Instead, go there.

Don't watch this television show, but this one's okay.

Read this book, but avoid this one because it's sinful.

Sometimes it seems like this would make life so much simpler.

Unfortunately, the Bible doesn't give a complete list of all the books, movies, television shows, music, etc...that you should and should not focus your mind on. That would be ridiculous and impossible. However, Philippians 4:8 gives us a fairly comprehensive set of guidelines that we are commanded as Christians to obey.

*"Finally, brothers and sisters, 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."*

In this new e-book, "Mind Games" we're going to look at each one of these guidelines individually and see how following Paul's instruction can revolutionize every part of our lives.

Just what does it mean for us to experience a "revolution" in our lives?

Well, a revolution is a sudden, complete or marked change; a dramatic and wide-reaching change in conditions, attitudes, or operations. It means a dramatic change in ideas or practice.

The best picture we have of a revolution is a political revolution, where the existing government is overthrown and a new government or political system takes over. Everything changes. The balance of power and authority shifts from the old government to the new government and new rulers.

Historical events like the American Revolution and the fall of Communism paint vivid pictures in our minds that define the word “revolution”, proving that whenever there’s a revolution the old is gone and something new has come.

Ironically, these are the same words that Paul uses to describe what happens in a person’s life when they become a Christian. *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”* (2 Corinthians 5:17)

When we get saved, we go through a personal revolution. When we join the family of God, we leave the kingdom of Satan and all of its ways.

*“For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves,”* (Colossians 1:13)

*“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.*

*But because of His great love for us, God, Who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved”* (Ephesians 2:1-5)

Now, as citizens of God’s kingdom, we are called to follow His ways, obey His Laws, and live our lives in conformity with His will.

*“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”* (Ephesians 2:22-24)

Essentially, we are called to have a revolution! As Christians, we are commanded to throw off the sins that are connected with our old way of life in the kingdom of Satan and passionately pursue a new way of life in Christ. God is calling

His Men to get serious about abandoning the ways of Satan's kingdom and wholeheartedly pursue everything that He has made available to us in His kingdom. It's time for a revolution!

So where do we begin? How do we begin to answer the Holy Spirit's call to rise up and start our own personal spiritual revolution?

Let's take a look at Romans 12:1-2 to find the answer:

*"Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will."*

In these verses, Paul is calling on the people of God to start a revolution. He's urging them to wholeheartedly and completely dedicate their lives and their bodies to God. He's commanding them to abandon their old ways of life, the patterns of the world, and start living according to the rules of God's kingdom.

Essentially, he's saying, "Start living your life according to God's will for your life--live by His kingdom plans, purposes, and Laws. Dedicate yourselves to fulfilling your spiritual destiny. Stop living according to the ways of this world and live God's way."

How does he tell them to do this?

He tells them to *"be transformed by the renewing of your mind."*

Interesting, isn't it? Paul doesn't sit down and write them a list of do's and don'ts. He doesn't lay out a map of permissible and impermissible behaviors. Instead, he says that the key to living a revolutionary life in Christ begins in our minds.

I don't know about you, but when I think about making changes, I usually think about actions. However, Paul teaches that before our actions can change our minds must be changed.



Why? Romans 8:5-8 says: *“Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.”*

*The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.*

*The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.”*

Wow! Do you see how clearly Paul explains that our actions follow our minds? That’s why it is so important that any spiritual revolution begin with our minds.

Again, a spiritual revolution resembles a political revolution. If you’ve been watching the news lately, you’ve heard about various countries in the Middle East that are in the process of overthrowing their government for the purpose of establishing a new government. One of the determining factors that the news media uses to report on which side is winning the battle is which side is in control of the strategic areas of the country: the capital city, the airports, the major cities.

In our spiritual revolution, the most strategic area in a human being is the mind. If the mind is always on sinful, fleshly desires, a person will most likely be living a defeated Christian life. However, if a person’s mind is controlled by the Holy Spirit, then He is in control of that person’s life.

Whoever or whatever has control of the mind has control of the entire person. That’s why it’s so important that we obey Paul and *“we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:5)*

Now let’s get really practical. How exactly do we obey this verse?

That’s what we’re going to talk about throughout the rest of this book. We’re going to look at Paul’s command in Philippians 4:8 and try to discern line by line where Paul says we should focus our minds. We’re going to go beyond the obvious, and see how focusing on the opposite of each of these guidelines could be the very reason that



many Christians continue to be held in bondage, never experiencing all that Christ has for them. In each chapter, we'll talk about practical things that you can do to help you start renewing your mind and focusing on things that will make you spiritually healthy. As we take this journey together, we'll uncover the mind games that our enemy uses to keep Christians in bondage, and form strategies for how we can overcome these mind games and win the battle for our souls.

Are you ready for a revolution? Then let's start studying, "Mind Games".

# **Chapter 1**

## **“Thinking on things that are True”**

***“Finally, brothers and sisters, 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.”***

***Philippians 4:8***

What does it mean to think on things that are true?

**True means** the opposite of false. It has the sense of valid, reliable, and honest.

Truth is a representation of things as they are.

Vine, Unger, & White’s, “An Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words” defines true as “actual, true to fact, conforming to reality, factual”.

It seems like a simple definition---the opposite of lies. However, living a culture that is filled with lies makes a Christian’s need to focus on what is true a critical factor in renewing our minds.

Everywhere we look, we are surrounded with lies. Each day, the plethora of entertainment outlets available to us speaks lies in our minds about what is right and what is wrong, what is acceptable and what is unacceptable. Constantly, we are lied to about what is normal, what is healthy, and what is socially acceptable. We’re told lies like:

God did not create the world; we are all the product of evolution.

All roads lead to Heaven. Christianity is only one of many religions, all leading to the same place.

You must be tolerant and accepting of all religions, never telling anyone that their religion is wrong.

We must be tolerant and acceptable of all lifestyles. People have choices and there is no such thing as sin.

Even within some churches, we are told to compromise our standards of morality in the spirit of tolerance.

However, all of these statements are lies.

There are absolutes. There is only One True God Who created the world and is still in control of it. He sent His One and Only Son, Jesus, to die on the cross and redeem mankind from their sins. He is the One and Only Way, the Truth, and the Life.

The Bible is God's Word. It speaks ultimate truth. Within its pages, sin is clearly defined. So is the path to salvation. Those who choose to accept Jesus as their Savior will spend eternity with Him. Those who reject Him will spend eternity in Hell. Although these may sound like harsh realities, they are reality.

As Christians, we need to keep these fundamental truths of our faith in the forefront of our minds, and not allow ourselves to be deceived by the lies of a culture that tell us otherwise. We stop being light in a dark world, because we're more comfortable blending in.

When we lose sight of Biblical truths and allow lies to put us into a state of spiritual anesthesia, we lose the very essence of who we are as Christians.

These truths are the basis for our life and they define our purpose and our calling on this earth. They are what drive us to abandon ourselves, follow God wholeheartedly and do our part to fulfill the Great Commission.

No wonder our enemy is working overtime trying to get us to replace these truths with lies! It is up to us to choose whether we will believe lies or truth, based on where we choose to focus our minds.

You see, it's very, very easy to get sucked into the culture of lies. For instance, a few months ago, my sister and I were going through a very difficult time. When the end of the day arrived, it was easy to crash in front of the television and watch a popular

comedy that propagated many of these lies. Honestly, it was a really funny show and it took our minds off of the stressful situations in our own lives. Night after night, we compromised and allowed our minds to dwell on lies disguised as sarcastic humor.

Then one night, Adessa had a terrible nightmare. In the dream, someone I was very close to was openly tolerating games of witchcraft. Shw woke up completely livid thinking, "They better not fool around with things like that!"

Then the Holy Spirit said to her, "You're the one who's fooling around with things like that by watching a comedy where people joke about these types of games."

When she told me her dream, it was like someone hit me between the eyes! Like the frog who didn't realize he was being cooked for soup because the temperature of the pot was rising slowly, I didn't realize that I was giving ground to the lie that the lifestyle of the people on television was normal. Quickly, I repented and that was the end of that show!

This is just one of the techniques that our enemy, the devil, uses to hold Christians captive to lies. Another of his popular tactics is causing us focus on and believe lies about ourselves.

"You'll never amount to anything."

"You're not worth anything more than an abusive relationship."

"Who do you think you are to believe that God has an amazing plan for your future after what you've done in the past?"

Like videotape, we replay these words spoken to us by other people---parents, teachers, friends, former spouses or girlfriends, co-workers---over and over again in our minds. As we replay the episodes over and over again, they become ingrained into our minds and control our lives. Sadly, there are women reading this article that have been held in captivity for ten, twenty, thirty years or more by LIES that were spoken to them or about them.

However, a large part of learning to think about things that are true, is making a conscious effort to replace the lies that play like videotape through your mind with the truth that God speaks in His Word about you.

Rather than focusing on the lie that you are worthless, you need to think about and focus on the truth of **1 Thessalonians 1:4** **“For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that He has chosen you.”**

Instead of listening to the lie that you aren’t capable, think about **Philippians 4:13**, **“I can do all this through Him Who gives me strength.”**

A large part of learning to think about things that are true, is making a conscious effort to replace the lies that play like videotape through your mind with the truth that God speaks in His Word about you.

Rather than believing the lie that you have no future, quote **Jeremiah 29:11**, **“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”**

Both lies and truth are powerful tools, each carrying the power of life and death. The amazing thing is that both are within your reach.

The choice is yours: Will you focus on lies you’ve been told or the truth in God’s Word? Depending on your choice, the life that hangs in the balance is your own. If you want to choose life, you will need to make the conscious choice to obey Paul’s command and focus on the truth.

One final trap that Satan has been using on Christians has a twist of irony to it. Unfortunately, it’s been quite a successful tactic. Here it is: **He’s deceiving people with the lie that lying is no big deal.** Again, he’s using the media and popular entertainment to accomplish his dirty deed.

Think about it: how many times have you been exposed to a form of entertainment that uses comedy to spread the message that lying is no big deal--- everybody does it? How often do we watch people lie, cheat, steal, and betray each other without getting caught while we laugh at each punch line?

Unfortunately, the joke is on us. As we watch, our consciences slowly becoming duller and duller toward lying. Soon we believe that lying is no big deal as long as no one gets hurt. Next, we convince ourselves that it's okay to lie to keep someone from getting hurt. Ultimately, lying becomes a regular part of our lives and the result is that lots of people get hurt.

As I know from the personal experience of living with a father who called himself a Christian but had a major problem with lying, it is a big deal. It steals, destroys, and kills families, relationships and reputations. It isn't funny, and the repercussions aren't all wrapped up in 30 minutes. That may be the lie that Hollywood wants to portray, but reality is that when trust is lost, it takes years to get back---if it can ever be fully regained.

As Paul said, we should not be thinking about these types of things. Our entertainment choices should promote truth, honesty, faithfulness, and loyalty to commitments. As Christians, our media choices should reinforce our values, not tear them down. Even during our time of rest, we should be focused on renewing our minds, not filling them with lies.

Someone once said, "You are the same today as you will be in 5 years except for two things: the books you read and the people you meet."

In our multi-media age, I would have to add the movies and television shows you watch, the music you listen to, and the games you play to this list. Even with my additions, the point is the same. Each of us is influenced by the outside influences we let into our lives. As Christians, we need to ask ourselves, "Am I being influenced toward good or evil, lies or truth?"

As we said before, truth is the opposite of lies. It's a small definition, but it speaks volumes. When Paul commands us to focus on what is true, he is also commanding us to turn away from lies. As we actually stop and look at how prevalent lies and lying are in our world, it may seem like impossible.

However, don't all revolutions look impossible when they start?



Hasn't every major change in the history of the world started when the seemingly weak said to the oppressive giant, "I've had enough---you're not going to control me anymore? I'm going to be free!"

This is what I believe the Holy Spirit is calling each one of us as members of His Body to rise up and say. Personally, I believe that one of the best places we can start is with the stronghold that lies has on each of us individually, as a corporate church, and as a nation.

Now is the time for us to stop tolerating and condoning lies. We must stop compromising and filling our minds with lies.

Today is the day to stop believing lies about the world, ourselves, and our God. Instead, we need to be obeying the words of Paul and focus on the things that are true. We need to renew our minds with God's Word and recommit ourselves to living by His standards and His principles.

Each day, we need to make the conscious choice to turn away from lies in all forms and turn toward truth. Once again, we need to view our world, our relationships, and our lives through God's eyes---the eyes of absolute, ultimate, unadulterated truth.

It's time to start a revolution. It's time to overthrow lies with truth by thinking on things that are true.

**John 8:32 "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."**

# **Chapter 2**

## **“Thinking on Things that are Noble”**

**“Finally, brothers and sisters, 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.”**

### **Philippians 4:8**

When we started our study, “Mind Games” I thought, “Writing this series will be a breeze.” After all, “Whatsoever things are true” was simple enough to understand and discuss.

Then I sat down to focus on this month’s topic, “Whatsoever things are noble”, and I have to admit that I walked away from the computer more than once. Because while “truth” is a word that’s easily defined, I really struggled to find the meaning of the word “noble” and how it could be applied to our lives. Before long, I realized I’d have to pull out the commentaries and do some heavy research if I was ever going to figure out what the Apostle Paul was trying to say.

Let the studying begin!

The first thing I learned was that I wasn’t the only one struggling with the meaning of this word. (Mostly every commentary pointed out that this was a hard word to translate). It comes from the Greek word “σεμνός”, pronounced “sem-nos”. It means “venerable or reverend”.

After looking up “venerable” in the dictionary, I found that it means, “Something, hallowed, reverend, sacred, or grave.”

I have to admit that when I first read these definitions I wasn’t sure how we, as Christians, could find practical application in our own lives. Was the apostle Paul saying that as Christians, we should focus all of our attention on the serious, the sacred, and the reverend and grave matters of the universe?”

I knew that if this was true, I was going to have a difficult time writing this article. After all, this isn’t what my real life looks like. I don’t spend my days in a monastery contemplating the great theological issues of the universe. I’m definitely not always

serious. Quite the opposite! When you really get to know me you'll find that I like to laugh and have fun with my friends, sing my favorite songs at the top of my lungs, and crash in front of a family-friendly comedy or action flick.

If you were in a room with my sister and I and our friends, we wouldn't be the people texting LOL on their /-phones. No, we'd be the people actually laughing out loud and having a blast. Any kid's class that I teach is always the loudest in the building, and I try to incorporate as much fun into our learning as possible.

So as I came across words like, "Grave, serious, reverend, and venerable", I wondered, "Is the Apostle Paul saying that the freedom to enjoy our lives in Christ is wrong?"

Better keep studying.

As I studied, I realized that the confusion I was feeling was actually one of the biggest mind games that Satan uses to draw Christians away from the path of following Christ. He does all that he can to paint a false picture of Christianity as joyless, serious, morbid and grave. As he did with Eve in the garden many years ago, he points out all of the things that Christians can't do. He tries to get us to focus on the forbidden rather rejoice in the garden we've been given.

The enemy wants Christians to believe that the Christian life is meant to be somber and miserable and the only road to joy is through disobedience to God's commands. Yet, nothing could be further from the truth!

This is a deceptive trap that the enemy wants Christians to believe. He wants us to believe that the Christian life is meant to be somber and miserable and the only road to joy is through disobedience to God's commands. Yet, nothing could be further from the truth!

In these verses, Paul isn't giving us guidelines that will remove joy from our lives, rather, he is setting boundaries to keep us from experiencing pain, danger, and physical, emotional, and spiritual injury. After all, doesn't Paul say at least 16 times in

Philippians that Christians should “rejoice” or “be filled with joy”? Why would he tell us to remove all joy from our lives?

There must be a clearer meaning to this word “sem-nos”. So back to the books I went. Before long, I found these definitions.

“Sem-nos” means “honorable, lofty, majestic; not vulgar or ignoble”.

John MacArthur defines it as “worthy of respect”.

It didn’t take more than a few hours for me to understand exactly what this Scripture is trying to say. Now I understand that Paul wasn’t saying that we need to remove all happiness, joy, and pleasure from our lives, but rather that we need to find pleasure and enjoyment in things that are honorable and worthy of respect rather than in things that are vulgar and of low character---debased. Throughout the book of Philippians, Paul encourages us to rejoice and be joyful; he just doesn’t want us to find our joy in filthy garbage.

Yesterday, as I was pondering the meaning of these verses, I was reminded of the difference between what is honorable and what is vulgar---the noble and the profane. As my eyes were opened, I understood, “So that’s what Paul’s saying we should avoid.”

It all started when a friend recommended a music video. I’m not sure what I expected to find, but it wasn’t what I saw. Immediately, I was shocked by the vulgar lyrics and the borderline pornographic choreography. Clicking it off I thought, “What’s honorable about that?”

What’s honorable about a scantily dressed girl pressing herself up against a boy trying to seduce him?

What’s noble about a woman throwing herself at a man offering him anything to want her?

Why are we supporting an artist who promotes demeaning women and treating them like objects?

What about self-respect? What about teaching our young girls to be strong independent women? This video was complete garbage!

That's when it clicked---the Apostle Paul wasn't saying don't listen to music, he was saying, "Choose to listen to good music. Music that lifts your spirit, inspires you toward higher ideals, and encourages you to be a better person. Don't fill your mind with vulgarity and disgusting images, fill your mind with images of hope, love, encouragement and joy. Choose what is honorable and noble."

Fast forward a few hours while I ate dinner, helped with the dishes, and put in a few more hours of work. Feeling tired, I clicked onto FACEBOOK, to check my messages before relaxing for the night. That's when I saw a short video clip that a fellow minister had posted of a baby laughing hysterically whenever the parent tore paper. The caption read, "If you're having a bad day and need a laugh, keep this to play as many times as necessary. You'll almost certainly feel better."

The caption was true! This video was hysterical! I couldn't help but laugh out loud as I watched this adorable little one laughing their head off at the sight of ripped paper.

Just like Proverbs says, **"Laughter is good like a medicine."** (Proverbs 17:22) There's nothing like a good laugh to help you relax, make you feel better, and change your entire mood. It's a gift that God has given us. Personally, it's one I take advantage of quite often finding humor in many areas of our lives.

I don't believe that God ever meant for His people to be known as the "sour-puss club". Again, Paul encourages us to **"Rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say rejoice!"** (Philippians 4:4)

Joy is listed among the fruits of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22)

Like music, laughter is not something that God wants to remove from our lives. In fact, it's probably something He'd like to see more of in our lives. Rather than discouraging us from laughing, the instructions of Philippians 4:8 simply challenge us to find humor in honorable things rather than in vulgarity.

Jokes don't have to be dirty in order to be funny. Comedy doesn't need to be cruel, hate-based, or profane to make us laugh. In fact in my experience, those types of jokes don't usually make you feel good. They usually make you feel uncomfortable or dirty---most of the time they aren't even that humorous.

Rather than looking for humor in vulgarity or inappropriate topics, as Christians, we can enjoy the humor in the noble, honorable, normal things that are all around us. Again, it's about changing your palette and choosing to develop a taste for good, clean, admirable comedy rather than the vulgar and the profane.

Well, after the Holy Spirit took two different opportunities to explain to me the meaning of the word "noble", you'd think He'd be finished for the day. Not in my world! Instead, right before midnight as I was preparing to turn into bed, I once again checked my FACEBOOK looking for a message from a friend. Instead, my eyes landed on a passionate discussion about whether or not a Christian young woman should read a popular new book.

What impressed me the most about this conversation was the boldness with which several slightly older women in the church discouraged her from reading this book and encouraged her to strive toward nobility in her life. They called the suggested book exactly what it is: porn for women, and they encouraged our young friend to look for reading material that encouraged purity of mind and heart. Telling her that they wanted the best for her life, they spoke from the heart about their experiences, and suggested she find something else to read.

Simply put, they were encouraging her to focus on things that were noble, honorable, and worthy of respect. Just like the Apostle Paul, they were encouraging her to walk away from the temptation to focus on the vulgar, the profane, and the things that are shameful and focus her mind on more noble topics.

You know what? These were not cranky old ladies with nothing better to do with their time than sit in judgment of others. I know these ladies personally. They are funny, dynamic, strong, out-going women who get the most out of their lives and wanted to encourage another sister in Christ to live an abundant life rather than a life weighed



down by the burden of sin. With their advice they fought against the lies that Satan wants our young friend to believe that “God’s ways are too restrictive and no fun.”

Instead they spoke the truth that said, “True freedom and true happiness are found in following God’s ways and choosing to focus on the things that are noble.”

# **Chapter 3**

## **“Thinking on Things that are Right”**

***Finally, brothers and sisters, 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. Philippians 4:8***

Stunned. Shocked. Taken back.

These are the only words that accurately describe my response to the end of a popular song I heard on the radio.

It was the first time I'd actually heard the song. Bored as we waited at a drive-thru window, we randomly scanned through the radio stations when we heard the familiar voice of a young woman. Recognizing her voice, we stopped. After all, what could be the harm?

We were familiar with some of her other work. She claimed to be a born-again Christian. Some of her stuff even popped up in the Christian bookstore. However, as I was drawn into the plot of this song, I quickly realized there was nothing Christian about it. Instead, this song was an endorsement for revenge and maybe even murder. Although it took me awhile to figure out exactly where this song was heading, once I figured it out I was shocked. This just wasn't right!

Ah, there was one of those words again.

"Right".

It was one of the words Paul used as he gave Christians guidelines for where they should focus their minds in Philippians 4:8.

If you go back and study the meaning of the original word, you find that it comes from the Greek word, "dikaios" which means, "Whatsoever is agreeable to justice and righteousness".

Barnes defines this word as "The things which are right between man and man."

Others define it as righteousness in the broadest sense possible. Righteousness means “acting in accord with divine or moral law.”

So let’s keep this simple. For today, let’s abandon the discussion of liberal and conservative Christian behavior and let’s focus our attention on obeying Paul’s command to focus our minds on things that promote obeying the commonly accepted divine and moral laws taught within the Bible. A good place to start is by looking back into the Old Testament at the most commonly accepted of all moral standards: The Ten Commandments.

**Exodus 20:1-17 And God spoke all these words:**

**“I am the Lord your God, Who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.**

**You shall have no other gods before Me.**

**You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God.....**

**....You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His name.**

**Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.....**

**.... Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.**

**You shall not murder.**

**You shall not commit adultery.**

**You shall not steal.**

**You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.**

**You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."**

"Do not covet, do not lie, do not steal, do not commit adultery, no not murder, honor your father and your mother"...these are all part of the Commandments---the most commonly accepted form of moral and divine law. These principles show us what is wrong, and they show us what is right.

Did you catch that? There's that little word "right" again?

Think about it: when Paul says that we should focus our attention on whatever things are "right", then logically, he is telling us that we should not focus our attention on things that are not "right". Unfortunately, many Christians who wholeheartedly believe it is their responsibility to obey the 10 Commandments, have absolutely no problem allowing their minds to focus on other people disobeying the 10 Commandments. According to Paul, we need to rethink this double standard and ask ourselves, "Am I truly obeying the Bible when I allow my mind to focus on things that are wrong?"

Unfortunately, many Christians who wholeheartedly believe it is their responsibility to obey the 10 Commandments, have absolutely no problem allowing their minds to focus on other people disobeying the 10 Commandments.

Here are some things to think about:

I'm sure that everyone reading this article believes that murder is wrong. However, when's the last time you allowed yourself to watch someone be murdered on television or in a movie? Have you ever considered that watching or reading murder mysteries could actually be desensitizing your brain to the loss of human life, or teaching you to think or act like a murderer?

Again, all of us would agree that adultery is wrong. It destroys lives and marriages and is a sin against God. Yet, how often do we fill our minds with images of adultery in music, movies, television, and books?

Here's another thought: All over America, Christians are going to the polls to take their stand and defend the definition of marriage as being between a man and a woman. Still, how many of those same people watched the lesbian wedding on "Friends" or "Will and Grace" or any of the other television shows that have been promoting the homosexual agenda for years?

You see, many years ago, Christians embraced the concept that they need to vote their conscience and convictions during elections. This is good. However, it's time that this same group of people realized that these same convictions need to guide their daily entertainment choices. We don't need to simply vote against things that are wrong in the public arena, but we need to stop focusing our minds on things that are wrong in the privacy of our own homes.

We don't need to simply vote against things that are wrong in the public arena, but we need to stop focusing our minds on things that are wrong in the privacy of our own homes.

Perhaps this sounds a little harsh. Maybe you're thinking, "You're taking this too far. There's a big difference between actually killing someone and watching a murder mystery on television."

Well, I agree, there is. One has much more dire consequences than the other. However, they are both sin. Thankfully, you don't have to rely on my word for it, but you can hear Jesus' words on the topic.

**Matthew 5:21-22** "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell."

**Matthew 5:27-28** "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

**Matthew 15:19 “For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.”**

You see, in the kingdom of God, it's the state of the heart that matters most. Although focusing your mind on entertainment choices that promote murder, stealing, lying, and adultery (just to name a few) may not actually cause you to commit these sins, your heart could very easily be drawn into the evil or sinful intent attached to these sins.

For instance, the song that I talked about at the beginning of this article did not make me want to commit murder. However, I have to admit, it did strike a chord in my heart. You see, the woman in the song who chose to allow the man in the song to die was the victim of abuse. All she wanted was to be free from the abuse and the somehow destroy the memories that it ever took place.

On the particular day that I heard the song, the Holy Spirit was working on my heart, trying to make me face, forgive and overcome some very painful memories of abuse I'd experienced and seen my Mom experience over the years. Although the Holy Spirit was trying to do a healing work, the wound was still a little fresh and sensitive.

As I listened to the words of this song, I could identify with some of the feelings. It was touching my heart. Although I would never allow it to inspire me to murder, it could very easily feed feelings of revenge, hatred, unforgiveness and resentment. If these feelings are harbored long enough then they could be very as destructive to my heart, my mind, and my relationships with God and others.

This is why songs like this are so dangerous and unfortunately, so popular. They play on the emotions of every person who has things in their past that they'd rather forget than face. It's like a buffet filled with bitterness, hatred, anger, resentment, self-pity and revenge. Although it may taste good in the moment, in the end constantly feeding your mind with these ideas will make your heart, your mind and your spirit sick.

As a mature believer, I realize that I cannot listen to songs like this or focus my mind on any type of entertainment of this nature if my heart is going to properly heal,



mend, forgive and overcome. I've got to be honest---no form of entertainment is worth staying in chains of sin. I'm learning, like Paul, to focus on things that are "right"---things that promote the fruit of the Spirit in my life---righteousness, peace, joy, healing, health, contentment, and wholeness. I'm learning to flip a switch, turn it off and say, "No way, I'm going to focus my mind on things that are right."

Now the choice is yours. Are you going to choose to take a stand, change the channel, shut off the radio or computer, walk out of the movie theatre, shut the book, or turn off all other forms of entertainment when they focus on things that aren't right or are you going to pull up a chair and dine at the Destruction Buffet?

You see, just as he did in the Garden of Eden, your enemy wants to play a mind game with you right now. He wants you to believe that if you make the choice to focus on things that are right, then you will be missing something. One of the biggest tricks in his arsenal is the lie that God is trying to deprive His people of pleasurable things whenever He tells them to avoid sin. However, it's time we exposed this trick for exactly what it is: A BIG FAT LIE.

Just like in the Garden of Eden, God isn't trying to keep you away from anything that is good for you. He's trying to protect you from things that will destroy you. There's no doubt about it---focusing your mind on things that are not right will eventually have a destructive effect on your heart, your mind, your soul, your attitudes, your choices and your relationships.

When Paul tells us to focus our minds on things that are right, he is trying to protect us from all of this destruction. It's just like a parent who tells their child not to touch a hot stove. You don't do it to deprive them of the experience. They do it to protect them from the pain.

As Christians, it's time we challenge ourselves to overcome the mind game of the enemy that says, "It's no big deal. It's only entertainment. You need to relax. It's not hurting anyone."

Instead, be victorious and win the game by saying, “I’m not falling for that lie. My Heavenly Father says that I should focus my mind on things that are right. I know that He loves me and wants what is best for me. He is working for my good, and He would not deprive me of any good thing. So I am going to obey Him and turn away from wrong and focus on what is right. I am going to feed my mind with things that follow His divine and moral laws, knowing that this is the path toward becoming a healthy and whole man of God.”

**John 10:10 says, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”**

# **Chapter 4**

## **“Thinking on Things that are Pure”**

Do you have any pet peeves? You know, things that just really bother you and get under your skin. I recently came face to face with one of my pet peeves. Let me explain.

Recently, I was watching a family based comedy on tv. Although it passed my PG test, one of the characters made a joke that really irked me. He said something to the effect that women can have sex anytime they want because men are always willing to sleep with any woman anywhere. I hate this joke! It implies men are pigs who have no self-control or moral boundaries and are unable to be pure and holy in our sex lives.

A few days later, I was listening to a talk radio show. The popular host started talking about a NY Times article he read. The article's premise was that women are responsible for population control because, given the chance, a man would sleep with and impregnate multiple women a day. Once again men were portrayed as sex addicts with no morals or self-control. I quickly flipped off the radio station out of both anger and because I thought the topic was crude and inappropriate.

Later in the day, I saw a commercial with two women standing in what I guess was a bar deciding which guy they were going to "hook up" with....after all, they could choose whoever they wanted because all men want sex whenever and wherever it is offered to them.

Once again, I was steaming. In our day and age, men have a horrible reputation. We are seen as sex craved pigs with no morals or standards. Even worse is the fact that in many cases this reputation has been earned. Well, I believe it is time for God's men to stand up and end this reputation! We need to become morally strong men with sexual integrity. I guarantee you, when we stand up and break free from the bad reputation of men, the world will take notice! That is what we are going to look at as we continue this month with the series, "Mind Games". Once again, let's look at Philippians 4:8.

**"Finally, brothers and sisters, 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."**

In this Scripture, the word “Pure” comes from the Greek word “**hagnos**” which means “clean, that is, innocent, modest, perfect---chaste, clean, pure.” It means moral purity of thought and purpose as well as words and deeds.

Barnes defines it as “Chaste - in thought, in feeling, and in the conversation between the sexes.”

God’s will for His men is to be pure. This is especially true when it comes to anything sexual. We cannot be calling ourselves God’s men if we are living a sexually impure life. This not only includes our actions sexually, but it also applies to how we think and the words we say.

Ephesians 5:3 tells us there shouldn’t be a hint of sexual immorality among God’s people. No impurity of any kind can be a part of our lives.

Pornography is a no-no.

Sexually explicit TV shows, movies, and music must go.

Sex outside of marriage is forbidden, even for the divorced or engaged man.

Ephesians 5:4 even says we can’t have any coarse jesting or obscene talk. This includes off-colored jokes, double entendres, crude words, or even talk of sex. Godly men shouldn’t brag or talk about past sexual sins or past encounters. This all falls under this category.

Here are some questions to ask yourself:

When you see unmarried couple in bed together on tv, do you change the channel? Even if they are just talking?

Do you leave a conversation at work or with friends when the coarse jokes or sexual innuendos start flying?

Do people around you know better than to have off-color conversations around you?

If you said “NO” to any of these things, then you are not living a pure life that God requires of His men. Even worse, you are in trouble when it comes to your relationship with God.

Why do I say this? Because I Corinthians 6:9 clearly says the sexually immoral person cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. **“Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men.”**

This is serious stuff!!! Think about it...if you are looking at pornography when the rapture happens, you will get left behind. If you are sleeping around, God can't take you in the rapture. We must become sexually pure men and destroy the reputation of men in our lives. The good news is God is more than willing to help us do it!

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I Corinthians 6 goes on to say in verse 14 that God has the power to help us. **“By His power God raised the Lord from the dead, and He will raise us also.”** The same power that raised Jesus from the dead can raise us from sexual death. He has the power to set us free. It takes 2 actions on our part.

**The first action is a desire to be free.** We must want to break free. We must hate the sexual sins we are committing. God will never take away a sin we want to keep. He doesn't work that way. We must hate the sin and never want it to be part of us again. We cannot use forgiveness as an excuse to keep sinning. We must despise our sexual sin and never want to commit it again.

The second step is found in 1 Corinthians 6:18. **We must flee sexual immorality.**

**“Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.”** This is the only sin or temptation we are ever told to run away from. All others we are told to stand firm against. However, we must flee from sexual sin.

If the temptation to sin sexually comes from your tv, get rid of it. If you struggle with looking at stuff on the internet, get rid of it. You can live without a pc or a tv, but you cannot live without eternal life and a relationship with God. Get rid of whatever is causing the sin and keeping you from being pure before God.

Replace the time spent on these devices with Bible reading and prayer. Jesus clearly says that some sins and demonic influences can only be overcome through prayer (Mark 9:29). More than likely any sexual sin is accompanied with sexual spirits or perverse demons that need to be removed from your life. Prayer is key to removing them.

These two steps are crucial to living a pure life. When people see you do these things and live a morally and sexually pure life, they will know you are different. To be honest, the world expects Christians to be different in this area. When you overcome, they will see the difference in your life, and you will have broken the bad reputation. When all Christian men work together to break free from their sexual sins and live a godly, moral lifestyle, we can start a new reputation for men that God's men live a pure life.



# **Chapter 5**

## **“Thinking on Things That Are Lovely”**

Several years ago, my family decided to accept the PG-challenge. That's when we chose to set all of the televisions in our home to filter out everything that carried higher than a PG-rating. Now whenever anything with intense violence, excessively foul language, or any sexual content comes on, our television only shows a black screen and the words: PROGRAM BLOCKED.

To be honest, if you are channel surfing after 8 p.m. at night, you see that message a lot. Because of their inaccessibility, there are many popular programs that our family doesn't even know exists. It's always a little shocking to me whenever I'm away from home and catch a glimpse of current entertainment trends. Let's face it---there are many things being called entertainment that just don't fit the description found in **Philippians 4:8: "Finally, brothers and sisters, 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."**

So far in "Mind Games", we've talked about the Christian's need to focus on truth rather than lies, and things that are worthy of respect rather than the vulgar and debased. We talked about how we should focus on things that are right and pure. Now we're moving on toward Paul's next command: **"Think about things that are lovely."**

Personally, I like the way the Message Version of the Bible translates this command:

**"Summing it all up, friends, I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly;"**

I like that description---the best, not the worst, the beautiful, not the ugly---because what I've become keenly aware of lately is that we live in a culture that promotes the worst and the ugly on a consistent basis. Even scarier seems to be the fact that we've become so calloused and hardened to the repulsive, the horrendous, and the demonic that we don't even see it as evil anymore. It's just good clean fun.

Or is it? Is it really harmless or are we like the proverbial frog in the kettle, slowly replacing our spiritual discernment as the enemy gains a foothold in our lives.

Is it possible that the lie “It’s all good clean fun” is really just another one of our enemy’s mind games designed to devour us as he gains control in our lives?

Perhaps the best way to really answer this question in your own life is to take your own PG Challenge. Or better yet, completely walk away from the television, movies, or videos and computer games for two weeks. If you don’t think you can go completely cold turkey, then commit yourself to viewing only things that are completely innocent in nature for a period of time. Say “goodbye” to anything violent, anything mysterious, anything scary or related to the horror movie industry. Put aside the Science Fiction or the Fictional Novels. Absolutely abandon anything that contains magic, spells, or any references to witchcraft.

At the end of this time frame honestly answer these questions, “Am I feeling any different spiritually or emotionally?”

Am I happier, less depressed or less moody?

Am I less afraid?

Am I sleeping better?

In general, has my attitude toward God and people picked up at all?

Am I focusing more on the positive than the negative?

What could these questions possibly have to do with your entertainment choices?

Well, actually, everything. The truth is that wherever you allow your mind to feast will ultimately nourish your spirit, your emotions, and even your physical body. If you’re feasting on the ugly, the worst parts of the universe, and the dark side of life, you are going to start feeling ugly, oppressed, and depressed. In the same way, when you choose to focus on the things of God and His work in the universe, no matter what your

circumstances, your perspective will change because you will see His hand at work. Knowing that He is in control, you will be less tense, healthier and generally happier. It's the old principle of "You are what you eat"; however, we're talking about food that comes in through the eyes and ears and feeds the mind and spirit.

One thing that the modern-day Christian needs to be very aware of is the fact that Satan has launched an all-out attack to poison the minds of this generation, including Christians, using the entertainment industry. You see, even if you and I don't choose to believe that our hearts and minds are influenced by what we watch and listen to, our enemy knows that it is true. Just like the frog in the kettle, he has flooded the entertainment industry with demonic content---witches, warlocks, magic, spells, vampires and werewolf's, demons and the occult.

Sadly, he's begun his attack on the most vulnerable members of our society: our children.

Don't believe me? Then spend an afternoon or evening watching "The Disney Channel" or "Nick for Kids". How many television programs focus on occult practices, wizards, witches, and other demonic influences?

Look at the "Lord of the Rings" and the "Harry Potter Books" designed specifically for children. While parent and educators were thrilled that these books awakened a passion for reading in children, Satan was dancing for joy because he knew that these books and movies were indoctrinating children in the religion of Satanic worship and the occult. Like a wolf in sheep's clothing, this propaganda is being paraded and praised while it is influencing the minds of innocent children. Believing the lie that "It's no big deal---it's only entertainment", we've allowed an entire generation to feast on a buffet of poison rather than encouraging them to turn away from the ugly and focus on the beautiful. However, it's time that this mind game was exposed and we started speaking truth and making better choices as to where we and our children focus our minds.

Notice that I said we need to be protecting our own adult minds as well as our children's minds. Because even though this type of entertainment gained a foothold

though the younger generations, it is now common for adults to be watching “fantasy” shows or movies on television that proudly and openly advertise themselves as demonic.

For instance, the other night, I was waiting for the commercials to end and get back to the family friendly show that I was watching. However, as I waited, I was stunned by what I saw. Right there on one of the big networks, the commercial advertised that a show was about demons. In fact, the commercial showed a human being transforming into a demonic being. Friends, this is not something we should be playing with!

The demonic world is not pretend, it is not a fantasy. Although it should not be feared because we are victorious in Christ, it should also not be taken lightly. We should never, ever, ever be allowing our minds to be focusing on such things.

On the contrary! If you read the New Testament, you see that Jesus and the disciples, as well as the early church concentrated on delivering people from the power of demonic influences. Why then, do so many who call themselves “the church” today invite these same demonic influences into their homes for a visit night after night after night?

If you read the New Testament, you see that Jesus and the disciples, as well as the early church concentrated on delivering people from the power of demonic influences. Why then, do so many who call themselves “the church” today invite these same demonic influences into their homes for a visit night after night after night?

I truly believe that it is time that Christians get a new perspective on the electronic age in which we live and the effects that it has on our lives. You see, years ago, people shared their free time with friends and family. They had conversations, told stories, and played games to relax and entertain themselves.

For better or for worse, our modern age has replaced people with electronic images. Now we listen to other people’s conversations, hear their stories, and relax and entertain with strangers via an electronic device. This isn’t a criticism---it’s a fact about our society.

Realizing that this is our new reality, I think it's time that we started looking at the television shows and movies we watch, the computer games that we play, and the music and videos we enjoy as houseguests. We need to honestly ask ourselves, "Would I invite these people over to dinner?"

Would I want them hanging out at my house?

Maybe then we'd start thinking thoughts like:

Do I want vampires and werewolves in my kid's bedrooms?

Would I be as comfortable participating in the occultist activity I'm currently watching on t.v.?

Would I want that creepy monster playing with my kids?

It's time that we as Christians did a reality check and asked ourselves: How much time am I spending focusing on the dark, the wicked, the worst, and the ugly?

More importantly, how much time am I spending thinking about things that are lovely?

Is the time I spend thinking about lovely things greater than the time I spend focusing on the unlovely, the ugly, the dark, and the worst parts of the world?

Hopefully, honestly asking ourselves and answering these questions will challenge us to heed Paul's warning, and "Think on things that are lovely."

# **Chapter 6**

## **“Thinking on Things of Good Report”**

Recently, I had the privilege of meeting a very impressive group of college-aged students. We were at an event advertising our ministry, and our table was right next to the table for The Master's Commission, an intense discipleship program training young people for a life of ministry.

As the day went on and we had the opportunity to talk to these young people and hear their hearts, it became obvious that they were very different from the standard picture our society paints of college age students. Rather than spending their time drinking, partying, and living for the moment, these young men and women spent their days learning how to minister both from books and by actually doing practical, hands-on ministry. Instead of seeing their college years as a time to throw off restraints, they were embracing a very structured discipleship program with very strict rules---including no dating during their first year. Still, when they described the program, they spoke with a sparkle in their eye and a passion in their hearts knowing that they were following Jesus and fulfilling His plans for their lives.

Obviously, these are not the type of young people we often see on the news headlines. No, we'll be more likely to hear about the young men who got drunk and sexually assaulted a young woman or the college students who rioted after their team won or lost a game. (I never understand why they riot either way, but that's just me.)

Unfortunately, we live in a society that focuses on the worst, the shameful, and the unworthy. However, even though we can't bury our heads in the sand and become unaware of what's happening in the world around us, as Christians, we need to be sure to give our minds a fair and balanced view of the world.

As Paul says in Philippians 4:8, we need to **“Think on things that are admirable.”**

Other versions of the Bible translate the word “admirable” as “good report”. Originally, it comes from the Greek word, “euphēmos” which means, “well spoken of, that is, reputable”. Basically, what Paul is saying in this portion of the verse is that as Christians we need to make an effort or cause our minds to zoom in on people, things,



and situations that deserve respect or approval---people and things that should be admired.

Let's be honest---the media is most likely not going to do this job for you. In their super-competitive search for ratings, most media outlets are going to focus on the most tantalizing, most bizarre, most sensational portions of our society. Crime, murder, sex scandals, people falling from grace---these all generate popular headlines and attract mega audiences for days on end.

But what about the teen who decided to flip burgers for minimum wage rather than steal or sell drugs? He probably won't be on the news.

What about the politician who was faithful to his wife every day of his life without compromise? There most likely won't be any television movies made about him.

How about the minister who was faithful to God, his wife, his children, and the people he served year in and year out without scandal or controversy? Nope, his name probably won't be splashed across the pages of newspapers.

The truth is that if you're going to focus on things that are admirable, you're going to have to look past all of the popular distractions that our minds so easily focus on and make an effort to find the people and things of this world that are worthy of respect. The good news is: these people and stories do exist. In fact, they are probably all around us if we are just willing to look beyond the obvious and seek out the admirable.

For instance, one of the activities that took place at the event where we were advertising our ministry was the ordination of new ministers. Obviously, I don't know all of the stories of the people who were ordained that day, but I am privileged to know the story of one young man.

Many years ago, his father turned his back on God and abandoned his family leaving his wife with practically nothing except their two children. It was a very difficult time for all involved. Yet, in spite of the very unfair circumstances she was handed, this woman did not turn her back on God or her children. She didn't seek revenge (like others who've gained national headlines) but instead she sought God. She worked

hard. She sacrificed, stayed active in the church and did her best to raise her children for God.

That night as her son received his credentials as an ordained minister; I couldn't help but think, "She is a Superhero!" When others might have been overwhelmed, given up, maybe even turned their back on God in anger, she rose to the occasion and met the challenge. Not only is her son in full-time ministry, but she is currently ministering as the head of the Children's Department in her local church. Although there will probably never be a movie about her life, she is someone we can look up to and admire.

Besides looking at the people around us who are doing admirable things, another way to focus on people and things of good report is to study the lives of Christian men and women who have gone before us. There are so many men and women who have overcome obstacles, done extraordinary things for the kingdom of God, and set an example for us to follow. Their stories and experiences are told in books, biographies, movies, and articles that they've written. When we choose to put down the salacious, the tabloids, and the unworthy things that are in our popular media, and choose these resources we are focusing our minds on the admirable and challenging ourselves to be more admirable.

One of the biggest blessings in my life was having the opportunity to read about many of the great men and women of the faith when I was a child. I can still recall the stories of George Mueller, Hudson Taylor, Amy Carmichael, and Jim and Elizabeth Elliott.

Even though it may sound old-fashioned, there is still so much that we can learn from these great men and women of the faith. Their testimony has so much that we apply to our own lives. When we are willing to turn off all of the less than admirable media all around us and refocus our attention on people who lived truly admirable lives, we will begin to see not only our outlook and perspective brighten, but we'll see our own attitudes and behavior become more admirable.

A final way that we can focus our mind on the admirable rather than the unworthy, is by spending more time studying the Bible---especially the lives of the men and women of the faith. True, they weren't all perfect. In fact, most of them made at least one, if not many, BIG mistakes in their lives. (But seriously, that just makes them easier to relate to.)

Yet, despite their humanity, there are still so many admirable qualities to be found in their stories. In fact, there are so many admirable qualities that Hebrews 11 presents them in the Hall of Fame of Faith. When we allow ourselves to be challenged by the admirable qualities in their lives (and learning from their less than admirable qualities) we will become more admirable people.

Let me add one more thing when it comes to studying the lives of Biblical characters: the best way to do this is with a Bible in one hand and a Biblical commentary in the other. Don't trust Hollywood to give you an accurate presentation of the Bible. Do your own investigating using reliable, historical commentaries, Bible Dictionaries, or a Bible study from a reliable Christian author. Put some effort into it and you'll find that in the end, you'll reap incredible rewards for focusing on things that are admirable.

At this point you might be thinking, "What's the big deal of whether or not I choose to go out of my way and put forth a lot of effort to think on things that are admirable or if I just settle for the status quo and focus on whatever comes my way---admirable or not?"

Well, again the answer is simply: Wherever you focus your mind is essentially what you are feeding your brain, soul, and spirit. If you're constantly focusing on the negative, the salacious, and the unworthy, it's like eating garbage all day, every day. Eventually, you're going to get sick.

This sickness of the mind will show up in the form of a negative attitude, a critical spirit, bitterness, anger, despair, and a feeling of being constantly overwhelmed or depressed. Basically, if you're always feeding your mind bad news, you'll eventually develop a hopeless, what's-the-point attitude.

However, if you are balancing the constant barrage of bad news and negative media coming in from the world around you by purposely choosing to focus on things that are admirable, you're going to be mentally and spiritually healthier. You'll have a more positive attitude. You'll be able to more clearly see God's hand at work in the events of your life. You'll trust Him more and worry less.

As you're influenced by the admirable aspects in other people and society, you'll eventually find yourself being challenged to live a more admirable life. That's when you'll start being the change you want to see in the world around you rather than simply focusing on everything that's wrong all the time.

As with all of Paul's instructions, the instruction to "**Think on things that are admirable**" will make a positive impact on your life and the lives of those around you. Although it might initially take some work and retraining of your brain, like a good workout, in the end, the results will be worth the effort when someone sees the change in you and says, "I really admire him. He's different. I want to be like him."

As you overcome the enemy's lie that "It's no big deal where you focus your brain", you'll find that you'll have a brighter perspective, clearer thoughts and more excitement and purpose to live your everyday life. I don't know about you, but these things are well worth the effort to me!

# **Chapter 7**

## **“Thinking on Things that are Excellent”**

“But it only has a few bad words in it.”

“There are only a couple of sexually explicit scenes; most of it is perfectly clean.”

“It’s fantasy-based---nobody actually believes in hobbits, witches, or warlocks. It’s not like we’re having a séance.”

“It’s no big deal---really, it’s not that bad.”

For those of you who don’t know, I’m a former church kid. My Mom was saved when I was 2 years old, and my sister and I were raised in Pentecostal churches. We went to Christian school during the week and Sunday School and church on the weekends. Coming from this background, I can tell you with all honesty---when it comes to excuses for why it’s okay to compromise with evil, I have heard it all!!

Summing up all of the arguments, I’d have to say that they all basically boil down to: “It’s not that bad.”

It’s almost as if we have a barometer measuring sin. At the top of the scale we’ve got the REALLY bad sins---the things that no good church-goer would ever dream of doing.

At the bottom, we’ve got sins that most Christians now find completely acceptable.

In between, there are all of these “gray areas” that were once considered sins, but now we’re trying to justify on the Bad Barometer. It’s almost like we’re now grading our obedience to Biblical principles on a curve. Along the way, we’ve dulled our consciences and cheated ourselves and our minds out of the life that we really deserve as sons and daughters of Christ.

Deserve? Sounds like a strange word doesn’t it? Aren’t we all taught that we deserve nothing but Hell?

Possibly “deserve” is the wrong word. Maybe the right word is “entitlement.”

You see, although it is true that before we were adopted into God's family we were entitled to nothing, when Christ paid the price for our sins and we accepted Him as our Savior, we were adopted into God's family. **As Romans 8:14-17 says, "For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by Him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory."**

As adopted sons and daughters, heirs with Christ, we are now entitled to certain things in God's kingdom. Albert Barnes says, "That inheritance is His favor here, and eternal life hereafter."

Sometimes I wonder if we, as Christians, in our effort to enjoy as much of the world as possible without actually losing our eternal inheritance, aren't robbing ourselves of the joys of living with God's favor here on earth.

Sometimes I wonder if we, as Christians, in our effort to enjoy as much of the world as possible without actually losing our eternal inheritance, aren't robbing ourselves of the joys of living with God's favor here on earth.

Take for instance, Paul's command to us in Philippians 4:8. It says, **"Finally, brothers and sisters, 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."**

Have you ever wondered why Paul gave us this command about where we should focus our minds?

What if we went back a verse to **Philippians 4:7, "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."**

Could it be that if we think on things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy we will experience more peace?

Could this be one way that our minds and hearts are guarded in Jesus Christ?

Is it possible that by following Paul's instructions we would be given a gift that is unique to the adopted children of God---guarded, pure, renewed minds that actually fill our lives with peace?

By choosing not to obey this verse, are we actually thumbing our noses at one of the gifts that we are entitled to as children of God?

You see, over the many years that I have walked with Christ, one of the things I have learned is that when allow the "Sin Barometer" to control our lives, the only person we are only hurting is ourselves. Yes, excuses like the ones listed above may help you justify and give yourself permission to do whatever you want to do, but they don't really help you in the long run. In the end, when you choose to live as close to the world as possible without actually losing your salvation and place as a child of God, you are robbing yourself of the many blessings that come as a child of God.

When you choose to live as close to the world as possible without actually losing your salvation and place as a child of God, you are robbing yourself of the many blessings that along with being a child of God.

Let's look at it this way: Say you adopted a child out of Social Services. You went through all the paperwork, interviews, the entire process. You did everything necessary to adopt him and give him the full legal rights as a child in your family. Wouldn't you expect him to move in with you, start eating with your family, wearing the clothes you picked for him, going to the schools in your neighborhood, and participating in family activities just like your other children?

What if he decided that he liked the idea of being adopted, but he wanted to continue to live at a group home? He wanted to be your child, but he didn't want to take full advantage of everything you were offering him. How would you feel if he



continued to live his life as if you hadn't adopted him, but he still wanted to carry your name as your adopted child?

I can tell you that there is NO child currently living in foster care that would do this. Given the chance for adoption, they would jump at the chance for a home, a family, and everything that entails. Yet, many Christians, when given the opportunity to full participate in all that the kingdom of God has to offer, choose instead to simply take the name but continue on with their old life saying, "It's not that bad." Along the way, they are robbing themselves of all they are entitled to as children of God.

That, my friends, is the danger of the sin barometer, and probably the reason that Paul doesn't say in Philippians 4:8, "Think on things that aren't that bad."

Instead, Paul says, "**Think on things that are excellent.**"

There's an interesting word. What does excellent mean?

The Apostle Paul would say, "I didn't tell you to settle for things that are just a little bad. I commanded you to focus on the things that were of the highest quality, things that were of superior merit, very, very good. You're not even shooting for good? You're settling for not that bad?"

Excellent means, "Very good, of the highest quality. Possessing outstanding quality or superior merit."

The truth is that standing next to the Apostle Paul, we'd never get away with saying, "It isn't that bad---it's just got a few problems."

He'd answer back, "I didn't tell you to settle for things that are just a little bad. I commanded you to focus on the things that were of the highest quality, things that were of superior merit, very, very good. You're not even shooting for good? You're settling for not that bad?"

It's like the child who comes home from school expecting to be rewarded for C's and D's because at least they are passing. In this passage, the Apostle Paul is asking,

“Why aren’t you trying for A’s? You should be striving for every good and perfect gift God has for you, not settling for the counterfeit joys of this world.”

This month, as we study Philippians 4:8, I want to challenge you to ask yourself, “Am I playing mind games with my own conscience? Am I trying to justify sin rather than pursue sanctification?”

It’s a tough question, but it’s an important question that we all need to ask ourselves from time to time. Your honesty and your answers could radically change your life. When you stop judging your life against the “Sin Barometer” and start living by the Kingdom Principles, you’ll start reaping kingdom rewards that you’re entitled to as a child of God. As you stop focusing on things that “aren’t that bad” and start obeying the Biblical command to “Think on things that are excellent” you’ll see changes in your mind that will result in changes in your life. It’s time to stop playing Mind Games and start living victoriously.

# **Chapter 8**

## **“Thinking on Things that are Praiseworthy”**

**“Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all His benefits” Psalm 103:2**

Over and over these words kept running through my mind. To be honest, it was odd that this was the Scripture filling my mind because during this time I wasn't exactly in the mood to rejoice. I was actually going through a very difficult time where I was bouncing back and forth between sadness, anger, and loss. Still, these words kept ringing through my mind....

....whenever I felt like there was no hope...

...at the end of a time of prayer, after I'd poured out my heart to God, I'd feel led to end with worship...

...as I was gathering my strength to face yet another challenge...

Each time I would hear the gentle voice of the Holy Spirit saying, **“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all of His benefits.”** Like Paul's command in Philippians 4:8, the Holy Spirit was calling me to choose where I would focus my mind and **“Think on things that were praiseworthy.”**

Was I going through a difficult time? Undoubtedly.

Did God remain faithful through it all? Undoubtedly.

Like a gentle nudge, this Scripture constantly running through my mind reminded me that even in the most difficult times I needed to choose to focus on God's faithfulness and the blessings He'd given even while some things were being taken away.

Job sets an excellent example of this attitude after he heard the news of the disaster that overtook him and his family. **“The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.” Job 1:21**

Another example we can follow is Paul and Silas' choice to worship when they were in the Philippian prison. Acts 16 tells their story.

**“Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, ‘These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.’**

**She kept this up for many days. Finally, Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, ‘In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!’ At that moment the spirit left her.”**

So Paul and Silas are minding their own business, on their way to pray, when a young woman who was demon possessed starts harassing them. Apparently, this didn’t happen just once, but it went on for days. Finally, Paul had enough and in the name of Jesus set her free from the demon that controlled her. In a moment, she was delivered and restored to her right mind.

In a perfect world, this is where the crowd would have gone wild with enthusiasm. They would have been high-fiving Paul and Silas, cheering, doing the wave, and bringing out anyone else who needed a miracle to be healed or delivered.

Guess what? That’s not what happened. Instead, the girl’s owners became angry and reported Paul and Silas to the government.

**“When her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. They brought them before the magistrates and said, ‘These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice’”**

Excuse me? When did Paul and Silas do all that? NEVER!

They were just minding their own business---the girl was disturbing them. Now, when they’ve HELPED her, they are being falsely accused to the government. But wait, things only get worse!

**“The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.”**

From falsely accused to bound and tied in prison, things in this scene escalated quickly. Even though Paul and Silas were completely innocent of any of the charges being lobbied against them, they were still experiencing some pretty awful punishments. Take a second and look at them slowly.

They were stripped---humiliated.

Their bare bodies were beaten with rods---so badly that it is described as being severely flogged.

Then they were thrown into prison where the guard was told to keep a close eye on them.

Just take a minute and let that last phrase sink in.

Here they are in prison with really bad people---thieves, murderers, revolutionaries---and yet the government is saying, “These are the guys you’ve got to keep an eye on---they are dangerous.” Seriously? I think that accusation alone would have made me want to curl up in the corner, and cry myself to sleep.

Finally, they get put into the “inner cell” and for extra precautions their feet are put into the stocks. Albert Barnes points out that *“the phrase ‘inner cell’ refers to the most retired and secure part of the prison. The cells in the interior of the prison would be regarded as more safe, being doubtless more protected, and the difficulty of escape would be greater.”* He describes the “stocks” as *“being fastened or secured by the feet, probably by cords, to a piece or beam of wood, so that they could not escape. It is probable that the legs of the prisoners were bound to large pieces of wood which not only encumbered them, but which were so placed as to extend their feet to a considerable distance. In this condition it might be necessary for them to lie on their*

*backs; and if this, as is probable, was on the cold ground, after their severe scourging, their sufferings must have been very great.”*

Seriously!?! All of this torture for what? They were innocent of the charges placed against them! They were minding their own business! Ultimately, their greatest crime was helping a young girl. Yet, this was the result. Here they were, stripped, beaten, badly wounded, laying flat on their backs on the cold ground in the securest part of the Philippian prison.

That’s when Paul and Silas do something amazing. They started praising God!

**“About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.” Acts 16:25**

Here they were, Paul and Silas, in the Philippian prison, suffering indescribable pain for crimes that they didn’t commit; yet, instead of focusing on the injustice, the persecution, and the pain, they chose to shift their attention and think on things that were praiseworthy. Rather than focusing on their circumstances, they focused on the greatness of God and obeyed the command in Psalm 103:2 to **“Bless the Lord and forget not all of His benefits.”**

I have to say there’s a certain irony about it---Paul telling the Philippian church to focus on things that are praiseworthy after he set the example for them by praising the Lord in the absolute direst of circumstances. Yet I find it strangely comforting knowing that Paul wasn’t just setting an impossible religious standard---a self-righteous precipice that we can never attain.

What’s even more amazing is that Paul didn’t write his words instructing the Philippian church to think on things that are praiseworthy from an ivory tower, but rather, from a Roman prison. Paul knew that life wasn’t always fair, that bad things happen to good people, that Christians experience persecution and betrayal, and that life doesn’t always end happily ever after.

However, Paul chose not to focus exclusively on these truths. Instead, he chose to look at life through the eyes of eternity. He chose to shift his attention from his

temporary suffering onto the eternal God Who was worthy of all praise, honor, and glory.

This month, I have been challenged to follow Paul's example. Does this mean that I instantly stopped dealing with my emotions or feeling the weight of the challenges that had to be faced?

No, being completely open, I'll admit that I've spent many hours talking to God, working through my feelings and even talking to my closest friend. Still, at the same time, I've been answering the Holy Spirit's call to fight the desire to wallow, and I've tried to enter each time with God in a time of praise---remembering all of His benefits. I've been talking to myself and reminding myself to be thankful for the things God has given, the ways He is providing, the people He's provided in our lives, and the healing that is available for our body, soul, and spirit. Even in the middle of a difficult time, I've been choosing to accept Paul's challenge, to think on things that are praiseworthy and praise the Lord for them.

Now the challenge is passed on to you.

Will you choose to think on things that are praiseworthy?

Will you obey God's command to **"Bless the Lord and remember all of His benefits?"**

When life gets hard and you want to throw a pity party, will you choose instead to remember all that God has done for you and praise Him for it?

As with all of the other commands we've studied in Philippians 4:8, it comes down to a choice. You have a free will and you control the thoughts that rule your mind.

You may not have been given the choice of whether or not you will go through difficult circumstances or situations---Paul wasn't. However, you can choose whether you respond to this trial with an attitude of praise or the attitude of a victim. A victor praises God no matter what the circumstances knowing that He is in control and



whatever happens was allowed for the benefit of God's kingdom and God's glory. Choosing to be a victor rather than a victim begins with a decision of the mind--- choosing to think on things that are praiseworthy. Which will you be?

# **Chapter 9**

**“Think on**

**These**

**Things”**

***“Finally, brothers and sisters, 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.***

***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.” Philippians 4:8-9***

Well, we’ve finally reached the end of our journey together. We’ve taken an in depth look at one of the most popular Scriptures in the Bible. We’ve searched the true meanings of the words that the Apostle Paul used to describe where we should focus our minds, and then we’ve talked about ways that we can practically apply his instruction to our everyday lives.

Now we come to the part of our journey where the rubber meets the road. It’s time for us to move past learning about how to overcome the enemy’s mind games, and beginning applying these principles to our lives. It’s time for us to be obedient and force our minds to *Think On These Things*.

That’s exactly what Paul says in the verse immediately following Philippians 4:8. I like the way The Message reads: *“Put into practice what you learned from me, what you heard and saw and realized. Do that, and God, Who makes everything work together, will work you into His most excellent harmonies.” (Philippians 4:9)*

You see it isn’t enough for us to simply study a passage like Philippians 4:8. We can’t just learn what it means and feel the Holy Spirit’s conviction about things that need to change in our lives. That’s just step one. The real change, the real results don’t come until we actually start putting the things we have learned and realized into practice day in and day out.

I think it’s interesting that Paul used the word “practice” to describe the response we need to have as we approach these dramatic shifts in thinking. This word comes from the Greek word “prasso” which means, “to perform repeatedly or habitually” It is a primary verb that specifies the need to perform an act over and over again rather than just one time or one single act.

It holds basically the same meaning as the English verb “practice”: To perform (an activity) or exercise (a skill) repeatedly or regularly in order to improve or maintain one's proficiency.

Why did the Apostle Paul say that we would have to “practice” focusing our minds on the things that were true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy?

Obviously, he knew that this type of thinking does not come naturally. Being realistic about the tendencies of the human mind and the state of the human condition, Paul knew that we’d have to put forth effort and practice, practice, practice in order to train ourselves to think God’s way.

I don’t know about you, but it doesn’t come naturally for me to think on things that are true. Without the help of the Holy Spirit accompanied with a determination to focus on things that are true, my mind is much more likely to believe the lies the enemy wants to tell me about my identity, my circumstances, and my future. It takes effort to cast these lies aside and replace them with the Word of God and His truth. It also requires work to weed through the lies constantly being propagated by culture and stand firm on the Biblical absolutes of Scripture. These things don’t just happen---they require intentional practice each and every day.

The same truth applies when it comes to thinking about things that are noble or right. It’s easy to settle for the many influences in our culture that are vulgar and of low character---after all, they are everywhere. To think on things that are noble, each of us has to choose to turn away from these things and retrain our brains to find pleasure and enjoyment in things that are honorable and worthy of respect. This requires a conscious decision on our parts to turn off the television or radio, put down the magazine, or turn away from any other media that is promoting things that just aren’t right---things that are adamantly contrary to God’s Laws found in His Word.

Let’s be honest—the world we live in is anything but pure. Never before in the history of mankind, has it been more difficult for men and women to say as Job did, *“I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a young woman (or man, if you’re*

*a woman.)” Job 31:1 Yet, it is only when we make such a covenant---a commitment to ourselves, God, and our families to focus daily focus only on things that are pure--- that we will truly be obeying the Word of God.*

It’s going to take that same type of commitment to focus on things that are lovely, because the only thing that the enemy is pushing harder and faster than impure, pornography in our culture is society’s new fascination with witchcraft and the occult. Still, make no mistake my friends; this trap is equally dangerous, destroying the hearts, souls, and minds of those who fall into it.

Sure, it’s easier to be the parent who says, “It’s no big deal, it’s just a fantasy.” But every time you make the decision and allow you or your family to participate in this type of entertainment or activity, you’re allowing you and your family to feast on a buffet of poison rather than encouraging them to turn away from the ugly and focus on the beautiful. Even though it’s the more difficult choice, it’s time we chose the harder road and exposed this mind game. It’s time we started speaking truth and making better choices as to where we and our children focus our minds.

Still, I’m not going to lie to you---it’s going to take work to turn aside from the evil in our world and focus our minds on things of good report. It will require practice to look past all of the popular distractions that our minds so easily focus on and make an effort to find the people and things of this world that are worthy of respect. It may even cost extra time or money to provide entertainment choices and resources featuring people and things that are admirable. However, in the end, the results will be worth any price that you will pay, because the reward is something that money simply cannot buy: Peace of mind.

Let’s take a minute and go back and look at **Philippians 4:9**, “***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.***”

Did you catch the reward for putting Paul’s commands into practice?

Peace.

Albert Barnes says that this verse should be correctly translated, “The God Who gives peace will be with you.”

Lately, I’ve noticed that the one thing that people seem to want more than anything else in their lives is peace of mind. We’re all looking for ways to reduce our stress, to worry less, and enjoy life more. We want to sleep at night free from anxiety and fear. We want to be happier, healthier, and have more peace in our relationships. Basically, we’re all craving more peace in our lives and in our minds.

Perhaps one of the reasons that peace is the missing ingredient in so many people’s lives is because as a culture, we are no longer following Paul’s recipe for how to have God’s peace in our lives. As a society, we’re focusing on everything but the things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy.

To be honest, I’m not sure there is much that we can do to reverse this trend in society as a whole. However, I am absolutely sure that each one of us can make the decision to change our own individual lives.

Much like an athlete chooses their level of performance based on their commitment to practice; we choose our level of peace of mind on whether or not we practice putting Paul’s instructions into action.

Each day, every one of us is given the choice of where we will focus our minds. Individually, we each make the decision to take the easy, lazy way out, follow the crowd, and let our minds wander wherever they wander, or we can choose to train our minds to obey Paul’s commands and think on things that will bring us peace. Much like an athlete chooses their level of performance based on their commitment to practice; we choose our level of peace of mind on whether or not we practice putting Paul’s instructions into action.

It’s a decision we make each time we turn on the television, listen to the radio, make an entertainment choice, pick up a book or newspaper, or enter into a conversation. We choose what things will influence our minds. We decide whether we will entertain the mind games of the enemy or overcome through the power of the Holy Spirit.

But let's get practical. Let's say that we've decided we want to obey Paul's commands and experience God's peace in our lives. What are some practical steps we can take to help us keep our minds focused on things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy?

### 1. Daily Spend Time in the Bible.

There is no better way to renew your mind and refocus your thinking than by daily washing your mind with the Word of God. This is where you will learn God's ways so that you will be better able to discern right from wrong and overcome the enemy when he comes against you with his mind games.

### 2. Be Open to the Conviction of the Holy Spirit

One of the biggest ways that Christians cheat themselves from growing spiritually is by ignoring the conviction of the Holy Spirit. This is also one of the most common ways that the enemy steals our peace and joy.

It works like this: An earnest Christian feels the convicting power of the Holy Spirit say, "This is sin---you need to change your behavior or thinking---for instance, you need to change where you've been focusing your mind."

Then, like a bird steals a seed from the ground before it can take root, the enemy comes in and says, "That's no big deal---everybody's doing it---don't worry about it."

The Christian who believes that lie and ignores the conviction of the Holy Spirit will never experience the joy and peace that naturally comes with the lifestyle change the Holy Spirit wants. However, the Christian who says, "Get behind me Satan, I'm going to obey the convicting power of the Holy Spirit" and radically changes their life will experience the reward of freedom from the sin that held them captive and the blessing and peace that comes with living a life of obedience.

That's why there's no need to delay obeying the Holy Spirit when He convicts you of sin. Just like you'd jump on an amazing opportunity right away so that you could

receive the benefits as quickly as possible, when the Holy Spirit convicts you of sin, repent quickly and begin changing immediately.

### 3. Take a Second Look

If you're serious about changing your thought patterns and learning how to obey Paul's instructions to "Think on Things that Will Bring You Peace", I suggest that you reread the entire book, "Mind Games".

This time, as you read each article, ask the Holy Spirit to show you what He wants to eliminate from your life and what practical steps you can start applying to change your thought patterns. Feel free to print the articles, highlight them, or pass them around to your friends and family. Use this free resource as a way to really ask yourself, "Am I obeying the commands given in Philippians 4:8?"

### 4. Find Someone to Hold You Accountable

One of the best things you can do whenever you are starting a new adventure or making a lifestyle change, is to find an accountability partner to help keep you on track and remind you to stick to your commitments. Then whenever you're tempted to slip back into your old thought patterns or slack off and let your mind focus on things it shouldn't be, they will be there to say "I thought you weren't going to think that way anymore?", or "I thought you gave up that type of music, t.v. show, or reading material."

***Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, "Two are better than one... If either of them falls down, one can help the other up".***

### 5. If You Fall Down, Get Back Up Again

The truth is that from time to time, all of us are going to fall off of the "think on things that are true, noble, right, pure, etc...." bandwagon. We all have bad days when we allow ourselves to focus on the situations and circumstances around us instead of keeping our eyes on Jesus. However, one bad day is exactly that---one bad day. You have to be careful that one bad day doesn't become an excuse for a lifetime of bad behavior. There's no need to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Each day is a



new day with new choices. Don't waste it wallowing in the regret of yesterday. If you sinned, repent and move on choosing not to sin again, but rather reaffirm your commitment to obey Paul's commands and retrain your mind to focus on things that are beneficial to your spirit. Don't wallow---get back up and move forward again.

## 6. Remember, Practice Makes Perfect

The very essence of the word "practice" is that we do something over and over again until we gain complete proficiency and skill. Just like a child needs to practice a musical instrument day after day before they can play a concerto, so each of us will need to practice training our minds to think on things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy.

The fact is that having a renewed mind and a mind that is filled with God's peace isn't going to just magically happen. It will come as we daily practice making right choices about what we will allow to influence our minds and what we will choose to think about. Our hearts and minds will change daily----

----as we change the channel on the television and say, "No, I'm not watching this garbage."

---when we change the station on the radio and choose to listen to music that feeds our spirits rather than depresses it and tears it down

---as we choose to politely walk away from a negative conversation filled with gossip, slander, or sensuous language.

---when we choose to turn off the ever present media and open up our Bibles to read, study, and have family devotions.

We will begin to change as our choices begin to change. One step at a time, day by day, our practice will provide the training our minds need to reap the rewards we desire. As we continue obeying Paul's commands and putting God's ways into practice in our own lives, we will quickly begin to reap the results of joy and peace in our hearts and minds.

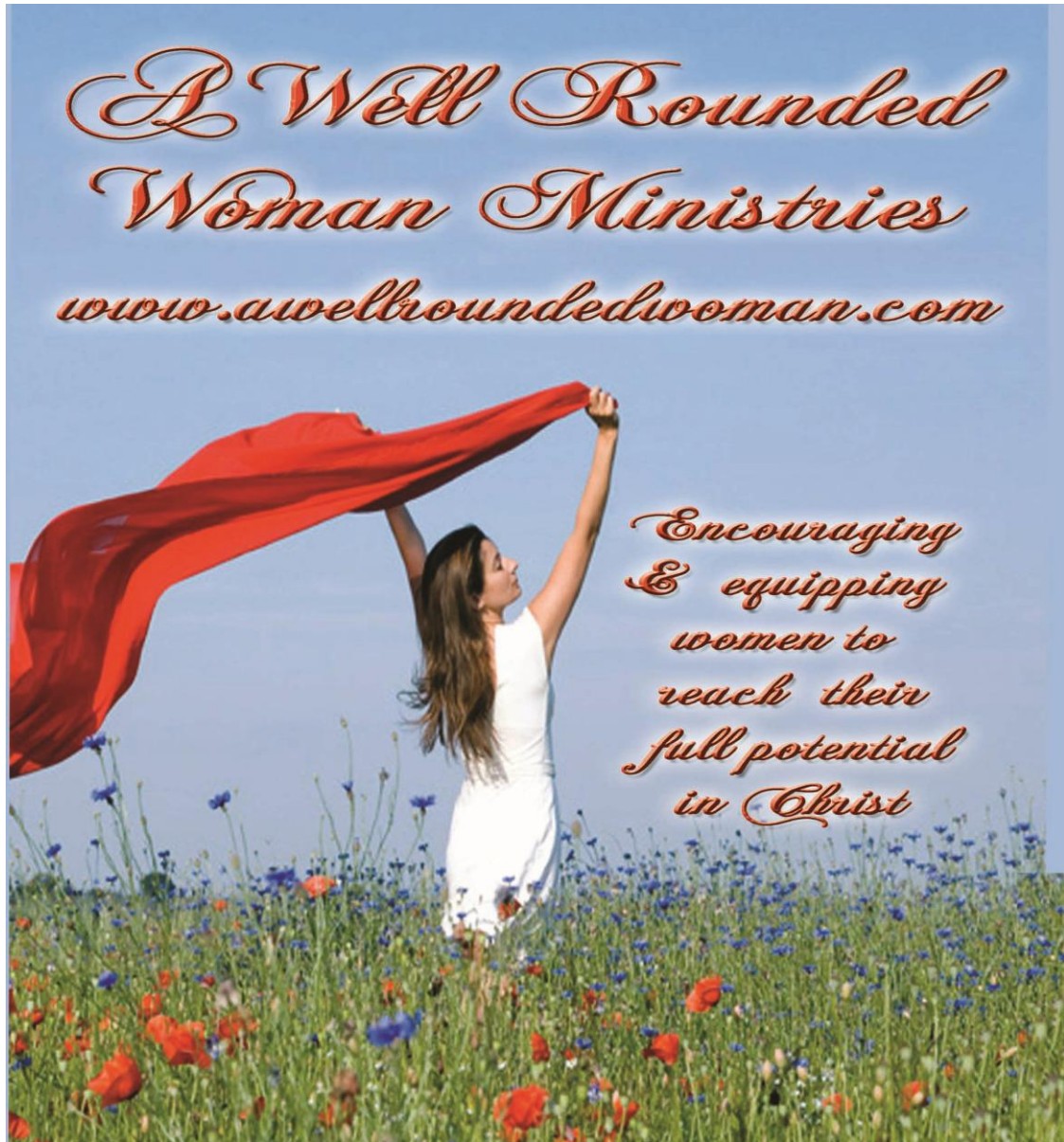
Jamie Holden can be contacted at [Jamie@mantourministries.com](mailto:Jamie@mantourministries.com) .

Feel free to send any questions, comments, or requests for speaking engagements.





# Guys, Here Is A Website For The Women In Your Life!!

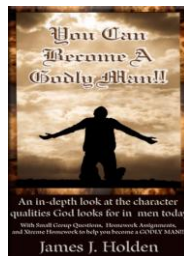
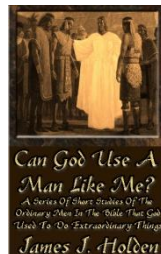
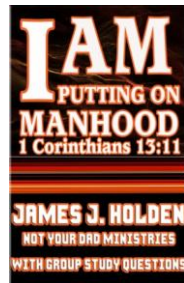


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