

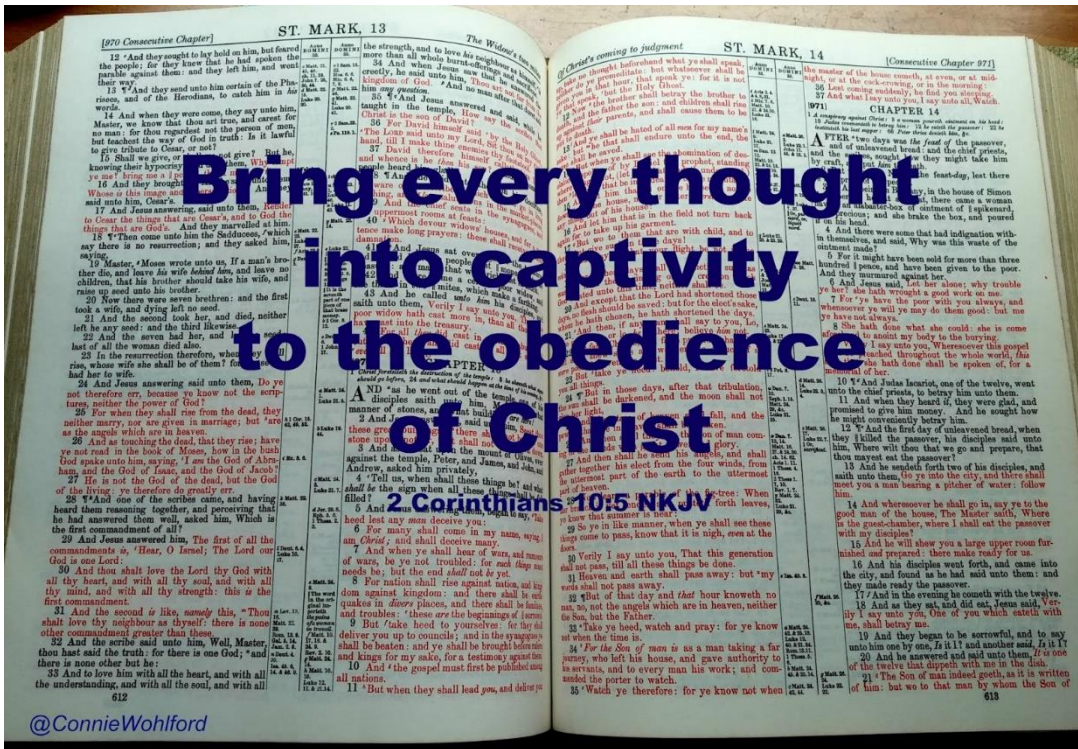
ECCLESIA CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST

BIBLE ENRICHMENT SERIES

January 31, 2023

Pastor Luther H. Holmes, Jr.

TAKING EVERY THOUGHT CAPTIVE



KEY VERSES: II Corinthians 10:3-5

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

INTRODUCTION.

The results of a 2020 study Trusted Source suggested people typically have more than 6,000 thoughts per day. In the study, which involved 184

participants with an average age of 29.4, study authors used brain imaging scans to track when new thoughts began while participants were either resting or watching a movie. Why did they choose to show participants movies? They explain that transitions between events in movies trigger “thought worms,” or detectable patterns of brain activity — just like thoughts that emerge spontaneously. Since each new thought generates a new “worm,” researchers can recognize when one thought ends and the next begins.

After testing these transitions at different times, on two different days, they found a median rate of about 6.5 thought transitions per minute. This rate appeared to remain fairly consistent over time. They concluded the study by estimating, based on this rate of 6.5 transitions each minute, that the average young adult would have more than 6,000 thoughts throughout the day.

LET’S STUDY.

In 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, the apostle Paul says there is a constant battle raging in our minds. When Paul warned the Corinthians not to be ignorant of the Devil's "wiles," the Greek word for wiles means "schemes" and is from the same word used for "mind."

The mind is the main battlefield in spiritual warfare. Every attack of Satan involves the human mind. In other words, Satan's primary assaults occur in our thought life. Our enemy, the devil, wages war in our minds through feelings, convictions and opinions that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God. *He inserts thoughts into our minds in an attempt to affect or alter our thinking and then our behaviors.*

If thoughts were not enemies, then there would be no need to take them captive.

In our lesson, Paul identifies three challenges our minds are up against:

- Strongholds
- Arguments
- Every lofty thing or anything that sets itself up against the knowledge of God.

WHAT IS A STRONGHOLD? *A stronghold is a mindset or attitude that is extremely difficult to break free from. It is similar to being a prisoner in a*

maximum-security prison. It is also a place where a sin or belief is strongly defended or upheld.

We can be taken hostage in our own mind by believing lies about ourselves, life, or the world around us. God wants us to reject the deceptive thoughts and beliefs that hold us captive. He wants us to demolish the walls of resistance in our minds and to strengthen our knowledge of the truth.

ARGUMENTS. The word argument in Greek, *logismos*, means *speculation, reasoning and thought*. We must demolish the faulty arguments that work against us and replace them with biblical truth. Understanding the true knowledge of God's Word leads to correct thinking, which leads to obedience to Christ.

WHAT IS "TAKING YOUR THOUGHTS CAPTIVE"? Thinking might be an essential skill, but it can still get in your way sometimes. Mind wandering, or thoughts that veer off course from your current activity, happens pretty frequently for most people — during up to almost half of your daily activities, according to some research. These distracting thoughts can create challenges when you really need to focus on your current activity, or when they lead to emotional distress.

2 Corinthians 10:5 tells us that we are to "demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we **take captive every thought** to make it obedient to Christ."

What you put in your mind has an effect on what you think. Remember those scary movies you watched as a kid, then had nightmares? It didn't take long to realize that the way to avoid the nightmares was to stop watching that kind of movie.

As a way of life,

- taking your thoughts captive means choosing what you allow to take root in your mind.
- taking your thoughts captive simply means gaining control over what you think about yourself and life.
- Taking your thoughts captive means speaking God's authority over them, and believing what God desires for you.

Our thoughts are impacted by what we believe. Some of us are deceived by the enemy. We readily accept the lies he whispers to us and accept them as truth. Those lies affect our view of ourselves, of God and our outlook on life.

Our emotions, actions, thoughts, character, attitude, actions, and speech are all interconnected. We must nourish our mind and safeguard it; otherwise, the devil will attempt to create downward spiraling thoughts that will hold us captive and affect our relationship with God. Pastor Craig Groeschel nailed it when he said: "Our lives move in the direction of our strongest thoughts."

One of the main defensive counter strategies to protect the mind is that of casting down. To cast something means to hurl it with great force.

- You are to cast down evil imaginations Satan puts into your mind.
- You are to cast down thoughts that exalt themselves against God.
- You are to bring every thought into captivity and obedience to the Lord.

You "cast down" by consciously taking control of your mind and refusing to dwell on the thoughts Satan inserts. **Note that YOU are told to cast down...It is not something God does for you.**

We are to cast out all thoughts and beliefs that are contrary to the Word of God before they enter our hearts and become a part of our mindset.

What is telling you, it's too great for God?

- Trials?
- Bills?
- Debt?
- Sin?
- Failure?

It's time to cast that down! But pastor, it's too big. It's too great a struggle. Is it bigger than God? If it's bigger than God, you have cause to worry, but if it's not, start tearing it down!

You see, one or the other has control. Period. Either your worries or God.

- Either your problems or God. Either your failures or God.
- **You must choose.**

EMPOWERING APPLICATION FOR EVERYDAY LIFE:

Here are 6 ways to take your thoughts captive:

1. **Accept responsibility for your thoughts.** You have the ability to exercise control over your thoughts. God warned Cain to focus his mind on the right things, but Cain chose to think about the wrong things - anger and jealousy - which led to his murderous actions. *Are you willing to admit that you can, with God's help, regain control of your thoughts - and think enabling thoughts instead of disabling ones?*
2. **Your mind - not just your behavior - must change.** God calls us to change sinful behavior that does not honor Him. Instead of focusing on your outward behavior, work on disciplining your mind - from which the behaviors stem. Allow God to transform you by the renewing of your mind ([Rom. 12:2](#)).
3. **Think through your problems rather than just react to them.** When you experience difficult challenges, you can react to them and think yourself into despair every time. Or you can look forward to the next opportunity and ask yourself what you learned from this failure. Is your first thought *I'll never do anything right?* You don't have to get trapped by disabling thoughts. You are capable of getting out of your shame, despair, hopelessness, and anger - by taking control of your thoughts.
4. **Take your disabling thoughts captive through confession.** Paul urges us to "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" ([Rom. 12:21](#)). Confront your disabling thoughts. Turn them over to God and become who He sees you can be. It will take work to take your thoughts captive *each time* they pop into your mind. But it is possible with the help of the Holy Spirit.
5. **Choose to focus your thoughts on the right things.** We are to think about those things that are "true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable" ([Phil. 4:8](#)). When we think about those things, God promises to give us His peace. It takes personal discipline and commitment.

6. **It is possible.** It is not easy to retrain your thoughts or to respond in new Christ-like ways. Take heart: as God empowers you to focus your mind on the right things, it will become easier. You *can* develop a new frame of reference, based on what is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy.

God gave us the Holy Ghost to empower us. Start following these steps today to gain power over your mind and thoughts. Let God be true and every other thing a lie! Cast the devil out of the mind!

Note sources: Crosswalk; Jeremiah Study Bible