

**LESSON ELEVEN**  
**IT'S ALL IN YOUR MIND**  
**(Philippians 4:8-13 NKJV)**

### REFLECTION

Don't we all need a makeover? A makeover is a complete transformation or remodeling of something, especially a person's hairstyle, makeup, or clothes. Worrywarts need peace. Those who struggle with envy need to learn how to be content. Truth be told, most of us *hunger* to be different. So, here is one of the most valuable questions you can ponder...how exactly *do* people change?

### DRAWING NEAR

When in your life have you had the most—materially speaking? When have you had the least?

What do you remember about how you felt during those different times?

### SITUATION

The apostle Paul has provided some guidelines for how the believers can adopt the example of Christ and live at peace with one another. In this next section, he adds one additional method that Christians can employ to fight against fear and anxiety: dwelling on thoughts that are God-honoring. Paul knows the battle against the enemy begins in the mind, and by adopting thoughts that are true, noble, pure, and right, we have the proper mindset to wage the fight.

### OBSERVATION

Read **Philippians 4:8-13** (New King James Version)

### EXPLORATION

1. Why do you think your thoughts are so important when it comes to following Christ?

**Answer:** What we put in our minds comes out in our words and actions. Our thoughts are so important when it comes to following Christ because our minds are powerful tools that can control our behavior and emotions. As we read and study the Word we need to use our minds for application.

2. What is significant about the qualities Paul chose for evaluating and ordering our thoughts?

**Answer:** The qualities that Paul chose for ordering and evaluating our thoughts are positive and uplifting. These are things that inspire worship of God and service to others.

3. What conclusions, if any, should you draw from the fact that Paul speaks about *thinking* in **verse 8** and *doing* in **verse 9**?

**Answer:** Our thinking shows up in our doing. Our Christian life is not just about what we think. It is about our words and works. “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” (**James 1:22**).

4. Paul seems to be suggesting that when your thinking is spiritually sound, your circumstances will stop stealing your joy. How have you experienced this in your life?

**Answer:**

5. Remember that Paul was in prison when he penned this letter to the Philipians. Given this, how can he state that he is “not saying this because I am in need” (**verse 11**)?

**Answer:** It has been about 10 years since the Philipians had given Paul their first gift, when he was in Thessalonica. Paul had learned to be content in every situation. He had stated in **verse 10** that the church at Philippi’s care for him had flourished again and they had opportunity to help. He was not asking for anything at the time of this writing.

6. What thought strengthened Paul and enabled him to be content during even this hard circumstance and his other times of want?

**Answer:** The thought that he could do all things through Christ who strengthens him, enabled him to be content even through times of abundance and lack. The Greek word for “strengthens” means “to put power in.”

## INSPIRATION

You and I are infected by destructive thoughts. Computer viruses have names like Klez, Anna Kournikova and ILOVEYOU. Mental viruses are known as anxiety, bitterness, anger, guilt, shame, greed, and insecurity. They worm their way into your system and dimish, even disable, your mind. We called these DTPs: *destructive thought patterns* (actually, only the author called them DTPs.)

But do you have them? When you see the successful, are you jealous? When you see the struggler, are you pompous? If someone gets on your bad side, is that person as likely to get on your good side as I am to win the Tour-de- France?

Ever argue with someone in your own mind? Rehash or rehearse your hurts? Do you assume the worst about the future? If so, you suffer from DTPs.

What would your world look like without them? Had no dark or destructive thought ever entered your mind, how would you be different? Suppose you could live your life without any guilt, lust, vengeance, insecurity, or fear—never wasting mental energy on gossip or scheming. Would you be different?...

Oh, to be DTP-free—no energy lost; no time wasted. Wouldn’t such a person be energetic and wise? A lifetime of healthy and holy thoughts would render anyone a joyful genius...

Life Lessons from Philipians, Max Lucado, Author, Thomas Nelson, Inc; Philipians, MacArthur Bibles Studies, John MacArthur, Author, Thomas Nelson, Inc; King James Open Bible, Thomas Nelson, Inc.

A lot like the twelve-year-old boy seated in the temple of Jerusalem. Though he was beardless and unadorned, this boy's thoughts were profound... when it comes to his purity of mind, we are given this astounding claim: Christ "knew no sin" (**2 Corinthians 5:21 NKJV**). Peter says Jesus "committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth" (**1 Peter 2:22**). John lived next to him for three years and concluded, "in Him there is no sin" (**1 John 3:5 NKJV**)...

But does this matter? Does the perfection of Christ affect us? If he were a distant Creator, the answer would be no. But, since he is a next door Savior, the reply is a supersized yes!

Remember the twelve-year-old boy in the Temple? The one with sterling thoughts and a Teflon mind? Guess what? That is God's goal for you! You are made to be like Christ! God's priority is that you be "transformed by the renewing of your mind" (**Romans 12:2**). You may have been born virus-prone, but you don't have to live that way... God can change your mind. (From Next Door Savior by Max Lucado.)

## REACTION

7. What are some of your most destructive thought patterns?
8. How disciplined is your mind? Do you work at corralling untrue and unhealthy thoughts?
9. What process do you employ for dwelling on just those thoughts that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable?
10. How confident would you be in telling a younger Christian what Paul told the Philipppians in **verse 9**?
11. Would you describe yourself as a contented person? Why or why not?
12. In what ways are you continually depending on Jesus for your strength?

## LIFE LESSONS

Mention meditation and most Christians either glaze over or tense up. Perhaps you, too, view this practice as incomprehensible or even incompatible with your faith. But in fact, meditation, is both described and prescribed in Scripture (see **Joshua 1:8** and **Psalms 119:27**). At the most basic level, meditation is simply focusing our minds on a thought or set of thoughts. It is chewing on an idea like a cow might chew its cud. It is letting our minds marinate in (soak up) a certain idea. We all do this. Even worrying is a (negative) form of mediating—it is dwelling on possible bad outcomes. Paul is

telling us here that the path to a joy-filled life of contentment and peace is by learning to meditate on what God says is true. Will you do this today?

## DEVOTION

*Father, we have so much to learn. We realize our minds are often focused on things that are untrue, unworthy, unlovely, and unhealthy. By your Spirit, teach us how to reprogram our thoughts so they line up with yours. Impress upon us the great truth that our lives will never change until minds are changed.*

## JOURNALING

Think about a recent incident in which you got emotional. What thoughts contributed to your strong feelings? How do those thoughts compare with what God says is true?

**Next Lesson:** Lesson Twelve: Generosity—**Philippians 4:14-23.**